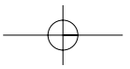

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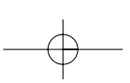

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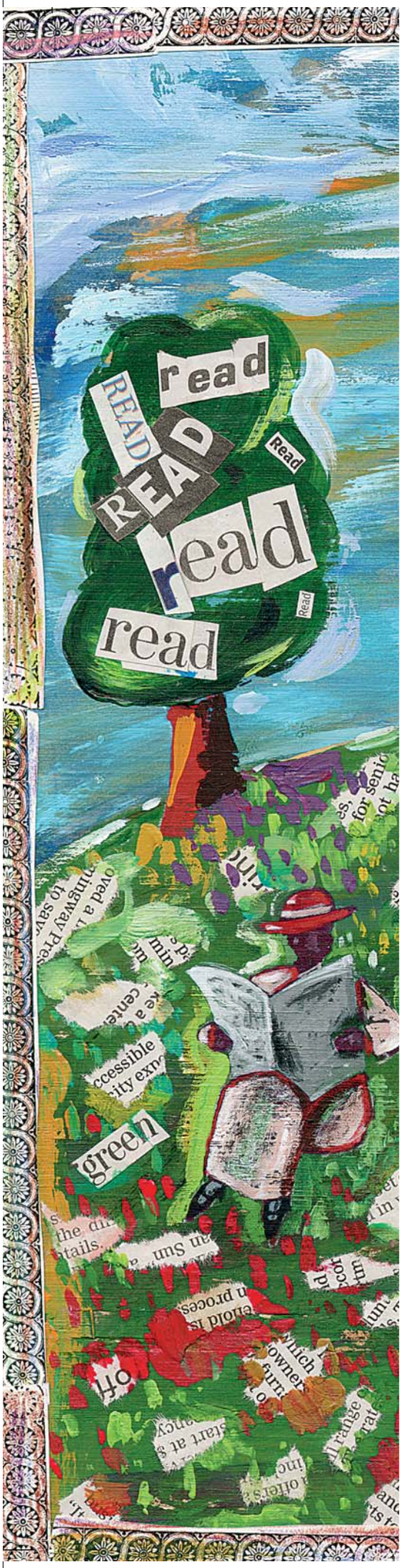

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Renée Vaillancourt McGrath
Features Editor

Kathleen M. Hughes
Managing Editor

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January/February 2005 **Vol. 44, No. 1**

The Public Library Association is a division of the American Library Association, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; www.pla.org.

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Circulation Statistics Not a Good Measure of Reading

Renée Vaillancourt McGrath's Editor's Note on what she read during her recent maternity leave (September/October 2004) got me reflecting on my own recent reading as well as on my work. As I continue to enjoy reading in this era of vast and easy access to an almost infinite diversity of books, I feel concerned professionally that, while our library's circulation has continued to rise, almost all of the increase for the past decade or so is due to audiovisual materials, which I expect to account for nearly half of our circulation this year. Graphic and video content is increasingly being delivered directly to consumers via the Web, cable, satellite, and so on, especially by commercial services, because it's more convenient and, in some cases, the only permitted access under copyright and distribution restrictions. With the recent NEA report noting a decline in reading books, and trends suggesting that audiovisual content will be delivered directly to consumers, it is not hard to project a decline of 50 percent or more in our circulation at some point in the future. A compelling case can and must be made that public libraries will continue to be an essential service in providing access to information and expression to all, especially in an era of increasing commercial control of digital content, as well as in providing a unique civic space in our communities. However, I'm concerned that it will not be as easy to compete for the discretionary time of the full spectrum of our community's residents or for resources for these evolving roles when the historically understood measure of usage, circulation, is likely to be dropping in the years ahead.—*Bill Cochran, Director, Parmly Billings (Mont.) Library; www.billings.lib.mt.us*

Talking about Books

I read with interest Renée Vaillancourt McGrath's Editor's Note in the January/February 2004 issue of *Public Libraries* regarding literacy. I was particularly interested in her comments about the "One Book" model, book discussions, and everyone reading the same book. I host two book discussions a month in our small library. I am a slow reader, and sometimes it's all I can do to read the two books for the discussions. I frequently feel frustrated that I do not have the time to read the books I want to read and breathe a sigh of relief each summer when I can read just what I want from my ever-growing list. In school, much of my pleasure in reading was lost by the need to read what my teachers felt I ought to read.

So what to do? I like the idea of a book discussion where everyone reads what they would like and then shares the bounty. At the end of each of our book discussions, we go around our circle and talk about other books we've read that month. I think I will set aside one month next year for just this: each of us will read what we wish, and bring it to the group to book talk more in-depth than the few minutes the end of the book group allows. For the past two summers, I have held monthly open book nights where we get together to just talk books, share favorite book catalogs, and even digress to talk about movies, and so on. My book club participants seem to like this.

Any other ideas you'd like to share on reading many books and freedom of choice would be appreciated.—*Carol Kubala, Adult Services Librarian, Saxton B. Little Free Library, Columbia, Conn.* ■

Public Libraries encourages letters to the editor. Letters are used on a space-available basis and may be excerpted. Preference will be given to letters that address issues raised by the magazine. Acceptance is at the editor's discretion. Send to Renée Vaillancourt McGrath, 39 Stevi Cutoff Rd. W., Ste. C, Stevensville, MT 59870; publiclibraries@aol.com.

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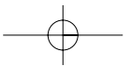

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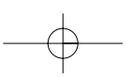

Reading Is Part of Your Job

Renée Vaillancourt McGrath
Feature Editor

Every year, the *Public Libraries* Advisory Committee decides on a theme for the January/February issue. This year's theme of readers advisory was suggested by Mary K. Chelton, professor at the Graduate School of Library and Information Studies at Queens College/CUNY and long-time readers advisor, after the success of the YALSA-sponsored preconference on readers advisory at the PLA conference in Seattle last year. The excellent essay by Ursula LeGuin ("Genre: A Word Only a Frenchman Could Love") that is featured in this month's Book Talk column contains the text of LeGuin's speech from that conference.

As any review of professional library literature will reveal, there are many ways to spell readers advisory. Sometimes it's capitalized, sometimes it includes an apostrophe before the s and sometimes after. Without trying to make a decision about what is the "best" or most appropriate way to spell this term, the editors at *Public Libraries* (in consultation with ALA's Production Services) have decided to standardize the spelling of readers advisory (as such) in this issue except where it refers to a title.

We're sure you will agree that the spelling of the term is far less important than the services that libraries provide in this area. We received many excellent manuscripts to consider for this special theme issue, including several that we were not able to include. Two of these articles were particularly noteworthy, and though we don't have space to include the full text in this issue, I would like to mention some of the unique ideas and services they outlined.

The staff of the Koelbel Public Library in Centennial, Colorado, offers book talks for library staff and the public (not just for teens) on such themes as "Books I Love" (for Valentine's Day), "Breathtaking Fiction," and Mother's Day. Librarians JoAnne Pulcino and Susan Ciazza shared these other services that the Koelbel Public Library has to offer:

- a brown bag lunch series featuring booktalks on "Cooking Up Murder" (culinary mysteries), "Cool Summer Reads," "Strength of Spirit in Fiction," "Religious Writers around the World" (nonfiction titles), and "Truly Spectacular Books on Tape";
- readers advisory for audiovisual materials, including the solicitation of written feedback on the narrators of audiobooks (which many listeners agree can make or break the story);
- booklists in notebooks at the readers advisory desk (including the popular "Nonfiction Books That Read Like Fiction") and a pamphlet that lists staff favorites;
- readers advisory displays such as "the scene of the crime," featuring mystery booklists and materials set off from the surrounding area by eye-catching yellow crime scene tape;
- readers advisory services on their **library district's Web site** (www.arapahoelibraries.org), including a space for patrons to suggest titles for the library to purchase;
- a regularly updated "coming soon" list that allows patrons to place holds on titles that the library has on order; and
- a local author reception in which up to twenty authors sign and sell their books at tables set up in the library.

Holly Hibner and Mary Kelly shared ideas from the Salem-South Lyon District Library in Michigan. Some of the readers advisory services they offer include:

- loading a cart with adult materials that might be of interest to parents and wheeling it into the youth services department during story time. The librarians at Salem-South Lyon District Library even offer to retrieve specific items from other areas of the library for parents during these programs;
- carrying tablet PCs while assisting patrons in the stacks, which allows them ready access to online readers advisory tools;
- inviting verbal "book reports" from patrons on titles that they've read—they welcome feedback on readers advisory suggestions even when the patron didn't like the book; and
- publishing a loved it/hated it column in the local newspaper in which two librarians debate the merits of a particular title (à la Ebert and Roeper).

Hibner and Kelly also recommend reading book reviews, paying attention to patrons', friends', and family members' opinions about books, and watching *Oprah, Today,* and *Good Morning America* to keep current on what books are hot. They suggest asking patrons to provide a movie rating (G, PG, PG-13, or R) for the types of books that they are looking for in order to help determine their reading tastes. And finally, they warn against being judgmental. The task of the readers advisor is to provide suggested titles that the patron might enjoy, not those that the librarian thinks patrons should read, necessarily.

This point hit home for me when I read the article "Romancing Your Readers" by John Charles and Cathie Linz, (on page 43 in this issue). Although I wouldn't consider myself a literature snob, I don't think I've ever read a romance novel. After reading Charles and Linz's article I saw that there is more to this genre than I realized, and decided to check out one of their recommended titles from my local public library. I have to admit that I approached the circulation desk with some trepidation at the thought of what the staff would think of me (a librarian!) reading romance novels. I am grateful to Charles and Linz for making me aware of this subtle prejudice that may have interfered with my ability to be a good readers advisor.

Genre prejudice is the fear behind the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee's recommendation against labeling in its *Intellectual Freedom Manual,* which is currently being revised. Caryn Katz challenged this recommendation at the PLA Board

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According to Plan

Clara N. Bohrer

The Public Library Association's strategic plan places a high priority on training and knowledge transfer, with a strong emphasis on developing resources and providing continuing education opportunities that support planning initiatives.

As part of this long-term effort, PLA solicited feedback from library managers after publishing *Planning for Results: A Library Transformation Process* in 1998. It became clear that librarians wanted an updated planning model that addressed challenges twenty-first-century libraries would face, along with simplified and streamlined processes for achieving results.

PLA responded by publishing *The New Planning for Results: A Streamlined Approach* in 2001. PLA used this as the basis for a series of planning and resource management manuals. Together these resources are called the Results series, and they have led to national recognition for PLA as a source of planning tools and professional development for library staff and trustees.

We each serve a unique population with varying circumstances and needs. We all face one constant, however: how to most effectively meet service priorities with the resources we have. The Results series provides tools, knowledge, and encouragement that libraries—no matter what their size, service goals or budget—can use to improve their performance.

The series currently includes *Managing for Results: Effective Resource Allocation for Public Libraries, Staffing for Results: A Guide to Working Smarter,* and *Creating Policies for Results: From Chaos to Clarity.*

All titles share three important characteristics:

- Each focuses on developing policies, procedures, and practices that help libraries carry out their mission and service priorities. The series assumes that libraries have already defined overall goals, so each book is free to concentrate on improving performance.
- The books are written as how-to manuals, and their hands-on approach is intended to provide useful information that can be applied to each library's local circumstances.
- Books in the series include consistent messages and use similar vocabulary, organization, and methodology. They are intended to work together but can stand alone so you can begin with any title in the series.

PLA is expanding the Results series and plans to publish two titles a year. Upcoming books include *Technology for Results* by Diane Mayo (formerly known as *Wired for the Future*) (winter 2005); *Fund-Raising for Results* by Susan Kent and Rolly Kent (summer 2006); *Assessing for Results* by Rhea Rubin (winter 2006); *Managing Facilities for Results* by Cheryl Bryan and Ruth O'Donnell (summer 2006); and *HR for Results: The Right Person for the Right Job* by Paula Singer and Jeanne Goodrich (winter 2007).

Sandra Nelson serves as senior editor for the series. Sandra helps assure the high degree of continuity and quality that is a PLA priority. She works directly with authors who are selected because of their ability to present information that can be used by library managers who have varying levels of experience and work in communities with unique needs and challenges. In addition, an advisory committee of librarians and subject matter experts works with Sandra to develop each book's conceptual framework and react to the draft manuscript. Advisory committee members also field test processes and workforms, if necessary.

In addition, PLA offers educational workshops that support the Results series, including The New Planning for Results, Staffing for Results, and Managing for Results. Currently, ninety-seven trainers in twenty-nine states are available to help libraries learn more about the process of planning. In early 2005, library managers will be able to use a database available through **PLA's Web site** (www.pla.org) to locate trainers for specific titles and regions of the country.

PLA's first two eLearning courses are based on the Results series. Creating Policies for Results and The New Planning for Results are the most interactive eLearning offered by ALA at this time. The courses have been well received because they are immediately available, can be fit into any schedule, and don't require travel. They are another example of PLA's own planning process and commitment to delivering regional and local continuing education opportunities. I encourage you to try one of these eLearning courses and see the benefits for yourself.

The Results series is the top-selling book series developed by an ALA division. Almost 22,000 copies are in public libraries around the country. It's clear that librarians and trustees are committed to improving their libraries and have turned to PLA for assistance.

We all measure performance and progress by what we achieve from our efforts. The Results series offers a blueprint and toolkit with proven methods and ideas that any library can use to successfully move in the direction of its goals. Go to PLA's Web site for more information about the series, and begin today to achieve greater value from your planning efforts and for the community you serve. ■

Clara N. Bohrer, West Bloomfield Library, 4600 Walnut Lake Rd., West Bloomfield, MI 48323-2557; bohrercn@wblib.org. She is currently reading *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell* by Susanna Clarke, *The Price of Government: Getting Results We Need in an Age of Permanent Fiscal Crisis* by David Osborne and Peter Hutchinson, *I Am Charlotte Simmons* by Tom Wolfe, and *The Snack Thief* by Andrea Camilleri.

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of Directors Meeting (II) at the 2004 ALA Annual Conference in Orlando, and I agree that the benefits of genre labeling outweigh the costs. Although some readers may avoid certain books because they have a genre label, and other may never branch out from their preferred genres, most patrons appreciate being steered towards categories of books that they might enjoy.

Many readers advisory resources are mentioned in this special issue of *Public Libraries*. One of the favorites of the staff at the Koelbel Public Library is *The Traveler's Reading Guide: Ready-Made Reading Lists for the Armchair Traveler,* edited by Maggy Simony (Checkmark Books, 1994), which they use to suggest nonfiction and, especially, fiction titles related to various places that patrons are planning to visit.

NoveList (www.epnet.com/public/novelist.asp), **Genreflecting** (www.genreflecting.com), **What Do I Read Next** (www.gale.com/servlet/ItemDetailServlet?region=9&imprint=000&titleCode=GAL10&type=4&id=111002), and the **Fiction_L** electronic discussion list (www.webrary.org/rs/FLmenu.html) all are mentioned by several contributors to this issue as favorite readers advisory online resources. Librarian Helena Travka (who served as a referee to review one of the manuscripts submitted for this issue) also recommends **Overbooked** (www.overbooked.org), formerly known as Book Links, which is a volunteer project led by Ann Chambers Theis, collection management administrator at the Chesterfield County (Va.) Public Library. It includes author Web pages, annotated lists of recommended fiction and nonfiction, themed booklists, feature titles lists, and Author Connections—a space for authors to recommend their books to readers; and **Readers Advice** (www.readersadvice.com), which provides extensive genre (and subgenre), author, and series indexes as well as readers advisory tips and sources.

Interestingly, both of the contributing editors of our technology columns (Steven M. Cohen of Internet Spotlight and A. Paula Wilson of Tech Talk) suggested that the OPAC offers great possibilities as a readers advisory tool if patrons could be allowed to post reviews of books that could be accessed when readers pull up an item in the catalog. OPAC vendors, take note!

Based on the suggestion of Nann Blaine Hilyard, a member of the *Public Libraries* Advisory committee (and co-contributing editor of the Perspectives column), beginning with this special theme issue, *Public Libraries* will be including recommended reading from our authors and columnists in their contributor's notes.

Rochelle Logan, associate director of support services at the Douglas County Libraries in Castle Rock, Colorado, who also served as a referee to review a manuscript that was recently submitted to *Public Libraries,* includes her "favorite book this month" in her e-mail signature file. She got the idea from Nancy Pearl, former executive director of the Washington Center for the Book at the Seattle Public Library, who included reading recommendations on her voice mail message. Pearl, who is also the author of *Book Lust: Recommended Reading for Every Mood, Moment, and Reason* (Sasquatch Books, 2003) and the model for the **librarian action figure** (www.mcphee.com/laf), retired in August of 2004. She is mentioned by several contributors to this issue in honor of her tireless efforts to promote books and reading (see the November/December 2003 issue of *Public Libraries* for a Book Talk interview with Pearl).

The Readers Advisory Team at the Koelbel Public Library in Colorado: standing (from left to right): Padma Polepeddi, Midge Trueman, Joel Poppelton, Susan Ciazza; seated: Maggie Goodman, and JoAnne Pulcino

Sadly, several contributors to this issue bemoaned the fact that they don't have much time to read for pleasure anymore. The articles and columns in this special issue of *Public Libraries* clearly demonstrate the importance of readers advisory as one of the fundamental services offered by public libraries. In order to provide good readers advisory services, librarians must read. It should not be considered inappropriate to read (yes, for pleasure) in between serving patrons at the reference desk, or during lulls at the circulation desk. While many of us roll their eyes when people say that, as librarians, we must get to read a lot of books, *people expect us to read (on the job)*! Patrons who see librarians reading are more likely to ask them for book recommendations. And librarians who read are more likely to be able to recommend good books. So as soon as you finish reading this special issue of *Public Libraries,* put down the journal and pick up a good book (then tell someone about it)! ■

Written August 2004. Contact Renée Vaillancourt McGrath, features editor, at 39 Stevi Cutoff Rd. W., Ste. C, Stevensville, MT 59870; publiclibraries@aol.com. She is currently reading *Inquiring Mind: A Semiannual Journal of the Vipassana Community*.

Self-Service Readers Advisory

Keddy Ann Outlaw

Some library customers are not inclined to ask staff for help in finding good books to read. Yet there are plenty of self-service techniques librarians can use to point out good books to customers, including readers advisory corners, signage, and bulletin boards.

Public libraries with dynamic readers advisory (RA) Web sites are serving customers well. Book covers, reviews, and reading lists are revealed with the click of a mouse. In most cases, the capability to reserve suggested titles is just as easy. What about customers who do not (gasp!) use the Internet regularly? Wouldn't it be great if their walk around your library proved just as fruitful for reading suggestions?

Where to start with such a concept? How about creating a reader's corner or RA bookshelf? Though RA these days includes nonfiction as well as fiction, when most customers ask for a good book, they mean a novel. So the best place for a reader's corner is probably near the fiction collection. Pull out the *Fiction Catalog, What Mystery Do I Read Next?,* Nancy Pearl's *Book Lust,* and other bibliographies, and move them to your new RA shelf or carrel. Make signs inviting customers to "look for a good book" here. Customers who would never dream of asking a busy staff person for a reading recommendation will feel more comfortable helping themselves in this manner. But these familiar reference tools are only the beginning.

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A Checklist for Improving Your Readers Advisory Practice

- Keep a reader's notebook. List your favorite books with short annotations (this will help you remember all the good books you have read!).
- Write book reviews for your library or local publications—this will help you learn to put a book's appeal into words.
- To learn more about great authors and their works, listen to **National Public Radio's Writer's Almanac** (also available as daily e-mail from www.writersalmanac.org).
- Collect reading lists.
- Create a reading list notebook for customers to use and subdivide by reading interest.
- Customize reading lists with library holdings.
- Post a few short reading lists on a bulletin board near the fiction or popular nonfiction.
- Establish a recommended reading bulletin board.
- Design a recommended reading form for customers to fill out (including the author, title, and why they like the book).
- Invite staff to fill out recommended reading forms.
- Interview local celebrities about their favorite books; feature the results in posters, displays, and news releases.
- Create a readers advisory station or reader's nook, where customers can use RA reference materials in or near the fiction section.
- Create read-alike bookmarks.
- Post read-alike bookmarks or flyers in the fiction shelves (If You Like Grisham . . . in the Grisham area, and so on.)
- Post award-winner lists in the appropriate fiction areas (Edgar, Spur, and so on).
- Make signs featuring quotes from favorite novels.
- Shelve a few books face out so the covers attract readers.
- Ask all staff for display ideas.
- Create an award for the best display idea of the year.
- Display idea: group books by color (great green books, hot pink reads, and so on)
- Display idea: group books by first name (A My Name is Alice, Marys Who Write Mysteries, and so on).
- Display idea: group books by size (huge and wonderful books, tiny treasures, and so on).
- Display idea: authors with pseudonyms (Chesney/Beaton, Roberts/Robb, and so on).
- Highlight oldies but goodies by creating a display of bestsellers from another date ten, twenty, or thirty years ago.
- Celebrate authors' birthdays with small displays of their books.
- Use Chases' Calendar of Events to find unusual display themes.
- Post as many bestseller lists from various sources as you possibly can.
- Make sure customers (as well as staff) have access to all book review periodicals.
- Subscribe to **BookPage** (www.bookpage.com), a monthly review magazine.
- Ask local book clubs to share their reading lists; post these lists for all to see.
- At the end of the year, ask customers to nominate their favorite fiction and nonfiction books published that year; collect results to post in the library or online.
- Create a survey asking customers what books they would take to a desert island.
- Revisit favorite novels while weeding or shelving fiction.
- Order extra copies of your favorite books so you can recommend them more often.
- Read a few titles in genres outside of your usual reading tastes.
- Put a sign on your reference or information desk inviting customers to ask for a good book.

Readers Advisory Special Interest Groups

Nancy Fredericks

Have you ever had the pleasure of entering a video store and finding a clerk who actually knows and watches many of the movies in the store? Not just the horror flicks, but a wide variety of films? When you ask them about a particular movie, they are able to give you useful information, not just blurbs from the box. Once you develop a relationship with this clerk, he or she may be able to recommend movies to your tastes. Wouldn't it be wonderful for library customers to receive the same level of service from the library when they come in to select books?

The art of recommending the right book for the right mood is not taught in library school. Sometimes in the rush to master new software, automation systems, and other technology, librarians don't take the time to develop their readers advisory skills. Acquiring these skills does not require speed-reading the entire library collection. Librarians can become familiar with a wide array of books by reading book reviews in professional and commercial journals; utilizing databases, such as Gale's What Do I Read Next? and Ebsco's NoveList; and organizing an RA special interest group. A group of Florida librarians in the Tampa Bay area decided to get together and establish a group to develop and improve their readers advisory skills.

The Tampa Bay Library Consortium (TBLC) Reader's Advisory Special Interest Group (RASIG) was inspired by the Adult Reading Round Table of Illinois (ARRT), which was founded in 1984 to promote readers advisory service and fiction collections in public and school libraries.[1] RASIG shares ARRT's goals. Like ARRT, RASIG offers workshops and a wide variety of programs to library staff.

The first step in establishing the special interest group was contacting the area library consortium, TBLC, and requesting a liaison. Karen Wilber, continuing education coordinator, enthusiastically took on the role. An avid reader, Wilber was instrumental in establishing the special interest group's discussion list and weblog, which are hosted on **TBLC 's Web site** (www.tblc.org/goodreads). With communication tools in place, meeting times were established and news of the group began to spread.

A flyer announcing the first meeting was faxed to all TBLC member libraries. The same flyer was also e-mailed to librarians in the Tampa Bay area who had already expressed an interest in readers advisory. The e-mail encouraged librarians to forward the message to others who might be interested. A message announcing the meeting was also posted on ALIS, the **University of South Florida's School of Library and Information Science discussion list** (www.cas.usf.edu/lis/alis.html). A **RASIG discussion list** (http://lists.tblc.org/mailman/listinfo/readers-advisory) was also established. This allowed it to be listed on the **TBLC Web site** (www.tblc.org) along with other special interest groups.

At the first informal meeting, which took place in December 2001, the group discussed goals and objectives for the special interest group, which included creating a discussion list, developing a Web page or weblog of readers advisory sources, sponsoring programs to assist library staff in developing their readers advisory skills, and assisting in promotion of and participation in local programs that encourage reading. It was also decided that the group would meet quarterly, and membership would be open to all interested library personnel.

The quarterly meetings consist of a program or workshop featuring a guest speaker followed by a discussion of a preselected genre of literature. The first formal meeting took place on February 14, 2002. The guest speaker was Margo Hammond, book editor of the *St. Petersburg Times*. Hammond organizes the annual Times Festival of Reading. The festival celebrates literacy and the joy of reading through a wide variety of exciting events, including author talks and book signings, presentations by book critics and journalists, children's storytelling, and a marketplace with booksellers and exhibitors.[2] At the meeting, Hammond discussed her criteria for selecting books to be reviewed in the Sunday book section of the *St. Petersburg Times* and described the reading festival. After Hammond's presentation, the group shared readers advisory tips and tools.

RASIG continues to meet quarterly, covering such topics as:

- giving effective book talks;
- using Ebsco's NoveList and Gale's What Do I Read Next? databases effectively;
- arranging author presentations;
- marketing and promoting reading, as presented by the Barnes and Noble staff;
- selecting and purchasing graphic novels; and
- discovering tips, techniques, and resources for book discussion groups.

Genres the group discussed include mystery, romance, graphic novels, horror, African-American fiction, Christian and inspirational fiction, science fiction and fantasy, and book-to-movie tie-ins. Members of the special interest group are encouraged to bring marketing materials related to readers advisory and share programming ideas.

Members of the special interest group are encouraged to bring marketing materials related to RA and share programming ideas.

Future quarterly meeting topics include guest speakers from a local romance writers group and a discussion of local community reading projects. The membership of the group has grown from six members to more than thirty, with more than twenty different libraries represented. At the special interest group meetings, these Tampa Bay librarians explore a wide variety of genres as well as improve their readers advisory skills. Library customers benefit from their increased knowledge, just as the video store customer benefits from the personalized service the well-informed clerk provides. ■

. . . these Tampa Bay librarians explore a wide variety of genres as well as improve their readers advisory skills. Library customers benefit from their increased knowledge . . .

