LibraryThing: Sharing Books, Making Connections
A Needs Assessment Report

Prepared for

OMSI
OREGON MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

by
OMSI Evaluation & Visitor Studies Division
Portland, Oregon
Contact: Cate Rhodes; Marcie Benne, Ph.D.

LibraryThing Overview

LibraryThing Defined

LibraryThing (www.LibraryThing.com[1]) is an interactive, Web-based service that helps individuals and organizations easily catalog their books. By cataloguing books on LibraryThing, members have the opportunity to connect with other LibraryThing libraries. This is done through the use of keywords (called "tags"), comments, and reviews. Members can view other libraries that share the same book(s), read members' reviews of books, generate book recommendations, and even arrange to share or swap books.

Objectives

Evaluation & visitor studies division staff at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) works in the field of museum evaluation and conducts research studies with museum visitors. In an effort to stay abreast of and benefit from current research in the field, OMSI piloted the use of LibraryThing with museum staff. The two primary objectives of this project were (1) to present a tool that could serve as a forum for the visitor studies community—almost like an online, professional book club and (2) to share the evaluation findings from the use of this forum with the OMSI community, including lessons learned, strengths and weaknesses, and recommendations for launching it at a museum. Use of this tool was tracked via a variety of methods, and OMSI's findings were presented in a poster session at a conference hosted by our field's professional association, the Visitor Studies Association (VSA). (See poster in Appendix G.)

## Relevance to Visitor Studies Field

OMSI's LibraryThing project staff believes this publicly available tool provides an innovative forum for communicating and learning in the field of visitor studies. As individuals read books, they can enter reviews into LibraryThing where students, evaluators, researchers, project developers, and others can view them. LibraryThing provides a continuous forum for sharing impressions of literature within and beyond the walls of individual institutions, beyond annual conferences, and beyond visitor studies publications.

LibraryThing at OMSI

OMSI discovered LibraryThing in October of 2007, thanks to a volunteer who was working as a literature reviewer for the evaluation & visitor studies division. During October and November of 2007, the library holdings of the evaluation & visitor studies and research & development divisions were added to OMSI's LibraryThing account, and a series of methods for evaluating use of the tool in a museum environment were developed. Use of the account was tracked starting in October 2007 and continued through June 2008. LibraryThing was introduced to OMSI staff in December 2007. Continual improvements to the process of using this tool were informed by evaluation.

The timeline below shows the progression of the LibraryThing pilot project at OMSI (Figure 1). This timeline describes key events that occurred throughout the course of the project. The events in the timeline will be described in full detail in the following report.

Figure 1. Timeline of LibraryThing pilot project at OMSI

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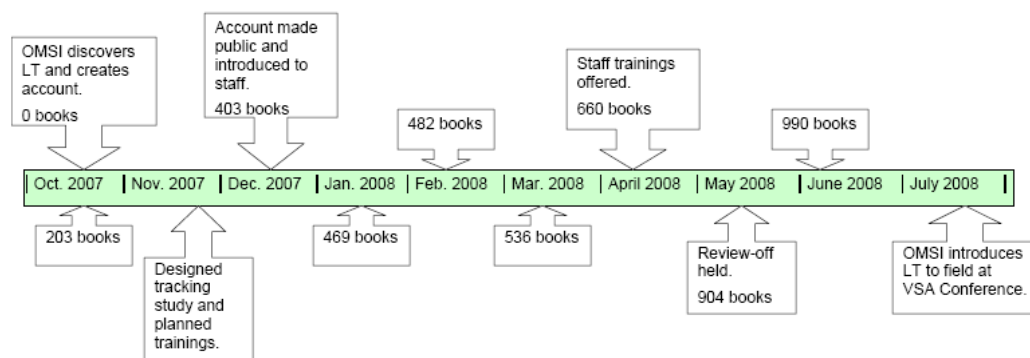
[1] OMSI has no investment in LibraryThing or any affiliation with its owner. It is simply a tool that the museum uses.

Report

Methods

OMSI's evaluation & visitor studies division used six methods to track the progress of the LibraryThing project. The methods included: tracking (population counts), user group (similar to online blogs) feedback, developer notes, training session feedback forms, a post-use survey of OMSI staff, and a survey of other museums that have LibraryThing accounts. These methods are outlined in Table 1, and they are discussed in more detail in the report below.

Table 1. Methods for evaluating use of LibraryThing at OMSI

Methods	Reporting timeframe
Tracking (population counts)	Weekly
User groups	Weekly
Developer notes	Weekly
Training session feedback forms	Once, after each training session
OMSI user survey	Once, after public launch of site
Survey of other museums who use LT	Once, after public launch of site

Introducing LibraryThing

In December 2007, LibraryThing was introduced to OMSI staff. An e-mail was sent to staff that explained how to use the system and it suggested some perceived benefits of using the system in a museum environment (see Appendix A for e-mail text). The e-mail encouraged people to login, try out the system, and leave their comment(s) in a series of "user groups," sort of like online experience logs. OMSI's LibraryThing project staff created four user groups: a welcome group, where people could say that they had logged in and used the service; a questions group for people to log their questions about LibraryThing; and a suggestions group for ideas for improving the services or how the museum is using it. The fourth group was added in the second month of the project to track developer notes and ideas (e.g., if a training was held or a system for standardizing tags was developed). These developer notes (termed "admin notes" inside LibraryThing) served to document the project for the development team.

Tracking

A tracking system was implemented to monitor the use and growth of the OMSI LibraryThing account. Tracking began in December 2007 and continued on a weekly basis through June 2008. A volunteer conducted tracking of different aspects of the account. These included a running total of the statistics (e.g., total number of books, reviews, etc.) and snapshots of the Profile, Connection News, Tag and Author Clouds, Tag Mirror, Stats, and External and Internal Reviews pages. The cumulative totals were recorded in a spreadsheet and a snapshot of each of these pages was saved.

Books and other print resources are held in a variety of locations throughout the museum. A library for exhibit research & development and evaluation & visitor studies is housed in the evaluation office. Another library that provides materials for educators, the Science Education Research Center (SERC), is located in the education wing; both OMSI staff and non-OMSI teachers can check materials out of this library. Additional libraries are located in the museum's laboratories (e.g., chemistry, physics, technology, watershed, paleontology, early childhood). When OMSI initiated use of LibraryThing, only the books from the exhibit research & development and evaluation & visitor studies library were added. The introductory e-mail that was sent to staff encouraged them to add resources from their libraries to the account. Figures 2–4 show the increase in the number of books, book reviews, and tags in the OMSI LibraryThing account over time.

