

Reader Development

Reader development increases customers` awareness of their own reading interests, ability to articulate why certain books appeal, and skill at making connections to similar books.

This involves:

1. Understanding what motivates people to read; helping them comprehend their motivations; and understanding how diverse interests, needs, and backgrounds affect reading choices
2. Making explicit one's own RA knowledge by describing, whether in an RA conversation or a reading list, the appeal factors of a book, and leading readers to various resources that may assist in their search for titles
3. Expanding one's own reading tastes in order to share knowledge with a wide and varied clientele

What are the overall benefits of focusing on reader development?

- By helping readers understand why they read, we assist them in recognizing the essential role that reading plays in their lives. This knowledge raises the profile of reading as a valued activity, and helps them appreciate its importance in their lives.
- By assisting readers to better understand their own reading tastes, we help strengthen their insight into their own reading personalities
- By modelling our RA knowledge and teaching customers how to use RA tools, we empower readers, demystify the selection process, and increase their confidence in their ability to select books for pleasure.
- By enlarging our understanding of the diverse interests, needs, and backgrounds that affect reading choices, we serve customers more effectively.
- Understanding the range of backgrounds that affect reading choices leads to more diversified RA services which in turn helps more readers find the books they need.

1 – Understanding what motivates people to read; helping them comprehend their motivations; and understanding how diverse interests, needs, and backgrounds affect reading choices

Why do people read?

People read for a variety of reasons and if we polled 50 people, we would find 50 different answers. They often give practical reasons for their decisions, such as “I need to read for school or work,” to “I want to learn something new,” or “I don’t read except for magazines.”

However, greater insights into the psychology of reading can be found in a growing number of studies. People read to participate in a shared reading experience, understand their emotions better, cope with the world and the changing circumstances in their lives, and develop and explore their identity and beliefs.

How does the shared reading experience impact reading?

From a young age, most children are read to by their parents, grandparents, older siblings, librarians, teachers, and others in their community. This shared experience of reading allows them to feel connected to each other as they experience the same story at the same time.

Shared reading experiences continue in adulthood as people recommend books to each other and share their thoughts on what they read. In *The Story Species: Our Life-Literature Connection*, Joseph Gold explains, “It might be said that the contemporary popularity of book clubs is based on the need to be involved in stories. People who attend these clubs find themselves bonded by sharing responses to texts.”¹ This need to feel connected to others also explains the popularity of bestseller lists and sought-after titles: people want to read what others are reading and join in the discussion.

Indeed, one of the main influences on reading choice is the recommendation of peers. The Pew study on *Reading Habits in Different Communities* concluded that 66 percent of readers (both suburban and urban) rely on families and friends to find books.² Similarly, the British *Booktrust Reading Habits Survey 2013* found that 33 percent of readers get recommendations from friends and 23 percent from family. This is not surprising since family and friends tend to share similar interests. And when their interests differ, readers sometimes choose a book that they would not normally select.³ Often readers believe that if a friend or a family member is reading a book, it must be good.⁴

¹ Joseph Gold, *The Story Species: Our Life-Literature Connection* (Toronto, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2002), 37.

² Pew Research Centre’s Internet & American Life Project, “Reading Habits in Different Communities,” 2012, http://libraries.pewinternet.org/files/legacypdf/LibrariesAndReading_CommunityTypes_12.20.12.pdf

³ DJS Research Limited, “Booktrust Reading Habits Survey 2013,” 2013, http://libraries.pewinternet.org/files/legacy-pdf/LibrariesAndReading_CommunityTypes_12.20.12.pdf

⁴ Opening the Book Ltd, “Reader-to-Reader,” 2014, <http://www.openingthebook.com/resources/reader-to-reader>

How are emotions involved in reading?

Many books evoke emotional responses from readers, be it happiness at the end of a romance, fear from a horror story, or suspense from a mystery that will not let readers sleep until they finish the book. People often choose to read in order to experience these emotions.

The way we feel when reading allows us to better understand our emotional responses to situations in life. Studies have shown that fiction readers are more empathetic than non-fiction readers or non-readers. In their exploration of the link between fiction and empathy, Raymond A. Mar, Keith Oatley, and Jordan B. Peterson have found that, “a ready capacity to project oneself into a story may assist in projecting oneself into another’s mind in order to infer their mental states.”⁵ As readers become involved in a narrative and attached to characters, they put themselves “in their shoes,” and empathize with them. This emotional response to fiction provides the reader with an ability to better understand others in a variety of different situations.

How does reading help people understand the world around them?

As people read, they learn about the world. Readers may be introduced to new countries, times, and places through reading. They may discover new cultures or imagine what life would be like in other solar systems. Books can provide readers with a greater awareness of world events, increased knowledge of cultures different from their own, and a better context for news events. Nancy Pearl’s framework for understanding appeal factors includes setting as one of the doorways into a narrative. Through settings, many readers enjoy exploring a variety of places and times.

