



From Collections to Connections:
Turning Libraries “Inside-Out”

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Let's Refresh Your Home Library!

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***Abstract:** This summer a new Hungarian website, Rukkola was launched that helps you renew your home library for almost free. If you have a book that you don't need, you can upload and show it to the users of Rukkola, and if somebody marks that they would like to get your book, it's your task to send it to them. In exchange for your sending the book, you get points that provide you with the opportunity of claiming new books from other users. So, with this website you can renew your home library by paying only the postage of the books you sent. This new emerging service - as a new source of book procurement - means a new challenge for libraries.*

A questionnaire was elaborated and made available on Rukkola website in the middle of September. 659 questionnaires were filled in and returned. We tried to find answers to the following questions:

- *Who are the users of this website?*
- *What kind of books do they usually claim, and besides Rukkola, what other sources they use to get books?*
- *Have their book-buying and library-visiting habits changed since they are using Rukkola?*

Data show that such sites are real competitors of libraries. Most users claimed that they don't visit libraries as often as before since they registered to Rukkola. They also spend less on books.

I also compared the answers of these questions with the data of the users of the biggest Hungarian social website for booklovers, named Moly.hu.

Keywords: Rukkola.hu, Moly.hu, web2.0, bookchanging, Hungary.

Introduction

The theme of my research is the Rukkola.hu book-changing website, which launched summer of 2012 and since that revolutionized the life of the Hungarian booklovers.

The new, innovative idea is a private initiative, but now so many publishers are helping to the editors of the site. The Rukkola.hu is a very rapidly growing website. The statistics show that 81 days after the site-start it has already 11,100 users; it is a big when we watch that how small country is Hungary. In that time 81,000 books were available on the site and 54,000 had a new owner. In the initial period the editors did not receive money for their work, but with 110 days after the site-start the advertising spaces appeared. So the website with thousands users became a profitable company.

It is not the first project, in which people can swap their books. There was a big event in Budapest so-called Book-changing market. You could offer there your unnecessary books and bring from there news. The value of the books was not important only the numbers. The remaining books were given to a small school library.

But the movements on the internet are most important for us. There is a big international website what named BookCrossing.com¹. In this system all of the books have a special ID number, what you must glue in the book, because with this number will the next owner identify it. After that you must give a book to somebody you know or with who you get to know in the site, or you can leave a book somewhere in the city, on a bench, in a cinema, in a coffee shop, where somebody can find that. Everybody who meet with book and own it for a little time mark it on the site, so everybody can follow the adventures of the book. Daniele Dalli and Matteo Corciolani made a research about the communities of the site and they got that result BookCrossing is able to transform the market and the habits of the users, at least in a moderate, smooth and non-radical way (Dalli & Corciolani, 2008).

We have a Hungarian version of the "BookCrossing game" what named "Veszíts el egy könyvet"² (Lose a book!). The essential of this site is the same like the BookCrossing, but mother site of this is a Könyvtár.hu,

¹ Website: <http://www.bookcrossing.com/>

² Website: <http://veszitsel.konyvtar.hu/>

which is operated by the Hungarian National Széchényi Library, so in this project libraries undertook a significant role. But it is a small thing when we watch next to the Rukkola.hu, because the Hungarian people left only a fragment of those books what they want to change in the new site. So this new emerging service - as a new source of book procurement - means a new challenge for libraries and for its catalogue (Spiteri, 2012).

The Operation of the Rukkola.hu

How the Rukkola.hu works? If you have a book you do not need, you can upload and show it to the other users of Rukkola.hu, and if somebody marks that they would like to get your book, it is your task to send it to them. So with this website you can renew your home library by paying only the postage of the packages you sent. We must make it clear we are speaking about paper books, not about e-books. So the exchanging happened in a virtual space but not with electronic books. There are some rules concerning which books can you put on the site: It must be intact, complete and original, so the users can not submit homemade copies.