Figure 2. Total books in OMSI's LibraryThing account from inception (Dec. 2007) to present (June 2008)
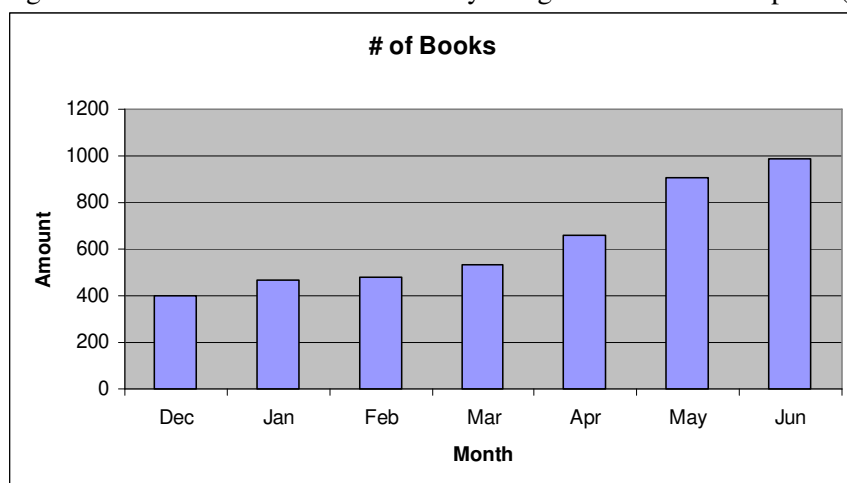
# of Books

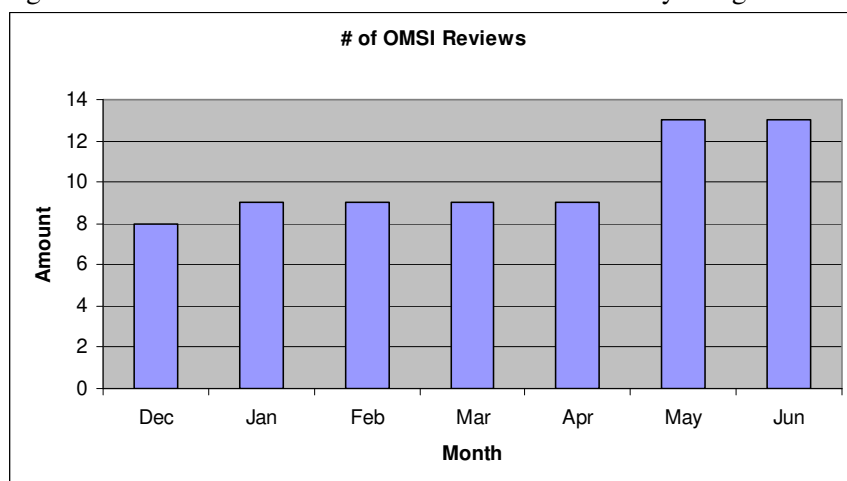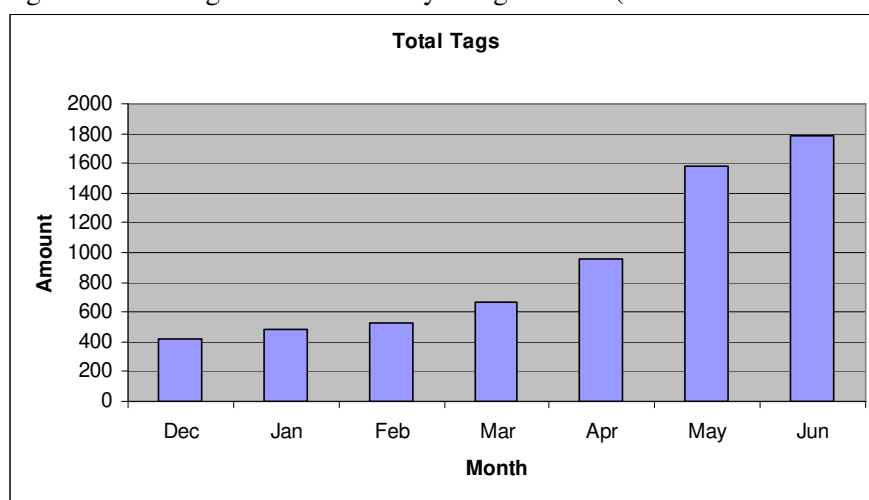Figure 3. Total number of book reviews in OMSI LibraryThing account (Dec. 2007–June 2008)

# of OMSI Reviews

Figure 4. Total tags in OMSI LibraryThing account (Dec. 2007–June 2008)

Total Tags

User groups and developer notes

Another mechanism used to track the use of the OMSI LibraryThing account was user groups. Three user groups were created: Welcome, Questions, and Suggestions. These groups functioned like "blogs" and

served for users to leave comments. A fourth group was used only by project development staff. This group, titled "Administrative Notes," served as a "journal" of the implementation process.

The user groups were not highly used. Some staff did add a comment to the Welcome user group, but only development team staff added comments to the Questions, Suggestions, and Admin Notes user groups.

Training sessions
A training session was designed to teach staff how to use LibraryThing. It was offered at eight different times throughout the month of April 2008. Paid and unpaid staff from all museum departments were invited to attend the trainings (approximately 300 volunteers and 190 employees were invited). The invitation was sent via e-mail (see Appendix B). The goal was to train 25 staff in April and have 50 new reviews added to the OMSI LibraryThing account by the end of May 2008.

The trainings were held in OMSI's technology lab and attendees used the LibraryThing system on computers while a facilitator guided their exploration and answered questions. The goal of training 25 staff was met. A PowerPoint version of the presentation was made available on a shared file server for staff who could not attend the trainings and so that individuals could refer to it as needed (see Appendix F). A free drink coupon was offered as an incentive to any staff who completed two book reviews. Two staff received the coupon. The goal of 50 new reviews was not met.

Feedback Forms
A feedback form was given to participants in OMSI's LibraryThing trainings. Participants offered their feedback on the trainings, including their suggestions for any needed changes, as well as successes. (See Appendix C for a copy of the instrument.) Seventeen staff members completed a session feedback form.