Nancy Fredericks is a Youth Services Librarian with the Pasco County Public Library System in Hudson, Fla.; nancyfredericks@pascolibraries.org. She is currently reading *The Gospel According to Larry,* a young adult novel by Janet Tashjian; *Founding Mothers,* an adult book by Cokie Roberts; *Ghost Sitter,* a children's book by Perri Griffin; and *The Five People You Meet in Heaven,* an adult book by Mitch Albom.

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1. Mary Constance Back, "Adult Reading Round Table Homepage." Accessed July 14, 2004, www.arrtreads.org.
2. *St. Petersburg Times* Festival of Reading Homepage. Accessed July 14, 2004, www.festivalofreading.com.

VERSO

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Librarians love to collect reading lists. Often they are stored in files or folders at the reference desk. If customers ask the right question, they may be given a reading list to consult. Why not make it easier for customers to browse through reading lists by collecting them in a binder? Organize the lists into such categories as Mystery, Romance, College Bound, Best Books of the Year, Historical, and so on. Place the binder on your RA shelf. Make sure there is room on the shelf to leave the binder open, inviting browsing. Consider adding check marks and call numbers to the lists. Also, create signage that promotes the use of interlibrary loan for titles not owned by your library branch or system. Be sure to update your reading list notebook regularly, adding and subtracting lists as needed.

Hang bulletin boards in your RA area as well. Display especially interesting reading lists or bookmarks here. Attach reviews for books of local interest. So customers don't have to get out their reading glasses, consider enlarging the font or photocopy size for these items. On a separate bulletin board, invite customers to fill out small forms recommending books they've just read. Listing author, title, and one sentence about the book is usually enough. If customers are slow to start contributing, start with staff recommendations.

Displays have become very popular and certainly invite customers to try new titles and subjects. If space is limited, even shelving a few books with their covers facing forward is an inviting technique. Sources for display ideas are endless, including Chase's Calendar of Events or the many book lists posted on the **Fiction_L Web site** (www.webrary.org/rs/FLbklistmenu.html).

Read-alike bookmarks or lists can be integrated into the collection. Attach such lists to card stock to make a three-dimensional sign. Display the John Grisham read-alike list right next to the Grisham titles; ditto for Mary Higgins Clark and other popular authors. Customers should be able to consult or even carry these small signs around the library while they make their selections. Or make them available as bookmarks or flyers to pick up. Whatever you do, just put the reading advice exactly in the spot where customers might need it. Do the same for award lists—Pulitzers, Edgars, the Spur Awards, and others. Display this information in such a way that it is easy and ready to use. Once you start doing this, don't be surprised if you get requests for further read-alike lists. You may also get unsolicited suggestions for additions to existing lists. Invite customers to contribute however they can.

Techniques such as these should enliven your RA visibility. Customers will realize the library is very much in the business of matching readers with books. We also, of course, want to introduce interested customers to RA resources online. We need to Web talk such resources just as we do books. Prolific readers who are not very experienced in using the Internet may become more motivated to go online once they realize the wealth of materials available. If you have access to NoveList or What Do I Read Next? online, be sure and display promotional materials about these databases in your RA area. Help your customers become experts in finding their favorite reading materials.

Self-service checkout and self-service reserve shelves are increasingly prevalent in today's public libraries. Though we never want to lose the human connection between staff and customer, empowering customers to help themselves find what they need can lead to an improved level of satisfaction. Look around your library with a fresh eye. What can you do to add an element of self-service to your readers advisory practice? ■

Keddy Ann Outlaw is the Branch Librarian at West University Library, Harris County Public Library, Houston, Tex.; koutlaw@hcpl.net. She is currently reading *The Known World* by Edward P. Jones and *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri for her book discussion group. On the lighter side, she's torn through all of the titles in Alexander McCall Smith's Ladies Detective Agency series, and in the Southern-fried humorous category, she recently read and enjoyed *Bet Your Bottom Dollar* by first-time novelist Karin Gillespie.

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TALES FROM THE FRONT

Rakow Research Library of Corning Museum of Glass Now Searchable Online

Anyone interested in the art and history of glass can now turn to the Internet to review the extensive resources of the world's largest and most comprehensive library on these subjects. The Rakow Research Library of the Corning Museum of Glass, which includes an outstanding collection of primary documents as well as traditional library materials, has placed its holdings catalog online.

At **Rakow Research Library's new Web site** (http://rakow.cmog.org), a single search can retrieve information from both the library's online catalog and its index of glass-related articles. Users may search in the library catalog, the article index, or both databases simultaneously, including holdings in all formats.

A tutorial is available at the site to assist users. Anyone with additional questions may call the library's reference team at (607) 974-8849, rakow@cmog.org, or go to www. cmog.org.

"It has always been our mission to make our collections as accessible as possible," said Patricia Rogers, head of the library. "This new online site allows researchers located anywhere in the world to explore our resources."

Much of the Rakow's holdings on glass are available on microform, which can be borrowed through Interlibrary loan at local public or academic libraries. Contact ILL@cmog.org for more information.

One-Stop Web Site for Information on the Tsunami Disaster

Librarians at the University at Buffalo (UB), New York, have put together a one-stop Web site to help the public keep abreast of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster. The **Indian Ocean Tsunami Disaster site** (http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/asl/guides/indian-ocean-disaster.html) links to up-to-date news on the situation from Reuters, the United Nations, New York Times, CNN, and BBC; background information on the seismology of earthquakes and resulting tsunamis; and links to many reputable disaster-relief organizations currently working in the area, including World Vision, the United Nations, Save the Children, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

The site also offers hotline information numbers for each of the countries most seriously affected—Indonesia, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and the Maldives—and links to sites carrying up-to-date information and maps about the disaster-relief efforts in each country.

Links to the U.S. Geological Services (USGS), the USGS National Earthquake Information Center, the Global Earthquake Report (the worldwide earthquake locater), and UB's Multidisciplinary Center on Earthquake Engineering Research offer accurate data for those interested in the current geological status of the area and the state of its constructed environment.

David Bertuca, associate librarian in UB's Arts and Sciences Libraries, who helped design the site, said, "We want to offer the public a way to get fast, accurate information from a variety of national and international sources and to facilitate the involvement of individuals in the relief efforts."

"This is what librarians do," he said. "We're information specialists, and we serve the public interest by making sure the most accurate information out there is available to everyone so they can educate themselves, and make informed decisions about what to do with what they learn."

For more information, contact Patricia Donovan at pdonovan@buffalo.edu or call (716) 645-5000, ext. 1414.

Long Live Rock at the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library

Garage Rock, a six-week series where area rock bands rocked the parking garage of the main library, was recently concluded at the Toledo-Lucas (Ohio) County Public Library. Each show attracted more than one hundred mostly high school-aged fans.

Garage Rock served as an opportunity for new bands to perform before a live audience as well as providing established bands another venue. Eighteen bands performed for free during the course of the series.

"Garage Rock was a new and innovative way to attract a younger group of the community to the library, but it was also a bit of a risk," said Clyde Scoles, Toledo-Lucas County Public Library. "Teens are a tough, tough demographic to attract, yet Garage Rock attracted one hundred for (each of) six consecutive Thursday nights in the summer. Our public library hosted six live, loud, rock concerts, and that was new for us."

Preparation for Garage Rock 2005 is already underway. For more information, contact Chris Kozak, Media Relations Officer, Toledo-Lucas County Public Library, at (419) 259-5381.

Los Angeles Public Library Expands Services for the Visually Impaired

To meet the needs of an estimated 300,000 Los Angeles residents with visual disabilities (approximately 10 percent of the city population), the Los Angeles Public Library has expanded its services for the visually impaired with the opening of low-vision service centers at select locations in the central library.

The new centers feature computer stations with assistive technology that allow access to computer programs for people unable to use standard computers in the library, as well as closed-circuit TVs to enlarge print text and read text aloud.

The low-vision service centers are of particular value to

"Tales from the Front" is a collection of news items and innovative ideas from libraries nationwide. Send submissions to the contributing editor, **Jennifer T. Ries-Taggart**, Director, Seymour Library, 161 East Avenue, Brockport, NY 14420; jtaggart@libraryweb.org.

Jennifer Ries-Taggart is currently reading *Islands* by Anne River Siddons; *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln; and *The Game* by Laurie King.

adults with visual disabilities who are unable to read the books, magazines, and newspapers that provide information needed in their daily lives, as well as to those who do not have their own computers and need access to public computers for e-mail and word processing. Students with vision disabilities will now have better access to up-to-date company information and research demographics for their job searches. The blind will also benefit from the voice technology components of the equipment.

"With our new low-vision centers, the library is now able to bridge the digital divide for people with visual disabilities," said then-city librarian Susan Kent. "The centers dramatically enhance the library's commitment to enriching people's lives by providing everyone with free and easy access to information."

The low-vision service centers are in addition to the services already available to these users, such as low-vision informational and recreational materials in the form of videos, e-books, DVDs, and large type, as well as audio books.

The low-vision service centers offer closed circuit television magnifiers, Open Book (scanning and screen-reading software that converts printed text into electronic text that can be read aloud by the computer), and ZoomText (screen magnification software).

Funding for this program was made possible by a Public Library Services for People with Disabilities grant from the California State Library. For further information, visit the **Los Angeles Public Library's Web site** (www. lapl.org).

Brooklyn Public Library Receives $516,732 IMLS Grant

Brooklyn (N.Y.) Public Library (BPL) received a grant of $516,732 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) for a pilot training project called PULSE (Public Urban Library Service Education). The project, done in collaboration with the Pratt Institute School of Information and Library Science (SILS), gives students pursuing a master's degree in library science (MLS) the opportunity to experience the different career opportunities available at a major urban public library. It will also help prepare students for leadership positions and motivate them toward public librarianship. The grant helps tap students with multilingual and multicultural backgrounds who can best serve diverse urban communities such as Brooklyn. BPL currently has librarians on staff who received their MLS from SILS and offers select, on-site courses taught by BPL staff to SILS students. The new project will be an expansion of this successful partnership. BPL will nearly match funding with $417,404.

The PULSE project is a three-year collaboration consisting of elements at both BPL and SILS that started in August 2004. In effect, BPL will serve as a satellite campus offering accredited courses. Selected students started in September 2004 classes. BPL will create seven new trainee positions each year to work at flagship facilities, such as the central and business libraries. The trainees will apprentice with BPL age-level specialists and management. In the third year, trainees will select an area of concentration.

Pratt will develop a PULSE curriculum that incorporates existing and new courses for trainees and other students who want to focus their careers in a public urban library system. It will also offer a three-credit practicum consisting of a 150-hour internship at BPL in selected areas of interest, such as archives, children's services, special needs populations, Web-based services, and business library services, among others. The program will offer one student a full scholarship in each of the three years.

Inquiries about the project should be directed to the program manager, Jerome Myers, Brooklyn Public Library, Grand Army Plaza, Brooklyn, NY 11238, or send an e-mail to J.Myers@BrooklynPublicLibrary.org. Additional information may be obtained at pulse@pratt.edu or visit the **PULSE Project's Web page** (http://pratt.edu/~pulse).

Free Computer Calendar Strips

Want an easy, effective PR tool? Want a handy reminder of your library's Web site? Take your cue from the Hawaii State Public Library System. Hawaiian public libraries are offering free computer calendar strips courtesy of the Hawai'i Library Foundation. The colorful red, yellow, and white strip is designed to fit directly above the computer monitor screen or to be placed at the top of your keyboard. A total of 25,500 calendar strips were distributed statewide.

For more information, visit the **Hawaii State Public Library System's Web site** (www.librarieshawaii.org). ■

New Internet Study to Find if Internet Use Affects Public Libraries

Five years ago, a national study conducted by the University at Buffalo School of Informatics (UBSI) and the Urban Libraries Council found that increased Internet use in the United States had not produced a reduction in the public use of libraries. The study presented a new consumer model of the United States adult market for library and Internet services, one that consisted of "information seekers" who used both resources, but in different ways.

With Internet use continuing to grow by leaps and bounds, the UBSI researchers will now undertake a much larger national study to see what changes have taken place over the past five years. Data for the new study will come from a national, random digit-dialing survey of three thousand respondents throughout the country, plus an in-house questionnaire of ten thousand library patrons in five urban library systems.

The new study will be funded by a $266,881 grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Studies (IMLS), which also funded the first study. George D'Elia, professor in the department of information and library studies at UBSI and principal investigator on the first study, will also lead this study. He will work with Melanie Kimball and Christopher Brown-Syed, UBSI assistant professors of information and library studies.

The first study, which received the 2003 Jesse H. Shera Award for Distinguished Public Research from the American Library Association's Library Research Round Table, was published in 2002 in the *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*.

Practical Perspectives on Readers Advisory

Nann Blaine Hilyard

I became a librarian because I like books, I like people, and I like to connect them. From my first day on the job in a small Texas public library I have been recommending books, talking about books, and wishing I had more time to read.

Our August 2004 vacation was an Elderhostel trip to Vancouver, British Columbia. Our thirty travel companions were a mix of interesting folks who have made this and our thirteen previous Elderhostel trips so enjoyable. When I got home, I e-mailed our new friends a list of a dozen books that had come up in our conversation. Yes, even on vacation, I'm doing readers advisory!

This column includes perspectives on readers advisory from long-time practitioners as well as new librarians. It concludes with a thought-provoking essay about fostering an environment for reading.

Read, Read, and Read Some More

Lisa Powell Williams
Reference Librarian, Moline (Ill.) Public Library;
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"Read, read, and read some more" was a typical weekend homework assignment for my daughter during second grade. It's also excellent advice for readers advisory librarians.

Fresh out of library school, with reading tastes vacillating between library lit and Danielle Steel, I knew I needed to stretch into the art form that is readers advisory. How could I become a better readers advisor? Several years and many patron transactions later, I've found several practices that bear repeating.

Write, write, and write some more. Keep a journal or a calendar noting what is read each week and the parallels or quirky disjointed threads that weave authors and titles together, leading readers from one read to the next.

Not enough time to read it all? Then *listen, listen, and listen some more*. Listening to an audio novel has provided exposure to tales I'd never sit and read through. This has often been a boon at the desk, when patrons have asked for a good listen, as well as good story. One caveat: a narrator's take on a tale can make or break an audio read.

Listen to the chatter of colleagues in the staff room. Who's laughing hysterically while reading? Who's almost sobbing with a tearjerker? Whose mind is reeling from contemplating alternative universes? What subtleties link the books they love? Characters, place setting, use of language? Invite staff to share their favorites in an annual list.

Try, try, and try some more. Challenge yourself to read five books in a particular genre. Having been assigned to purchase Westerns one year, I delved into learning the Spur Award winners, awarded by the **Western Writers of America** (www.westernwriters.org/spur_awards.htm), and reading Western fiction, which isn't necessarily the gun-slinging Western of yore. If not for this exercise, I'd have missed out on reading JoAnn Mapson, the winner of a Booksellers 76 award (2002) for *Bad Girl Creek,* a novel featuring a strong Western woman and a Western farm setting, rather than a traditional Western.

Visit, visit, and visit some more. Attend book fairs and visit with authors. This year, the Illinois Authors Book Fair at the Illinois State Library provided the opportunity to hear and interact with Erik Larson, author of *The Devil in the White City,* and with Elizabeth Berg, who is one of my perennial favorites. I continue to take great joy in sharing their remarks from this event with patrons inquiring about their books.

Connect, connect, and connect some more. Know your community, build relationships, chat up the authors you know, invite commentary on authors with whom you are not familiar. Stretch beyond your normal reading pattern by joining a book club; key in on what members share about what resonates with particular reads.

Volunteer, volunteer, and volunteer some more. Dominican University students in readers advisory classes have sought input from practitioners as part of their class work. Share your insights and listen for the students' ideas as to how to enhance the vision of readers advisory in the future. Sign up to review for the Publisher's Marketing Awards, Romance Writers of America, the numerous ALA committees, or any other awards committee that provides an opportunity to read new and up-and-coming fiction. Respond to calls from library periodicals that need fiction reviewers and delve into nonlibrary lit for opportunities to stretch your reading knowledge.

Browse, browse, and browse some more. When BookExpo is held in a city near you, take the opportunity to browse the wide array of publishers who are touting their latest and greatest. Not a reality? Wander the aisles at your local independent and chain bookstores. Why are the items on display grouped together? What might work for your regular readers the next time they ask for a good read? You never know what you may be asked in a bookstore, either. I've been approached several times by patrons blending the librarian they know into another book-laden environment. My latest experience when buying additional copies of bestsellers at a local bookstore prompted the lady next to me in line to inquire if Mary Balogh's latest was among the items I was purchasing, as she couldn't wait to read it. While it wasn't, I assured her it was on our shelves and connected with a delighted patron during this chance encounter.

Skim, skim, and skim some more. If it weren't for my monthly reading of *Romantic Times Book Club,* I may never have known that Mary Balogh's *Slightly Dangerous* was tagged to be a summer hit with the historical regency romance crowd. More than once, skimming the morning newspapers or half-listening to the *Today* show before work has clued me into what

might be asked for on a given day and provided a heads-up for the foundation of tomorrow's read-alike requests. Skim what your patrons read. In my library that means I need to pay attention to *People* in addition to the *New York Times Book Review*. I am also apt to be a better readers' advisor after skimming the latest e-mail installment concerning Oprah's Book Club.

Remember, remember, and remember some more. Be aware of writers who write in more than one style. The patron who adores Nora Roberts may not be so fond of her alter ego, J. D. Robb. And the patron who swoons at *Suzanne's Diary for Nicholas* may not appreciate James Patterson's *2nd Degree*.

Try making your own READ posters—sometimes the image of a staff person with a particular title will invite conversations that otherwise would never have occurred.

Series reading can be tricky, too. Unless you've read at least one book in the series, how will you know if you really need to start at the beginning or if, by book ten, the author shares enough backstory to let the reader dive in and catch references to past adventures? Provide reader resources such as **Bookpage** (www.bookpage.com) and **Bookmarks** (www.bookmarksmagazine.com) for their reading pleasure, to stimulate interest and discussion. Do the same with bestseller lists by having them readily available in Web site or library catalog links. Offer a Bestseller Club of popular authors and order multiple copies of these authors' works. Be sure to have a Staff Recommends shelf near the new books to stimulate interest in worthy, but not necessarily blockbuster, titles.

Encourage, encourage, and encourage some more. Encourage staff to attend readers advisory training at conferences, to play with **NoveList** (www.epnet.com/public/novelist.asp), to subscribe to **Fiction_L** (www.webrary.org/rs/FLmenu.html) and delve into their archives. Challenge staff to create their own author/title read-alike lists. Try making your own READ posters—sometimes the image of a staff person with a particular title will invite conversations that otherwise would never have occurred.

When you've accomplished all this, return to the lesson of second grade—hit the shelves and voraciously *read, read, and read some more*!

Five Tips for Readers Advisors

Tracy E. Luscombe
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"Read everything you can." That is the advice I received from a senior librarian when I received my MLS a few years ago. She explained that if you read magazines, newspaper articles, and anything else in print, even if they are on topics that do not interest you, you will have a smattering of knowledge on many subjects and be able to better help patrons in their research. As I began work in public libraries I realized this also helped me to become better at readers advisory. With the budget cuts in staffing levels at libraries, and the new design of library buildings with only one or two information desks, we are all being asked to step outside our personal reading comfort zones.

As I went through all those general library science classes, I did not think that I would use that class on kiddie lit. Sure, I read the books, or at least skimmed them. Since I did not plan to be a children's librarian, I did not make a good mental note of which ones to recommend when a child asks for "a book with fairies." But at least I had that class.

In her article "We Need to Recommit to Readers Advisory Services," Cathleen A. Towey noted, "Children's librarians are trained to know their collections, beginning in library school with children's literature courses."[1] I do not remember any course listings titled "What to Recommend to Adults Who Want No Curse Words in a Book." Librarians for adult services are left on their own to learn the books available in different genres. Here are a few helpful tips.

One, go back to the opening sentence of this essay: read everything you can. Read magazines, book reviews, newspapers, book reviews, comic strips, book reviews, advertisements, and more book reviews. Even read the book reviews that have nothing to do with your area of collection development. Waiting in the doctor's office? Flip through that parenting magazine, even though you are not a parent. Waiting in line at the post office? Pick up the newspaper somebody left on the counter and read the business section. (They include business book reviews on occasion.) The obvious—read the professional library journals that float around the staff lounge; and read as many books, both older and newly published ones, as you can possibly squeeze into your busy life.

Two, take advantage of the audiobook. Not only does it familiarize you with the book's content, but it will make your commute more pleasant. I have found the audiobook is a great source for learning children's books. They are short and usually heartwarming. *Because of Winn-Dixie* by Kate Dicamillo took only a few days of running errands and trips to work, and was a delightful story. Audiobooks have become increasingly popular with patrons, and you may be expected to make recommendations for them, too. As many long-time fans of this format will tell you, the reader can make or break an audiobook. Those who have heard Jim Dale read the Harry Potter books are looking for anything he has recorded, even if they would not normally be attracted to the story line. In turn, however, pop in a tape with a reader who is too droll, or where the pace of the narration is all wrong for the story line, and you will return that set of tapes to the library very quickly. Experience has taught me that a book read by its author is often not nearly as good as one read by a trained actor. Bookmarking is a key feature that can make a difference, too. Can you turn the car off and then start right back where you left off when you turn it back on? Cassettes are usually better for this feature than the CD format.

Three, wander your local bookstore. Even if you have no intention of buying anything, you can see what is being displayed. Flip open the cover and read the flyleaf. You may not remember it exactly, but it will probably "ring bells" when someone comes into your library and asks for "that new spy novel that is out."

Four, listen to friends and strangers. What books do you hear people talking about when they are sitting at the next table in the restaurant? What have your friends and family read that they liked or hated? What are the radio DJs and the people who call in to their shows saying about new books? What are your co-workers reading over lunch? Word of mouth is still the best form of advertisement. Look what it did for *The DaVinci Code* by Dan Brown.

Five, keep lists. Start a notebook of lists, divided by genre, of books your library owns that you know something about, and have it handy at the reference or information desk. While the formal published lists, such as **What Do I Read Next?** (www.galegroup.com, available by subscription), provide some great ideas, it can be frustrating for the patron when they choose a book from this source that you directed them to, and then find that your library does not own the book or that it's not in. Even if the lists are handwritten pages and kept in a ring binder, you will have somewhere to start to help the patron when they ask about a genre you have not spent much time reading.

Readers advisory is a never-ending job for public librarians. With the right planning it can also be one of the most rewarding. Without planning, it will only be frustrating for both you and the patron. When you find what works best for you, you'll become known in your library as "the one to ask for a good book."

Real-World Readers Advisory

Lisa M. Kreutter
Reference Librarian, Clark County Public Library, Springfield, Ohio; lkreutte@ccpl.lib.oh.us

When I first began my career as a public librarian, I was under the impression that to do readers advisory properly it was necessary to read a book first in order to recommend it. Nearly five years later I am no longer under that impression. I nearly always recommend books now from a slew of sources, including Internet reading lists, electronic databases, and recommendations based on what my colleagues and I have enjoyed. Our library also has a Web page dedicated to staff picks, which helps guide patrons to books that library staff recommends. In addition, our new automated catalog, Polaris, links titles directly to recommendations from NoveList as well as linking to reviews from sources such as *Publishers Weekly,* which makes it easier for patrons to make reading selections.

With so many resources available, I no longer panic quite as much when a patron walks up to the desk and asks me to recommend a good book. After asking the standard questions of "What was the last book you read?" or "Who is your favorite author?" I often do a general Internet search, peruse the **Fiction_L archives and book lists** (www.webrary.org/rs/FLbklistmenu.html), or search electronic readers advisory databases, such as NoveList (EBSCO) or What Do I Read Next? (Gale Group).

Doing readers advisory searching is easier with fiction. It's a little harder to find, for example, a list of Bill Bryson read-alikes, but it can be done with the subscription electronic database What Do I Read Next? This database allows you to type in a title (for example, Bryson's *A Walk in the Woods*) and select subjects similar to the original title entered. Selecting subjects you want to read about then produces a list of similar titles. This is one effective way to find nonfiction books for a patron. The nice thing about What Do I Read Next? is that it includes both fiction and nonfiction sources; some other readers advisory sources deal only with fiction.

Webrary (www.webrary.org/mgplhome.html), a Web site put out by the Morton Grove Public Library, is a great source for book lists; whether you're looking for Bridget Jones read-alikes, or fiction and nonfiction that reads like *A Child Called It,* you will find it here. The smart librarians from the Fiction_L mailing list pool their collective knowledge to come up with new book lists that are current and thorough. It's also a good site to recommend to patrons.

I must admit that I rarely use print sources to do readers advisory. Perhaps this is because I am so comfortable in an electronic environment. While I occasionally glance through readers advisory books for specific genres such as science fiction or romance, I find it much easier to consult an electronic source initially. Once in a while I still use *The Whole Story: 3000 Years of Sequels and Sequences* to find the next book in a series, but I now rely primarily on the Kent (Mich.) District Library Web page's **What's Next** (www.kdl.org/libcat/whatsnext.asp) to find the next book in a series.

NoveList is a huge boon to public and school librarians everywhere. In addition to reading lists, sample book talks, book discussion information, and articles, NoveList provides great search capabilities, and a database of fiction books, including young adult, children's, and adult fiction. Whenever a patron asks for book read-alikes by an author I'm not familiar with, I usually search an electronic database such as NoveList. NoveList generally doesn't disappoint; the only thing to remember is to do a broader search initially by selecting fewer subjects to search on. I have done searches where I selected too many of the same subjects to search on and pulled up a list of only one book—the one that I was trying to find read-alikes for!

All in all, readers advisory is fun. Though it's always nice to be able to recommend a book I've actually read, more often I rely on other people's advice (whether online or in print) to recommend something. Librarians who do readers advisory should consider reading outside their preferred genre. I'm guilty of sticking to my favorite popular nonfiction books and small press fiction novels; while I know I should occasionally take in a science fiction novel or a Western, I too often do not! Reading in other genres helps expose librarians to other types of writing, as well as perhaps spark a new interest (maybe not, but who knows).