In exchange for your sent book, you get points that provide you with the opportunity of claiming new books from other users. In the site is a category to the most popular, emphasized book, which more than 25 people want to claim. If you put on the site a book like this you get more point. You can see the point system of the site in the 1st table.

Table 1. The point system of the Rukkola.hu

Activity	Points
Claiming one book	5 points
Putting one book on the site	1 point
Giving one book to somebody	4 points
Putting popular book on the site	2 points
Giving one popular book to somebody	8 points

It is very difficult to classify the Rukkola.hu because it is neither a classical website nor it is not a typical Web 2.0 site either. We cannot leave a comment, upload files or record any data. But the administrators only ensure the framework of the site, it does not function without that the users mark what they want to have or give (O'Reilly, 2005). The Rukkola.hu has a "brother website" called Moly.hu, which is a typical Web 2.0 site and the most popular Hungarian social website for booklovers. These two sites are connected and the data of the books come from the Moly.hu, so we can add content about the books (comments, ratings, tags) in that page. The other question is that: is the Rukkola.hu a social website? Maybe yes and maybe not. We cannot follow activities of other users and leave a comment, so in the site we cannot discuss with each other, even so there is a big community behind a site, and therefore Rukkola.hu is often referred to as a social website. It is because the editors are using the biggest social websites (Facebook and Twitter) in a very professional way. The personal relationships between the users form mostly here and in e-mails, because they coordinate the hanging of the books in that way.

Problem Statement

We made a research among the users of the site. A questionnaire was elaborated and made available on the Facebook page of Rukkola.hu between 15th and 21st September. 659 questionnaires were filled in and returned. We tried to find answers to the following questions:

- Who are the users of this website?
- What kind of books do they usually claim, and besides Rukkola.hu, what other sources they use to get books?
- Have their book-buying and library-visiting habits changed since they are using Rukkola.hu?

We also compared the answers of these questions with the data of the users of the Moly.hu (Audunson and Tóth 2012).

Demographic Variables

The users of the Rukkola.hu website are mostly women (86%). The data is the same about the Moly.hu users too. In that website the female respondents are in a majority with 83.4%. 290 replier of the Rukkola.hu users

are between 21 and 30 years and the average age is 28 years. The youngest respondent is 12, while the oldest is 71 years old. The average age among the users of the Moly.hu is 27.4 years, and there the youngest respondent was 12 years old and the oldest is 71 years old too. The most of the Rukkola.hu users (35%) are living in the capital or in its surroundings; it is the same in the case of the Moly.hu users too, because 40% of them are living there. The repliers of both sites are highly educated.

Most of the Rukkola.hu users (66%) are using the Moly.hu too. So we can state that there is a stable layer, which loves books and reading, but gets with it and use the internet for book connection activities.

The Habits of the Users

The respondents have big home libraries, but they do not often read old books from there, because the Rukkola.hu website changed their selecting habits. 46% of the Rukkola.hu users said that they have more than 500 books at home, but we had a question to them: "Since you are a member of Rukkola.hu, from where do you get your books?" They had to mark in a five-point scale how often they choose a book what they want to read from the mentioned sources, where the 1st point meant "never" and the 5th meant "always". The average of the answers can be seen in the 2nd table. In 2010 the Moly.hu users got this question too. The data show that to them almost all of the alternatives were more important than to the Rukkola.hu users. The exception is the downloading from the internet, but it can be because of the intensify of e-book culture. Those people who are using the Rukkola.hu select their readings usually from those books what they claimed from the site.

Table 2. Captions for figures should be below the figure

	Moly.hu users (2010)	Rukkola.hu users (2012)
I select it from my own library	4.05	3.71
I borrow from a library	3.43	2.71
I borrow from a friend/family member	2.94	2.82
I buy it in a bookstore or second-hand bookshop	3.94	3.08
I buy it on the internet	3.44	2.64
I download it from the internet	2.12	2.37
I read what I claimed from Rukkola.hu	-	4.12

The Rukkola.hu users buy and borrow fewer books than the members of the Moly.hu, and they answered that they also spend less money on books than before and aside from the Rukkola.hu website they do not use the internet to obtain readings. Most of the respondents usually do not usually download e-books and do not buy books in web stores. 55% answered they pay less while 19% do not pay money at all for books since they use this website. So the rate of the people whose book-buying habits changed is very high.

