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Technology Tutorial for LibraryThing

What is LibraryThing?

Library Thing is a free online service that aids people in cataloging their books. It gives you easy access to your catalog as well as connects you with people who have the same books and other books you might enjoy. It also allows you to find certain events, such as book signings and book sales, in your local community. While many librarians use LibraryThing as a way to provide their patrons with online access to their collections, anyone who needs to organize their book collections can use it; it goes beyond cataloging and allows you to connect with others and develop an online community for your book interests.

How are Libraries Using LibraryThing?

While you don’t need to be a librarian or part of a library to create a LibraryThing account, many libraries are starting to use LibraryThing as a way to better connect with their patrons. Some libraries are using it to post new books added to their collection on their blogs, suggesting book recommendations on their library websites, and some use it in addition to OPAC because it allows users to add ratings, reviews, tags, and view covers of the book. Because it has a degree of social interaction on the website, LibraryThing allows libraries to provide more involvement in their local and online communities.

Prerequisites:

In order to use LibraryThing, you need a basic knowledge of social media, meaning you understand how to interact with other users and exchange information in an online context. LibraryThing allows users to interact in the online and local community so users must be conscious of the information they share. If you want a better idea of LibraryThing’s privacy policies, go to http://www.librarything.com/privacy

How do I sign up?
To sign up, go to [www.librarything.com](http://www.librarything.com). On the lefthand side, there is a beige box that says in green font, “Become a Member?” Click on the Join Now box.

Create a screenname, password, and if you want to, type in your email. Indicate whether this account is personal or for an organization. Once you are done filling in these boxes, click the Join Now box. You now have a LibraryThing account!

**How to get started with cataloging your books**

Once you have your account, you will want to start adding books to your collection. At the top of the page under the big heading LibraryThing you will see a list of tabs. Click on the one that says Add books.

There are many options you can choose from to find the specific books you have.

You can type in the name of the

- author
- title
- ISBN
- LC card number
into the green box under **Add to your books.** This will automatically search Amazon.com for different editions of books. Once you type in the information for the book you are searching, a list of search options will pop up on the right.

Some of these books will have covers while others will just have the title, author, and publication date. If you are not sure which book is the exact book you have at home, you might want to click the (more) button under each title to get more information about the book in the search bar. This will give you a short list of the ISBN number, Publication information, and Dewey decimal number.

If you can’t find your exact book edition on the first page, you can click the next button at the top right of the box and it will show you more results.

**What if I can’t find my book in Amazon?**

If you can’t find your book under the Amazon search listings, or you know that your book is not going to be found through Amazon, you might want to try different search engines.

On the same page as **Add to your books** you will see a line in bold that says **Search where?** And a list of Library Congress, Overcat, Amazon.com, and then a blue link that says **>> All 700 available sources.** If you click on this link, it will ask you for a language list and a country list. You can specify which language or which country you are looking for, or if you click on **View all 701 data sources** you can see a list of 701 institutions in countries all over the world.
Organizing the books in your collection

As you add more and more books to your collection, you can access these books in different ways. If you click on Your books at the top left of the page, it will bring you to a list of all of the books in your collection so far. You can view your collection by

- List
- Covers (of the books)
- Tags
- Authors

Under the list category, you can rate the books in your collection. At the very right of the collection, you can rate the books you have, see how many other members have it, and reviews for the book. If you want to edit the book in your collection by

- adding tags
- your own review
- public or private comments about the book
or other information you might find necessary to catalog it you can click on the pencil image on the right of the book in your list as shown below:

The **Covers** category displays the covers of the books in your collection.

The **Tags** section allows you to personalize your collection with specific descriptions that help you locate the book you want. For example, when I think of Audrey Niffenegger’s *The Time Traveler’s Wife*, I think “that’s definitely a tear-jerker.” I went to the tags section when you are viewing your collection under the **List** section, and double-clicked on the Tag section and typed in “tearjerker” as a tag. This way, when I go to the Tags section, I will see my “tearjerker” tag with the number of books it has been tagged under:

This is a great way to locate books in a way that is personalized to your interests and the way you categorize things. When you click on the tear jerker link, it will show you a list of all the books this tag is under.

The **Authors** section has a list of authors with the number of books in your collection next to their name. If you scroll your mouse over the name of an author, **author page** will pop up underneath. If you click on this link, it will bring you to a page for the author with useful information like other works they’ve written, how many reviews they’ve received, and biographical information such as where the author was born and what other occupations they might have besides author.

**Getting involved in your local and online community**

As you continue to add more books to your collection and organize them the way you want, many people on LibraryThing like to get involved in the online and local community. If you click on the **Talk** tab at the top right of the page, you will see numerous forums about topics from
other LibraryThing users. You can even post your own topic of interest or question on the left under **Post** as shown below:

To get further involved with LibraryThing, you can also click on the **Local** tab to check out book signings, book discussions, and other events in your neighborhood. It is a great way to talk to other people about the way they catalog their books and to meet fellow book lovers who enjoy the same reading materials that you do.

You can also edit your Profile and allow other users to learn more about you and your collection by clicking the **Profile** tab at the top of the page.

**Zeitgeist**

If you click on the last tab at the top of the page, **Zeitgeist**, you will come to a screen full of different categories. The Zeitgeist section of LibraryThing allows you to check out what other people in the world are reading. It gives you statistics that you might find interesting, such as what are the Top 1000 books on LibraryThing? Or which Authors use Library Thing? Or what are the most reviewed books on LibraryThing? Once you click on Zeitgeist, other categories pop up (under the permanent tabs at the top of the page) that can help you narrow down your browsing. You can click on **Books, Popular, Reviews, Authors, Recs, CK, Local, Languages, Helpers, and Helpers Log** depending on your browsing interest.
Additional Resources

To find more information about LibraryThing, you can check out the following other resources:


Anna Laura Brown’s video tutorial on LibraryThing for Librarians, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0uu_A9JUAU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0uu_A9JUAU)

UC San Diego’s pdf tutorial on Library Thing for their collection (it is catered toward their institution but has some basic information on how to do certain things in LibraryThing): [http://tpot.ucsd.edu/catpolicies/cattoolsresources/docs/librarything.pdf](http://tpot.ucsd.edu/catpolicies/cattoolsresources/docs/librarything.pdf)

Check out the LibraryThing blog to find out about new events coming up:

Roberta Sibley’s: “Notes from the Field: The Librarian Who Loves LibraryThing” (article):
[http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~ashleyfa/Social%20Tagging%20Articles/The%20Librarian%20Who%20loves%20LibraryThing.pdf](http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~ashleyfa/Social%20Tagging%20Articles/The%20Librarian%20Who%20loves%20LibraryThing.pdf)