Staff members were also asked if they would change anything about the training session, whether or not they found the presentation style and balance of hands-on experiences appropriate to their needs, and if they had any additional comments to offer. Feedback was generally positive, and the few suggestions that were offered about the training suggested more hands-on time for experimenting with the system, encouraging staff to bring their own books to add (which was a part of the invitation to staff), providing snacks, and offering the training during a staff meeting in order to reach a larger audience. (It should be noted that this option was not chosen so that staff could have hands-on access to computers and use the LibraryThing account during the training.)

Post-use survey with OMSI staff
A Web-based, post-use survey was sent to LibraryThing training participants approximately one month after the trainings were completed. The survey asked participants for feedback on their use of the system, including their suggestions for any needed changes, as well as successes. A total of eleven staff completed the post-session survey. (See Appendix D for the survey e-mail and Appendix E for the survey instrument.)

While most staff (9 out of 11) had not used LibraryThing since the training, most of them said that they thought they would use LibraryThing in the future (8 out of 11). Of these staff members, all said that they anticipated using LibraryThing for professional use. Two staff members said they did not intend to use the tool in the future, for professional or personal use. (See Tables 2–4).

Table 2. Whether or not staff members have used LibraryThing since the trainings

Response	Total (n=11)
Yes	2
No	9
No answer	0

Table 3. Whether or not staff members think they will use LibraryThing in the future

Response	Total (n=11)
Yes	8
No	2
No answer	1

Table 4. Purpose for which staff plan to use LibraryThing in the future

Response	Total (n=11)
Professional use	8
No future use	2
No answer	1

Staff members suggested a number of things that would make them more likely to use LibraryThing in the future. One recommendation was having the ability to track book circulation (availability and location, including whether or not the book was checked out). This is a feature that the creator of LibraryThing, Tim Spalding, is working on adding to the system. Another suggestion was to build the use of the system into a person's day-to-day job functions. For example, instead of saving literature reviews in a Word document on a staff server, staff members could enter those reviews into LibraryThing and tag them to signify that they were conducted in correlation with a specific project. This suggestion seemed to have implications for getting staff to review books as well. Having more book reviews was also suggested. See all suggestions in Table 5.

Table 5. Things that would make staff more likely to use LibraryThing in the future (open-ended)

Response	Total (n=11)
Known availability and location of books	1
A recommended booklist via e-mail	1
Necessary for job	1
More book reviews	1
Better user interface	1
No answer	6

Suggestions of things that staff would change to improve LibraryThing were similar to the things they suggested that would make them more likely to use the system. Suggestions referred to standardizing the tagging system, having more user-friendly navigation, more book reviews, adding journal articles, and others. See a full list in Table 6.

Table 6. Changes staff suggest to improve LibraryThing

Response	Total (n=11)
Standardize tag system (e.g., removing tags' case sensitivity)	2
User-friendly navigation	2
Update journal article descriptions	1
Provide listing and reviews of journal articles	1
Improve interface layout and appearance	1
More book reviews	1
Have not used enough to know	2
No answer	6

Finally, staff were asked if they had any additional thoughts to offer about LibraryThing. Most staff did not offer an answer (7 out of 11). Four participants provided a response: one liked LibraryThing, one did not like it, one preferred another similar interface, and one had not used it enough to know.

Survey of other museums that use LibraryThing
Some museums are already participating in this online community; as more visitor studies professionals participate, the value of the forum grows. To learn about other museums' experiences using LibraryThing, OMSI contacted museums with LibraryThing accounts. OMSI conducted a member search on LibraryThing for the key word "museums." The search generated a list of member profiles, many of

which appeared to belong to individuals. Twenty-seven, not including OMSI, appeared to be profiles for museums (see Table 7).

Table 7. LibraryThing member accounts that appear to be affiliated with museums

Museum	LT user name	Website	Location
Amherst Museum*	AmherstMuseum	http://www.amherstmuseum.org/	Amherst, NY
Biotechnology Learning Center—The Children's Museum of Indianapolis	biotechlc	http://www.childrensmuseum.org/themuseum/biotech/index.htm	Indianapolis, IN
Bob Campbell Geology Museum*	geomuseum	http://www.clemson.edu/geomuseum	Clemson, SC
Cambodian American Heritage Museum and Memorial Library	CAHM		Chicago, IL
The Canadian Museum of Civilization (formerly National Museum of Man. Athapascan Indians)	museumofarchaeology	http://www.civilization.ca/visit/indexe.aspx	
Canmore Museum and Geoscience Centre*	Cmags	http://www.cmags.org/	Canmore, Alberta
The Costume Museum of Canada	CostumeMuseumCanada		Winnipeg, Manitoba
The Eugene Field House and St. Louis Toy Museum*	fieldhouse	http://www.eugenefieldhouse.org	St. Louis, MO
Frye Art Museum*	FryeMuseum	http://www.fryeart.org/	Seattle, WA
The John C. Freeman Weather Museum*	TheWeatherMuseum	http://www.wxresearch.org	Houston, TX
Legacy Museum of African American History	LegacyMuseum	http://www.legacymuseum.org/	Lynchburg, VA
London Transport Museum Library	LondonTransportMus	http://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/collections/80.aspx	Covent Garden, London
Mashantucket Pequot Museum & Research Center	mpmrc and pequotmuseumlibrary	http://www.pequotmuseum.org/	Mashantucket, CT
Museum of Chinese Australian History Inc.	chinesemuseum	http://www.chinesemuseum.com.au/	Melbourne, Victoria
Museum of Comic and Cartoon Art	moccany	http://www.moccany.org/	New York, NY
Museum of Friends	museumoffriends	http://www.museumoffriends.org/?page_id=6	Walsenburg, CO
Museum of Indian Arts & Culture/Laboratory of Anthropology*	LabofAnthropology	http://www.indianartsandculture.org/	Santa Fe, NM
NederlandsFotoMuseum	fotomuseum	http://www.nederlandsfotomuseum.nl/	
The Old Barn Museum	TheOldBarnMuseum	http://www.theoldbarnmuseum.org/	Newark, IL
Ontario Science Center	OSCLib	http://www.ontariosciencecentre.ca/	Toronto, Ontario
Oregon Museum of Science and Industry*	omsi	www.omsi.org	Portland, OR
Paul and Lulu Hilliard University Art Museum	uamlibrary		University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Lafayette, LA
The PC Museum	pcmuseum	http://www.thepcmuseum.com/	Web only
The Sound Museum	soundmuseum	http://www.soundmuseum.net/	Different locations, MA
Summerland Museum and Heritage Society	summerlandmuseum	http://summerlandmuseum.org/	
West Virginia Museum	WVAMuseum		
Wilseyville Library & Community Museum	WLCM		Wilseyville, CA
Women's History Museum and Education Center*	WHMEC	http://www.whmec.org/	San Diego, CA
*Denotes museums who reported to currently use LibraryThing.			

