GIFTING TECHNOLOGIES

ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDIES OF END-USERS AND SOCIAL MEDIA SHARING

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The use of digital media, such as books, movies, music and photos is becoming ubiquitous. End-users are, to a larger extent, producers, distributors and consumers of such digital artifacts. The sharing of digital media in social networks and communities presents an interesting array of research questions. This thesis expands upon such questions.

To what extent is gifting a part of the online media sharing surge we are experiencing today? While many studies have mainly been interested in understanding why people contribute to online communities in general, this thesis takes a more situated approach and examines a number of specific online sharing services in order to understand the contextual question of “what is given to whom, how and why?” In a series of online ethnographic studies and papers this thesis articulates analytical categories, dimensions and conflicts that can be useful in describing digital gifting, and thus define, at least part of, the ground that more technical work can stand on.