Ultimately, good readers advisory means guiding a patron to something similar to what the patron reads, but perhaps more challenging.

Ultimately, good readers advisory means guiding a patron to something similar to what the patron reads, but perhaps more challenging. I'll always be grateful to the perceptive public librarian (and my former boss!) who gently guided me away from the Sweet Valley High series that I was so fond of and put

some books by Lois Duncan in my hands during the teen summer reading program. My career is the success story of readers advisory done well.

Readers Advisory: Generation Next

Erin Smith
Youth Services Librarian, Fargo (N.D.) Public Library;
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As a newly minted children's librarian, I was taught in library school that one-on-one, staff-intensive readers advisory was something librarians in the good ole days used to stake their jobs on. Nowadays, however, readers advisory is something that many contemporary librarians, who are busy managing increasing circulation, a shrinking library staff, and technological changes, do on the fly. We find ourselves pushing a one-size-fits-all book list into a young fantasy fan's hands instead of taking the time to discover what he or she is really looking for in a book. Unfortunately, with increasing technological advances and budget cuts continuing to loom in many library futures, librarians are not going to become any less busy. So what's to be done?

Librarians should use technological advances to improve readers advisory services. As computer scientist Rob Reilly states, "I think one of the most effective services that a school or public library could offer its patrons, students, and their parents is 'readers advisory' lists. But while online databases are becoming more commonplace, the readers advisory doesn't seem to have found its way to the library's online presence."[2] Librarians and the public we serve, especially our younger customers, are becoming increasingly tech savvy. Children today are accustomed to finding information online. Thus, library Web sites can be used to introduce children to the world of print through online book discussion groups, weblogs, links to book review sites, relevant databases, and more. A growing number of libraries are incorporating great readers advisory pages into their Web sites.

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Basic library readers advisory sites include features such as online versions of book lists created by librarians, as well as links to lists of award-winning titles and other credible book lists. The Fargo Public Library currently has such a site in place. We are working to add advanced interactive features to our site. Soon we'll offer online book reviews written by librarians and by our customers, links to free online book clubs, reading-related electronic discussion lists and chat rooms, and local school summer reading lists.

In a busy world, where one-on-one readers advisory is all but impossible, an online readers advisory site that can be accessed from any Internet location is a truly desirable asset. Such a site not only extends a virtual helping hand to our young fantasy fan mentioned above, but may also bring in more customers who found us online first. Readers advisory need not be a thing of the past. Like most library services, readers advisory simply needs to evolve in order to better serve the next generation of library users.

How I'm Learning to Like Readers Advisory

Sian Brannon
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I read a lot, but I stink at readers advisory. I either don't remember or mix up author's names. I can't keep plot lines straight. Somehow I recall books I read as a teenager better than the book I read last week. However, I am learning the detailed, delicate art of readers advisory. Here's how I got started.

The old Denton (Tex.) Public Library had two service desks in the adult area. The information desk situated near fiction and the front door handled basic questions and readers advisory. Then there was the reference desk nestled between genealogy and nonfiction. I always worked at the reference desk and never had to think about readers advisory. Last year the library closed for remodeling, and we opened a new branch with one service desk. From day one, I was responsible for readers advisory. I've tried to hide behind those who used to work at the information desk while I slowly gain confidence in my readers advisory abilities.

The first thing that I found out about readers advisory was that not everyone wants to know what I like. They want something *they* will like. I naively used to think that readers advisory was basically the opinion of whomever you asked. Little did I know that some consider readers advisory to be a *science*. Second, not everyone wants to try something new (meaning: read what I like). I had to learn about different kinds of authors, and fast. I knew I didn't have time to start reading entire books from different genres.

So what did I do? I hung out in our circulation department. By checking in books every once in a while and rummaging through the carts of books prepared to go back on the shelves, I discovered what fiction authors were the most popular with the customers. That gave me a starting point. From there I could go to an online bookstore and find out what people generally bought in conjunction with those things ("Those who bought this also bought *this* . . ."), and also see the basic subjects of those books.

After getting a quick idea of what people at my library were checking out, I could expand on the overall idea of what is popular in different genres. A good place for me to learn more about genres was to ask customers inside the library for recommendations. Who knew there were so many genres out there? I had been stuck in my comfort zone of similar books for so long that I had no idea that there were more fiction genres than just mystery, romance, science fiction, and Western, which are the stickers that we put on our paperbacks. I was taken aback the first time a library customer got mad when I suggested an author she considered fantasy when she wanted sci-

ence fiction. There was another who gave me a lengthy discussion of the difference between thriller, suspense, crime, mystery, and horror. (I am still not 100 percent sure about those.)

Another big help was to ingratiate myself to the collection development librarians who purchase our fiction titles. They allowed me to look at their orders and ask questions about the authors. One of the librarians invited me to participate in a selection committee meeting where they review automatic ordering. I didn't have much input, but I started recognizing the names of series, books that have things in common, and authors who are similar to each other. I bet by now you think that I never read journals or even go to bookstores, but that is not the case. I simply have a hard time keeping them all straight.

Readers advisory was slowly taking over my brain. I snatched up any promotional materials that I could find. I scoured the What do I Read Next? database. Any time I happened upon an article about readers advisory, I tried to circulate it in my department so that others would learn, too (and then, in turn, help me). When Nancy Pearl's *Book Lust* came to my library, I was first on the hold list. People at the library put together a staff-selections display, and I was one of the first to make recommendations. I even started writing down every book I read with a note about when I read it, who wrote it, and if I liked it. I am determined to offer good readers advisory.

To be perfectly honest, I don't feel much better about my readers advisory skills now than when I first started trying to grasp it ten months ago. Although I now know what a read-alike is, I still get apprehensive when someone wants to know what books they should read if they like something else that I have never heard of. Luckily for me, there are plenty of suggested reading lists, Web sites, electronic discussion lists, and book clubs that cover the nuts and bolts. I can glean the information that I need when I need it. It's not the fastest method of readers advisory in the world, but it provides answers most of the time.

I have come to the conclusion that when it comes to readers advisory, some people have it and some people don't. Recently I heard that there are entire librarian positions dedicated to readers advisory in some public libraries. The thought makes me shudder. However, with more and more people coming to the reference desk and asking me readers advisory questions, I realize that I have to get better. Most patrons even listen patiently while I offer opinions, too. I haven't given up trying to learn more readers advisory technique. I'm open to suggestions!

The Reading Environment

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By now everyone who works with books has read, or read about, the National Endowment for the Arts' **Reading at Risk survey** (www.nea.gov/news/news04/ReadingAtRisk.html). In the foreword Dana Gioia writes, "For the first time in modern history, less than half of the adult population now reads literature, and these trends reflect a larger decline in other sorts of reading." The report goes on to state, ". . . literary participation is clearly less popular than it used to be, possibly due to competition for entertainment time and money from a range of other options, including videogames, movies, and the Internet."

Librarians, particularly those working in the area of readers advisory, should wonder if there is also competition for the time and resources readers need to *learn* about literature. Has half an hour watching CNN on the treadmill replaced a Sunday morning reading *The New York Times* and poring over the *Book Review*? Have *Access Hollywood, Entertainment Tonight,* and *E! News Live* become the primary way many

If television, the Internet, and magazines aren't promoting reading as much as other amusements, shouldn't libraries be acting to fill that void?

Americans receive their entertainment coverage? They all feature previews and reviews of television shows, movies, and, sometimes (though rarely), live theater. But how often do they feature novels, noncelebrity nonfiction, or poetry? A vast amount of entertainment information is being pushed at television viewers, Internet surfers, and magazine readers. But how often does it recognize the printed word as an entertaining and compelling aspect of contemporary culture?

If television, the Internet, and magazines aren't promoting reading as much as other amusements, shouldn't libraries be acting to fill that void? What are we doing to "push" information about books to our patrons? Libraries have coasted along, believing that our very presence says, "Reading matters. Readers matter." But *is* reading a priority in libraries? Do we spend as much time, money, and energy promoting our literature collections as we do our new wi-fi access or our cozy cafe? We make sure our new multitiered meeting rooms are wired for PowerPoint presentations, but do we insist that our architects provide room for book displays and public service desks that are conducive to conversing with patrons? Do we train our staff to make book recommendations? To help our fiction browsers find read-alikes for favorite authors? Do we make recreational reading a priority for our patrons and ourselves?

To make library usage and literary entertainment a priority for time-crunched patrons, we must promote our libraries as having a service they can't find anywhere else—because we do have a service they can't find anywhere else! It still amazes me that when patrons approach the desk wanting to find a good book to read, the number one question they ask is, "What have *you* been reading?" The reason many of our patrons come to the desk rather than relying on the Sunday paper's book section or picking up one of our bibliographies is for a personal recommendation. What they get is the best kind of value-added service. They receive a personal recommendation that's also professional and knowledgeable. Where else in town can someone go and receive free, enthusiastic help from a degreed professional with access to hundred-dollar reference books and costly subscription databases?

If we prioritize reading, if we believe promoting and providing access to literature is a primary goal of libraries, then shouldn't we also prioritize hiring and supporting staff who are themselves dedicated to the act of reading? The most effective readers advisors are the ones with the capacity to put themselves in another person's shoes. Much has been written about the readers advisory interview. The techniques, the

tricks, the tried-and-true. But no matter how by the book your questions are, if you're not a reader yourself—your patrons can tell. Who wants to get a restaurant recommendation from somebody who only reads reviews? You want to discuss your dining with somebody who eats out every once in a while. Recreational reading is such a private activity, so personal, that patrons looking for advice on what to read next must trust that their request will be respected. To tell people what you read is, in part, to tell them who you are. One of my colleagues literally takes her message to the streets, driving around town with the license plate "IMARDR2."

Recreational reading is such a private activity, so personal, that patrons looking for advice on what to read next must trust that their request will be respected. To tell people what you read is, in part, to tell them who you are.

The results of the Reading at Risk survey show that:

> literary readers are nearly three times as likely to attend a performing arts event, almost four times as likely to visit an art museum, over two-and-a-half times as likely to do volunteer or charity work, over one-and-a-half times as likely to attend sporting events, and over one-and-a-half times as likely to participate in sports activities. In fact, people who read larger numbers of books tend to have the highest levels of participation in other activities, especially arts activities.

Can we say that arts attendance and volunteering are inherently better than other activities, and therefore readers are better people than nonreaders? Probably not. Can we say that people who regularly read literature seem to be more engaged in artistic and philanthropic activities than their nonreading peers? Perhaps. Can we say that making time for recreational reading has become more challenging and the space available for book reviews and discussion in the media is dwindling? Probably. Can we say that libraries are rising to the occasion by maintaining and increasing their book budgets; creating well-designed and functional spaces for literature collections; using library programming, Web sites, display spaces, newsletters, and other publicity mechanisms to promote reading; hiring, training, and retaining readers advisory staff?

Well, can we?

Conclusion

S. N. Ranganathan's Five Laws of Library Science certainly apply to readers advisory:

- Books are for use.
- Every book its reader.
- Every reader his book.
- Save the time of the reader.
- The library is a growing organism.

Have you read any good books lately? ■

Hampton (Skip) Auld is Assistant Director, Chesterfield County Public Library, 9501 Lori Rd., Chesterfield VA 23832-0297, (804)748-1767; auldh@chesterfield.gov. He is currently reading *Naked Came the Manatee* by thirteen Miami-based writers including Dave Barry and Carl Hiassen, *Beyond Good & Evil* by Friedrich Nietzsche, *A Passionate Preference: The Story of the North Carolina School of the Arts* by Leslie Banner and Douglass Zinn, *Poetry 180: Turning Back to Poetry,* compiled by Billy Collins, and *Exception to the Rulers: Exposing Oily Polititcians, War Profiteers, and the Media Who Love Them* by Amy Goodman and David Goodman.

Nann Blaine Hilyard is Director, Zion-Benton Public Library, 2400 Gabriel Ave., Zion IL 60099; nbhilyard@zblibrary.org. She is currently reading *Dead Guy's Stuff*, the second of four mysteries by Susan Fiffer about an antiques picker in Evanston, Illinois, and *The Gothic Enterprise* by Robert Scott.

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2. Rob Reilly, "Building an Online Readers Advisory and Getting Good Reads," *Multimedia Schools* 10, no. 4 (2003): 61–63.

NCLIS Honors Libraries for Promoting Good Health

The United States National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) announced the winners for the 2004 NCLIS Blue Ribbon Consumer Health Information Recognition Awards for Libraries. Nominated by state library agencies, the awards highlight libraries that do the most to promote a healthy lifestyle.

NCLIS administered the award, providing overall direction, with a special task force of NCLIS Commissioners volunteering to organize the process and judge the entries. A list of the winners can be found at www.nclis.gov/news/pressrelease/pr2004/2004-04HealthAwardWinners.pdf.

Award winners were chosen based on the overall success of the library's consumer health information services program, with particular emphasis on the program's potential impact, innovativeness, and replicability. Winning entries will be compiled into a report of best practices in consumer health information distribution done through libraries. The report will be published by NCLIS in the fall.

Book Talk provides authors' perspectives on libraries, books, technology, and information.

Genre: A Word only a Frenchman Could Love

A Speech Given at the PLA Preconference on Genre, Seattle, February 2004

Ursula K. Le Guin

The concept of genre is a valid one. We need a method for sorting out and defining varieties of narrative fiction, and genre gives us a tool to begin the job. But there are two big problems in using the tool. The first is that it's been misused so often that it's hard to use it rightly—like a good screwdriver that's all bent out of shape because some dork tried to pry paving stones apart with it.

"Genre" is a generic word—naturally!—for "a kind or style, especially of art or literature," says the *Oxford English Dictionary,* and more specifically a term for paintings of a certain type and subject matter—"scenes and subjects of common life."

Now, "scenes and subjects of common life" nicely covers the subject matter of the realistic novel, which is often the literary equivalent of genre painting. But when the term came over into literature, for some reason it came to mean anything but the realistic novel, and was applied to fictions whose subject matter is some degrees removed from common life: Westerns, murder mysteries, spy thrillers, romances, horror stories, fantasies, science fiction, and so on. An odd reversal, but no harm in it.

The subject matter of realism is broader than that of any genre except fantasy; and realism was the preferred mode of modernism. By relegating fantasy to kiddie lit, modernist critics left the realistic novel with the widest field and could see it as the biggest kind of fiction. So the word "genre" began to imply inferiority, and came to be commonly misused, not as as a description, but as a negative value judgment. Most people now understand "genre" to be an inferior form of fiction, defined by a label, while realistic fictions are simply called novels or literature.

So we have an accepted hierarchy of fictional types, with "literary fiction," not defined, but consisting almost exclusively of realism, at the top. All other kinds of fiction, the "genres," are either spaced out in rapidly descending order of inferiority or simply tossed into a general garbage heap at the bottom. This judgmental system, like all arbitrary hierarchies, promotes ignorance and arrogance. It has seriously deranged the teaching and criticism of fiction for decades by short-circuiting useful critical description, comparison, and assessment. It condones imbecilities on the order of, "If it's science fiction, it can't be good; if it's good, it can't be science fiction."

And judgment by genre is particularly silly and pernicious now that the whole idea of genre itself is breaking down.

For that's the other problem with our good tool; the screwdriver is the wrong shape for the slots, the screws are all screwy. Much of the best fiction being written doesn't fit into the genres any more, but combines, crosses, miscegenates, transgresses, and reinvents them. Seventy years ago Virginia Woolf was questioning the possibility of writing realistic fiction honestly. Many honest writers have given up the attempt.

Terms such as "magical realism" are hastily conceived labels slapped across great, widening cracks in the conventional structure of narrative. They often disguise more than they reveal. Major novelists, great writers appear outside any recognized category. Tell me what kind of fiction it is that José Saramago writes? It is not realism; no, it certainly isn't; but it is, it very certainly is, literature.

The breakdown is occurring even across a major boundary, the definition of fiction and nonfiction. Jorge Luis Borges said that he considered all prose literature to be fiction. Fiction, for Borges, thus includes history, journalism, biography, memoir, Cervantes' *Don Quixote,* Pierre Menard's *Don Quixote,* the works of Borges, *Peter Rabbit,* and the Bible. It seems a large category, but it may prove more intellectually practicable than any attempt to salvage useless distinctions.

And yet the categories established by genre are not only perpetuated, cemented in, by the stereotyped thinking of reviewers, by the ingrained habits and superstitions of publishers, and by the shelving and descriptive practices of booksellers and libraries. They also are—have been and still are—useful, perhaps necessary, to the appreciation of fiction. If you don't know what kind of book you're reading, and it's not a kind you're used to, you probably need to learn how to read it. You need to learn the genre.

Useless and harmful as a value category, genre is a valid descriptive category. It may be most useful historically; it may cause more confusion than clarity in defining a postmodern work. But where definition by genre applies and is applied fairly, it is invaluable both to readers and to writers.

For example: A writer sets out to write science fiction but isn't familiar with the genre, hasn't read what's been written. This is a fairly common situation, because science fiction is known to sell well but, as a subliterary genre, is not supposed to be worth study—what's to learn? It doesn't occur to the novice that a genre is a genre because it has a field and focus of its own; its appropriate and particular tools, rules, and techniques for handling the material; its traditions; and its experienced, appreciative readers—that it is, in fact, a literature. Ignoring all this, our novice is just about to reinvent the wheel, the space ship, the space alien, and the mad scientist, with cries

of innocent wonder. The cries will not be echoed by the readers. Readers familiar with that genre have met the space ship, the alien, and the mad scientist before. They know more about them than the writer does.

In the same way, critics who set out to talk about a fantasy novel without having read any fantasy since they were eight, and in ignorance of the history and extensive theory of fantasy literature, will make fools of themselves because they don't know how to read the book. They have no contextual information to tell them what its tradition is, where it's coming from, what it's trying to do, what it does. This was liberally proved when the first Harry Potter book came out and a lot of literary reviewers ran around shrieking about the incredible originality of the book. This originality was an artifact of the reviewers' blank ignorance of its genres (children's fantasy and the British boarding-school story), plus the fact that they hadn't read a fantasy since they were eight. It was pitiful. It was like watching some TV gourmet chef eat a piece of buttered toast and squeal, "But this is delicious! Unheard of! Where has it been all my life?"

Ursula K. LeGuin

Ignorance as a critical qualification is celebrated every time a literary pundit exhibits his sophistication by performing the time-hallowed ceremony of the Ritual Sneers at Tolkien.

We do urgently need to try to rethink genre in order to reform the practices of critics and reviewers and the assumptions of readers and to bring the description of fiction into some kind of relation to reality. I admit that the temptation to pull a Borges is very strong, to just say, "Genre is dead! All fiction is Literature! Long live Fiction!"

But what's the use in saying it when you are going to run your head right against the solid obstruction of category labeling and shelving practice, from the conception of the book, the contract, the cover, to the bookstores and libraries? How can you tell reviewers to stop shoving books into outmoded categories where they don't fit, when the publishers themselves absolutely insist on the category labels—and when many, perhaps most of the authors, would scream bloody murder if they didn't get the genre label and cover and category that keeps their book from getting lost among all the other books in all the other genres?

Marketing rules, OK? I have no illusions that intelligence could possibly replace marketing in this or any other matter. Commercial genrification has its reasons. They are not intelligent reasons, but they are intelligible.

Consumerism also rules. If the books aren't labeled, if they aren't shelved by genre, if they don't have a little bitty label saying SF or M or YA, a whole lot of customers and library users will come storming the counter or the desk, shouting, "Where is my fiction fix? I want a fantasy, I can't read all that realistic stuff! I want a mystery, I can't read all that plotless stuff! I want a masterpiece of grim realism, I can't read all that imaginary stuff! I want mindless fluff, I can't read all that literary stuff! Etc., etc."

To give each reader an annotated author-title list of whatever their fiction addiction is, so they can go find the books on the shelves, is a perfectly fair solution, offered by many libraries. But addicts don't like it. They want books to be easy the way fast food is easy. They want to go to the shelf and stick out their hand and get a fix.

Have you ever noticed initials on the fly leaf of a series mystery at the library, sometimes a whole row of them down the leaf? They're so people will know they've read that one already, because looking at the story itself wouldn't tell them anything, since it's exactly like all the other books in that series by that author. This is addiction. But the only harm I can see in it is that it keeps people from reading good stuff. And they might not read the good stuff anyway, because they've been scared into thinking that literature can't possibly include anything about horses, space ships, dragons, dreams, spies, monsters, animals, aliens, or dark, handsome, taciturn men who own large houses in remote bits of England. Oh, Darcy, they need you! But they've been scared away from Darcy, or never allowed a glimpse of him. And the commercial fiction machine feeds their hunger for story with junk food—commercial, mechanical, formula fiction.

Any genre, including realism, can be formulized and made commercial. Genre and formula are two different things. But the assumption that they are the same thing allows the lazy-minded critic and professor to ignore all genre literature, dismissing it, unread, as unreadable.

To put a genre label on a book is to ensure it a safe audience, but a limited audience. Publishers go for safe, and so they like genre labels. But not always. With low-risk, big-name authors, safety lies in assuming that the author's literary reputation would be damaged by the admission that one or more of their books belongs to a genre other than literary realism. So when *Oryx and Crake* came out, Margaret Atwood and her publisher denied that she'd ever had anything to do with science fiction—despite the fact that the novel is science fiction in every sense of the term, though unfortunately rather unoriginal science fiction—and despite the fact that *The Handmaid's Tale* also is science fiction, of an equally familiar type though of far higher quality, in fact of superlative quality.

Atwood knows perfectly well what she's writing; I heard her describe *The Handmaid's Tale* as science fiction, reading from it at Harbourfront the year it came out. But by the time it appeared, the publishers had hushed her up and forcibly established her literary virginity, which has remained unspotted ever since. This time, to my grief, she felt it necessary to misdescribe and even sneer at "space" fiction and to describe her book by one of those feeble euphemisms, "speculative fiction" or something. Her marketing department evidently lives in terror that she'll lose the Nobel Prize if her science fiction is recognized as such. So the poor book was doomed to lukewarm civility from the literary reviewers and exasperated silence from the people who could in fact review it usefully, the critics who know and like the genre.

If Atwood had taken the risk of saying straight out, even of *boasting* that her book is science fiction, she would have done literature considerable good, and I believe not damaged her own standing except in the eyes of the most reactionary and mandarin *litterateurs,* with whom she has notoriously little patience. But Atwood has taken so many risks, I have no heart to blame her for not taking this one. [Author's note, March

2004: I hear that she has in fact broken out of the marketing department's closet and said that of course the *Handmaid* and *Oryx* are science fiction. Brava Margaret!]

I do admire the courage of Doris Lessing, a real literary lion, a woman who can roar, for making her publisher publish her three science fiction novels as science fiction, and talking about them as science fiction, and even attending the Worldcon. She saw no call to badmouth anybody else to protect her precious reputation. I do not see that her reputation has in fact suffered from her excursion into genre; but of course Lessing has always been a transgressor, always crossing sacred boundaries. No cage for that lion.

I too have crossed some genre barriers, in fact about as many as I could. It's not a matter for me of stooping to an occasional amusing bit of slumming in the kiddie-lit ghetto or the sci fi gutter. I live there, in the ghettos and gutters. I am a street person of the city of fiction. And every now and then I come lumbering up like some sort of sewer monster out of the depths of genre onto the spotless lawns of literary realism—since realism, to my mind, is simply another genre, another domain of fiction, and all mine if I want it.

Thinking about the maneuvers performed by self-defined "literary" novelists to preserve their purity from genre pollution, I realized that I am in the unusual position of being able to perform the same poses and contortions, only backwards.

How am I to protect my unspotted name as a science fiction writer from the scorn of those who might think I have been shamelessly performing acts of realism in public?

Thus: How dare you call me a realist? My book *Searoad* has nothing to do with the commercial realism found in all the chain bookstores. I call the book "Social Reality Enhancement." Realistic novels are for lazy-minded, semi-educated people whose atrophied imagination allows them to appreciate only the most limited and conventional subject-matter. Realistic fiction, or re-fi as its fans call it, is an outworn genre, written by unimaginative hacks who rely on mere mimesis. If they had any self-respect they'd be writing memoir, but they're too lazy to fact-check. Of course I never *read* re-fi, but my children keep bringing home these garish realistic novels and talking about them, so I know that it's an incredibly narrow genre, completely centered on one species, incredibly culture-bound, full of wornout clichés and predictable situations: the quest for the father, mother-bashing, obsessive lust, suburban guilt, and so forth. All it's good for is being made into mass-market movies. Given its old-fashioned means and limited subject-matter, realism is quite incapable of describing the complexity of contemporary experience.

Now, would you believe that tripe? There's some truth in it. But it's tripe. All judgment of literature by genre is tripe. All judgment of a category of literature as inherently superior or inferior is tripe.

A book can't be judged by its cover, or by its label. A book can be judged only by reading it. There are many bad books. There are no bad genres.

Of course there are genres that are unappealing to individual readers. A reader who liked or valued all kinds of narrative equally would be undiscriminating to the point of imbecility. Some people honestly can't read fantasy with any pleasure. I honestly can't read porn or most political thrillers with pleasure. I have friends who cannot read *any* fiction with pleasure; they need what they can consider or pretend to be facts. These differences point, again, to the underlying validity of the concept of literary genre.

But they do not justify any judgment of literature by genre.

There are commercial subcategories—such as some series mysteries, sub-teen grossout books, strict formula romances—that are so narrowly prescribed, so rigidly diminished in emotional and intellectual scope, that a genius would go mad trying to write one of serious merit. But if you incline to sneer at romance as an intrinsically inferior fictional category may I invite you to read—since evidently you have not read them —- the works of Charlotte and Emily Brontë?

All judgment of literature by category or genre is tripe.