Of these twenty-seven institutions, OMSI contacted eighteen. These were museums chosen because their LibraryThing member accounts contained member profile names and their institution's real names. Of the eighteen institutions contacted, eight institutions were using LibraryThing, three were not, and the remaining seven provided no response.

Initial contact with LibraryThing member museums was made via e-mail or by posting a message on the museum's LibraryThing profile page (contact was made on 6/19/08). Follow up contact occurred during the following week and entailed a list of questions about the institution's use of LibraryThing and was made via e-mail or phone (see Appendix F for a list of questions asked). Of the eleven institutions that provided responses, nine were collected by phone and two were collected via e-mail (see Appendix F for the e-mail/post text). See Table 8 for LibraryThing member museums' responses.

Table 8. Museums with LibraryThing profiles that OMSI surveyed and their use of the system

Museum (n=18)
Currently using LibraryThing (8)
Amherst Museum
Bob Campbell Geology Museum
Canmore Museum and Geoscience Centre
Eugene Field House and St. Louis Toy Museum
Frye Art Museum
Museum of Indian Arts & Culture/Laboratory of Anthropology
Weather Museum
Women's History Museum and Education Center
Not familiar with LibraryThing (3)
Biotechnology Learning Center
Costume Museum of Canada
Mashantucket Pequot Museum & Research Center
No response (7)
Cambodian American Heritage Museum & Memorial Library
London Transport Museum Library
Museum of Chinese Australian History Inc.
Museum of Comic & Cartoon Art
Museum of Friends
Paul and Lulu Hilliard University Art Museum
Wilseyville Library & Community Museum

Of the eight museums who responded to OMSI's survey and are currently using LibraryThing, the majority discovered LibraryThing through an in-house librarian (7 out of 8); this person was also usually responsible for managing the account. Half of the museums who used LibraryThing did so to showcase their collection to the public (4 out of 8). See Tables 9–11.

Table 9. How museums found out about LibraryThing

Source	Total (n=8)
In-house librarian	
Personal experience	5
Web search	2
Other staff/volunteers	
Personal experience	1

Table 10. Individual(s) responsible for monitoring the museum's LibraryThing account

Responsible individual	Total (n=8)
Librarian	5
Library staff	2
Volunteer and/or staff	2

Table 11. Museums' objectives for using LibraryThing

Objectives	Total (n=8)
Showcase collection to public	4
To increase visitorship	3
Book club	1
Online catalog	4

Museums varied in how they introduced LibraryThing to their staff or the public. No museums suggested the implementation of a training program to encourage staff to use the tool. Most museums seemed to provide the system for public purposes. See Table 12.

Table 12. Museums' processes for introducing LibraryThing to their staff and/or the public

Response	Total (n=8)
Recommended to museum	1
Disseminated to staff in select departments	1
Through museum's website	1
Use as online library	2
Restricted library use	1
Just arriving to implementation phase	2
Through usage by certain groups	1

All of the benefits mentioned by other museums were also mentioned by OMSI staff (see Table 13). Worldwide networking was one of these benefits. It is a benefit that is unique to this type of resource networking system. It is also a benefit whose value increases or decreases as individuals increase or decrease their use of the system. Networking is directly tied to staff use, a challenge identified by OMSI staff who found it difficult to incorporate use of the system into their daily workflows. This may be an issue that needs to be addressed before LibraryThing can be a successful networking tool for museum professionals. See Table 14 for barriers to using LibraryThing identified by other museums.

Table 13. Perceived benefits of using LibraryThing in museums

Benefits	Total (n=8)
Staff and/or public notified of current and updated collection	2
Location of titles	1
Can share interests	1
Accessible anywhere	1
Worldwide networking	3
Cost effective	2
Easy to use and flexible	4
Breadth of information	1
Don't know	1

Table 14. Perceived barriers to using LibraryThing in museums

Barriers	Total (n=8)
Difficult to incorporate circulation/book movement tracking into LT	1
Unlisted books	2
Takes time to learn all applications	2
Does not incorporate cataloguing of journals, articles, and other scholarly literature	1
Subject headings don't cover LT's entire collection	1
Confusion of tags	1
Don't know	1

Finally, museums that were currently using LibraryThing were asked if they plan to continue to do so in the future. Of the eight museums, six said that they plan to continue to use it, and they listed the purpose of use. Two museums were only using the system temporarily. See Table 15.

Table 15. Museums' future plans for using LibraryThing

Future plans	Total (n=8)
Continue use	6
For temporary use only	2
Continue adding books to shelf list	2
Expand shelf list to sister institutions	1
Highlight museum's collections	1
Open to public use	1
Don't know	2

Comparisons to Other Systems

OMSI LibraryThing project volunteers compared LibraryThing to other systems in three ways. First, volunteers assessed the different features each system offered. Next, they rated the systems based on what features they liked best and least. And, finally, they offered an overall rating along with their general impressions of each system. Two to three volunteers completed each step in this process. See Tables 16–18 for their findings.

