Welcome to LibraryThing: A Beginner’s Guide

Introduction:

LibraryThing is a book lover’s dream come true in the digital age. It is an online platform that helps readers keep track of their ever growing reading list, including books they are currently reading, want to read, own, have borrowed, and so on. You can even make notes on how you felt about books you have already completed, by typing up reviews and giving star-ratings, and adding tags to help keep similar items sorted together. There is a social media element to the site as well, since you can link to your friends’ accounts and see what books interest them. Even beyond that, it is a way to expand your literary knowledge and awareness by making recommendations and connecting with people around the world who are interested in the same books. The service will even alert you to opportunities to meet authors you love. This service is also useful for those who are looking to catalog their home library, with Dewey Decimal numbers or another classification system. Thankfully, you can access all of these features for a very low cost: work with up to 200 books for free or pay $10 a year or $25 for life for up to 5,000 books (or 10,000 with special permission).

Prior Knowledge Requirements:

Thankfully, LibraryThing does not require its users to have much outside knowledge to use their services; most of the features are functional with a basic working knowledge of the Web. Readers may find that they will get more out of this site if they know how to download apps and widgets on their smartphones, or have a some experience connecting through social media and online forums over the Internet. However, even without prior experience, LibraryThing is easy to navigate and new users can become accustomed to using different features in no time at all. There is a lot to be done on LibraryThing, so it would be wise to check out a tutorial, if only as a way to discover all of the available functions of the site.

Individual and Library Use:

As any bookworm knows, it can be difficult to keep track of an ever growing booklist, decide what to read next, or connect with other readers, but with a personal account, LibraryThing makes that easy, as it is a platform to keep your books organized and information easily accessible.

- Suppose that you’re at a bookstore and come across a book that you think sounds
interesting; you can log in to LibraryThing and add it to your list of books you want to read.

- What if you want to get your friend a book for their birthday, but you aren't sure if they've read the latest from their favorite author? Linking to their LibraryThing account can get you the answer without spoiling the surprise at their party.
- Imagine that none of your friends have finished the book you stayed up all night reading; through LibraryThing, you can chat about countless titles with other online users.

At first glance, it may seem that this technology would be more useful for an individual than it would be in a library setting, but there are many ways that a librarian could apply the resources of this site with an organization account.

- LibraryThing helps make book recommendations, which are also a big part of any librarian's job, so she could use the site for reader advisory if she's stumped.
- With all of the tagging features available on LibraryThing, librarians won't have to rack their brains for every title that works for their themed displays, since they can find lists of applicable materials with a few keystrokes.
- Book reviews on LibraryThing could help in selecting new titles to add to your collection.
- Many libraries host their own book clubs, and the forums on LibraryThing could be a great platform to host online discussions on selected titles by creating a “Group” for the club or encourage members to reach out to others.
- There is also a feature which alerts you to author events nearby, and libraries could use this feature to promote readings that they sponsor.
- One of the most exciting tools for librarians, is the “Early Reviewer” option, which gives you access to advanced copies of new books, and you can continue to use this service as long as you post a LibraryThing review of each title within one month.

The “LibraryThing for Libraries” page, listed at the end of this tutorial, offers plenty of further suggestions, tips, and services for librarians.

**Starting a LibraryThing Account:**

1. On your Web browser, tablet, or handheld device, access LibraryThing.com and click the “Sign Up” link on the left side of the page, under the heading “Check it Out.”

2. A box labeled “Become a Member” will appear on the right side of the page. Enter your desired username and password in the designated fields. An e-mail address is also recommended in case you forget and need to recover your password.

3. If you chose to enter your e-mail address, you will receive an automatically generated
confirmation e-mail containing several helpful links, including links to your profile and library.

**Starting a Library:**

1. As soon as you have logged in, your screen will display your personal LibraryThing homepage.

2. You will find a link that reads “Add Books” at the top of the page. Once you click on that link, you can search for a particular book according to its title, author, or ISBN (if you want to catalog a particular edition of a book, then searching by ISBN is the best choice). The default source for book information is Amazon.com, but you can choose from over 700 international sources.

3. A record for the book will appear on the right side of the screen. Click on that link to add the book to your personal library.

4. To view your library, click the “Your Books” link, also located at the top of the page.
Using Your Library:

Once your library contains books, here are some ways that you can manage it:

1. View the full record, or “work page,” for a book by clicking on its title. You can use the tag and collection features from this page. This is the work page for *The Hunger Games*:

2. Tag your books according to genre (“science fiction”), subject matter (“dystopia”), target audience (“young adult”), or any other identifier that you think is important. Use the “edit tags” function on the work page.
You can also browse a cloud of previously applied tags to find similar books, or scroll through a list of recommendations further down the page.

3. Rate the book by clicking on the row of stars above the tag feature.

4. Edit information about the book by clicking on the “edit your book” link on the left side of the work page.

5. Sort your books into collections, by clicking the appropriate icon:

Collections include:
- Wishlist
- Currently reading
- To read
- Read but unowned
- Favorites
- Additional collections of your choice!

**Exploring LibraryThing:**

Here are some other points of interest that will help you learn more about LibraryThing and what it has to offer.
About LibraryThing
This page offers basic information about the site in the form of Frequently Asked Questions.

A Short Introduction to LibraryThing
This page provides an expanded tutorial on LibraryThing’s many features.

LibraryThing Blog
Check for new information about the site, featured books, and noteworthy discussions.

Privacy and Terms of Use
This page informs users of their rights and responsibilities, and includes a discussion etiquette for the social media aspect of the site.

LibraryThing for Libraries
This page provides reader’s advisory tools, suggestions for how to use LibraryThing to enhance the library catalog and Web site, virtual browsing tools, and a library-related application for mobile devices… just for librarians!

Tutorial Videos:
- Getting Started: Creating an Account and Setting Up Your Library
- Stay Organized: Arranging and Customizing Your Library
- Discovering New Books: Using Tags, Book Recommendations, and Reviews
- Making Friends: Using Groups and Talk Features
- LibraryThing for Librarians