So what are we going to do, now? What use is the whole concept of genre if you can't damn whole categories of fiction with it so that you never have to bother learning how to read them, and if the fiction writers are going to keep crossing over, ignoring boundaries, slipstreaming, interbreeding like a barnful of cats while, at the same time, publishers and booksellers and librarians cling immovably to the old, false, rigid divisions, because they're commercially unrisky, and because they make it easy for people to find certain types of books without being exposed to any alien forms of literature that might possibly take over their minds and put new ideas into them?

I mean, God forbid that we should mix genres on the shelves. What if I went to Powell's or my branch library for Philip K. Dick and found him next to Charles Dickens? How terrible! Or if I went looking for the new Steven Saylor mystery and had to go *right past* the Patrick O'Brien sea stories! Or, of course, vice versa. Let alone being exposed to some sort of Western by Molly Gloss or something indescribable by Karen Fowler or Carol Emshwiller or Virginia Woolf or Jane Austen that isn't like any of the other books at all. If fiction, all fiction, were shelved alphabetically by author, what misery and confusion would result! People would have to know the alphabet! It is unthinkable.

Could I suggest that we think about it? ■

Ursula K. Le Guin writes both poetry and prose, and in various modes including realistic fiction, science fiction, fantasy, young children's books, books for young adults, screenplays, essays, verbal texts for musicians, and voice texts for performance or recording. She has published six books of poetry, twenty novels, more than a hundred short stories (collected in eleven volumes), four collections of essays, eleven books for children, and four volumes of translation.

Last year, she published *The Wave in the Mind: Talks and Essays on the Reader, the Writer, and the Imagination* (Shambhala, 2004); and *Gifts*, a fantasy novel (Harcourt, 2004). Three of Le Guin's books have been finalists for the American Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize, and among the many honors her writing has received are a National Book Award, five Hugo Awards, five Nebula Awards, SFWA's Grand Master, the Kafka Award, a Pushcart Prize, the Howard Vursell Award of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the L.A. Times Robert Kirsch Award.

If you have any suggestions of authors you would like to se featured in "Book Talk," or if you are interested in volunteering to be an author interviewer, contact the contributing editors: Kathleen Hughes is Managing Editor of *Public Libraries*, and Brandan Dowling is the Editorial Assistant. Both can be reached at the Public Library Association, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; khughes@ala.org; bdowling@ala.org. Brendan is reading *Nicholas Nickleby* by Charles Dickens; Kathleen is reading the *Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* by Anne Fadiman.

Readers Advisory

A Community Effort?

Steven M. Cohen

Internet Spotlight explores Internet and Web topics relevant to librarians in the public library sector. Your input is welcome.

In this issue, we celebrate readers advisory, that ubiquitous service that permeates all public libraries. This column addresses numerous online resources (from librarians and otherwise) dealing with readers advisory issues. In addition, I hypothesize about the possibilities of providing readers advisory service via the library OPACs using patron records. Online resources for readers advisory services abound. Libraries have set up databases and portals on their Web sites that assist patrons in selecting what books to read. For example, the Hennepin County (Minn.) Library System has created **Find a Good Book** (www.hclib.org/pub/books/iyl), where the user can search for an author, title, or, more importantly, book theme. The Montgomery County (Md.) Public Libraries have built the **Readers' Café** (www.montgomerycountymd.gov/apps/libraries/readerscafe), a virtual meeting place for books and readers.

Fiction_L (www.webrary.org/rs/FLbklistmenu.html) is one of the more popular electronic discussion lists for public librarians. It deals mostly with readers advisory issues, but also assists in reference work in locating that hard-to-find book, collection development issues, and book lists. Fiction_L is hosted by the **Morton Grove (Ill.) Public Library** (www.webrary.org), and two resources are available on the site, besides the obvious one of providing information about how to subscribe and unsubscribe to the mailing list.

First, users can search the **Fiction_L archives** of the posts or browse by year (www.webrary.org/rs/FLarchive.html). Second, and more impressive, are the **Fiction_L book list pages** (www.webrary.org/rs/FLbklistmenu.html), which are the direct results of the discussions that went on in the mailing list. In other words, lists were built on the suggestions made from the contributors to the list. The lists are divided into seven categories: genre, character, setting, subject, audience, author, and miscellaneous. Each list has a date (month and year) attached to it. This is important, as new books may have been published that fit in a particular book list. One would hope that outdated book lists would be updated, but this doesn't seem to be the case. Once a book list is established, it seems to remain stagnant.

Another good readers advisory resource is **The Reader's Robot** (www.tnrdlib.bc.ca/rr.html), a readers advisory tool that holds more than 5,500 books in twenty-one different genres. The Reader's Robot is provided by the **Thomson–Niccola Regional District Library System** (www.tnrdlib.bc.ca) in British Columbia, Canada. There are many aspects to this resource that are worth perusing, including two search mechanisms and a reading list creator. The first search database, The **RR Search Engine** (www.tnrdlib.bc.ca/cgi-bin/rr-search.pl) allows the user to choose one or more of the twenty-one genres, search by one or more keywords, use the Boolean operators "and" and "or," and have wildcard endings or exact matches. The second, and more impressive, search feature is an **"appeal" search** (www.tnrdlib.bc.ca/cgi-bin/rr-searchappeal.pl). The user can choose between eight of the genres (I'm not sure why all twenty-one genres are not available) and pull up a question-and-answer section on numerous aspects of fiction. The questions range from the simple (the length of the book and the social class of the characters), to the more complex (the style of the author, how the book leaves the reader feeling). After the fifteen questions are answered, the engine will produce a list of books that fit the criteria from the fifteen questions. The **Instant List Section** (www.tnrdlib.bc.ca/il-menu.html) allows the user to view certain lists that have already been created by the creators of the site. And, browsing the collection is always available.

One of the more interesting book selection tools that has been online for a few years is **Which Book** (www.whichbook.net). What makes this site interesting is that the user has almost total control of the type of books that get presented. This is done by rating the types of books wanted by using more or less criteria to the desired level of twelve categories. For example, the first criteria are happy and sad. One can choose books that are more happy than sad on different percentage levels. If a purely sad book is wanted, then move the arrow all the way to the left. If a semi-sad theme is needed, then move the arrow only a little bit toward the sad side. If no preference is needed, then keep it in the middle. The user can do this for all twelve categories. One would think that this method of choosing books to read would be the most comprehensive for the online environment (nothing beats the face-to-face discussions with a librarian when readers advisory is on the table) as it allows the user to choose the intensity of many types of book personalities. This is a wonderful resource.

While librarians may not be fond of Amazon.com or BarnesandNoble.com, they have many sections that libraries can learn from, including those on book suggestions. While this can't be categorized as true readers advisory since they are not assisting in the book selection process, the information provided by these online bookstores can assist the reader in determining whether or not to read a particular book. Both Amazon and Barnes and Noble offer reviews by the press as well as by thousands of readers who take the time to send in their thoughts about the books.

For example, I picked a book that I recently finished, titled *The Wisdom of Crowds* by James Surowiecki (Doubleday, 2004), and looked at its pages in Amazon and Barnes and Noble. On **Amazon** (http://tinyurl.com/69rag), the first "readers advisory" suggestion that I see is "people who have bought this book also bought . . . ," which lists five books, only one of which I might read based on the title alone. Then Amazon has

a section called "Customer's Advice" that recommends books in addition to, or instead of, *The Wisdom of Crowds*. Then come the lengthy reviews by professional journals and Amazon customers. Last, one can browse similar books based on the subject headings that Amazon suggests. Barnes and Noble has similar functions.

While many believe that Amazon.com and Barnes and Noble have been less than stellar in the book suggestion department, I can only guess that most of the patrons who don't access the public library go to Amazon first. In fact, I would even bet that some patrons who regularly use the library go to these top online bookstores for book suggestions.

Ideas for Library Online Readers Advisory

Putting Amazon's and Barnes and Nobles's practices to use in library catalogs would not be difficult. Instead of "people who bought this book also bought . . . ," each record could contain links to the catalog record of "people who checked this book out also checked out . . ." (if such information is stored). There is no breach of privacy here, just anonymous advisories by readers with similar interests. In fact, this collective wisdom could not only work within the library, but consortia could take all of the patrons' checkout records in the regional, county, or even state networks and build a mechanism by which thousands of library patrons are recommending books to one another, anonymously. And imagine what could happen if OCLC worked with this data to build an international system.

I know, first things first. Vendors will have to communicate with one another, and patrons may be a bit skeptical of letting out their reading lists (albeit anonymously). But on a purely sociological framework, this theory works. Collectively, who better to recommend books to each other than the entire community of library users?

Of course, there are other ways in which to incorporate readers advisory into the library OPAC. I have always thought that library OPACs should have sections where library patrons could participate in book suggestions when a title is retrieved from the system. It could be called "Recommended books from your community members." While there are many inherent problems with this idea (nonsensical or political opinions expressed by patrons or obscene language), I'm sure that the benefits would outweigh the costs. In fact, there could be administrative control as to who can post. Perhaps a committee of community members could be formed to write and post reviews.

If the library wants to have book recommendations by librarians, a link to other books chosen by subject specialists can be displayed when a book title or author list is called up. Imagine a link titled "Your librarians recommend" within the OPAC. There may also be a way to incorporate the aforementioned Which Book into the library catalog. The patron accesses a title in the catalog and the record is displayed, hopefully with some sort of book synopsis (most OPAC vendors have already included this feature in their software). After the synopsis, the Which Book chart could be displayed and the reader could manipulate the more or less schema, with the final result of suggested books with direct links to the catalog record.

In an article in *Library Journal* titled **"Taking Back Reader's Advisory"** (www.libraryjournal.com/index.asp?layout=articleArchive&articleid=CA317643), Barbara Hoffert lists several useful methods for bringing readers advisory back into the library, including by using remote library services such as online chat for book discussion and by creating better annotated lists on our library Web sites.[1] There was no discussion, however, of incorporating readers advisory into the library OPAC, which is probably the most popular part of the library's Web page as well as the most often accessed software within the library. Why shouldn't we use it to assist our patrons in choosing the best books for their wants and needs?

I believe there can be a place for both librarians and the community to provide readers advisories to patrons. While librarians do have expertise in readers advisory, utilizing the collective wisdom of a user base can increase the likelihood that a patron seeking advice for future reading will be satisfied. The trick is finding the best ways to incorporate this collective wisdom. This is where, I believe, the library can step in and thrive. ■

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Steven is currently reading *Status Anxiety* by Alain de Botton (www.alaindebotton.com/status.htm), a brilliant, readable account of the struggles about how people see us, both sociologically and psychologically, and *The Wisdom of Crowds: Why the Many Are Smarter Than the Few and How Collective Wisdom Shapes Business, Economies, Societies, and Nations* by James Suroweicki (www.wisdomofcrowds.com), which argues that, under the right circumstances (laid out step by step in each chapter), collective work is better than the results of the smartest individuals within any particular group.

Reference

1. Barbara Hoffert, "Taking Back Reader's Advisory," *Library Journal*. Accessed Oct. 10, 2004, www.libraryjournal.com/index.asp?layout=articleArchive&articleid=CA317643.

Resources

Hennepin County Library System, "Find a Good Book," www.hclib.org/pub/books/iyl
Montgomery County Public Libraries Readers Café, www.montgomerycountymd.gov/apps/libraries/readerscafe/index.asp
Fiction-L, www.webrary.org/rs/FLmenu.html
Morton Grove (Ill.) Public Library, www.webrary.org
Fiction-L Archives, www.webrary.org/rs/FLarchive.html
Fiction-L Booklist, www.webrary.org/rs/FLbklistmenu.html
Thomson—Niccola Regional District Library System in Canada, www.tnrdlib.bc.ca/index.shtml
Reader Robot Search Engine, www.tnrdlib.bc.ca/cgi-bin/rr-search.pl
Reader Robot "appeal" Search, www.tnrdlib.bc.ca/cgi-bin/rr-search-appeal.pl
Readers Robot Instant List Section, www.tnrdlib.bc.ca/il-menu.html
Which Book, www.whichbook.net
Amazon, www.amazon.com
Barnes & Noble, www.barnesandnoble.com
Amazon Page for "Wisdom of Crowds,"http://tinyurl.com/69rag
BN Page for "Wisdom of Crowds,"http://tinyurl.com/4l9zg

Tech Talk explores issues that public librarians face when they offer electronic services and content. It aims to create a bridge between the practical and theoretical issues related to technology.

Tech Lust

Where Technology and Books Meet Up

A. Paula Wilson

When I first interviewed Nancy Pearl for a previous Tech Talk column ("Readers' Advisory Services: Taking It All Online," November/December 2001, 344–45), she said something I just didn't get at the time. She said that although there are many good readers advisory Web sites, she hoped that these would not be seen as taking the place of a real live readers advisory interview. I thought about that for a while. A reference transaction is methodical, smacking of procedure and process, while a readers advisory interview is more of a conversation a librarian has with a reader. There are online tools that help research librarians like me (who stopped reading fiction when the Internet became very popular) answer such questions.

Another year passed and I attended a presentation Pearl gave to a group of Nevada librarians. She spoke about this title and that title and, by the end of her workshop, we all had a new list of great books to read. She focused on certain appeal characteristics (such as language, setting, story, and character) that a book may have. I learned a lot that day. But most of all, I felt that I wasn't reading enough, or not reading enough fiction, and my fingers were too frequently tapping away on the keyboard. Certainly there are many ways that technology can enhance traditional readers advisory services, but could technology ever take the place of patrons visiting the library to find their next best read? Sure it could, for some of our customers. Other customers will always prefer to visit the library because the visit is not just a means to an end (good books). Some customers enjoy the interaction with the staff, being surrounded by books, or attending book discussions.

Determined to explore what readers advisory would be like in an online setting, I set out on a course to experience, firsthand, what our customers may encounter in online chat sessions with librarians in response to the simple question, "Can you recommend a good book?" (see figure 1). My first foray into online readers advisory began during a chat session that ended abruptly with a terse referral back to my home library where, as this librarian suggests, I should work with my local librarian (see figure 2). My second attempt yielded three links to reading lists (**Internet Book List** [www.iblist.com], **Historical Fiction by and about Women** {www.hcpl.net/booklists/histwom.htm]. and **American Historical Fiction Book List** [www.slco.lib.ut.us/amhistor.htm] that were all equally useful. On my third and final attempt to have a productive online readers advisory session I hit a home run (see figure 3). The librarian and I chatted back and forth several times as she began to further define my reading preference, touching upon the appeal characteristics Nancy Pearl discussed at the workshop. She asked about time periods and genres and eventually pushed to me two book titles, *Maisie Dobbs* by Jacqueline Winspear and *Divine Sarah: A Novel* by Adam Braver. Additionally, the librarian shared book reviews on each title, and just when I thought we were done, she chatted back that she had one more in mind but could not remember the title. She returned after about a minute with the last title and a review for *Lucy* by Ellen Feldman. A thought crossed my mind that this librarian must be the one who chases customers out of the door with that one last book they just had to have. I thanked her for her excellent service and typed goodbye. What a great exchange, and a personal touch! I felt that I had a meaningful encounter and found some great new books to read. Perhaps online readers advisory service can be just as meaningful for some customers. I know it was for me.

My infrequent encounters with Nancy Pearl and the thoughts she left me with motivated me to start searching for places that one could discuss books online. If I could have a relatively meaningful chat session with a virtual librarian, what would an online book discussion feel like? Could online discussion boards take the place of monthly book discussions at the library? Perhaps, for some customers. Thousands of online message boards exist to discuss specific titles or literary themes and book-related topics. Many times these forums are a part of a larger site such as **Chatelaine's Book Club Forum** (www.chatelaine.com) or **iVillage's Readers and Writers Message Boards** (www.ivillage.com). More than one thousand reading groups are available just at Yahoo! Groups, and other readers gather at **The Washington Post's Online Book Club** (www.washingtonpost.com), and **Oprahs's Online Book Club** (www.oprah.com).

Technology has enabled readers to chat with one another or find out more information about a book or an author, such as at **BookBrowse** (www.bookbrowse.com). Technology has enabled authors to conduct live chat sessions with thousands of readers; for example, **AuthorChats** (www.authorchats.com). Technology has even allowed readers to track books as they exchange hands throughout the world, such as **BookCrossing** (www.bookcrossing.com).

I was disappointed that I wasn't able to find a forum to discuss the book I had just finished reading, *Grand Ambition* by Lisa Michaels. There is so much to talk about after reading this book. (What happened to Glen and Bessie? Did she kill him? Did he die trying to save her from the untamed rapids of the Colorado River?) Ideally, the library catalog would be the appropriate tool to post my thoughts and questions so that other readers can join in on the discussion. Rather than scouring the Web looking for a place to discuss a particular title, it

An Online Chat Session Form

FIGURE 1

A Less-Than-Successful RA Chat

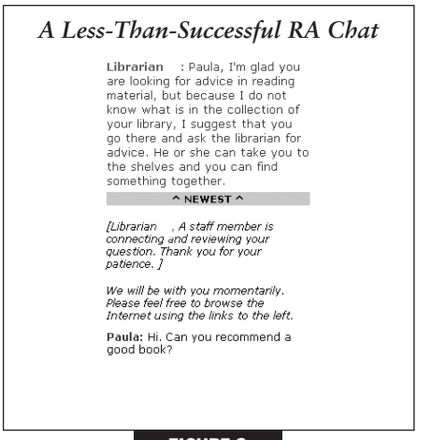

FIGURE 2

A Successful RA Chat

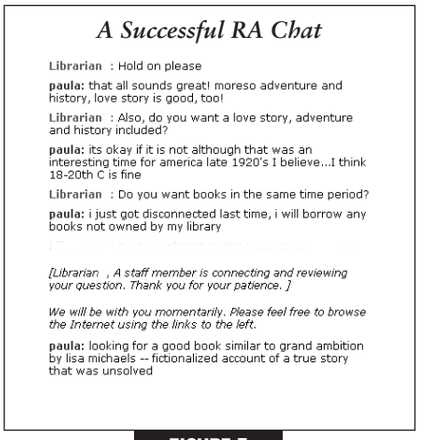

FIGURE 3

would be great if the library catalog included a space where patrons could post a review of a particular title in addition to reading published reviews.

The last time I saw Nancy Pearl was at the Chandler (Ariz.) Public Library in early 2004, where I purchased her latest title, *Book Lust*. Again, Pearl weaved a story of her own while highlighting one book after another. I was astounded that she had read and remembered so many books, and I enjoyed listening to her. I was often mesmerized at the fluidity of her transitions from one title to the next and her thoughtful reactions to them. This time I learned about even more great titles and felt even more guilty, and sad, too. Not only had I not read all of these great titles, but because of that, I couldn't talk about them, or share my reactions to the books with others.

Readers advisory is about conversations—conversations with our customers, among librarians, and among friends. No matter how fast I type, online conversations about books would not flow as smoothly as they did when I actually heard Nancy Pearl talk. My librarian friend and I drove away that day feeling like we just got out of a great movie. We were both clutching *Book Lust* and vowing to read more. ■

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Paula is currently reading *Grand Ambition* by Lisa Michaels and *The Miracle Life of Edgar Mint: A Novel* by Brady Udall.

The mention of systems and vendors in this column does not constitute an evaluation or an endorsement of the products or services by the Public Library Association or the editors of this magazine. The contributing editor of this column welcomes any comments or questions at the e-mail above.

ALA Begins PATRIOT Study to Measure Law Enforcement Activity in Libraries

The American Library Association (ALA) has initiated a set of surveys to assess the impact of the USA PATRIOT act on America's libraries and library patrons. Working with several teams of academic researchers, ALA seeks to quantify and examine contacts by federal law enforcement agencies in public and academic libraries. The planning phase of this project was made possible by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The Knight Foundation is helping to finance these studies, with additional support anticipated from other foundations.

As homeland security tops the 109th Congress's list of priorities and parts of the PATRIOT Act are scheduled to sunset in Decembe 2005, ALA seeks to ensure that library patron privacy is preserved. The results of these surveys will provide much-needed information to inform the debate about law enforcement's role in libraries and the effect that the law enforcement activity is having on library users. Preliminary results will be made available to members of Congress as they debate the status and necessity of the sunset provisions.

The Web-based surveys, titled Impact and Analysis of Federal Law Enforcement Activity in Academic and Public Libraries, are directed at academic and public library administrators. The survey questions will examine the contacts being made by law enforcement in libraries, how library policies have changed since the passage of the USA PATRIOT Act, and any resulting changes in library patron behavior. The survey instrument has been carefully reviewed by counsel for the American Library Association to ensure that respondents do not violate the gag order imposed by the USA PATRIOT Act, and the U.S. Department of Justice has acknowledged its interest in the results of the project.

The team of researchers working in tandem with ALA have selected a diverse sample of United States public and academic libraries reflecting geographic, population, and size differences. Administrators of the libraries selected for the study will be notified by mail. Libraries selected for the survey are strongly encouraged to respond.

The study's results will be presented as a report at ALA's 2005 Annual Conference in Chicago. The results may be used to create an educational resource for practitioners on dealing with federal law enforcement.

InterViews is an occasional column highlighting unique perspectives, individuals, and institutions in the library world.

Copyright Concerns

Public Performance Rights to Show Films in the Library

Carrie Russell

My public library shows old Hollywood classic films on Saturday afternoons. Being a copyright specialist, I can't help but wonder if the screening—in copyright lingo, a *public performance*—is an infringement of copyright. Because we are dealing with copyright law, the answer (of course) is necessarily complex and unsettled. The right of public performance is an exclusive right of the copyright holder. In other words, the copyright holder has the sole right to "perform" the work. Screening a film without the prior authorization of the copyright holder is therefore an infringement—unless the screening is excused because of allowances in the law.

A public performance is defined in the copyright law as a performance that occurs "at a place open to the public or at any place where a substantial number of persons outside of a normal circle of a family and its social acquaintances is gathered" (section 101). Thus, watching a video at home with family and friends is not a public performance. Screening a film for the purpose of nonprofit education is also noninfringing because of copyright exemptions detailed in section 110 (Limitations of Exclusive Rights: Exemption for Certain Performances and Displays). Screening a public domain film is also noninfringing, but few films are in the public domain. Unfortunately, that film series in the public library is probably infringing.

Hold on. There's no need to freak out or lock the doors of the library to bar the entry of the FBI. There may be other reasons why the public library screening, whether on film, video, or DVD, is okay. Sometimes libraries can buy or rent videos or films *with* performance rights. For example, the library may rent the title from a movie distributor like **Swank** (www.swank.com), and as part of the rental price, performance rights are included. Some video distributors sell performance rights as part of the purchase price to libraries and schools, such as **First Run Icarus Films** (www.frif.com). It is highly unlikely that videos or DVDs of feature films—the films that a library most likely shows— will automatically come with performance rights. These must be obtained from the copyright holder, who probably will not license the right to you whether you charge admission fees or not. Libraries can also purchase blanket licenses from vendors such as **Movie Licensing USA** (www.movielic.com) that handle feature films. These licenses must be acquired every year and supposedly allow the library the right to show movies to the public. The problem, however, is that the license does not cover every movie, and I have heard librarians lament that they often don't know what movies their license covers.

Some people may argue that public library movie exhibitions are fair because their purpose is not-for-profit. Some make the event more "educational" in nature by having a discussion group session after the movie. These ideas do lend themselves to assessing the use as fair, but we must also consider the other three factors of fair use (section 107). The second factor, the nature of the work, (most likely a Hollywood movie) is probably not fair because the copyright law tends to protect audiovisual works to a greater extent than a factual print work. The third factor, the amount of the work being used, is also a problem because the entire work is screened. Finally, the fourth factor, the effect on the market, is a concern because there is a vibrant, secondary market for movies—movies can be rented and purchased outright in video or DVD format for a reasonable price and consumers can watch them at home.

Then again, there will be situations when a public library screening is a fair use. For example, perhaps the library is hosting a community open house where the mayor or some other public official will discuss new public housing plans. During the program, a documentary about the history of public housing is shown. Or after the 9/11 attack, the Friends of the Library hold a community meeting to reflect on the disaster and consider ways to heal and move forward. At the meeting, they show a video version of *On Death and Dying*. Or the local high school is being renovated and the English literature class needs to use the library for a screening of *Romeo and Juliet*. All of these examples are arguably fair uses and not infringing.

In addition, because library movie night is a pretty widespread occurrence, even though it may be an infringement, the activity *seems* lawful. It becomes accepted in our society, and societal norms do shape how the law is interpreted. (A related public library example is story time. Reading a story aloud to the public is technically an infringement of the public performance right too, but we don't worry about it. Story time is a common practice.)

I can find no case law directly on point—no library has been involved in a copyright infringement court proceeding because of library movie night. Perhaps the copyright holders do not care what the library is doing because the impact is minor. Perhaps copyright holders don't want to spend the time and money on a court proceeding. Perhaps the copyright holders do not have confidence that they would win the case. I tend to think that because the activity is so widespread, copyright holders don't care.

Librarians need to weigh their options before they proceed with movie exhibitions. Your decision will depend on your judgment to a certain extent. Is your institution willing to take a risk? Or would you rather be safe than sorry? You may want to discuss the concern with legal counsel before making your decision. ■

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Readers Advisory Services and Training in the North Star State

Jane George, Michele McGraw, and Sarah Nagle

Library patrons in Minnesota are now just as likely to ask for readers advisory help at the information desk as they are to ask for traditional reference service. These same patrons have also come to expect entertaining author presentations and reading incentive programs geared toward adults from their libraries. As such, Minnesota libraries and the Minnesota Library Association recognize the need to offer the tools and training required for librarians to provide the best readers advisory service possible.

Library patrons at Carver County Library (CCL), Dakota County Library (DCL), and Hennepin County Library (HCL) in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area are reading more than ever. Popular bestsellers, spine-chilling mysteries, gripping nonfiction, and book club favorites fly off the shelves. Readers advisory service remains an essential part of what these libraries offer their communities, and is a service that library patrons expect.

Library patrons come to the library looking for suggestions for their book clubs, or for ideas about good books or authors they'll enjoy. Librarians work with avid readers always looking for something new, and not-so-avid readers wanting something they'll enjoy for a vacation. These readers' expectations are high, and their time is often short; they may be comfortable talking with staff about their favorite books, or they might prefer to browse a display and take a look at staff suggestions. Libraries need to offer a variety of readers advisory options to reach the wide variety of readers who come looking for ideas about what they should read next.