Table 16. Key features of different Web-based library cataloguing systems

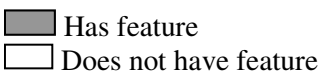| Features	Anobii	BookJetty	Goodreads	LibraryThing	Shelfari
Authors program			■	■	■
Authors/cloud			■	■	■
Blog widget	■	■	■	■	■
Catalog	■	■	■	■	■
Early reviewers program				■	
Facebook link	■	■	■		■
Groups/group shelves	■		■	■	■
Import/export	■	■	■	■	■
Invite friends	■	■		■	■
Predefined tags	■	■	■		■
Private accounts		■	■	■	■
Recommendations	■	■	■	■	■
Reviews	■	■	■	■	■
RSS feeds		■		■	
See what friends are reading	■	■	■	■	■
Sends e-mails	■	■	■		■
Statistics		■	■	■	■
Tags/cloud	■			■	■
User defined tags	■	■	■	■	■
User rating	■	■	■	■	■
TOTAL FEATURES	12	15	15	17	18

■ Has feature
☐ Does not have feature

Table 17. Aspects volunteer raters liked most and least about different Web-based library cataloguing systems

System	Liked Most	Liked Least
Anobii	Targets casual readers; language options	Reviews lacked substance; difficult to navigate
BookJetty	Webpage layout; breadth of information	Limited book and profile information
Goodreads	Social networking	Limited book information
LibraryThing	Detailed book information	Associated costs; layout of information
Shelfari	Webpage layout	Bad spam reputation

Table 18. Volunteer raters' general impressions of different Web-based cataloguing systems

General impressions of Web-based cataloguing systems
Anobii
This site is simple, simple, simple; it looks to be for those who are casual readers and want to know what to read next; reviews had no real basis except for like or dislike, not reasons why.
BookJetty
This site is really focused on social sharing; may be designed for foreigners who are looking for English books in foreign libraries; it is not really for educational stuff, but more for comparing what you and your friends have read.
Goodreads
Totally set up for social networking through books; the books are really an aside compared to the amount of features for getting to know other people. The authors and upcoming events sections of this system are informative and easy to view at a glance.
LibraryThing
This system serves great as a general cataloging system; the owners are helpful and fast; the information on books is excellent; it is easy to use; lots of features for the books (not other people) to keep you exploring. The reviews from the OMSI account paired beside reviewers from other individuals are very readable. Overall this system feels more user-friendly and contains more detailed content about the books while Goodreads is more geared toward social networking. Would like to learn more about networking with other institutions like OMSI on LT.
Shelfari
Shelfari SPAM (see: http://www.librarything.com/thingology/2007/11/shelfari-spam-basically-social.php). This site is so similar in look to BookJetty. All of the features and even the Web layout are the same; most of the features are the same as LibraryThing; was afraid to join because of the warning so reviewed only what I could see without signing up.

Summary of Findings

By piloting the use of LibraryThing at OMSI, benefits, including unanticipated outcomes, and recommendations for improvement were revealed. This information was gleaned from the surveys with staff, the training feedback forms, the volunteer raters, and the conversations with other museums that use the system.

Perceived benefits of using LibraryThing include:
- Online catalog (for staff, students, teachers, public)
- Share/showcase collections with public
- Document collections, including locations
- Find new resources
- Interactive literature reviews
- Network with peers (at home institution and worldwide)
- Share interests
- Increase visitorship
- Book club
- Breadth of information
- Flexibility and ease of use

A positive, unanticipated outcome was revealed during the pilot project as well. OMSI has a resource library that teachers can use called the Science Education Resource Center (SERC). These resources are managed by a volunteer who comes in once a week to sign them in and out to teachers. Teachers must come to the museum to see what resources are available and to sign them out; they have to make an appointment to do this.

When OMSI piloted the use of LibraryThing in the museum, volunteers throughout the museum helped to enter books into the database and to streamline the use of the system in their areas of work. The volunteer who manages SERC immediately saw that teachers would benefit by being able to access the system online, without having to visit the museum to see what resources were available.

While it is not clear whether or not OMSI will have the resources to continue promoting the use of LibraryThing in a museum setting, efforts will be made to connect with the teacher audience that uses

SERC. A plan will be put in place to connect with teachers and to teach them how and encourage them to use this tool. LibraryThing project staff will contact the SERC volunteer and formulate a plan to introduce this tool to teachers and facilitate its use.

Finally, throughout the course of the pilot project, a few suggestions were made for how to make LibraryThing more accessible in a museum setting. Some of the suggestions are specific to LibraryThing features, while others address OMSI's internal workflow.

Suggested improvements for using LibraryThing in a museum setting:
- To increase use of the system, it needs to be built into staff's regular workflow flow, sort of like a job requirement (e.g., for posting literature reviews during proposal development, as a tool for communicating across project teams, both internally and externally, and/or creating a recommended reading list).
- The more reviews that are added by staff, the more likely other staff will be to want to add reviews. (Building reviews into job functions will contribute to staff's ability to add reviews.)
- Incorporating a way to catalog journal articles and other publications that do not have ISBN/Library of Congress numbers would be valuable.
- Circulation tracking is needed. (Where are books located? And are they checked in or out?)
- Consistent tagging is needed. (See Tag Cloud example below in Figure 5.)

Figure 5. Sample Tag Cloud that illustrates inconsistent use of tags

Future of LibraryThing for Museum Professionals
Of the five main recommendations that OMSI staff had for facilitating the use of LibraryThing in a professional museum setting, many may be addressed in the near future. The creator of LibraryThing, Tim Spalding, has regularly added features to the system based on user feedback. He was recently approached by OMSI and told about the project of piloting the use of LibraryThing in the museum, and he was interested in the project. He was also responsive about some of the changes OMSI suggested.

Mr. Spalding is currently working to create a circulation tracking system in LibraryThing. It would allow simple in and out tracking in the short term, and, eventually, he proposes an upgraded circulation system. Currently, he pointed out, members use tags and/or comments to track the circulation of books, but that there has been demand for a more sophisticated system.

Mr. Spalding was also very supportive of the use of LibraryThing by professionals. Currently, the system is mostly used by individuals with personal collections. However, he suggested having professionals enter their own books separately, then create a "group," such as "VSA" or "OMSI," and identify themselves professionally through the group affiliation. This would also allow a user to search across any of the

libraries within a group. OMSI currently has only one LibraryThing account and all staff can access it to add/delete books, reviews, tags, and comments. Creating individually-affiliated accounts is an option that OMSI could explore.

If OMSI and/or other museum/visitor studies professionals are interested in continuing to use and/or expand the use of LibraryThing in professional settings, it appears that Mr. Spalding will be supportive of these efforts. His prompt response and interest in making the tool he created increasingly accessible to a wide variety of users suggests that he may be willing to work to meet professionals' needs.