People also read to cope with life’s challenges. Some read to escape problems; others to better understand their lives and situations. Bibliotherapy or “the use of reading materials for help in solving personal problems or for psychiatric therapy,” is a recent field of study that is growing in popularity.⁶ Librarians are at its forefront. LGBTQ readers might gravitate towards coming-out stories. Immigrants may find comfort in stories about newcomers who have experienced similar plights. Expectant mothers often choose books about pregnancy and childrearing. In order to best assist their customers, librarians should be mindful, if possible, of a person’s emotional and psychological state when recommending books.

Current affairs can influence reading choices because people seek understanding of situations. For example, readers who are interested in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict may want to read accounts of both sides to make informed judgments. Before elections, people may want to read biographies of key politicians to better familiarize themselves with the candidates.

⁵ Raymond A. Mar, Keith Oatley, and Jordan B. Peterson, “Exploring the Link between Reading Fiction and Empathy: Ruling out Individual Differences and Examining Outcomes.” *Communication* 34 (2009): 407-28. http://www.yorku.ca/mar/Mar%20et%20al%202009_reading%20fiction%20and%20empathy.pdf

⁶ *Merriam-Webster OnLine*, s.v. “bibliotherapy,” 2015, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bibliotherapy>

How are we influenced by what we read?

Our beliefs and identity are shaped by what we read. From the time we are young and are being read to, we observe how others around us react and we are influenced by what is read.

As we mature and experience the world around us, our self-perception and worldviews are often reflected in our reading tastes and choices. Some people read to challenge their preconceived notions and explore differing opinions and beliefs. Others prefer to have their views confirmed. When providing RA to our customers, we should be aware of cultural beliefs and traditions in our communities.

Different generations are characterized by different interests and attitudes which can affect reading taste. For example, the generation who were young adults during World War II generally value conformity and patriotism and like books that reflect these values. In contrast, baby boomers are more likely to set trends than follow others and are interested in a wider variety of genres⁷.

Similarly, culture influences reading choices. For example, user studies show that South African readers often value books with a moral. Meanwhile, in the former Soviet Union, periodicals are exceptionally popular⁸. National days of celebration such as Mandela Day can also inspire people to read.⁹

How can we help customers understand why they read?

People choose books for a variety of reasons so displays, booklists, blog posts, and other forms of communication on topics such as "nostalgic reads," "books to help you escape the everyday," or "books that teach you something new," can heighten their awareness of their motivations for reading. Create a display of books *about* reading, including such books as *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human* by Jonathan Gottschall.

Ask readers to reflect on what motivates them to read, or what they get out of reading during reader advisory conversations, if appropriate.

Hold a draw for a suitable reading-related prize. Entrants must briefly share what benefits reading holds for them or what motivates them to read in order to enter the draw. Post all entries where customers can read them and discover the many reasons people in the community read.

Offer opportunities for readers to reflect on and share their enjoyment of reading. Many common active and passive readers' advisory approaches can be used to provide opportunities for reader development and reflection on why reading matters. For example, a book club could

⁷ Alicia Ahlvers, "Older Adults and Readers' Advisory," *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (2006): 305.

⁸ Jessica Moyer, "Adult Fiction Reading: A Literature Review of Readers' Advisory Services, Adult Fiction Librarianship, and Fiction Readers." *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (2005): 220.

⁹ More Matshediso, "Mandela Day Inspires Reading Culture," *South African Government News Agency*, July 18, 2014, <http://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/mandela-day-inspires-reading-culture>

invite members to bring a book they enjoyed and discuss why they read it and what they enjoyed about reading it. Or invite customers to create “shelf talkers,” slips of paper that hang from a bookshelf and usually contain a short review of a book. To emphasize reader development, these shelf talkers could ask customers to describe what they get out of reading. Place them on the shelf where their favourite book is housed.

The library will benefit from staff becoming more knowledgeable about the benefits of reading, both for the individual and the community. They can then share these findings with managers and community stakeholders to build a case for reader development initiatives and programs.

2 – Making explicit one’s own RA knowledge by describing, whether in an RA conversation or a reading list, the appeal factors of a book, and leading readers to various resources that may assist in their search for titles

What do readers know about readers’ advisory?

Arguably, readers’ advisory is practiced by library staff without full disclosure to the readers whom they are serving. When library staff engage in a readers’ advisory conversation and ask questions about appeal factors, they are not necessarily sharing insight into reading with their readers. After talking with staff, readers are able to answer questions about the books they have read and may be able to talk about the type of reading experience they might enjoy. Many readers know what they like and do not like but they do not always know why. To find new books, they may read within a certain genre or are drawn to books which are marketed in similar ways—for example, “chick lit.” Readers may, in fact, like an aspect of one book and can find that feature in other genres or from other authors; however, they may never know exactly how to identify books they might enjoy. Library staff know that starting the conversation about reading is the hardest part of readers’ advisory. Most readers are not even aware that they can get help to find books to read. While you should not make assumptions about what your customer knows about readers’ advisory, it is important that staff talk more openly about theory as well as the resources that can aid readers finding the books they would like.

How can library staff build a reader’s understanding of their reading preferences?