Readers advisory allows libraries to promote books and encourage reading throughout their communities. Librarians share the breadth and depth of library collections by talking about books and authors, and by promoting library materials through programming and displays. Readers advisory is an essential role for the public library, and by focusing more closely on this particular service, librarians can increase circulation and patron satisfaction with library services overall.

Jane George is a Librarian at Dakota County Library–Wescott in Eagan, Minnesota; Jane.George@co.dakota.mn.us. She is currently reading I Am: The Selected Poetry of John Clare *edited by Jonathan Bate,* The Light Years *by Elizabeth Jane Howard, and* In the Shadow of No Towers *by Art Spiegelman. Michele McGraw is a Senior Librarian at Hennepin County Library–Southdale in Edina, Minnesota; mmcgraw@hclib.org. She recommends* Flim-Flam Man *by Jennifer Vogel,* Sex, Drugs & Cocoa Puffs *by Chuck Klosterman,* The Sweet Hereafter *by Russell Banks,* The Kite Runner *by Khaled Hosseini, and anything by Magnus Mills. Sarah Nagle is the Branch Manager and Reference Coordinator at Carver County Library–Chaska in Chaska, Minnesota; snagle@carverlib.org. She is currently reading* Haunted Ground *by Erin Hart,* The Children's Hour *by Marcia Willett, and* A Question of Blood *by Ian Rankin.*

Readers Advisory Services

Readers advisory services at CCL, DCL, and HCL include displays, collection arrangement and labeling, author and reading incentive programs, and a variety of book lists and online services.

Displays

One of the most effective readers advisory displays is "Staff Recommends . . . ," which enjoys the added advantage that all staff can be invited to contribute suggestions. Other popular displays include award-winning books or books centered around a program theme. For example, when Minnetonka Dance Company came to DCL for a performance of excerpts from *The Nutcracker* in December, staff set up a display of dance books and videos, and the materials circulated quite well. Many libraries in Minnesota display Minnesota Book Award-nominated books, especially from the time they are named until announcement of the winners in April.

Collection Arrangement, Signage, and Labels

Though generally termed indirect or passive readers advisory, collection arrangement, signage, and labels are other useful techniques employed by staff at CCL, DCL, and HCL to actively steer readers to good books. A current or browsing collection, strategically placed, ensures readers can find new items or those of topical interest. Materials that would otherwise have been lost in the collection often enjoy increased circulation when placed in a current or browsing collection. Signs above collection areas and stickers for book spines that indicate genre also assist readers in finding the books they want to read.

Programming

In *The Reader's Advisor's Companion,* Nora M. Armstrong states that "[o]ne of the most visible and popular methods of providing indirect advisory services at libraries is programming centered on

books and reading. These include book discussion groups, author appearances, and reading clubs."[1] It's difficult to imagine a library that doesn't offer space for or sponsor a book discussion group. Fiction and nonfiction book clubs, senior book discussion groups, and library-sponsored clubs that meet at local coffee shops all have their permutations at CCL, DCL, and HCL. HCL offers an online book group through its **Readers Online Web page** (www.hclib.org/pub/books). Recent book selections include Ernest Gaines' *A Lesson Before Dying* and Ian McEwan's *Atonement*. The Book Group in a Bag program at DCL has been quite popular with local book discussion groups. The book group consists of a sturdy canvas bag (with an attractive, imprinted logo) that contains ten copies of a title in paperback, together with discussion questions, an author background information sheet, a Resources for Readers brochure with suggestions on where to find additional information, a list of available Book Group in a Bag titles, and promotional bookmarks. Large-print copies of such titles have recently been added.

Reading incentive programs have long been a staple of children's programming—particularly summer reading programs—but they have lately become more popular in the adult arena as well. CCL, DCL, and HCL all offered the Hot Reads for Cold Nights program in 2004, first developed by Southeastern Libraries Cooperating (SELCO). Minnesota is not a warm place in the wintertime, and Hot Reads seemed the perfect answer to alleviating cabin fever and boosting circulation! Participants received a sign-up package that included such inexpensive items as a notebook for recording books read, library pencils, popcorn, and packets of hot chocolate. Libraries have offered different versions of Hot Reads: some featured weekly drawings with prizes, some offered only the sign-up packages. Several libraries enjoyed a comfortable success, and adult patrons were pleased to have their own program to match popular reading programs for children. The demographics of a community and physical situation of a building influence program results. Librarians at CCL, DCL, and HCL have observed that the most successful libraries with the Hot Reads program are those with more of a small-town feel where staff is often on a first-name basis with patrons.

In July 2004, DCL launched its Gold Card program, an idea borrowed from Chapple Langemack of the King County (Wash.) Library system. Readers fill out a reading record of fifty titles of fifty pages or longer in length (or fifty audio titles of fifty minutes or longer in length), and they can then qualify for a gold library card and a prize. Additional incentives and prizes are scheduled at six-month intervals.

In addition to reading incentive programs, CCL, DCL, and HCL sponsor numerous free author and book-related programs throughout the year, many featuring local authors or books with a local flavor. HCL's PenPals series, begun in 1997 and funded by the Hennepin County Library Foundation, brings such well-known authors as Isabel Allende, Frances Mayes, and Frank McCourt to the HCL community in a subscription format. Season ticket prices range from $95 to $180. DCL began its Writers LIVE! author programs in 1996. The series has evolved into Minnesota Mosaic, cultural arts programs funded by the Dakota County Library Foundation. Minnesota Mosaic includes a variety of the performing and the written arts. Danny Buraczeski's JAZZDANCE! and Kogen Taiko, a Japanese taiko drumming group, have appeared at the library, as have authors such as novelist Lorna Landvik and poet and essayist Ray Gonzalez.

Readers Advisory Tools

Print and online reference tools are essential to providing good readers advisory service. CCL, DCL, and HCL purchase readers advisory books, such as Nancy Pearl's *Book Lust,* and various Libraries Unlimited titles, such as *Strictly Science Fiction* by Donna Tixier Herald and Bonnie Kunzel, for reference and circulating collections. DCL branches keep a copy of a readers advisory Nnotebook at each reference desk that contains book lists in many genres to help librarians help readers. For this same purpose, annotated book lists in twelve genres—from adventure to travel—are kept with the readers advisory notebook at each library's reference desk. Patrons often borrow the notebook for reading ideas.

Other readers advisory tools include various print book lists and bookmarks, which are often also available online. HCL has an *If You Like . . . Handifile* in both print and online format, as well as its **Find a Good Book link** (www.hclib.org/pub/books). Book discussion group selections can be found on **DCL's Web site** (www.co.dakota.mn.us/library/reading/book_groups.htm), as well as an online, annotated list of **Librarians' Picks and Pans** (www.co.dakota.mn.us/library/reading/picks_and_pans.htm) complete with a "thumbs up" or "thumbs down." DCL also offers both in print and via e-mail subscription its **Fiction and Nonfiction Book News** (www.co.dakota.mn.us/library/reading/new_books.htm)—annotated lists of new releases that readers eagerly await each month. The Chapter-a-Day Online Book Club product is also available to patrons at DCL and HCL. A chapter per day from a new book is e-mailed to readers who subscribe. Readers can then search the library catalog to place a hold on the book; or if the library does not yet own the book, they can suggest it for purchase.

Working with community partners can provide other avenues for promotion of new books and programs at libraries. CCL's Chaska branch staff have worked with a local reporter to produce a weekly "On the Shelf" column featuring good reads and short subject collections along with a "What We're Reading" patron interview. Just as library patrons are curious as to what books have been recently returned, so do they like to know what others in their community are reading.

Training

Library patrons come to the library because they want help finding books they will enjoy. But no librarian can read everything, not all librarians are comfortable with readers advisory questions, and—according to the article "Readers Advisory 101: A Crash Course in RA: Common Mistakes Librarians Make and How to Avoid Them"—many public librarians have "no idea how to conduct a readers advisory interview."[2] Ongoing training opportunities provide a chance for staff to build their skills and confidence in the readers advisory interview process and knowledge of books and genres outside their own reading interests.

HCL has a number of readers advisory training options for staff, ranging from systemwide training to initiatives by individual libraries. The readers advisory training team provides intensive readers advisory training to newly hired librarians, and a refresher for librarians interested in learning about new resources. The training covers print

and online readers advisory resources, with a focus on the readers advisory reference interview—building skills in talking with patrons about books, and helping patrons find the kind of books they want to read.

HCL's Adult Readers Advisory Committee plans two meetings a year where staff can share their favorite readers advisory titles. The spring meeting focuses on summer reading, and staff are asked to talk about a book that they might actually find on the shelf at 4:55 P.M. on a Friday for a patron heading out of town for the weekend. The fall meeting has a guest speaker (usually a local bookseller, author, or publisher) on a readers advisory topic, followed by staff book talks on that meeting's theme. The book talks are only two to three minutes; and while staff are asked to cover the book's plot and characters, read-alikes and other features that would be useful for readers advisory are also shared.

Many libraries also incorporate readers advisory into their staff meetings or other events. One HCL library has a monthly meeting focused on readers advisory covering adult and children's fiction and nonfiction. Staff members bring titles to share for current awareness, and also talk about new print and online resources they've used with patrons. Library workers have shared stumper readers advisory questions, articles about new trends in publishing, and suggestions for displays and merchandising. DCL has a quarterly Breakfast of Champions meeting for librarians to discuss books they've been reading. At DCL's annual staff training day, the same group hosts a session that any staff member can attend.

Statewide Readers Advisory Programs and Groups

Statewide opportunities for readers advisory programs and support have been steadily increasing during the past few years. The Minnesota Library Association (MLA) Readers Advisory Round Table (RART) is active at the annual fall conference and at other events during the year.

A key function of RART is hosting the annual Readers Advisory Retreat, held each spring in an appealing setting such as the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. Each Saturday retreat consists of three sessions (plus breaks and lunch!) covering a variety of subjects. One session is usually an ice-breaker discussion on a theme (such as favorite cookbooks), and attendees are encouraged in advance to bring examples of such materials to share. Another session features a local author—during the past few years RART has invited such varied speakers as Chuck Logan, K. J. Erickson, Sandra Benitez, Shannon Olson, and Ann Tatlock. Rounding out recent retreats have been sessions on new nonfiction, trends in Christian fiction publishing, travel writing, and books for guys.

The RART Steering Committee members responsible for organizing these retreats have been pleasantly surprised at the number of speakers willing to donate their time (and often their books) for a small honorarium or even gratis. The speakers often see librarians as central to getting out the word, both for the speakers' books and for reading

in general. Many RART members have established working relationships with authors through programming at their own libraries. Representatives from two national audiobook companies also spoke recently on Listeners' Advisory.

Another key tactic has been to offer various sessions in the more intimate retreat setting and then repeat them at the MLA fall conference for a larger audience. The above-mentioned recorded book representatives repeated one such session. Another example of a locally developed program was "The Librarian and the Detective." A CCL librarian paired with her police department's detective to produce a well-received presentation on police procedurals and mysteries featuring private investigators. The duo went on to speak at many libraries once their fame had spread as a result of the conference.

The larger conference setting allows for a greater variety of programs and speakers—not to mention the opportunity for co-sponsorship by other MLA divisions. Examples of programs during the past few years include:

- "Minnesota Book Awards" explains how the winners are chosen and how libraries can develop programs featuring authors and books. Cheri Register, author of *Packinghouse Daughter: A Memoir,* was a featured speaker.
- Representatives from five Minnesota publishers—Afton Historical Society Press, Coffee House Press, Milkweed Editions, North Star Press, and Red Dragonfly Press—spoke about what they publish and how libraries and presses might work together to bring greater attention to Minnesota books and authors.
- Four librarians gave a well-received presentation on "Genre Fiction Web Sites in Book Selection and Readers Advisory." Copious handouts were available at the session.
- "New Faces for the Book Group" included information on how to develop kits containing multiple copies and discussion information.
- "Detectives without Pants: Alternatives to the Traditional Mystery" was presented by Michael Gannon of Anne Arundel County (Md.) Public Library.
- "Superheroes and Beyond: Why Comics and Graphic Novels Belong in Your Library."

Readers are hungry for a good book and for a story that will brighten their day and give them personal satisfaction and enrichment.

Readers advisory programs and training are well-supported within the Minnesota library community. This is evidenced by the sponsorship of Chapple Langemack (author of *The Booktalker's Bible,* published by Libraries Unlimited, 2003) for both an MLA general session and as the Award Dinner speaker. Her advocacy of how—and why—librarians can promote books and reading was a welcome and positive message for conference-goers dealing with budget cuts and PATRIOT Act woes.

On a statewide educational level, there is a readers advisory section in the most recent edition of **MORE: Minnesota Opportunities for Reference Excellence** (www.arrowhead.lib.mn.us/more/contents.htm).

Keys to Successful Readers Advisory

Many librarians view readers advisory as *the* up-and-coming growth area of public services (some have even dared to suggest that it may supersede reference services in public libraries). This unique service offers the personal contact and attention to patrons that are so often lacking in many everyday transactions. Readers are hungry for a good book and for a story that will brighten their day and give them personal satisfaction and enrichment.

The keys to successful readers advisory service are: (1) understanding the importance of readers advisory service to library patrons; and (2) providing training and support for staff so they can provide the best readers advisory service possible. A library's best resource for readers advisory is its staff. Librarians talk with patrons about books, develop displays and book lists, and plan programming—and to do that, libraries need to continue to train staff to provide professional and helpful readers advisory services. ■

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INDEX TO ADVERTISERS

RA for YA

Tailoring the Readers Advisory Interview to the Needs of Young Adult Patrons

Heather Booth

An effective teen readers advisory service depends, to a great extent, on the initial interaction and the approach to the readers advisory interview. Some important adaptations to traditional readers advisory techniques can greatly improve the quality of the interaction as well as increase the chances of successfully matching a teen to a book.

Young adults (YAs) are an exciting and enigmatic group of library users, with interests just as varied as our adult patrons. Teens comprise 23 percent of a public library's patrons.[1] A Smartgirl.org/YALSA survey of teen reading found that 72 percent of respondents "like to read for pleasure when they have time."[2] When engaged in discussion, avid readers of J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings series, or Louise Rennison's hilarious Confessions of Georgia Nicolson series can amaze the listener with their enthusiasm for the written word and the degree to which they can connect with characters and authors. Then, of course, there are the mislabeled nonreaders, whose faces you recognize but who have never approached the desk for more than change for the copier. They may frequent the computer room or spend hours skimming *Thrasher, Mad,* or *CosmoGIRL* magazines. And every library has teens browsing the shelves who decline help when approached, assuring us, "Oh, no. I'm fine."

All three of these groups—and every individual in between—can benefit from readers advisory service. Readers advisory for recreational adult reading has developed significantly over the past twenty years, and much can be applied from this wealth of experience when serving a young adult population. An effective readers advisory interview means a more enriching library experience, and will lead to a more positive and engaging relationship with the library over the course of the young adult's life. This article will address suggested ways of approaching teens, how to clarify the teen's reading interests, and ways to modify book descriptions for teen appeal.

***Heather Booth** is the Literature/Audio Librarian at Downers Grove (Ill.) Library; hbooth@downersgrovelibrary.org. She's currently reading* Dreaming in Cuban *by Cristina Garcia,* The Probable Future *by Alice Hoffman,* The Romanov Prophecy *by Steve Berry,* The Sea of Trolls *by Nancy Farmer,* What Happened to Henry *by Sharon L. Pywell, and* Witch Child *by Celia Rees.*

Why Is YA RA Different?

In *Connecting Young Adults and Libraries,* Patrick Jones states that our library services are "a combination of skills, knowledge, and attitudes."[3] He goes on to say, "The contention here is that YA work perhaps is different from other library work in that without the 'right' attitude as a base, the other two traits do not matter as much."[4] Conversely, thanks to the growing pool of readers advisory resources for teens, those without extensive knowledge of YA fiction but with a desire to improve readers advisory service to teens will be able to do just that with the "right attitude." Many libraries lack the resources for a desk or department dedicated solely to readers advisory, let alone a teen services or teen readers advisory desk. However, with a bit of practice and modification of readers advisory interview skills, anyone in the library who wishes to improve their interactions with and service to young adults will be able to do so.

Just like any other service that a public library provides, readers advisory for young adults is unique. Librarians, like teachers, are authority figures. The youth maxim "Don't trust anyone over thirty" will hold for many teens until they have an interaction that proves it wrong. Teens are accustomed to being given unsolicited advice on every aspect of their lives, including reading choices. The objective of readers advisory is not to recommend a book that is "good for you," but simply to suggest a good book for an enjoyable read. Receiving unbiased suggestions in the spirit of the pure joy of reading will be a foreign concept to some teens.

As mentioned above, young adults also have a different background of book recommendations than adults. The majority of their reading is required reading done for school.[5] Naturally, a single book assigned to a whole class is not going to please everyone. Even assignments that students may have brought to the desk in the past—fiction set in a particular time period, for example—may not yet have demonstrated that a librarian is available to suggest books specifically to their liking. Unless teens have interactions to show that librarians can provide a variety of leisure reading options, specifically for their particular interests, our suggestions,

just like school assignments, may be viewed as work rather than fun.

When approaching the readers advisory interview with a teen, it is useful to remember that many teens have had negative experiences with retail customer service. Whether from having their requests passed over in favor of adult customers, being shooed out of stores for inconsequential or nonexistent infractions, or any number of other manifestations of age discrimination, teens may be wary. Depending on the location of and ages served by the library's young adult collection, teens may be exploring an area of the library that is new and unfamiliar to them. Often on a different floor and always with a very different mood from the children's department, the reference/readers advisory area may seem a very grown-up place where teens are unsure of the new culture. Is it okay to sit on the floor? Take a book to another area? Giggle with your friend about the cute actor on the cover of *Seventeen?* Smiles, welcoming body language, and greetings can assure teens that they are welcome in the area, and that rules and standards of behavior will be enforced equitably.

Initiating the RA Interview

First of all, it must be said that some teens will approach the desk and ask for suggestions with more eloquence and understanding of their interests than some adult patrons. For the purpose of this article, a more general teen patron will be discussed: one who is reluctant to approach the desk, is unaccustomed to asking a librarian for reading suggestions, and may not be used to articulating the rationale behind their reading preferences.

From the moment teens walk into the area, library staff should attempt to make them feel just as welcome as any adult patron. Greeting them with eye contact and a genuine smile can do a lot for future interactions. One of the best ways to engage young adults in the readers advisory process is to simply be present. If the readers advisory interview is a conversation between the advisor and the reader, as suggested by Saricks and Brown, it is up to the advisor to initiate this conversation with the teen patron.[6] Moving out from behind the physical barrier of the reference desk and into the YA area is a good place to start. Pulling books to place on displays puts the librarian in the same position as the teen—browsing the shelves for a good book. Asking teens in the area if they have enjoyed a book lately that might be good for the display not only gets a from-the-horse's-mouth recommendation for the display, but acknowledges to the teen that he or she has valuable information to offer.

The phrase "Can I help you?" is sometimes not used or viewed as an offer of service, but as a substitute for any number of sentiments: "Knock it off," "Do you really need to be here?" or "I doubt you know what you're doing." Approaching with a different question or a statement instead may be better received. The object isn't to immediately get a book into their hands, but to open the conversation. Some possible phrases to use when approaching YAs include:

- How's it going?
- If you can't find a good book, let me know.
- Can I help you spot a particular title?
- Are you looking for a specific book or just browsing?
- Looking for something for school or just for fun?
- (Pointing out a book) This was a(n) funny/scary/interesting one. Have you read it?
- I'd be happy to suggest something if you'd like.
- Hey, great shoes.
- You going to watch the Cubbies tonight?
- Hey, did you see *The Simpsons* yesterday? I missed it.

Investigating Interests

Once the conversation has been opened, the readers advisor will need ways to decipher just what the teen is looking for, as well as ways to describe what Saricks and Brown call the "appeal factors" in a manner adapted to teenaged patrons.[7] Anyone who has asked a teen "What kind of book are you looking for?" knows that this question, while generally an acceptable one to ask an adult, often leads to a frustrating interchange with teens. This does not mean that young adults don't know what they like or want. Just as the overall concept of readers advisory may be foreign to them, they may be unfamiliar with articulating their reading interests.

The first thing to ascertain is the purpose this book will serve. Is this filling a free reading assignment? Does there need to be enough meat in the book for a book report? Or is it purely pleasure reading? Going after the reading assignment advisory with as much gusto as a free reading book is important, especially in light of the research showing that most students have little time to read outside of assignments.[8] A homework assignment may be the only readers advisory opportunity to connect with the teen. Just because it has to take place between 1860 and 1900, or be about a family, or be set in the West, or any number of reading topics, doesn't mean that a readers advisor can't find a book that meets the teacher's criteria and the student's interests.

A favorite question to ask adult readers advisory patrons is "What kind of book are you in the mood for?" When asking this of a teen, keep in mind the research that suggests one of the *last* parts of the brain to fully mature is the one that "controls unruly emotions."[9] What a teen

Additional Resources for YA RA

Book Lists and Book Awards. YALSA, www.ala.org/yalsa/booklists.

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is in the mood for when standing at the desk could be exactly the wrong book later that evening. Appeal speaks to more than the transient mood of the patron. It deals with the overall *feel* of the book.[10]

The questions that spark the most useful teen responses at the readers advisory desk in the Downers Grove (Ill.) Library are "What was the last book you read and really liked?" "Do you want something similar to that one?" "Do you like to read books that are like your favorite kinds of movies?" And even more useful, "Is there a book you really didn't like?" Asking "Do you read a lot?" is a gentler way of inquiring about reading ability and speed, and it's also perfectly acceptable to ask what grade the teen is in. A few follow-up questions can then aid in deciphering the approximate reading level and general tone of the book the patron is looking for.

Offering options rather than open-ended questions can lead a young adult to conclusions about what they are looking for. "Are you looking for something that's more realistic or more made-up?" After identifying a book that the teen has enjoyed, that title can be used as a gateway leading to other books. "What did you like about *Holes*? Was it the mystery, the two storylines that finally come together, or the characters?" Preferences will often be hidden in the responses. One teen preferred "romantic books" but didn't want anything by humorous romance writer Meg Cabot because, "that stuff would never happen." She was much happier with heavier, relationship-driven books, such as the story of an abusive teen relationship in *Breathing Underwater* and the tale of a love triangle between a brother, a sister, and the friend that came between them in *My Heartbeat*.

Articulating Appeal

After getting a better sense of the type of book the patron is looking for and pulling a few titles that may be matches, it's important to tailor the pitch to the audience. Crafting a book description with words and phrases that will be meaningful and interesting to the teen can and should be done without talking down to them. Is *The True Meaning of Cleavage* more appealing as "a character-focused book about friendship and coming of age," or a book "about what happens freshman year when Jess' best friend since they were kids gets a huge crush on an older guy with a girlfriend?" For an adult, it may be the former. But for someone who has yet to come of age, it's definitely the latter.

Young adults typically will want more plot description than adult patrons. Whereas an adult may be ready to check the book out after hearing it's a fast-paced book with quirky characters and an interesting, richly drawn setting, teens will still want to know what it's *about*. If the readers advisor hasn't personally read the book, taking a look at the flyleaf or giving a general overview from a reference source is a start. For books that are more focused on character than plot, a good description of the main character can go a long way in increasing the book's appeal. The readers advisor is basically introducing the patron to someone they will be spending a bit of time with.

Assuming that just because a book fits neatly into one genre, other books in the same genre would be just as desirable is a possibly problematic concept. If the teen is not an avid reader, *Harry Potter* may be the only fantasy he has experienced, and *Speak*, a gripping novel about the aftermath of rape, may be the only "problem novel." When it comes to historical fiction, one teen patron liked Holocaust fiction exclusively. Someone who liked the story of friends who pass around a great pair of jeans during a life-changing summer, *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*, might also enjoy books with alternating points of view, books told through letters, or books about friendship. Each of the three elements could take the readers advisory interview in a different direction, so shifting gears as new information is elicited can be expected.

Remembering back to the details the teen gave about books he or she enjoyed is helpful at this point. Did the format come up? Was the unique plot a draw? Or was the relationship between the characters the element that the patron noted? The new book's description can be structured by focusing on parallel details, while remaining truthful about the appeal. If the letters exchanged between characters were part of the appeal of the largely upbeat *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*, be sure to note the decidedly different tone if suggesting the much darker epistolary novel, *Letters from the Inside*, with its ambiguous but distressing ending.

Sometimes, the best efforts at engaging a teen in a readers advisory interview will fail. Here it is comforting to remem-

ber that teens should be allowed to experience the power of finding their own books. Discovering a favorite book on one's own is a mark of independence.

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Many adults can recall pulling a book off a shelf as a young person, becoming involved in the words, the characters, or the place, and feeling that they were the first to ever experience and understand that book in their own unique ways. Reading this book can be an empowering experience. It puts a young reader in the position of coming to the dinner table and saying, "I read a really great book today, you might like it," instead of being asked, "How did you like that book I gave you last week?" Sometimes, when a teen is browsing contentedly and refuses service given in a most teen-friendly way, he or she may be seeking out just such an experience.

Be Approachable

The watchword in readers advisory for young adults is approachability. Even if a perfect match isn't quickly apparent, a readers advisor can make it clear to the teen patron that he or she is taking the request just as seriously as any other request. As with nonfiction reference, even a librarian who is not an expert in antique coins can find answers in that field. Offering to look through some resources while the teen browses or works on the computer, then following up creates an opportunity for further searching. Letting the patron browse through some suggested books allows the teen more autonomy in making the final selection. By displaying a willingness to work with teen patrons on finding a great read, even if the perfect book is elusive the first time, the likelihood of creating a return patron and having a second chance to make a match is greatly increased. ■

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FEATURE

Rediscovering the History of Readers Advisory Service

Bill Crowley

Both formal and informal programs of readers advisory services are crucial aspects of the wide-ranging history of the American public library. Responsive readers advisory programs include both fiction and nonfiction as intertwined components. A critical mass of professional librarians is necessary for the long-term survival of readers advisory, and networking is central to maintaining an effective presence in the larger library community.