To spread the word about LibraryThing beyond OMSI's walls, the evaluation & visitor studies (E&VS) division presented a poster on LibraryThing at the Visitor Studies Association (VSA) Conference in July 2008. The objectives of the poster were (1) to introduce the visitor studies field to the potential for an interactive, online library database, www.LibraryThing.com, that can serve as a forum for the visitor studies community—almost like an online, professional book club and (2) to share our evaluation findings of the use of this forum at OMSI, including lessons learned, strengths and weaknesses, comparisons to other similar systems, and recommendations for launching it at a museum. E&VS staff also wanted to see if there was interest in the visitor studies field in using a system of this nature.

During the VSA conference, various visitor studies professionals expressed interest in the tool, including individuals affiliated with graduate programs in visitor studies in the US and Canada, evaluators at museums, and members of the Center for the Advancement of Informal Science Education (CAISE). OMSI E&VS staff will follow up with CAISE to see if it would be possible to assess the idea of using LibraryThing in the visitor studies field, including whether or not it would be the best choice for professionals. If there is sufficient interest, OMSI may be interested in collaborating on such a project.

Other ideas for promoting the use of LibraryThing in museum and visitor studies fields include sharing OMSI's experience on the Association of Science-Technology Centers–Informal Science Education Network (ASTC–ISEN) listserv and seeing if there is interest among other science center professionals. It has also been suggested that promoting the tool in museum/visitor studies professional programs may be an option.

Finally, it is not clear at this time whether or not OMSI will have the resources to further explore the use of LibraryThing with museum professionals. However, OMSI will share its findings from this pilot project with the field at large. OMSI is also interested in learning about and potentially supporting efforts that arise in the field to use this or another system to share our impressions of current research with our colleagues. To learn more about OMSI's experience with LibraryThing, contact visitorstudies@omsi.edu.

Appendices

Appendix A
LibraryThing Introductory Email

The following e-mail was sent to OMSI staff on December 18, 2007. It invited staff to try out LibraryThing and to take a survey to share their impressions via user groups. A reminder e-mail was sent on January 16, 2008.

_____

Subject: Please participate: LibraryThing.com

Greetings!

OMSI's Evaluation & Visitor Studies Division recently discovered a website that will let us catalog our books online. The website is called LibraryThing.com and we want you to:
(1) Try it out! (see log in directions below), and
(2) Tell us what you think! (by participating in the user groups described below).

LibraryThing (LT) is an online catalogue that will allow OMSI staff to search for books, enter books, review books, and share books with other individuals at OMSI and beyond. The books in OMSI's Evaluation and R&D Library have been cataloged in LibraryThing and some of them have been tagged (i.e. marked with keywords for easy searching), or reviewed by OMSI staff or volunteers. OMSI's LibraryThing catalog is currently <u>private</u>, which means that the catalog is only viewable by users that login with OMSI's password.

We want you to login to OMSI's LibraryThing library and search for books, enter your own books, review any books you like, and comment on your experience using the website via one of the "user groups" (these are like internal blogs and can be found under "OMSI LT Pilot"). The user groups are <u>private</u> and can only be viewed and accessed by logging in to the OMSI account. Only other OMSI staff who have the password will be able to view your comments in the user groups and book reviews. We will incorporate your feedback from the user groups to make the project more user-friendly. Eventually, our plan is to make OMSI's catalog <u>public</u> so that it will be viewable by anyone, anywhere. However, the existing user groups are for feedback during project development and will be removed before the library goes public. Since the standards for using the site are under development, please keep these things in mind:

1) Information posted to LT will eventually be public, so please do not post personal or proprietary information.
2) Since everyone is using the same login account, please sign the items you post (i.e. any comments, review, or user group messages) with your first name and last initial like this: David P. -->PLEASE NOTE: Because OMSI's account is <u>private</u>, OMSI's reviews of books will not be shown when you click "see reviews." To see reviews, go to "your library" and click on a book title. Then, when the book's profile is shown on the screen, click on "details" and you will be able to see OMSI's book reviews. You can also add your own reviews of books on this same page by clicking "edit."
3) If you add books, tag them with "dept:{your-department}". This will separate your books from all the others in the catalog and tell potential borrowers who they belong to. (The Evaluation and Visitor Studies department uses the tag "dept:EVS". Tags are user-defined descriptors for categorizing books. Multiple tags should be separated by commas.)

We know of at least one other science center that uses the LibraryThing network. After our pilot period with OMSI staff, we hope to join the network publicly and even encourage other institutions in our field to join as well. Our hope is that LibraryThing can become a tool for museum professionals to share resources and dialogue about current research in our field. We encourage you to search the site, enter your books, review or comment on the books in the OMSI library, and enter your feedback via one of the many user groups. If you have questions or comments about how to use the system, please email visitorstudies@omsi.edu.

Logging in:
To view the OMSI catalog, go to http://www.librarything.com and login to the OMSI account. Enter **username: omsi**, **password: ------------------**. (When OMSI's catalog is made public, you will be able to view it without logging in. However, you will still have to log in to enter books or reviews.)

Once you're logged in you'll be able to read and post comments to "OMSI LT Pilot" user group. *The first time you visit, please take a moment to say hello*. Click the "Talk" tab, and select "Your groups" if it's not already highlighted. Then click the "Welcome" topic and "Post a message". Or you can paste this URL into your browser: http://www.librarything.com/talktopic.php?topic=24641. (Again, please note that these "user groups" are private and only viewable by other OMSI staff who have the password and login. Your comments will be used to for project development purposes only and they will be removed before the site is made public.)

For more information about LT, try these helpful links:
http://www.librarything.com/about
http://www.librarything.com/quickstart.php

Thank you for your time and participation in this project. We are eager to hear your experiences and we hope this tool will be useful to you in your work.

-Evaluation & Visitor Studies staff & volunteers
(David Pelinka, Susan Martin, Marcie Benne, Cate Rhodes)

Appendix B
Training Invitation

The following e-mail was sent to OMSI staff at the end of March to invite them to attend a training to learn about how to use LibraryThing. The invitations were sent via Outlook e-mail and any staff members who accepted the invitation would automatically have it scheduled on his/her calendar.

_____

Subject: Please participate: LibraryThing.com

Greetings!