Data show that such sites are real competitors of libraries. 58% of the Rukkola.hu users are members of at least one library. It is not an outstanding value but presumably higher than among the Hungarian average. Only 31% of the respondents answered that they visit library less often than before. Even though the most users, 442 of the 659 claimed that they are visiting libraries as often as before since they registered to the Rukkola.hu website. On the contrary 173 of them are not members of any single library, so when they selected the answer "as often as before" they thought that "not previously and not now".

The users of the Rukkola.hu seem very single-minded. From the books of the site mainly they try to claim what they have wanted to read for a long time. It is the most important point to the 79% of the respondents. If you claim a book and after reading you do not want to keep it you can put it back to the site. I asked the users about that how often they put back books: most of them (55%) never put back that what he or she claimed previously. So the users claimed usually only what they really want and need to have. It can be caused by that most of the users do not or only sometimes find a new and unknown literature through Rukkola.hu. As you can see in the 1st figure my results are very similar to the Moly.hu. While that website is an important information source to the users, the Rukkola.hu does not have this function.

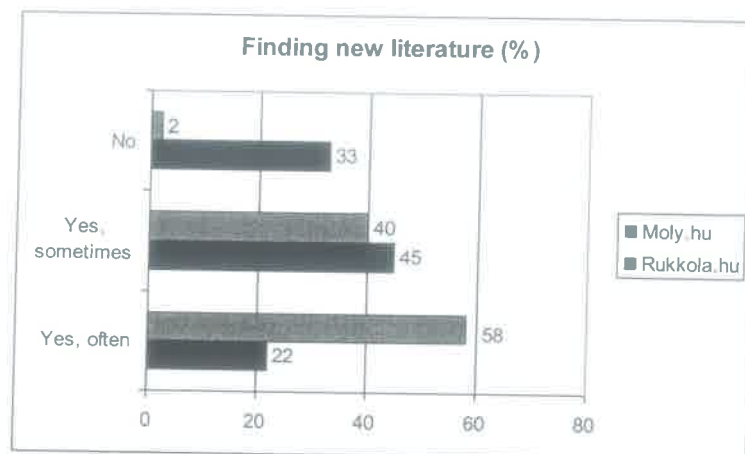


Figure 1. How often do people find new literature on the Rukkola.hu and the Moly.hu

Other Possibilities of the Site

The members of the Rukkola.hu usually claim contemporary and classic novels, but on the site are many school books too. I made a small overview with one booklist from the Deák Ferenc High School (Pécs) and must to ascertain that a student from the 1st, 2nd or 3rd class do not need to buy school books because they can claim everything from the Rukkola.hu, and the students of the 4th class can save significant amount of money by using this site. I did not find only the language course books because most of them are listed as emphasized book. Learning languages is a very important thing to the Hungarian book lover layer, but it is very expensive.

The site gives a big chance also to writers who published their first book or are not famous in the book market. Good example is György Horváth who propagates his book titled *Estvér* in the site and until now he put 161 copies of that to the site. Most of the Rukkola.hu users know his name and his book now, so we can say that it can be used for marketing purposes.

Conclusion

The users of the Rukkola.hu are very similar to the members of the Moly.hu, and most of them are registered to both sites. The book-changing website has a strong effect on the book-buying and library-visiting habits, the users buying and borrowing fewer books than before. But I conducted the research in the time when the site was very young. To have a clear picture I must repeat it. In the future the impacts can become stronger or weaker. The Rukkola.hu possibly will be more important in the life of the Hungarian book-lovers, or after the magic of the novelty will have been disappeared and the unnecessary books ran out nobody will use the site. All depends on the ingenuity of the editors.

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