When the historical record of readers advisory is consulted, more than a century of accounts by both critics and enthusiasts alike directly and indirectly support the contention that contemporary readers advisory service is best understood as an organized program promoting both fiction and nonfiction discretionary reading for the dual purposes of satisfying reader needs and advancing a culture's goal of a literate population. Even when perceived as a recreational activity, effective readers advisory is inevitably in the service of an educational end. Depending on local policies or service traditions, the beneficiaries of readers advisory guidance can include adults, young adults, and children.

An Early Opponent of Active Readers Advisory Service

During the momentous year of 1876, a number of significant events occurred in what Canadians, tongue-in-cheek, like to term "the great Republic to the south."[1]

- *First*, the United States of America celebrated its centennial year.
- *Second*, the American Library Association (ALA) was founded.
- *Third*, *Library Journal* came into being, and
- *Fourth*, a comprehensive work titled *Public Libraries in the United States of America: Their History, Condition, and Management* was published by the Government Printing Office.

Within the sprawling pages of *Public Libraries in the United States of America* were such valuable resources as an English translation of significant aspects of F. Rullmann's 1874 German-language argument for university-level study of "library science"; Charles A. Cutter's "Rules for a Printed Dictionary Catalogue"; indispensable histories of public, school, academic, and special libraries; and numerous compilations of library statistics.[2] Also included was a curious essay by F. B. Perkins of the Boston Public Library titled "How to Make Town Libraries Successful."[3] In this chapter, Perkins, who was in favor of including both serious and popular literature in public library collections, nevertheless argued against what we would now term "active readers advisory." For him, it was "unreasonable" for users of a library to "plague the librarian by trying to make him [or her] pick out books" instead of selecting their own works. It was Perkins' view that the very act of asking a librarian for assistance with reading was the equivalent of returning a book in damaged condition, refusing to pay an overdue fine, or complaining to the library staff when someone borrows a volume that you want. In short, asking for reading advice was a "wrong doing," an "injustice," and an "undeserved annoyance." At a minimum, a patron's request for help in selecting books demonstrated a lack of "considerate courtesy" to the library staff.[4]

Putting aside the 1876 date of Perkins' lament, the reader might profitably reflect on the state of readers advisory service in her or his library by asking the following question: *Does anyone in my library feel the same annoyance as F. B. Perkins when asked to help a reader find a book?* If the reader is forced to answer "yes" to this query, he or she may be working with colleagues who, at bottom, see the library as a refuge from the world and not as a dynamic agency engaged in effective public service.

When Did RA, Particularly RA in the Public Library, Actually Start?

Setting a date for the start of what we now call readers advisory service, particularly readers advisory in the public library, is at best a frustrating, almost arbitrary exercise. Efforts at historical precision can founder on such basic issues as the

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absence of common definitions. For example, answers to such questions as "What exactly is a public library?" or "What really is readers advisory?" have long been disputed. As a profession, librarianship has yet to determine when and where the first American public library came into being. Was it Peterborough, New Hampshire, in 1834 or Boston, Massachusetts, in 1854?[5] It is equally likely that scholars will never be able to pinpoint the exact occasion when a public or other library formalized its previously informal process of providing adult patrons with advice on reading.

Considering the local nature of public library service, as well as the vast differences in contexts, it seems presumptuous to make sweeping generalizations about the precise genesis of readers advisory. Yet, for all the confusion over when and where readers advisory started, it is possible to identify some high points when advising readers was considered to be of more than passing importance to public libraries and the people they serve. The historical record does provide some useful hints. It is probably safe to assert that readers advisory existed, even without the name, as long as public and other library staff actually talked about books with patrons, users, or customers. As Helen E. Haines, the near-legendary figure famed as much for her nineteenth-century work with *Library Journal* as she was for later decades of leadership in teaching and writing on book selection, wrote in 1950 in the second edition of her *Living with Books*: "Advising service to readers has, of course, been a vital, continuing current in the life-stream of public library development."[6]

Historically, there have been both high points and low points in the evolution of readers advisory, and the service has been offered in different configurations at various times. For all its achievements in reminding the library profession of the value of reading in the lives of so many, much of contemporary readers advisory has been what statisticians would call an "outlier" in the long history of readers advisory service. In particular, arguing that readers advisory service applies only to works of *fiction* overlooks what previous generations learned through years of experience and reflection—the fundamentally important factor unifying readers advisory service for adults, young adults, and children alike is not whether a book is more or less made up or more or less true. It is whether or not a book tells a story, including a story presented in a biography, history, or even a cookbook or gardening book with a strong narrative content. Discussion with readers of a work predominantly characterized by the presentation of "facts," such as an encyclopedia, dictionary, or almanac, whether in online or hard-copy format, falls into a librarian's "informational" rather than "readers advisory" function.

To progress, to embed readers advisory in the ongoing programs of public, academic, and school libraries, it is necessary to move beyond the contemporary privileging of fiction to embrace the often equally compelling narratives that are to be found in histories, biographies, travel works, and even in story-based cookbooks and gardening manuals. The truism that writers of both best-selling histories and romance novels have long understood—it's great to provide accurate facts but you need a compelling narrative to keep your reader—seems to apply on both sides of the fiction-nonfiction divide.

As part of this embrace of the readers advisory past, it is necessary to understand that present-day readers advisory has reversed the traditional prestige hierarchy of how books were viewed in the library world. For much of the history of modern reading, for the vast bulk of the public library's history, as well as the histories of academic and school libraries, readers advisory has been seen as an educational function grounded in using *both* nonfiction and fiction to assist readers. However, until recently, *fiction* was the decidedly junior partner. Until the revival of readers advisory in the 1980s, *nonfiction* was the intellectual gold standard of adult readers advisory service.

The extended readers advisory literature supplies both logic and precedent for envisioning at least four periods of readers advisory history, particularly readers advisory history in the American public library:

- 1876 to 1920—Inventing RA
- 1920 to 1940—Privileging *Nonfiction* RA
- 1940 to 1984—RAy "Lost" in Adult Services
- 1984 to Date—Reviving RA

1876 to 1920—Inventing RA

Why 1876? The short answer is that more thoughtful readers advisory practitioners in the 1920–1940 period, the time when it has been asserted that the "readers' advisory movement arose," did not really accept the view that readers advisory was a new service that was invented and publicized by more youthful librarians over the objections of the 1920s variety of librarian dinosaurs.[7] They acknowledged the prior events, people, and writings that inspired their own work. For example, the October 1927 issue of ALA's *Adult Education and the Library,* a journal published during the high tide of readers advisory as reader education, claimed it was "abundantly worth while" to find inspiration in "some of the literature on libraries which appeared fifty years ago" during the extended celebrations that marked the hundredth anniversary of American independence.[8]

If the educational function of library readers advisory was stressed in this period, there were good reasons to do so. Reinforcement of a library educational commitment was tied directly to the reality that fewer than 25 percent of American children older than fourteen years of age were still in school, and relatively few adults were college graduates.[9] It is useful to keep such a learning deficit in mind when exploring the period's extended debate over the library's educational priorities, including whether or not fiction should be disseminated for its own merits or continue to be used as a lure for exposing readers to the more exalted realm of nonfiction. Whatever the local service philosophy, the circulation of books of any type was a task to be undertaken for the reader's own good and the good of the nation, since "to produce the best results the library should furnish to all the people, old and young, of average intelligence and of the highest intellectual advancements, both improvement and intellectual entertainment."[10]

1920 to 1940—Privileging *Nonfiction* RA

The claim that readers advisory was a 1920s innovation has already been challenged, but there are understandable reasons why the generation of librarians emerging into leadership after World War I (WWI) might insist, often in books and journals cited by later library historians, that readers advisory service was its original contribution and was unrelated to previous efforts to match readers with books through the library. Such claims must be examined with a certain amount of care. Defining a program, any program, as new and exciting can be an effective way of securing financial support from supervisors worried about being perceived as old-

fashioned and unconnected to current professional developments. Claims of originality can also gain the commitment of younger staff who believe that their employer is resistant to necessary change, or who want to make their own professional reputations.

There were developments in the years just prior to 1920 that gave hope for a greater appreciation of the public library's educational value, with a resulting increase in community support. First, experience with camp libraries serving American soldiers in WWI through ALA taught librarians that adult males, if given the opportunity, would actually read books and might like to have ready access to them on their return to civilian life.[11] Second, although ALA's efforts to greatly expand post-WWI library service in America did not secure many public dollars, some in the foundation world retained an interest in library issues. William S. Learned's famed 1924 work *The American Public Library and the Diffusion of Knowledge,* developed out of reports made in his capacity as a staff member of the Carnegie Foundation, stimulated a well-discussed vision of the public library as a "community intelligence service" that, at the time, was taken as a justification of its role as an educational agency.[12] The 1920s also saw the creation of full-time readers advisory positions in a number of major public libraries. This development occurred before and after the publication of the ALA Commission on the Library and Adult Education's book-length report titled *Libraries and Adult Education,* a work describing readers advisory as a major component of the public library's educational role.[13] In a later and widely disseminated summary of this work, Judson T. Jennings observed that:

> the library's contribution to adult education resolved itself into three major activities:
>
> 1. An information service regarding local opportunities for adult students.
> 2. Service to other agencies engaged in adult education.
> 3. Service to individual readers and students.[14]

Another catalyst for readers advisory in public libraries, one whose components may have had an impact on the greatest number of public libraries in the period, was ALA's Reading with a Purpose program. This was an extended effort commissioning, publishing, and disseminating a series of bibliographical essays or "reading courses."[15] Supported in part by the Carnegie Corporation, the Reading with a Purpose program brought ALA and participating libraries a considerable amount of publicity for sixty-seven bibliographic essays on subjects as diverse as the sciences, the life of Christ, contemporary Europe, and African-Americans in the United States. Such essays, printed in hard-cover or pamphlet format, provided readers with recommendations for fiction or nonfiction reading, depending on the topic covered. About 850,000 copies of the Reading with a Purpose pamphlets were sold before the series was discontinued in 1933, in part because of the problems of keeping works up to date and the reality that standardized works were not always appropriate for use with a given individual.[16] It needs to be stressed that the concentration on ways of strengthening readers advisory during this period produced a number of findings that still retain their value in the twenty-first century.

1940 to 1984—RA "Lost" in Adult Services

Following World War II, the American public library community privileged its informational function and diminished the philosophical commitment to its educational and recreational responsibilities. A major symbol of this conceptual transformation was the post-war *Public Library Inquiry,* a massive study of America's public libraries funded by what was then a substantial $200,000 grant from the Carnegie Corporation and carried out by the Social Science Research Council under the direction of political scientist Robert D. Leigh.[17] In the report's summary volume, titled *The Public Library in the United States,* Leigh and the other project staff emphasized that a mainstream professional ideology existed within the public library community supporting the commitment "to serve the community as general center of reliable information and to provide opportunity and encouragement for people of all ages to educate themselves continuously."[18] The *Inquiry* dismissed the importance of the public library's *recreational* role or "'giving people what they want'" as a distinct negative. It further asserted that librarians who viewed the public library as a "free, miscellaneous book service supported by the public for that purpose" were cleaving to a course of action that would diminish or even doom the institution in the new communications age.[19]

A spectrum of reasons has been advanced by authors such as Sharon Baker and Catherine Sheldrick Ross for the decline of readers advisory in this and the previous period, including a switch in emphasis to "more technical aspects of librarianship," the rise of other suppliers of adult education, discrediting of the idea that people ought to be strongly directed in their reading, and the lack of cost-effectiveness in readers advisory service.[20] This period was characterized by the mistaken idea, embraced by administrators trying to maximize the effectiveness of their personnel dollars, that advising readers could be enhanced by folding readers advisory units into larger entities termed "adult services departments," defined as providing "library services for the continuing educational, recreational, and cultural development of adults."[21] For various reasons, including both fashion and finance, this process reduced the number of public libraries with a dedicated readers advisory staff from sixty-three in 1935 to ten in the 1940s and 1950s.[22] Most likely, in those libraries that gave up a separate readers advisory program, it also reduced the percentage of human and financial resources dedicated to helping readers' select books from 1920 to 1940 levels. Writing about the process in 1955, Lowell Martin was probably correct in hypothesizing that the decline in effective service to readers that followed readers advisory's absorption by adult services reflected a changeover that occurred too soon, before the institutionalization of the effective routines necessary to keep the program alive without the daily zeal of staff members who had embraced readers advisory with near-religious fervor in the l920s and 1930s.[23]

1984 to Date—Reviving RA

Although clearly subject to challenge, it is useful to set the start of the contemporary revival of readers advisory in 1984, the year of the founding of the northern-Illinois based but nationally influential Adult Reading Round Table (ARRT). A few years afterward, in an address reprinted in the November 1988 issue of *Illinois Libraries,* Ted Balcom described the ongoing resurgence of readers advisory service, epitomized by the formation of ARRT and the development of effective programs at the building level of local public libraries, as a "renewed interest in an aspect of

librarianship that for many years has seemed quaint and outmoded." Balcom ascribed what he saw as a prior lack of administrative interest in readers advisory to "more than a decade of delving into seemingly more high-powered subjects, such as automation, planning, and grantsmanship," activities that had temporarily displaced the love of books that had drawn many of his listeners into the profession.[24] A more pervasive and elemental factor may also have been active in the downplaying of readers advisory. For decades, when ambitious new librarians were socialized into public library cultures, they were not exposed to the value of combining "reader" and "advice" at service desks, inside reference department offices, on organization charts, or in professional job descriptions. This absence undoubtedly sent a strongly negative message about the ranking in the public library status hierarchy of activities designed to connect readers with books. By default, readers advisory activities in the mid-twentieth century seemed to be left to the circulation staff or librarians who had resisted being overly connected with the public library's fashionable identification with "information."

ARRT's founding in 1984 provided a new respectability for a reviving service whose local and national leadership was characterized by such well-known readers advisory advocates as Ted Balcom, Joyce Saricks, and Merle Jacob.[25] Even so, the selection of 1984 for a revival date is admittedly arbitrary and does not fully reflect the time lines of the forces moving public libraries to again embrace readers advisory. Such developments with clear implications for readers advisory include the 1970s-era influence of the Baltimore County Public Library in encouraging libraries to respond to reader demands, the increasing availability of sources of readers advisory assistance in both hard-copy and electronic formats, the rise in readers advisory training by state and national library associations, the offering of courses in readers advisory in academic institutions with ALA-accredited programs, and the renewed appreciation of the service voiced by such national leaders as Robert Martin, director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services.[26]

Much of the current readers advisory revival originally prioritized fiction, perhaps recognizing that fantasy, mystery, and romance stories had been even more neglected by librarians than the stories conveyed through biography and history. As already noted, it thereby reversed the historic readers advisory prejudice in favor of nonfiction.[27]

Past NYPL Lessons for Future RA Progress

For those seeking to draw both inspiration and advice from readers advisory history, the introspective work of Jennie M. Flexner and Bryon C. Hopkins in *Readers' Advisers at Work* is a uniquely valuable resource.[28] It is a work that captures both the explicit and implicit history of the most storied readers advisory program in the 1920–1940 period—readers advisory in the New York Public Library's (NYPL) central building and branch system. Of the reasons given by Flexner and Hopkins for publishing their analysis, one is of particular usefulness to twenty-first-century readers advisory practitioners. Thinking of both their contemporaries and readers advisory staff yet to come, Flexner and Hopkins sought "to make a record of [NYPL] experience in the hope that it will be of assistance to those wishing to initiate a readers' advisory service, and to those conducting advisory services who might find profit in checking their procedures and plans with those of another library."[29]

Flexner and Hopkins' research was based on the analysis of 1,250 survey responses from users of NYPL's readers advisory, review of records in the readers advisory office, and interviews with branch library readers advisory staff. Although decades have passed, there remain quite a few lessons to be drawn from the readers advisory experience at NYPL during the early years of the twentieth century. Five in particular, are worth discussing.

Appeal to Readers of Both Fiction and Nonfiction Books

A primary finding from the New York Public Library experience of the 1920s and 1930s is the appeal to readers of both fiction and nonfiction books when they are guided through a quality readers advisory program. Sixty years-plus may have attenuated precise comparisons with present-day experience, but the willingness of men and women to read in both fiction and nonfiction areas is repeatedly encountered. The NYPL program was openly didactic in its orientation, but readers chose their areas for guidance. It may come as a shock to present-day advocates of fiction-only readers advisory to learn that female users advised by NYPL chose to be advised about reading in history and biography at nearly the same rate (15 percent) as they sought guidance for "literature" (15.6 percent), a category that consisted primarily of prose fiction. The predominant interest of 1941 males in nonfiction can resonate across time to the present day.[30]

A Program Development Admonition

Another lesson to be drawn from the 1941 Flexner and Hopkins study is distinctly cautionary. Simply stated, it is the reality that claiming a special status for readers advisory as a program superior to other public library activities is self-defeating. Readers advisory must: (a) be justified by its positive effects on the entire library program; and (b) build a building-wide or organization-wide constituency.[31] Resented readers advisory services without connections to the larger organization can be prime candidates for termination during a budget crisis, or if and when a library director wants to launch a new program, looks for areas to consolidate in order to free up resources, and hesitates to touch reference or children's services, areas that can alternate as the dangerous "third rail" of proposed library cutbacks.

Training Future Administrators in the Value of RA

Critical to the lessons to be derived from the readers advisory experience at NYPL is the reminder that senior administrators who have provided readers advisory service even on a part-time basis may become lifelong readers advisory advocates. Youth or reference librarians have been known to become directors with a continuing fondness for the programs in which they had their professional start. To achieve such a long-term effect for readers advisory, it is imperative to minimize the temptation to operate the program with only library assistants or associates. Librarians with degrees from ALA-accredited programs remain the individuals most likely to become senior managers in all but the smallest libraries. If they have work experience in readers advisory, they may bring positive memo-

ries of the service with them in their rise up the administrative ladder.[32]

Matching Reader Needs to Library Resources

The readers advisory experience of NYPL in 1941 clearly underscored the need to ensure that the human resources dedicated to meeting user needs meet or exceed user expectations. Promising effective readers advisory service and not having enough knowledgeable personnel to deliver it is far more negative than not mentioning readers advisory at all. NYPL found that one readers advisory staff member per branch was not enough to provide effective service, and "only the branch readers' adviser who has delegated her duties to one or two specific staff members and given these persons individual training in interviewing has been able to establish effective service during the hours she is off duty."[33] Readers advisory, in short, requires a critical mass of practitioners within a given institution. One readers advisory librarian or staff member is far from enough.

Networking

The final lesson to be discussed from the NYPL achievements of more than half a century ago is the value of networking with an ongoing continuing education component, what Flexner and Hopkins termed "the necessity for discussion and exchange of ideas."[34] It is one of the many reasons why, for example, the Adult Reading Round Table and readers advisory discussion groups affiliated with library systems have proven to be so successful in our own day.

Undoubtedly, there are quite a number of other lessons to be learned from the NYPL experience and the larger context of a century and a quarter of documented readers advisory history. Perhaps the most important message is the realization that contemporary readers advisory practitioners and educators are not alone. Even the best among us have much to learn from our predecessors in the ongoing effort to adapt readers advisory thinking, philosophy, and service to the constantly changing educational, informational, and recreational needs of current readers and generations of readers yet to come. ■

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Young Adult Library Services Association
a division of the American Library Association

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The selection process will take place prior to ALA's Annual Conference in Chicago, June 23–29, 2005. Preconference participants will choose 100 titles from YALSA's annual Best Books for Young Adults, ALEX, and Michael L. Printz awards lists. The books on these lists have lasted, or should last, through the years, remaining the "Best of the Best" books for young adults.

How does the process work?

- Participants will be divided into 10 groups.
- Each group will discuss titles published during a designated year from 1994 through 2004. The book lists are available on the web at www.ala.org/yalsa/booklists.
- The goal of each group will be to select 10 titles from its assigned year.
- At the end of the preconference, all lists will be combined and named the "100 Best of the Best for the 21st century."

Those interested in participating in the preconference or other YALSA programs at Annual Conference can find registration information in the January issue of *American Libraries*. For more information contact the YALSA office at 1-800-545-2433, ext. 4387, or e-mail yalsa@ala.org.

Romancing Your Readers

How Public Libraries Can Become More Romance-Reader Friendly

John Charles and Cathie Linz

Romance fiction is the most popular of all fiction genres with readers, but is the least understood fiction genre by librarians. This article will define the key elements of the romance genre, explain its appeal to readers, explore current trends shaping the genre and how they affect romance readers advisory work, and offer some practical steps that libraries can take to become more romance-reader friendly.

Sales of romance fiction in 2002 totaled $1.63 billion, yet in some public libraries romance fiction barely has a presence.[1] Romance accounts for 34.6 percent of all popular fiction sales in the United States—more than mysteries/thrillers, general fiction, and science fiction and fantasy (see figure 1).[2] Still some libraries would prefer to ignore this genre while lavishing attention on its less popular fiction counterparts. There are more than 51.1 million romance readers in North America alone, yet many of these readers cannot find the kind of books they enjoy in their local public library.[3]

The romance genre is a dominant force in the publishing world and an important choice for millions of readers, yet there are still public libraries that snub this popular fiction genre. There may be reasons why some libraries continue to hold onto their misconceived perceptions of romance fiction, but the reality of the matter is libraries need romance fiction more than the romance genre needs libraries. (See sidebar on page 44 for suggestions on becoming a romance reader-friendly library.)

This article will refute some common misperceptions that librarians hold regarding the romance genre and will explore the current trends in romance publishing.

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What Is a Romance?

The definition of what exactly constitutes a romance is one thing that has remained constant over the years. According to the Romance Writers of America, there are two key elements to any romance novel: "a central love story and an emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending." This simply means that the focus of any romance is on the relationship that develops between two people. It doesn't mean that there cannot be other elements in the story. Suspense, intrigue, time travel, history, even secondary plot lines involving other characters can all be a part of a romance; but these other elements should never overwhelm the core of the story: the relationship between the hero and heroine.

A book must also have an emotionally satisfying or optimistic ending to qualify as a romance. This simply means that the reader is left feeling positive about the relationship between the two main characters by the end of the book. It doesn't mean that every couple in a romance novel must get married, though some do, but rather that at the conclusion of the story, the hero and heroine have the potential for a happy future together.

These are the only two elements a book must have to be considered a romance.[4] This leaves authors with a lot of room for creativity, and romance readers with a lot of different choices in books. For example, a romance can have a contemporary or a historical setting. There can be a generous measure of danger or suspense in the plot. Fantasy or magic can be a part of the story. Romances can be set in big cities, small towns, in exotic foreign locales, or even distant planets. Each of these elements will add their own unique flavor to a romance.

The Appeal to Readers

One of the main reasons readers are drawn to and return to romance fiction is the genre's ability to beautifully capture the range of human emotions in a story. Romance readers find it very easy to become invested in the relationship that develops between a hero and heroine in a romance because romance

authors are very skilled at bringing these emotions into their stories. Romance readers love sharing the hopes and dreams, laughter and tears that are a part of any relationship in a romance; and this close connection with characters is one of the romance genre's most potent lures to readers.

Another reason why romance fiction is so popular with readers is simply because it is perhaps the most hopeful and optimistic of all the fiction genres. There is something wonderfully satisfying to romance readers in knowing that no matter what kind of dangers, sorrows, troubles, or complications the hero and heroine in a romance novel might encounter, by the end of the book things are going to be okay for them. It is so comforting to know that even if we dedicated romance readers cannot control the world around us, there are still places where things end happily and people do find exactly what they are seeking.

Romance fiction is also wonderful escapist fare. Sometimes we as readers just want to get away from the real world, the petty small concerns, the dull routines that must be followed, the annoying people we work with or for; a romance offers us the chance to escape our own lives for a few hours and live in another world or a different time. This is what all good genre fiction offers readers, and there is nothing wrong with this.

Misperceptions about the Genre

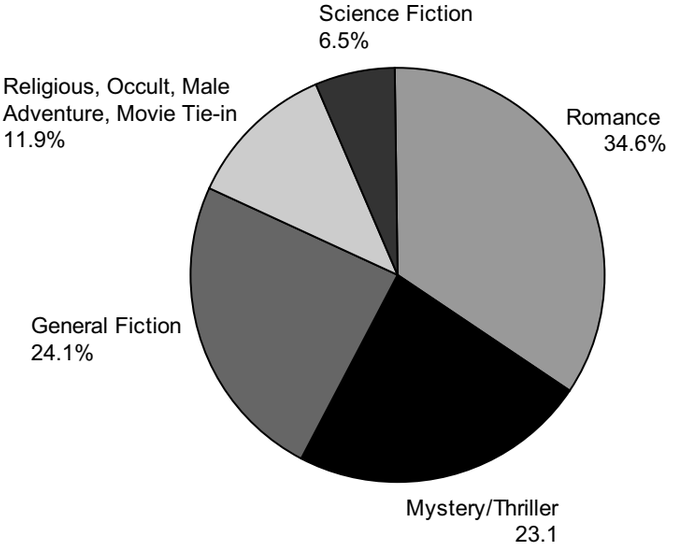
Unfortunately something that hasn't changed about the romance genre are the persistent misperceptions about romance fiction still harbored by some misguided library staff. Perhaps the biggest myth about the romance genre held by librarians who don't read romances themselves, or who cannot even be bothered to learn a little bit about the genre, is that romances are only about sex.

Nothing could be further from the truth. There is actually a wide range of sensuality in the romance genre. Romances can be sweet or steamy or anything in between, but sex is not the sole ingredient in any romance novel. The core of any romance is always going to be the relationship between the hero and heroine, but that doesn't mean sex is the only thing these two people have in common. Some relationships in some romances will have a sexual component to the story. The love scenes in these books can range from subtly mentioned to explicitly detailed; but more than anything else, the level of sensuality in a particular romance will depend on the individual author and the requirements of that particular story.

Another common misperception is that all romances are alike: if you have read one romance, you have read them all. Some librarians still believe that there is one common formula that all romance authors use, and the only possible differences in any two romances are the characters' names, and perhaps the setting.