You are invited to attend a LibraryThing.com training! Some of you may already be familiar with LibraryThing, but for those of you who aren't, it's an online catalogue that allows OMSI staff to search for books, enter books, review books, and share books with other individuals at OMSI and beyond. Since OMSI's initial participation

April 7, Training all of New Project Development within the Center for Learning Experiences
April 14, Training two groups in Center for Organizational Advancement (HR and Development)
April 21, Training two groups in Center for Organizational Advancement (Education and Marketing)
April 25, Training one group in Center for Organizational Advancement (HR, includes Volunteer Services)

May 31, All reviews due

Appendix C
LibraryThing Training Feedback Form

OMSI
OREGON MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Session Evaluation

Date:
Session Name:
Instructor(s):

PLEASE CHECK THE BOX THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR EXPEREINCE TODAY

	Definitely	**Somewhat**	**Very little**	**Not at all**	**Don't know**
Did we raise your curiosity?					
Did you learn something new?					
Did you have fun?					
How likely are you to recommend this program to others?					

Will this training be useful for your work at OMSI? If so, what was the most useful thing you learned?

What would you change about this training session?

How appropriate were the presentation style and balance of hands-on experiences in relation to your needs?

Do you have any other comments about your experience today or the session?

Appendix D
LibraryThing Post-Use Survey E-mail

The following e-mail was sent to OMSI staff on June 27, 2008, to invite them to attend a training to learn about how to use LibraryThing. A reminder e-mail was sent on July 1, 2008.

_____

Subject: Really short survey: LibraryThing

Greetings!

We're writing to you because you participated in a LibraryThing training offered by the Evaluation & Visitor Studies Division. Your feedback will inform next steps for LibraryThing at OMSI as well as help us determine our message about LibraryThing to Visitor Studies Association (VSA) Conference attendees in July.

Please help us by taking this short, anonymous survey (only 6 questions):
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=6h4c_2fLTQ3q7tqEdvJymh5A_3d_3d

Thank you very much for your time and participation! If you have questions, please contact Cate Rhodes crhodes@omsi.edu.

OMSI Evaluation & Visitor Studies Division staff

Appendix E
LibraryThing Post-Use Survey

The following Web-based survey was sent to OMSI staff who participated in a LibraryThing training.
_____

1. Did you participate in a LibraryThing training?
□ Yes
□ No

2. Have you used LibraryThing since that training?
□ Yes
□ No

3. Do you think you will use LibraryThing in the future?
□ Yes
□ No

4. If you plan to use LibraryThing in the future, for what purpose will you use it? (Select one.)
□ Professional use
□ Personal use
□ I won't use LibraryThing in the future.

5. What would make you more likely to use LibraryThing in the future?

6. If you could change one thing about LibraryThing to make it better, what would you change?

7. Is there anything else you want us to know about LibraryThing?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!
If you have questions about the survey, please contact Cate Rhodes at crhodes@omsi.edu.

Appendix F
Other Museums E-mail Prompt and Questions

The following e-mail was sent to LibraryThing members with accounts that appeared to represent museums and other related cultural institutions. It was sent on June 19, 2008. The questions following the e-mail were sent to any individual who responded to the initial e-mail and was willing to further discuss their institutions' use of LibraryThing.

_____

Subject: Questions about LibraryThing and museums

Hello fellow LibraryThing member,

My name is Vanessa, and I am an intern in the Evaluation & Visitor Studies Division at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI). OMSI has recently piloted the use of a LibraryThing account at our museum. We think LibraryThing presents an exciting opportunity for museum and informal learning professionals to network and discuss current research in our fields. We are interested in sharing our experience using LibraryThing and learning from other institutions' experiences as well. Is there someone that we can talk with about your institution's experience with LibraryThing? If so, please let us know who we can get in touch with.

Please contact me at vsin@omsi.edu at your earliest convenience, or feel free to share my contact information with the appropriate person. Thank you for your time.

_____

LT Questions for Museums

1. How did your institution know about LT?

2. What was your objective for using LT?

3. What were the processes for using LT?

    a. How did your institution introduce LT to staff?

    b. What was the staff's response?

    c. Who monitors the account?

4. What are the perceived benefits to using LT?

5. What are the perceived barriers to using LT?

6. What future plans does your institution have for LT?

    a. Are you interested in fostering the use of LT in the field (museum, informal learning)? If so,

      how?

LibraryThing.com

User guide to OMSI's online
library catalog

What is LibraryThing?

- "both entrancing and evil"
- "one of the Seven Wonders of the Web"
- "I'm so worked up that I'm not going to be able to sleep tonight."
- "I feel a mad enthusiasm creeping up on me"
- "Finally there's an easy way to catalog your books online, without software or downloads! … LibraryThing is the greatest invention since the glorious smell of paper and paste melded together in the spine of an old book."

What is LibraryThing.com?

- a catalog with over 20 million books belonging to over 300,000 members – including OMSI.
- a service to help catalog books easily
- a social space that connects people with similar reading interests
- a book recommendation engine that uses the collective intelligence of user's online book catalogs

History of LT and OMSI

- OMSI LT was started by the Evaluation and Visitor Studies department.
- The books in OMSI's Evaluation and R&D Library were cataloged in LT
  - some tagged (marked with keywords for searching)
  - some reviewed by OMSI staff or volunteers.

Why use LT?

- Add your department's books.
- LT is easy to use!
  - When you add a book, LT searches the catalogs of Amazon.com, the Library of Congress, and more than 80 world libraries for publishing information.
- LT provides an inventory of your library that everyone can see.

Why use LT?

- search OMSI departments for books.
- read and post reviews.
- exchange book information with colleagues at other institutions.
- encourage museum professionals at other science centers to share resources and dialogue about current publications in our field.

Currently OMSI and LT

- LT used to share reading research among staff and volunteers.
- LT catalog is public.
  - Viewable by anyone anywhere.
- Updates require password (all OMSI staff).
- Use of our catalog tracked by the Evaluations & Visitor Studies Department as well as LT.
- A poster session on LT is going to be presented by the OMSI Evaluations & Visitor Studies Department this summer at the Visitor Studies Association (VSA) conference.

