

MLIS 7300 Library Thing Assignment

My experience with www.librarything.com was painless for the most part. I was able to find all my books within either the Amazon or Library of Congress databases. It was nice to see the covers of each book and I also found that for books with several covers, LibraryThing allowed you to switch covers; as was the case with two of my books: *Candide* and *The Name of the Rose*.

For about half of the books I entered, I was able to find them in the Amazon database, but not in the Library of Congress database. I was using the ISBN to locate books and when a book did not have an ISBN or when the ISBN did not work, I then entered the LC publication number which did not work either for some reason. For the LC listings, I had to manually enter the author's name and search through most of the works to find the right one. Two of my books were not in the LC listings: *I, Freddy* and *The Monster at the End of This Book*.

After I 'entered' all my books, I then played with the style settings and was impressed when I was able to view all the Library of Congress information along with the cover and my personal tag listings. I also discovered that I could customize the style sheet and ended up with a view that allowed me to see the cover, title/author/date, subject headings, tags, LC classification, and ISBN. I can see how this would help a person trying to locate a book in the library visually in addition to the regular 'call number' information.

The most difficult part of this process was the social tagging. I have not participated in 'tagging' since its inception even though I have had a www.flickr.com account for some years. I have had other things to do besides giving my 'two cent' description to the world concerning every image or thing. I can see where social tagging could be of use in working with combinations of natural

language vocabularies and controlled vocabularies for easier user access in search queries; and I am sure there is more to come in this field (but will be covered later on.) Concerning www.flickr.com, I noticed the LC added part of their image library complete with the LC listings and I watched as the world added tags that were valid and not-valid, and shook my head at all the invitations from flickr users to the LC to 'join' their group.

But I digress; social tagging was difficult for me with books I had not read in many years. I found that I wanted to re-read the books in order to give a proper social tag since my memory is not what it used to be. I found that I was using Amazon proper to review what the books were about and prop up the memory; and I was looking at what the social consensus was tagging each book with. The hardest book was *V.*, it was not my favorite for the same reasons it is both exalted and scorned; so it was the hardest to tag.

I thought of how tagging would be similar to cataloging and realized some of the inherent problems with choosing descriptions. Describing what a book means varies from person to person much like describing color-no two persons see color the same. When I viewed what the LC subject headings were for some of my books, I found that I was disagreeing with the LC. One of my books-*The Invisible Dragon, Four Essays on Beauty*-has only a one word subject heading: aesthetics. My tagging for this book will give you an idea of the difference: "talk, beauty, art, art criticism, academic art, Foucault, Mapplethorpe, Caravaggio, Christ in art, meaning vs. beauty, space, academics vs. entrepreneur, art world, commercialism, truth."

Another book I entered, *On Photography*, was listed by the LC as 'photography, artistic.' This is pretty far off the mark as this book is about photographic theory and criticism, and the author

is not a photographer. At the same time, *Candide* is satire and philosophy more than it is politics and governments. I can't place all the blame on the LC, as there is a disclaimer from www.librarything.com that says the following concerning the subject headings and all 'green' text for that matter: "Green text is "calculated" text. Calculated text is provided when your own data is absent, and is either based on other columns in your catalog (eg., the "summary" field) or from books in other members' libraries (eg., Dewey, LCC and subjects)."

I am sure this issue comes up a lot and I want to assume, but I could be wrong, that libraries/catalogers may add their own descriptions in addition to what the LC has listed when inputting the books into the library OPACs. That said I have also heard many times the words 'cataloging rules' and how they are to be dreaded. I am most interested to learn more and yet I feel this exercise would have been more fun if those in the class could share their libraries with each other and thus share what for most-and here I am assuming again-is a passion for books.

Here is my librarything address: <http://www.librarything.com/catalog/fuzzypetrock>