Simply because all romances share certain common elements, they—like other fiction genres—have been labeled formulaic by librarians unknowledgeable about the genre. Though romances do share some common ingredients—the focus on the relationship between the hero and heroine and the happy or optimistic ending—it does not mean they are interchangeable. There is a big difference

Market Share of Romance in Popular Fiction



Data taken from Romance Writers of America, *2003 Romance-Fiction Sales Statistics, Reader Demographics, and Book Buying Habits*, 2003, www.rwanational.org/StatisticsBrochure2003.pdf.

FIGURE 1

Five Simple Steps to a More Romance-Reader-Friendly Library

1. Become more familiar with the romance genre and its subgenres. Read reference books on the genre, read romances themselves, and talk to romance readers.
2. Purchase romance fiction for your library's collection. While this might sound somewhat simplistic, if you don't have a good romance collection, you won't get many romance readers in your library.
3. As you select romance fiction for your library, try to purchase a range of titles from all of the romance subgenres. Series or category romance fiction should also be a part of your library's romance collection.
4. Catalog your romance fiction. Simply because the majority of romance titles currently published are paperback originals, they tend to be lost in libraries that don't catalog paperback fiction. If you don't know what you have, how can your readers?
5. Market your romance collection to readers. Whether through booklists and bibliographies, displays, programs, or even book discussion groups, let your patrons know you value romance fiction and its readers.

between formulaic books and books that share certain ingredients that are an essential part of that particular fiction genre.

The simplest way to dispute this particular misperception is by reading any two romances. For example, try reading Nora Roberts' *Three Fates,* a fast, sexy, contemporary, romantic suspense novel; and then read Barbara Metzger's *A Debt to Delia,* a beautifully poignant, sweetly romantic regency novel. Or you could try Amanda Quick's *A Paid Companion,* a witty, sexy, historical regency novel laced with a dash of danger; and then read Deborah Smith's *A Place to Call Home,* an emotionally intense contemporary romance that will have readers laughing and crying. All of these books are romances. All of them share the elements common to any romance, yet each one of these books is a unique reading experience. Each and every romance author brings their own distinct voice and writing style to their stories.

Current Trends in the Genre

Some things have changed in the romance genre in the last decade. As with any fiction genre, trends can play an important part in what is being published, what readers will find, and what libraries should be purchasing for their romance collections.

One trend that continues to shape the romance genre, and for that matter most other fiction genres, is that the lines defining the subgenres in romance are blurring. As authors explore stories that don't always fit neatly into one specific category of romance, the traditional boundaries between subgenres in romance are bending and shifting. Is a romance like Kristine Grayson's *Utterly Charming,* in which attorney Nora Barr helps handsome stranger Aethelstan Blackstone find a sleeping beauty in a glass case, more a fantasy romance or a contemporary romance? What do you do with a book like Lisa Cach's *George and the Dragon,* which has time travel, a modern-day hero, a medieval heroine, and a dragon? Or Tina St. John's *Heart of the Hunter,* which blends paranormal and historical with subtle skill. Perhaps the most important thing librarians can remember when helping readers is that each romance is different and you can't always precisely put books into distinct categories. (See the sidebar on page 46 for suggested titles in various romance subgenres.)

A particularly good example of the growing interest in blending genres is the Luna line, published by Harlequin. Popular fantasy authors such as Mercedes Lackey and science fiction authors such as Catherine Asaro are writing "compelling, female-focused fantasy with vivid characters, rich worlds, strong, sympathetic women and romantic subplots."[5] These books will appeal to both romance and fantasy readers, and smart readers advisors should remember these titles for both kinds of readers.

Chick lit and women's fiction are also playing a large part in shaping the romance genre. Chick lit focuses on female protagonists, usually in their late twenties or early thirties, who must deal with a variety of things in their lives, including family, friends, careers, and their pursuit of a good boyfriend. Chick lit fiction differs from traditional romances in that the heroines in these sassy, flirty, fun stories are searching for "Mr. Right Now" instead of "Mr. Right Forever." Romance for the chick lit heroine is just one element in her life and is not always the core of her story.

The demand for chick lit is easily discerned by the number of publishers that are creating new lines and nurturing new authors to fill the growing interest for this type of book. Harlequin, the world's largest publisher of romances, has created a separate line for its chick lit books, Red Dress Ink (RDI). The demand for RDI books has been so great that Harlequin is not only increasing the number of titles it publishes each month, but it is also branching out from trade paperback into hardcover for its RDI titles. Silhouette's Steeple Hill line of inspiration romances is also beginning to explore the idea of incorporating chick lit stories within its line. Kensington is another publisher that has noted the demand by readers for chick lit and has created its own label, Strapless, for its chick lit titles.

Women's fiction has also become increasingly popular with readers, which is not surprising since 93 percent of all romance readers are women.[6] As with chick lit, the scope of the story in women's fiction is broader. The heroines in women's fiction are usually in their late thirties or forties, generally older than their chick lit counterparts (a fact that is not lost on many romance readers who enjoy seeing a heroine they can identify with). Like their chick lit sisters though, women's fiction protagonists

find their lives, and thus their story, revolving around family, friends, work, and love. Though romance can be important for the heroine in women's fiction, it doesn't always command the total focus of her story. Often, it is the many different relationships a woman has and her relationship with herself that come together to form the core story of a women's fiction novel. With many popular romance authors, such as Barbara Samuel, Kristin Hannah, and Susan Wiggs, all writing women's fiction, it isn't surprising there is a growing demand for this kind of fiction from romance readers.

Tough heroines are also fashionable in the genre. While romance heroines have always been strong and capable—just try juggling work, family, and a hero—this new breed of heroines is inspired by cinematic heroines such as Lara Croft (of *Tomb Raider* fame), Buffy the Vampire Slayer (who could kill a vampire and still get her man), and Jennifer Garner's *Alias* spy Sydney Bristow. Reflecting this new interest, Silhouette launched a whole line, Bombshell, in 2004 devoted to this type of heroine, with other publishers such as Dorchester also offering readers who enjoy kick-butt heroines some new choices in romance.

Recommended Romance Titles by Subgenre

If there is one thing certain to inspire a "spirited" dialogue among readers, it's a list of recommended books! Remember all the fuss when Random House came out with the list of "100 Best Novels of the Century" a few years ago? The challenge was to come up with a list of fifty currently in print (as of September 2004) titles that would reflect the rich diversity of the romance genre and that could serve as an introduction for librarians new to the genre. The authors and titles below are the result, but they are not by any means the only romance titles and authors we would recommend!

Contemporary

Crusie, Jennifer. *Bet Me*
Eagle, Kathleen. *The Night Remembers*
Greene, Jennifer. *Where Is He Now?*
Hailstock, Shirley. *Legacy*
Kitt, Sandra. *Southern Comfort*
Macomber, Debbie. *The Snow Bride*
Phillips, Susan Elizabeth. *Ain't She Sweet*
Smith, Deborah. *A Place to Call Home*

Regency

Harbaugh, Karen. *The Vampire Viscount*
Kelly, Carla. *The Wedding Journey*
Metzger, Barbara. *A Debt to Delia*
St. George, Nonnie. *The Ideal Bride*

Inspirational

Baer, Judy. *The Whitney Chronicles*
Hatcher, Robin Lee. *Patterns of Love*
Henderson, Dee. *The Negotiator*
Rivers, Francine. *The Scarlet Thread*

Classics

Heyer, Georgette. *Bath Tangle*
Small, Bertrice. *Skye O'Malley*
Spencer, Lavyrle. *Morning Glory*
Stewart, Mary. *Nine Coaches Waiting*
Woodiwiss, Kathleen. *Shanna*

Chick Lit

Cabot, Meg. *Boy Meets Girl*
Cunnah, Michelle. *32aa*
Kwitney, Alisa. *The Dominant Blonde*
Senate, Melissa. *See Jane Date*

Women's Fiction

Gaffney, Patricia. *The Saving Graces*
Hannah, Kristin. *The Things We Do for Love*
Samuel, Barbara. *No Place Like Home*
Wiggs, Susan. *The Ocean Between Us*

Historical

Balogh, Mary. *Slightly Married*
Beverley, Jo. *Devilish*
Brockway, Connie. *The Bridal Season*
Dodd, Christina. *Some Enchanted Evening*
Garwood, Julie. *The Bride*
Kinsale, Laura. *Flowers from the Storm*
Kleypas, Lisa. *Suddenly You*
Medeiros, Teresa. *The Bride and the Beast*
Osborne, Maggie. *Silver Lining*
Putney, Mary Jo. *A Kiss of Fate*
Quick, Amanda. *The Paid Companion*

Paranormal

Feehan, Christine. *Dark Prince*
Kenyon, Sherrilyn. *Fantasy Lover*
Krinard, Susan. *The Forest Lord*
Kurland, Lynn. *A Garden in the Rain*
Moning, Karen Marie. *The Immortal Highlander*

Romantic Suspense

Brockmann, Suzanne. *Into the Night*
Gardner, Lisa. *The Perfect Husband*
Howard, Linda. *Mr. Perfect*
Krentz, Jayne Ann. *Sharp Edges*
Roberts, Nora. *Three Fates*

New Looks in Cover Art

One of the frequent criticisms in the past of the romance genre has been that the covers are embarrassing to both readers and the authors. Usually this refers to the popular clinch type of cover featuring a hero and heroine (in various states of undress) clutching one another rather enthusiastically. Librarians long ago should have learned to stop judging a book by its cover, but those who currently hope to use this as an excuse for not purchasing romance fiction will find that this justification no longer holds up. In the past ten years we've seen covers on romances continue to evolve from the traditional clinch, to the pastel floral designs that were so popular in the early 1990s, to a variety of new looks. One example of the new choices in romance covers are the so-called real estate covers, like Susan Elizabeth Phillips *Breathing Room* or Elizabeth Bevarly's *The Ring on Her Finger,* that feature a building of some sort, often surrounded by a garden or vegetation. Publishers hope this type of cover gives a warm and welcoming appearance, one that will draw the reader into the world created by the author.

Over the past five years, cartoon covers have been an extremely popular choice for romantic comedies, such as those published by Avon. These colorful covers use a cartoon type of drawing to

convey the lighter tone of the story and signal readers that the book will be light and humorous. Recently, cartoon covers have continued to evolve, moving toward a more stylized look as seen on Karen Kendall's *Someone Like Him* or even more so on Mary McBride's *My Hero,* as publishers try to capture the popularity of this type of cover and broaden its use to other kinds of romances.

The most recent trend in romance covers is the leg/shoe look. Whether it is the sexy, flirty look of a woman's legs as she puts on high heels that graces Susan Elizabeth Phillips' book *Ain't She Sweet* (see page 48) or the breezy, cute cover of Jennifer Crusie's *Bet Me* with its saucy shoes set against a bold blue cherry-filled sky, these contemporary romances signal to readers that their stories feature sassy, empowered heroines who will triumph in life and love.

While covers featuring the hero embracing the heroine are not the only choice in the market, they continue to remain popular with many romance readers, and thus many romance publishers. One new twist on the clinch cover is that now some covers are becoming more torso shots, including the clothed body of the hero or heroine, or both, but not their features. Leaving out the characters' faces allows readers to use their own imagination. Such is the case with the cover of Suzanne Brockmann's reissued *Frisco's Kid,* Christina Dodd's *Just the Way You Are,* and Connie Brockway's *My Seduction*.

Covers, along with the stories themselves, will continue to evolve with blending between the various looks as the marketing and art departments attempt to find the next fresh look. Because many librarians are now even more focused on marketing their collections to readers, understanding how covers can draw readers is a necessary part of readers advisory work, but librarians should always remember the most important thing is what comes between the covers of a book.

I Want another One Just Like . . .

Publishers of romance fiction have discovered what other fiction genres knew long ago: series or books linked by common characters or a setting are popular with readers. Series have long been a staple of the mystery genre, helping to build an author's audience and satisfying a reader's need for another book just like the one they finished. Now it seems romance publishers are enthusiastically embracing this concept to build reader interest and demand for particular authors.

A recent example of this is Madeline Hunter's Seducer series. Beginning with *The Seducer,* published in October 2003, Hunter would go on to offer readers three more historical romances published one month after the other, featuring four rakish friends who find love and danger in regency England. Mary Balogh's Slightly series of six regency historical novels, each featuring a different member of the Bedwyn family, were published within two years to the delight of her fans. Yet another example is Nora Roberts, who has long been fascinated by the connections that can develop between different members within a family. Roberts has written numerous trilogies, including her contemporary Born In series featuring three different sisters, and her recent

Romance Readers Advisory and Collection Development Resources

Books

Bouricius, Ann. *The Romance Readers' Advisory: The Librarian's Guide to Love in the Stacks*. ALA, 2000. ISBN 0-8389-0779-2. $32. Bouricius articulates the appeal of the genre to readers and writers, clarifies the differences between romance subgenres, and gives practical tips on collection development and the romance readers advisory interview.

Carpan, Carolyn. *Rocked by Romance: A Guide to Teen Romance Fiction*. Libraries Unlimited, 2004. ISBN 1-59158-022-6. $39. Carpan identifies the appeal factors of more than 500 teen romance titles arranged by categories such as humor, historical, and paranormal. Includes information on award winners, series, and profiles of selected YA romance authors.

Krentz, Jayne Ann, ed. *Dangerous Men and Adventurous Women: Romance Writers on the Appeal of the Romance*. Univ. of Pennsylvania Pr., 1992. ISBN 0-8122-1411-0. $14.95. The always entertaining Krentz and a distinguished troop of romance writers tackle the myths and biases that plague the genre. A key source for understanding the appeal of the romance to its readers.

Mussell, Kay, and Johanna Tunon, eds. *North American Romance Writers*. Scarecrow, 1999. ISBN 0-8108-3604-1. $42.50. A collection of essays on the genre by thirty contemporary North American romance writers including Mary Balogh, Jo Beverley, Jennifer Crusie, and Nora Roberts.

Ramsdell, Kristin. *Romance Fiction: A Guide to the Genre*. Libraries Unlimited, 1999. ISBN 1-56308-335-3. $47.50. Perhaps the most comprehensive book on the genre for librarians (and readers). After an introduction and history of the romance genre, Ramsdell devotes chapters to each subgenre, defines its appeal to readers, and offers a bibliography of romance authors and titles from the subgenre. Essential for any reference collection.

Regis, Pamela. *A Natural History of the Romance Novel*. Univ. of Pennsylvania Pr., 2003. ISBN 0-8122-3303-4. $24.95. Regis defines the romance genre and covers its literary history from *Pamela* to Nora Roberts.

Web Sites

Romance Readers Anonymous: www.toad.net/~dolma. Provides information on and details about subscribing to the Internet's oldest electronic discussion list devoted to discussing romance fiction.

Romance Writers of America: www.rwanational.org. The best site to begin with for anyone needing information on the romance genre with links to authors and publishers. Site includes a special section for librarians.

Romantic Times Book Club: www.romantictimes.com. Site for the genre's most popular fan review magazine. Includes reviews of romances, lists of romances by genre, and author profiles.

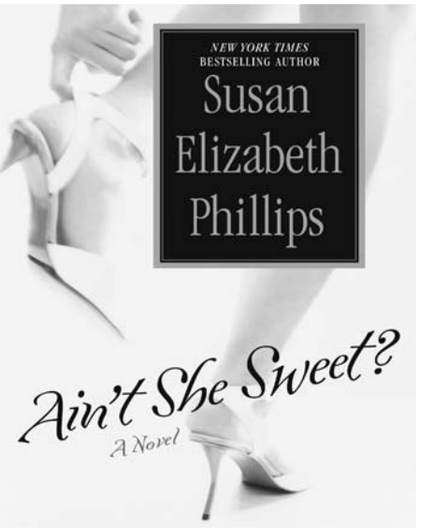
contemporary fantasy Key series featuring three different friends.

Though it might seem as if the romance genre has only recently embraced the concept of linked or connected books, Harlequin has used it for its series romances for years. In some cases, such as *Catching the Crown* or *Logan's Legacy,* different authors contribute their own book to a linked series. In other cases one author will write several linked books herself, as author Virginia Kantra did with her Trouble in Eden trilogy, each of which was set in the same small town. Another example is Harlequin Blaze author Alison Kent, who has written a number of sexy contemporary series romances whose heroines are all connected through their jobs at a company called gIRL gEAR.

What this blossoming trend means to libraries is that, now more than ever, collection development and materials selection is important. Libraries can no longer just purchase one or two titles by a popular author. Readers expect to find all the books in a series or in some way connected to one another in their local library's collection. (See sidebar on page 47 for romance readers advisory and collection development resources.)

Living Happily Ever After

Perhaps one of the most important changes that has occurred in public libraries is the way we are now treating the romance genre. Many librarians are finally getting that romance fiction is just as important a genre as any other we might have in our collections and to dismiss it sends a powerful message to readers. The one thing that romance readers and authors want, and now expect, from their public library is the same respect and attention we give to other fiction genres.



Susan Elizabeths Phillips' *Ain't She Sweet*

With a market of more than seven million readers who borrow romances from public libraries, the romance genre offers a wealth of exciting opportunities.[7] The opportunity to satisfy the demands of these current readers and bring potential new readers into your library holds forth the alluring promise of increased circulation. The opportunity to help connect an individual reader with these richly diverse stories, which joyfully celebrate the forging of a bond between two people, is perhaps one of the most satisfying experiences we can have as readers' advisors. Libraries that are willing to embrace the romance genre will discover that the promise of a happily-ever-after ending guaranteed to romance readers *can* really come true! ■

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WNBA Award Given to Seattle Librarian and Author Nancy Pearl

The Women's National Book Association is pleased to announce the winner of the WNBA Award for 2004/05 is Nancy Pearl, author, librarian, book reviewer, and radio talk show personality. The fiftieth recipient of the prestigious award, Pearl is being honored for her extraordinary contributions to the world of books. WNBA presented the award at a reception at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., on January 28, co-sponsored by the Center for the Book at the LOC. Another reception in Pearl's honor will be held in Manhattan on the eve of BookExpo America, Thursday, June 2, sponsored by the New York City chapter of WNBA.

Created in 1940, bestowed annually until 1975 and every two years from 1976 on, the WNBA Award honors living American women who derive all or part of their income from books and related arts, and who have done outstanding work promoting books and literacy well beyond the boundaries of their professional obligations.

Having spent the past three decades galvanizing readers and markets by promoting books and literacy for readers of all ages and backgrounds, Pearl just retired from the Seattle Public Library as director of Youth Services at the Washington Center for the Book. During her eleven years there, she founded the "If All Seattle Reads the Same Book" program, which has become a model for reading programs in urban and rural communities across the country.

Her weekly radio show on KUOW-FM (94.9) in Seattle and her frequent guest appearances on National Public Radio have also sent people scurrying to bookstores and libraries. Broadcasters and reporters delight in tapping her prodigious memory. She is especially fond of reciting first lines from her favorite book—in print, in person, and on the air.

Her current tour highlights her two newest projects, the widely admired *Book Lust: Recommended Reading for Every Mood, Moment, and Reason* , and her *Book Lust 2005: A Reader's Calendar* (with David Belisle), both published by Sasquatch Books. Sasquatch also expects to publish Pearl's next book, *More Book Lust,* in May 2005.

News from PLA

Help PLA with Recuitment Efforts

The Recruitment of Public Librarians Committee is conducting an online survey to obtain a current statistical picture of the recruitment, retention, and retirement of all public librarians in the United States. The data collected will be used to formulate a formal plan for PLA to appropriately address a variety of issues related to recruiting and retaining a high-quality, diverse workforce of public librarians over the next decade. **Please encourage all public librarians in your organization, including non-PLA members, to complete this very important survey at www.pla.org by February 28, 2005.**

Candidate Slate for 2005 PLA Election

President-Elect/Vice President
Susan Hildreth, California State Librarian
Claudia Sumler, Director, Camden County Library, Voorhees, N.J.

Issues and Concerns Cluster Steering Committee
Carolyn Anthony, Director, Skokie (Ill.) Public Library
Rivkah Sass, Director, Omaha (Neb.) Public Library
Irene "Renee" Blalock, Associate Director, Birmingham (Ala.) Public Library
Ann Cousineau, Director, Solano County Library, Fairfield, Calif.

Library Development Cluster Steering Committee
Kathleen Reif, Director, St. Mary's County Library, Leonardtown, Md.
Ramiro Salazar, Director of Libraries, Dallas Public Library
Elyse Adler, Research and Special Projects Administrator, Nashville (Tenn.) Public Library
Alan Harkness, Staff Development Manager, Gwinnett County Public Library, Lawrenceville, Ga.

Library Services Cluster Steering Committee
John D. "Danny" Hales Jr., Director, Suwanee River Regional Library, Live Oak, Fla.
Marcellus Turner, Director of Public Services, Jefferson County Public Library, Lakewood, Colo.
Sari Feldman, Executive Director, Cuyahoga County Public Library, Parma, Ohio
Eva Poole, Director of Libraries, Denton (Tex.) Public Library

Join a PLA Committee

Committee involvement offers you the opportunity to share your experiences, gain additional expertise, and learn from your peers—all while advancing the work of the profession. PLA is always looking for committee members and it is easy to get involved!

Here's how: Just visit our committee Web site at www.pla.org, complete a committee volunteer form, and then return it to our office, or call 1-800-545-2433, ext. 5752, and have one sent to you. If you have any questions about becoming a PLA committee member, please contact Shannon Distel at 1-800-545-2433, ext. 5026, or sdistel@ala.org. Please note that committee members must be members of both ALA and PLA.

Maybe It's Not Too Late . . .

Forgot to register for PLA's 2005 Spring Symposium? Even though the registration deadline has passed, there may yet be a few slots open. Call PLA at 1-800-545-2433, ext. 5752, to check if there are any openings.

Continuing Education Calendar Available on PLA Web site

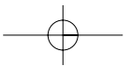
Plan your year with PLA—the 2005 PLA continuing education events calendar is up on our Web site at www.pla.org.

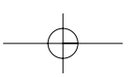
www.plablog.org

PLA has instituted a blog on its Web site. This is the first national library blog sponsored by an association. Fifteen bloggers covered the ALA Midwinter Meeting in what PLA considered a test run for a continuous blogging effort. Steven M. Cohen, *PL*'s Internet Spotlight columnist, spearheaded the effort. Check out out at www.plablog.org.

Save the Date!

PLA's next national conference will be held March 21–25, 2006, in Boston, Massachusetts. In addition to more than one hundred continuing educations programs, the conference also will feature a large exhibits hall, author events, preconferences, networking, tours, social events, and much more. Mark your calendar and visit www.pla.org for updates and information. ■





Fundamentals of Collection Development

By Peggy Johnson. Chicago: ALA, 2004. 360p. $60, $54 ALA members (ISBN 0-8389-0853-5) LC 2003-016815.

Intended for those with little experience in collection development and management, *Fundamentals of Collection Development* presents a combination of history, theory, current thinking, and practical advice from a contemporary perspective.

Nine chapters cover an introduction to the topic, organization and staffing, policy, planning and budgets, developing collections, managing collections, marketing, liaison and outreach activities, electronic resources, cooperative collection development and management, and collection analysis. Each well-documented chapter is followed by a case study that describes a library or situation requiring various collection management tasks to be completed; topical supplementary readings follow. A lengthy appendix of selection aids includes bibliographic tools and directories, review sources, and guides to reviews.

The writing is crisp and clear, and the topics chosen are germane, especially the lengthy sections on the ethics of dealing with vendors, intellectual freedom concerns of collection work, the licensing problems involved in providing access to electronic resources, and the problem of applying traditional budget categories to resources that demand both hardware and software purchases simultaneously. Author Peggy Johnson also understands that the collection must be promoted and that there must be outreach to user audiences, although she does not address the internal outreach that centralized collection development offices in public library systems need to do with their own branches and public services staff.

If the book has any problems at all, they lie in its generic one-size-fits-all quality that emphasizes function over context. For example, school libraries do not get much attention. Problems with fiction and popular audio and video materials—prime concerns of public libraries—are not explored in depth, although Johnson does allude to the profession's ambivalence toward fiction over the years. The term "young adult" does not appear in the book. The collection analysis chapter could use some visual examples of the methods surveyed, but is otherwise comprehensive. The history sections are illuminating but would have been more so if used specifically within the text to show how an idea or practice originated, rather than being separated out. Just a quibble: the *Interracial Books Bulletin* ceased publication more than a decade ago and should not be included in the list of selection aids.

The book is obviously intended for an MLS program, where its deficiencies can easily be addressed by outside readings, lectures, and assignments. It may also serve as background for in-service training for paraprofessional staff, or as a reference for collection development staff.—*Mary K. Chelton, Associate Professor, Graduate School of Library and Information Studies, Queens College, Flushing, N.Y.*

Teen Book Discussion Groups @ the Library

By Constance B. Dickerson. New York: Neal-Schuman, 2004. 172p. $49.95 (ISBN 1-55570-485-9) LC 2003-044261.

This recent offering from the teens@the library series published by Neal-Schuman offers practical advice and resources for starting or continuing successful teen book discussion groups.

The book begins with "15 Sure Fire Suggestions for Successful Book Discussions." These tips are excellent; indeed, this part could have been expanded and covered in more detail. Some of these tips include ice breakers for a shy group, generic questions to get any book discussion rolling, guidelines, tips for appealing to target audiences like boys, and descriptions of different types of book discussions such as theme-based, free-form, and traditional. Interspersed with these lists are diverse examples of how libraries across the country offer teen book discussions.

This guide then offers sample book discussions for fifty modern teen books. Each includes the areas of bibliographic information, themes, genre, main characters, and tips. This is followed by a synopsis and at least ten to fifteen possible discussion questions. Titles include current favorites and award winners such as *Hole in My Life* by Jack Gantos, *The Gospel According to Larry* by Janet Tashjian, and *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold. The book includes many multicultural titles and other themes important to teens. The titles are both popular and provocative, and should appeal to a wide range of teens.