LT Features

- Catalog
- Profile
- Reviews
- User Groups
- Statistics
- Author & Title Clouds
- Conversation News

How to use LT

- Search for books
- Add books
- Add reviews
- Add conversation to the user groups

How to search for books

- To search the general website:
  - Go to www.librarything.com
  - Click on the search tab

- To search only the OMSI catalog:
  - Go to www.librarything.com
  - Go to http://www.librarything.com/catalog/omsi and use the search box and button on the right of the screen
  - Log on to the OMSI account

How to add books

- Log on the OMSI LT catalog
- Click on the Add Books tab
- You can either add single books or books in bulk

How to add single books

- Search for a book using either author, book title, ISBN, or Library of Congress number
- Add your Tag
  - In general, Tags are used to describe subject
  - At OMSI, Tags state the department (or office) that houses the book (e.g. Evaluations & Visitor Studies is Dept:EVS)

How to add books in bulk

- Click on the Add Books tab
- Click on the Import Books tab on the bottom
- Add a file that you created with ISBN numbers of your books
- Add Tags
  - Tags will need to be edited after all your books are imported

How to Edit Tags

- Add the books first
- Search the catalog for the books to manually add
- Click on the Search tab
- Click the Advanced Tips link to see sample searches
  - Enter your criteria in the Your Library field
  - For example, 'Tag:EVSEducation' returns books tagged as EVS AND Education
  - 'Tag:EVS/Education' returns books tagged as EVS AND NOT Education 'Tag:
  - ""'returns books with NO tag

How to Edit Tags

- Use similar searches with other fields.
- When you have the list of books you want, click Power edit, it's the ✏ icon.
- Select either the individual books to change or select all
- Enter the tags to be added in the Add Tags field
- Click the Add To Selected Books link
- You can use the Remove Tags link to remove tags in the same fashion

How to add reviews

- Click on Your Library
- Click on a book title
- When the book's profile is shown on the screen click on the Edit book tab
- Enter your review in the space provided
- Add your name and last initial to the review
- Reviews can be seen in the Books Profile or Reviews section

How to add conversation to the user groups

- Click on the Your Profile tab
- Click on User Groups
- Click on the group that you would like to add to
- Add your name and last initial to the review

50 Reviews by May 31!

The first 50 reviewers (paid and unpaid staff) to enter two reviews (that have substance) will receive a coupon for a free drink at the Market Express!

Thank you for participating in LibraryThing!

Questions?

Appendix G
LibraryThing Poster

LibraryThing: Sharing Books, Making Connections

Introduction

LibraryThing serves:
- Public
- Students
- Professional
- Teachers
- And others!

LibraryThing can be used to:
- Create an online catalog
- Share/showcase collections
- Document collections, including locations
- Find new resources
- See/post literature reviews
- Network with peers (at home institution and worldwide)
- Share interests
- Use as tool to increase visitorship
- Use for book club
- Flexibly and easily access breadth of information

Objectives

1) To introduce the visitor studies field to the potential for an interactive, online library database, www.LibraryThing.com*, that can serve as a forum for the visitor studies community–almost like an online, professional book club.

2) To share our evaluation findings of the use of this forum at OMSI, including lessons learned, strengths and weaknesses, comparisons to other similar systems, and recommendations for launching it at a museum.
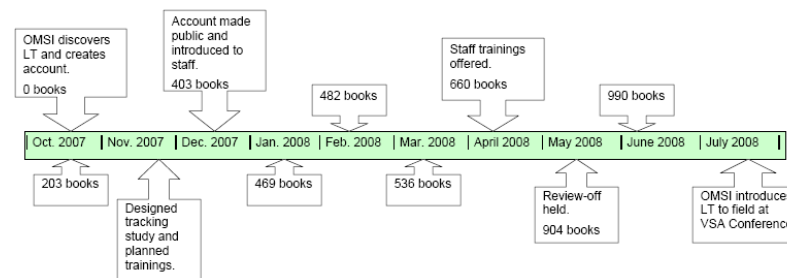
*OMSI has no investment in LibraryThing or any affiliation with its owner. It is simply a tool that we use.

Features Compared

LibraryThing at OMSI

Methods

The Evaluation & Visitor Studies Division introduced LibraryThing to OMSI staff and monitored use of our account via the following methods: Tracking (population counts), User group feedback, Developer notes, Training session feedback forms, OMSI staff survey, Survey of other museums.

Tracking (population counts)
- Created an OMSI LibraryThing account and entered books from our division's library.
- Tracked population counts weekly. These included snapshots of OMSI's account Profile, the Connection News, Tag cloud, Author cloud, Tag mirror, Stats, and internal and external reviews.

User groups and developer notes
- Created three User Groups: Welcome, Questions, and Suggestions. These groups are like "blogs," and serve for users to leave comments.
- A fourth group was only used by project development staff. These group, titled "Administrative Notes," served as a "journal" of the implementation process.

Training session feedback forms
- A training was designed to teach staff how to use LibraryThing. The goal was to train 25 staff in April and have 50 new reviews added to the OMSI LibraryThing account by the end of May 2008.
- The session was held in OMSI's Technology Lab and staff interacted with the LibraryThing system while a facilitator guided their exploration and answered questions. The goal of 25 staff was met.
- A PowerPoint version of the presentation was made available on a shared file server for staff who could not attend the trainings and so that individuals could refer to it as needed.
- A free drink coupon was offered as an incentive to staff to complete two reviews. Two staff completed reviews and received the coupon. We did not reach our goal of 50 reviews.

OMSI staff survey
- Two months after staff were trained to use LibraryThing, a survey was sent via email to training attendees to gather their feedback on their experiences using the system.

Survey of other museums who use LibraryThing
- A search was conducted of LibraryThing members using the keyword "museum."
- The search produced approximately 40 hits. After reviewing each member account, it was estimated that approximately 27 were museums.
- OMSI was able to contact 18 of these 27 museums. Eleven responded to our survey.
- Of these, 8 are currently using LibraryThing. Of these 8 museums, 6 plan to use it in the future.

Summary

What we have learned about using LibraryThing in a professional environment:
- Use of the system needs to be built into the regular workflow flow (e.g., post lit reviews during proposal development research).
- The more reviews that are added by staff, the more likely other staff will be to want to add reviews.
- Incorporating a way to catalog journal articles, etc., would be valuable.
- Circulation tracking would be valuable.
- Consistent tagging is needed (see Tag Cloud example below)

Features suggested by OMSI staff who used LibraryThing:
- Book circulation tracking
- Cataloging of resources other than books
- Consistent tagging system (e.g., remove case sensitivity)

Future of LibraryThing:
- LibraryThing creator, Tim Spalding, has regularly added features based on user feedback. A recent communication with him suggests that a circulation tracking system is in the works.
- Use of LibraryThing has been suggested to CAISE.
- Other ideas include promoting LibraryThing with Museum and Visitor Studies students and on the ASTC-ISEN listserv.

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