Additional helpful aspects of this book include a list for further reading and theme, title, and author indexes. While there are several books about teen library services on the market, this book, with its numerous examples of modern books for discussion, is hardly redundant. It includes many titles appropriate for older teens, and not just safe, generic titles, increasing its usability and value for librarians. This title is highly recommended for both school and public libraries.—*Amy Alessio, Teen Coordinator, Schaumburg (Ill.) Township District Library*

Teaching and Marketing Electronic Information Programs

A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians

By Donald A. Barclay. New York: Neal-Schuman, 2003. 255p. w/disk, $75 (ISBN: 1-55570-470-0) LC 2003-052744.

Have you ever heard from patrons, "Why do we need to use the library when everything is on the Internet?" Well, *Teaching and Marketing Electronic Information Programs* by Donald Barclay shows us how to effectively teach information literacy using all of a library's resources *plus* the Web. Barclay explains that information literacy is difficult to define because "computer skills are one element of electronic information

If you are interested in reviewing or submitting materials for "By the Book," contact Julie Elliot, Assistant Librarian, Reference/Coordinator of Public Relations and Outreach, Indiana University South Bend, 1700 Mishawaka Ave., P.O. Box 7111, South Bend, IN 43334; jmfelli@insb.edu.

Jennifer Schatz is the contributing editor of this column. She is currently reading *Couldn't Keep it to Myself: Testimonies from Our Imprisoned Sisters* by Wally Lamb and *From Socrates to Sartre: The Philosophic Quest* by T. Z. Lavine.

"By the Book" reviews professional development materials of potential interest to public librarians, trustees, and others involved in library service.

PLA policy dictates that publications of the Public Library Association not be reviewed in this column. Notice of new publications from PLA will generally be found in the "News from PLA" section of *Public Libraries*. A description of books written by the editors or contributing editors of *Public Libraries* may appear in this column but no evaluative review will be included for these titles.

literacy, but they are just part of the story" (2). He goes on to say that "computer-savvy people are not information literate because they lack an understanding of information economics or cannot formulate an effective search strategy" (2).

This book is highly organized, divided into four parts that take the reader through the process of teaching an information literacy class. The four parts are Teaching Electronic Information Literacy: Key Concepts and Strategies; Ready-to-Go PowerPoint Presentations for Teaching Electronic Information Literacy; Becoming a Master Electronic Information Literacy Instructor; and Managing the Successful Electronic Information Literacy Program.

Part I discusses how to show students that information is not always just a "click away" (15). Barclay asserts that before teaching anything, instructors should assess what computer skills students have because everyone has different levels of computer literacy. Barclay provides lists of what students should be able to perform on the computer and standards of information literacy. With the influx of information on the Web, students believe they do not need the library. The "just a click away" mythology states that "all information is easily findable and instantly available on the web with no need to evaluate the information found" (15). To disprove these myths, instructors should not be anti-Internet. They should explain what information can be found on the Web, also that what may be there today may not be there tomorrow, and what was once free may start charging a fee. Students need to recognize that the best information may not be found directly on the Internet, including databases, e-journals, and e-books. Barclay also explains plagiarism, copyright, and public domain as well as methods of searching, such as Boolean operators, stop words, and truncation.

This book comes with a CD-ROM that contains the author's PowerPoint presentations on different information literacy topics. Barclay includes print screens of these presentations and explains how to use these presentations when teaching; examples include Boolean Logic and Electronic Searching Essentials.

Part 3 describes how to prepare for the one-time information literacy class, as well as the semester-long information literacy class. He explains the procedures for forming a lesson plan vary depending on what type of class is being taught. For example, a fifty-minute class can cover three or four main points. He goes over teaching styles and how to keep the class interested, as well as how to develop a syllabus and assignments.

Part 4 goes into how to arrange the electronic classroom. Barclay states that marketing is important; students, faculty, and administrators need to be made aware of what the library does and how necessary information literacy is. It is also important to assess the success of these classes by surveys and other particular methods.

This book is very organized with bibliographies at the end of every chapter, an appendix, and an index. The CD-ROM is very useful. Barclay presents the information in an easy-to-understand way. *Teaching and Marketing Electronic Information Programs* should be highly useful to academic libraries and public libraries.—*Jen Dawson, Electronic Resources Librarian, Kanawha County Public Library, Charleston, W.Va.*

Seeking Meaning
A Process Approach to Library and Information Services

By Carol Collier Kuhlthau. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2d ed. 2004. 247p. $40 (ISBN 1-59158-094-3) LC 2003-060198.

The arrival of a new edition of one of the most cited, discussed, and well-regarded theories of information seeking is very good news indeed, especially since research using it has now been done in academic and public libraries in addition to the high school libraries where it was first studied.

Borrowing theories from John Dewey, Jerome Bruner, and Gary Kelly, Kuhlthau's Information Search Process (ISP) model theorizes that information seeking is a process during which searchers seek and construct meaning. She refutes a common tenet of information science, taken from signal theory, that information seeking does not reduce, but augments uncertainty (in its psychological and emotional sense). The fits and starts of the process are delineated as a series of stages that involve actions, thoughts, and feelings, each of which offers a "zone of intervention" for librarians trying to help searchers in different ways (levels of mediation), depending on where the person is diagnosed to be in the process, rather than just pointing everyone to resources—characterized here as the old one-size-fits-all "bibliographic model"—which is often needed only at the very end of the process, if at all.

Of particular interest is Kuhlthau's interest in the emotions surrounding the information-seeking process, especially before the searcher finds a focus for the research and the different processes brought to bear on routine versus complex tasks. The book includes several detailed analyses of adult searchers, as well as reflection from one of her study participants who found research papers in college much easier because of his exposure to the search process in high school. Each study in which Kuhlthau was involved includes details about methods and instruments used to gather data, no doubt in the hopes of provoking further replication studies. One important point made is that all the information sought in all the studies described can be characterized as "imposed," meaning that they were not voluntary activities.

The main interest in the ISP model has been in schools, where information-literacy instruction can be built around it, and the book includes sections on the implications for education. While this is not the only information-seeking model in LIS literature, and the type of information sought may limit its ability to be generalized across information-seeking contexts, its prevalence alone makes it noteworthy, and it is a pleasure to have such a clear, documented delineation of it here. This is an important, extremely well-executed book.—*Mary K. Chelton, Associate Professor, Graduate School of Library and Information Studies, Queens College, Flushing, N.Y.*

Building Better Web Sites
A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians

By Yuwu Song. New York: Neal-Schuman, 2003. 355p. Book + CD-ROM. $75 (ISBN1-55570-466-2) LC 2002-035769.

Building Better Web Sites is an excellent guide for building and maintaining quality library Web sites. The author, Yuwu Song, is a Web developer and instruction librarian at Arizona State University Libraries, where his main responsibility is developing Web sites related to library instruction. Song shares his knowledge and expertise on Web site design in this book to assist librarians in creating or improving their own library Web sites.

Having library Web sites has become a necessity for offering information in a nontraditional format. As time passes, it becomes all the more essential to have quality library Web sites for those patrons whose only interaction with the library will be the Web site. This book will help librarians meet this goal. *Building Better Web Sites* follows the pattern of the other books in the *How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians* series by breaking down the subject matter in such a way that novice Web designers will understand and learn the concepts. The areas covered will also stimulate those who have Web design experience with the more advanced techniques beyond basic HTML.

This book covers both principles and techniques in Web design and is tailored to

Continued on page 55

NEW PRODUCT NEWS

EBSCO Offers NoveList Readers Advisory Service Online

NoveList, a pioneer in readers advisory tools, not only provides access to a database of more than 120,000 fiction titles, 90,000 full-text reviews, 36,000 subject headings, and a complete spectrum of searching options, but also offers a wide range of supplemental resources.

The "Find a Favorite Author" or "Find a Favorite Title" feature may be used to locate a list of titles by John Grisham. Users may select one of these titles to find more than two hundred other legal thrillers. The product also offers natural language searching of the product's full-text reviews to find fast-paced thrillers or books that make good read aloud titles for a day-care center.

In addition, NoveList offers:

- more than 1,200 preconstructed booklists on a wide range of topics and genres;
- book discussion guides that include information about the author, plot summaries, discussion questions, and recommendations for further reading;
- booktalk scripts developed by well-known young adult librarians that can help staff develop their own talks or be used as handouts to supplement their next trip to an area school;
- read-alike lists developed by nationally known reader advisory experts. These lists describes an author's appeal and style and then define how the suggested read-alikes are selected based on the traits described for the author; and
- training options and resource materials.

NoveList can be linked to a library's catalog so that a user can check to see if the library owns a copy of a book described in the database.

www.ebsco.com

What's Next: A List of Books in Series, 2003 Updated Edition

Compiled by Nancy Mulder and Sandra Graham. Comstock Park, Mich.: Kent District Library, 2004. 373p. $35 (no ISBN).

What's Next is a list of both adult and youth books in series. The book is divided into four sections—series with a single author, series with multiple authors, index by title of series, and youth series-index by title of series. The pages of the book are color-coded. Everything is listed in alphabetical order, either by series title or author's last name, so it is easy to find books in series order. When possible, the books have been identified by genre.

The compiling of *What's Next* was coordinated by Nancy Mulder, branch manager of the Comstock Park Branch of Kent District Library in Michigan, and Sandra Graham, branch manager of the Alto Branch of Kent District Library. The book, which was published in April 2004 by Kent District Library, sells for $35 plus shipping costs. An order form for *What's Next* can be printed from KDL's Web site.

Kent District has updated and published this book for nearly ten years. The adult portion of *What's Next* is also available in a searchable format on the Web site, and is continuously updated.

www.kdl.org

New Readers Advisory Books from Libraries Unlimited

African American Literature: A Guide to Reading Interests. By Alma Dawson and Connie Van Fleet. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2004. 500p. $65 (ISBN 1-56308-931-9).

This is the first readers advisory guide to focus specifically on African-American literature. It organizes titles by genre (crime and detective fiction, frontier literature, historical fiction, inspirational literature, speculative fiction, romance, and mainstream fiction). In all, more than seven hundred titles are categorized and described. Award-winning titles are noted. In addition, keywords and subject lists accompany each entry. Title-author and subject indexes provide additional access. A list of resources for information on African-American authors will be posted on the Libraries Unlimited Web site as a supplement to the book. The book includes a brief history of the evolution of African American literature, guidelines for collection development and research, and tips for the readers advisor.

Blood, Bedlam, Bullets, and Badguys: A Reader's Guide to Adventure/Suspense Fiction. By Michael B. Gannon. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2004. 400p. $55 (ISBN: 1-56308-732-4) LC 2003060527.

This comprehensive guide to adventure and suspense fiction addresses the genre and its subgenres and includes titles published between 1941 and 2004. Each of the two thousand annotations describes

The contributing editor of this column is **Vicki Nesting**, Regional Branch Librarian at the St. Charles Parish Library, Louisiana. Submissions may be sent to her at 21 River Park Dr., Hahnville, LA 70057; vnestin@bellsouth.net.

Vicki Nesting is currently reading *By a Spider's Thread* by Laura Lippman, *Shoot the Moon* by Billie Letts, and *High Country Fall* by Margaret Maron.

and evaluates the best and most popular titles in the genre, and provides icons denoting the books that have been turned into films and titles that are highly recommended. A concise history and detailed guidelines for advising readers are included, along with subgenre definitions and related critical literature. Indexes let readers browse and search by author and title, subject, main character, page-turner, and works-to-film.

Jewish American Literature: A Guide to Reading Interests. By Rosalind Reisner. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2004. 360p. $55 (ISBN: 1-56308-984-X).

Like other titles in the genreflecting advisory series, the book organizes titles by genre (mysteries, thrillers, historical fiction, science fiction and fantasy, stories of romance, and literary fiction). In addition, there are chapters on Holocaust literature and on biography and autobiography. More than seven hundred titles are categorized and described.

Each chapter is further organized by subgenre and theme. Award-winning titles are noted, as are books that appeal to young adult readers and titles appropriate for book clubs and reading discussions. In addition, the author presents guidelines for building and maintaining a collection of Jewish literature, tips for advising readers, and lists of further resources for exploring the genre.

Rocked by Romance: A Guide to Teen Romance Fiction. By Carolyn Carpan. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2004. 304p. $39 (ISBN: 1-59158-022-6).

As teen romance differs substantially from adult romance, it can be difficult to match teens with the right books. Carpan offers help, identifying more than five hundred books organized by teen reader preference—such as humorous romance, issues romance, and romantic suspense. She provides plot summaries and notes appeal features—such as a charming protagonist or an evocative setting—and provides information about award winners and series. Also included are research materials, a core collection list, and profiles of authors of young adult romances.

Nonfiction Readers' Advisory. By Robert Burgin. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2004. 264p. $39.95 (ISBN: 1-59158-115-X).

This new work by Burgin will address the issue of how readers advisors can expand their repertoire and make better use of their library's collection by incorporating nonfiction into the readers advisory transaction. Some of the most notable authorities on readers advisory and reading promotion—Ken Shearer, Catherine Ross, Bill Crowley, Connie Van Fleet, Alma Dawson, Duncan Smith—contribute their insights on this arena of readers advisory.

Reference and Research Guide to Mystery and Detective Fiction, 2d ed. By Richard J. Bleiler. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2004. 848p. $78 (ISBN: 1-56308-924-6) LC 2003058905.

This new edition of Bleiler's guide is a reference and research tool, as well as an aid to collection development. Evaluative reviews of approximately one thousand reference works—including Web sites—on mystery and detective fiction provide in-depth discussions of their content, strengths, weaknesses, and usefulness, often comparing titles to similar or competing works.

In a feature new to this edition, Bleiler indexes reference works that provide biographical information on mystery writers, and lists the key Web sites on these authors. More than twenty-five hundred bio-bibliographic citations to individual mystery writers are given. Organized by publication type for easy access, this work also features a detailed index.

www.lu.com

What Do I Read Next? Offers Online Readers Advisory Assistance

What Do I Read Next?—a readers advisory tool available from Gale—offers users more than 100,000 titles, more than 60,000 plot summaries, 562 awards titles, recommended reading lists, and biographical information.

Genres include inspirational, mystery, romance, science fiction, fantasy, horror, western and historical novels, general fiction, classic fiction, and nonfiction. The software includes custom, in-depth search options so users may search by author, title, subject, genre, locale, or any of the other available variables. This readers advisory tool allows you to:

- identify new books that meet a personalized reading profile;
- create customized reading lists by using the "Keeper List" function;
- conduct a "Find Similar" title search or view the list of similar titles supplied by genre experts; and
- hyperlink between titles and recommended reading and award lists, and between series entries and the titles in the series.

A monthly highlights page allows the user to see selections of award winners, upcoming titles, and titles that revolve around different subjects each month.

www.gale.com

New from ALA Editions

Coretta Scott King Awards: 1970–2004. Edited by Henrietta M. Smith, Coretta Scott King Book Awards Committee, and Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table. Chicago: ALA, 2004. 176p. $35 (ISBN: 0-8389-3540-0) 2004006032.

Dedicated to the memory of children's book author Virginia Hamilton, *The Coretta Scott King Awards: 1970–2004* celebrates thirty-five years of African-American contributions to children's literature. This volume may be used as a selection tool and a teaching resource, both in schools for children and in library science programs. This new edition features:

- comprehensive listings and annotations of all winners of the Coretta Scott King Awards from 1969 to 2004;
- updated biographies of notable African-American writers and illustrators;
- a sixteen-page color section featuring illustrations for award winning books; and
- a personal look at what motivates and inspires contributors to African-American literature and art.

Horror Readers Advisory: The Librarian's Guide to Vampires, Killer Tomatoes, and Haunted Houses. By Becky Siegel Spratford and Tammy Hennigh Clausen. Chicago: ALA, 2004. 176p. $36 (ISBN: 0-8389-0871-3)

A guide for all the horror fans that use libraries. Key tools provided to expand upon this genre include listings of top books, authors, and award winners within eleven horror subgenres (such as mummies, biomedical, monsters, and splatterpunk). Clear descriptions of characteristics within each subgenre are pro-

vided throughout. Spratford and Clausen draw a connection between film and horror as a potent reminder that the scariest movies have been adapted from novels.

Readers' advisors and reference librarians will also learn:

- the art of the readers advisory interview for horror;
- strategies to develop, and tools to market, the horror collection;
- tactics for introducing non-horror readers to the genre; and
- where to go for more details and resources.

www.ala.org ■

BY THE BOOK

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show readers how to create functional and appealing Web pages starting with the most important elements: planning and site structure development. Also included are how to develop and incorporate interactive features and how to integrate multimedia elements and databases. The chapters encompass building and maintaining library Web sites; learning HTML basics; going beyond HTML with JavaScript, CSS, DHTML, and CGI; designing Web graphics; creative Web formats and multimedia; advanced Web technologies; and looking into the future of library Web sites. There are appendixes for different Web file formats, a glossary of Web design terms, and even a free Dreamweaver tutorial.

The added bonus of this well-written book is the accompanying CD-ROM that includes a plethora of sites and applications including HTML code from site design examples, JavaScript, CGI sample code, XML examples, SMIL applications, Java animation, flash animation, and more. Some books on Web design explain various sites and applications with only a screen shot to show you what it looks like on the user's end. Having an accompanying CD-ROM allows readers to see the sites and applications from the designer's end to make sense of how it was created and how it works.—*Christine Kujawa, Head of Circulation/Reference Librarian, Bismarck (N.D.) Veterans Memorial Public Library.*

The Next Library Leadership

Attributes of Academic and Public Library Directors

By Peter Hernon, Ronald R. Powell, and Arthur P. Young. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2003, 192p. $50 (ISBN 1563089920) LC 2003-053874.

In response to the anticipated director shortage when baby boomer librarians retire in the next few years, *The Next Library Leadership* provides an action plan for addressing this potential crisis. As its subtitle notes, the work focuses on academic and public library directors and the qualities needed for librarians to be successful in these positions.

In addition to the crunch caused by declining numbers of librarians, Paula T. Kaufman of the University of Illinois notes that the problem may be compounded by the perception that "more librarians seem to be content to stay in their current institutions and many librarians are uninterested in leaving their specialties to embark upon managerial paths" (3). An additional factor that impacts the situation is money; as James M. Matarazzo suggests. "One way to get more people into the field [is]: salary, salary, salary" (7).

The authors provide an extensive review of the literature concerning leadership qualities desired in library directors. They note that while several leadership trait studies exist, their conclusions provide only a small set of overlapping traits. They further state that "there are at least 100 definitions of leadership" (23). Furthermore, in addition to the variety of ways leadership can be defined, public library boards are said to be looking for the "WOW" (Walk on Water) factor.

Individual chapters are allocated to discussions by ARL, ACRL, and public library directors who provided anonymous responses to questionnaires that outline numerous leadership qualities, with a select few directors in each type of library sharing in-depth interviews concerning their own experiences and perceptions.

A multiplicity of lists of traits and desirable qualities are provided for each type of library director and these traits are then assessed for correlation between the types of libraries. Further information is provided as to how to best assess the traits, including the use of 360º reviews, in which a group of people, including a "boss," peers, subordinates, and patrons provide feedback for evaluating an employee.

To further aid current librarians in the acquisition of needed leadership traits, it is recommended that leadership development programs, mentoring, and formal programs of study, including an outline for a hypothetical doctoral program in managerial librarianship, be utilized as training tools. Current directors also repeatedly suggest that they view actual work experience as being an essential component of this training. Touted as a model in the list of leadership development programs is the Illinois State Library's Synergy Leadership Initiative for its "broad support from the state library leadership" (168).

The study concludes with a chapter on head hunting and how to best match the openings for library directors with the best candidates. It may be no easy feat to ensure that this occurs, given that the top three desired qualities for each type of library director vary. It is important to recognize that what is most valued in one library arena isn't necessarily what is most admired in another; for example, the divergence of opinion on the importance of scholarly publication: valued highly by ARL libraries, less so at ACRL institutions, and of even less interest to public libraries.

Recommended for all librarians, this is essential reading for library school students, as well as university administrators and library board members.—*Lisa Powell Williams, Reference Librarian, Moline (Ill.) Public Library* ■

Coming Up in the March/April issue of *Public Libraries*

"The Promise of the Great American Wealth Transfer for Public Libraries," Susan E. Randolph

"Ask a Librarian Gives Florida Something to Chat About," Matthew Loving, Dana Mervar, Steve Kronen and Joyce Ward

"Virtually Seamless: Exploring the World of Virtual Public Librarians," Janet Clapp and Angela Pfeil

"CIPA: Decisions, Implementation, and Impacts," Paul T. Jaeger, Charles R. McClure, John Carlo Bertot, and Lesley A. Langa

Public Libraries Instructions to Authors

Public Libraries, the official journal of the Public Library Association, is always eager to publish quality work of interest to public librarians. The following are options available to prospective authors:

- Feature articles. These are usually ten to twenty manuscript pages double-spaced. (Contact Renée Vaillancourt McGrath at publiclibraries@aol.com.)
- "Verso" pieces. These express opinions or present viewpoints and are not to be longer than six manuscript pages. (Contact Renée Vaillancourt McGrath at publiclibraries@aol.com.)
- Library news for "Tales from the Front" (Contact Jennifer Ries-Taggart at jtaggart@mcls.rochester.lib.ny.us.)
- Vendor announcements for "New Product News" (Contact Vicki Nesting at vnestin@bellsouth.net.)
- Reviews of professional literature. (Contact Julie Elliott at jmfelli@iusb.edu)
- Announcements of grants and other funding opportunities for "Bringing in the Money" (Contact Stephanie Gerding at stephaniegerding@earthlink.net.)
- Items for "News from PLA" (Contact Kathleen Hughes at khughes@ala.org.)
- Author interview ideas for "Book Talk" (Contact Kathleen Hughes at khughes@ala.org.)

Please follow the procedures outlined below when preparing manuscripts to be submitted to *Public Libraries*.

Mechanics

Because *Public Libraries* is composed using desktop publishing software, all manuscripts should be submitted on a PC-compatible disk or as an e-mail attachment (preferably in Word format). Please write both **YOUR NAME** and the **TYPE** of word processing program (including **VERSION**) on the disk label (or include in the text of an e-mail).

- Do not use automatic formatting templates. Make the manuscript format as streamlined and simple as possible. Complicated formatting creates problems for our desktop publishing software.
- Justify text on the left margin only.
- Double-space the entire manuscript, including quotes and references.
- Number all pages
- Add two hard returns between paragraphs to delineate them. Do not indent at the start of a new paragraph.
- Do not use the automatic footnote/endnote feature on your word processing program. Create endnotes manually at the end of the article.
- Do not use any characters that do not appear on the standard keyboard, such as bullets or arrows. These are embedded during the desktop publishing process.

Style

- Cover page. Submit a separate cover page stating the author's name, address, telephone and e-mail, and a brief, descriptive title of the proposed article. The author's name should not appear anywhere else on the manuscript.
- Abstract. Include two or three sentences summarizing the content of the article before the first paragraph of the text.
- References. *Public Libraries* uses numbered endnotes. References should appear at the end of the paper in the order in which they are cited in the text. Bibliographic references should not include works not cited in the text. See past issues of the journal for the preferred form for citations.
- Spelling and use. Consult the *Random House Webster's College Dictionary* for spelling and usage.
- Presentation. Write in a clear, simple style. Use the active voice whenever possible. Avoid overly long sentences.
- Style. Consult the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) for capitalization, abbreviations, and so on.
- Subheadings. Break up long sections of text with subheadings. All nouns, pronouns, modifiers and verbs in the subhead should be capitalized.
- Illustrations. Photographs enhancing the content of the manuscript are welcomed. Print copies are preferred over digital copies, unless digital copies are prepared at high resolution, suitable for magazine printing. Web-quality files, such as gifs, cannot be used. Please include captions for all photos submitted.
- Revision. Articles are edited for clarity and space. When extensive revision is required, the manuscript is returned to the author for revision and approval of editorial changes.

Tables and Graphs

- Tables and graphs should be prepared using a spreadsheet program such as Lotus or Excel, if possible.
- Number tables and graphs consecutively and save each one as a separate file. Indicate their placement within the text with the note [insert table 00 here].
- Give each table or graph a brief, descriptive caption.
- Use tables and graphs sparingly. Consider the relationship of the tables and graphs to the text in light of the appearance on the printed page.
- Provide data points for all graphs by marking them on the printout. In some instances a graph may benefit from being recreated on our software.
- For complicated graphic materials such as maps or illustrations of Web pages, prepare TIF files on a separate disk labeled with the name of the author and the type and name of each file. Save the graphics in a size similar to the size on the printed journal page; generally this should be 2.8 inches wide and not more than 5.5 inches deep. Saving to fit the size of the graphic on the printed page improves the quality of the printed graphic.
- You need not provide graphs in final form. If you prefer, you may provide a rough version or even a sketch. If so, please mark all data points clearly. We will create the graphic. You will have a chance to review the graphic when you review your typeset pages during the proofing stage.

If you have any questions about manuscript preparation or submission, please contact Renée Vaillancourt McGrath, Feature Editor, at publiclibraries@aol.com

Submission and After

Manuscripts are evaluated by persons knowledgeable about the topic of the work and the Features Editor. The evaluation process generally takes eight to twelve weeks for feature articles and less than eight weeks for Versos. Articles are scheduled for publication mostly in the order of acceptance, except where space considerations dictate. For example, the number of pages available might require a longer or shorter article to complete the issue's allotted sixty-four pages.

Send the original and a disk copy of the manuscript (or an electronic copy, as an e-mail attachment) along with your name, address, telephone, fax and e-mail address to: Renée Vaillancourt McGrath, Feature Editor, 39 Stevi Cutoff Rd. W, Ste. C, Stevensville, MT 59870. Queries can be addressed to publiclibraries@aol.com.

Receipt of all manuscripts is acknowledged. However, manuscripts cannot be returned unless a self-addressed envelope, large enough to contain the manuscript and with sufficient postage, is provided. Please feel free to contact Renée Vaillancourt McGrath (406) 777-1228 or Kathleen Hughes at the PLA office, 1-800-545-2433, ext. 4028, for more information. Your queries and suggestions are welcomed. ■

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