Library staff can refer directly to appeal factors when engaging in a readers’ advisory conversation. They do so by asking readers to articulate what they enjoyed most about their last reading experience. If the customer identifies, for example, the interesting and satisfying plot of a book as enjoyable, the readers’ advisor could ask follow-up questions about other books the person has read and if they liked the story element each time. Library staff could clearly explain to the reader that most reading experiences can be categorized. If a strong and interesting plot is critical to a reader’s enjoyment, staff could teach the customer how to find books that emphasize plot and story. For example, staff could point out that bestsellers are often plot-focused as are thrillers and mysteries. In this way, readers learn about the nature of their reading experience and can become more knowledgeable about what they like about the books they read.

As customers learn about the reading experience, they may discover that they have multiple preferences which change based on mood or situation. Library staff can ask where the customer read the book or what factors lead to their decision to read the book. It is possible that the reader likes to read story-rich books on vacation or as an escape from stress. The more readers become knowledgeable about the reading experience, the more empowered they will be to communicate relevant information about what they want in a book.

A customer may identify different moods or situations which influence their reading choices. Some readers can easily alternate between different appeal factors and will look for different things from different books depending on how they feel at a particular moment. Finding the right book for the right moment can involve the work of library staff but is most successful when readers clearly articulate what they want and why they want it. Library staff can assist readers more effectively when they refer directly to appeal factors, which in turn can educate their readers.

Why talk about appeal factors in the readers' advisory conversation?

For Joyce Saricks and Nancy Brown, the appeal factors of a book are pacing, characterization, storyline and frame. Nancy Pearl refers to these factors as doorways, and she uses the terms: story, character, setting and language. Library staff trained to offer readers' advisory services are familiar with these appeal factors and will ask readers about them in a readers' advisory conversation. In most cases, the staff member will refer to these factors rather obliquely without explicitly training the reader to recognize their own reading preference in relation to either of these models. It has often been incorrectly assumed that readers will not understand what these appeal factors are or recognize them in their own reading tastes. But library staff should use the readers' advisory conversation as a way to develop customers' knowledge about appeal factors, which in turn will increase their understanding of their own reading preferences.

Library staff who are involved in readers' advisory use the language of appeal when advising readers, displaying books, creating booklists, and book talking; so it is important to share that information with readers. This knowledge may open up the reading experience to readers in a unique and expansive way that they never considered before. As a result, they can become more intimately acquainted with what appeals to them in the reading experience. Increasing readers' vocabulary about what they find appealing about particular books will lead them to a better understanding of readers' advisory service, the marketing of particular books, and ways of expanding their own reading experience.

How can readers track their reading experience to share more insight with library staff?

Library staff should encourage readers to keep track of their reading and to think about what they liked or did not like in each reading experience. At minimum, readers who track the titles of the books they have read will be able to engage in more fulsome conversations with library staff about particular titles. There are many resources that provide read-a-likes suggestions; readers should be shown how to use those resources so they can assist themselves in the future.

Readers can also be encouraged to record the mood or situation they are in when they read a particular book. Rachel Van Riel suggests that, beyond appeal factors, readers want to recreate the reading experience or explore new ones when they choose a new book. The more information that readers can provide about their reading experience, the more assistance library staff can provide and the better the reader can navigate library shelves and bookstores with confidence.

What can libraries do to improve readers' knowledge of appeal factors?

Library staff should be trained to be more explicit with readers when engaging in a readers' advisory conversation. Information about appeal factors should be included in the conversation in a way that makes them more obvious to readers. If a reader indicates that she liked the poetic language of, for example, *The English Patient*, the advisor should ask more questions about the appeal of language and point out that there are other books which share those poetic characteristics and may be of interest to her. Staff could talk about what makes these books distinctive and how the reader might identify them. They should look for every opportunity to improve the reader's knowledge through conversation and information sharing.

Libraries have a number of self-directed ways to improve readers' recognition of appeal factors. When booklists are created, information about appeal factors could be included for each title. Lists could also group together books with similar appeal factors. This will assist customers in finding books that they may like to read. It will also provide them with additional information about appeal factors.

Displays can group similar books by appeal factors and give readers more information about what they like to read. Signage for the display should clearly provide information about the appeal factors or help set a mood.

In library programs, staff can speak more specifically about appeal factors when book talking or promoting particular titles. Library staff can explicitly identify appeal factors and the theory concerning why readers may like particular books. Library staff should showcase the tools that readers could use to find their next book. They could also encourage customers to speak to staff trained in readers' advisory.

Libraries could offer readers' awareness training sessions in which information about appeal factors, library cataloguing practices, print and electronic readers' advisory resources, and other readers' advisory support tools are showcased and explained. In addition, library staff could offer sessions which feature reading suggestions and organize the session in such a way as to reveal information about appeal factors.

What resources does the Library have for readers to learn about readers' advisory?

Items in the collection are often useful for readers' advisory purposes. Cynthia Orr's and Diana Tixier Herald's *Genreflecting*, Nancy Pearl's *Book Lust* titles, and other information books may be housed in a reference collection or in the general collection, but customers are not always aware of these resources or know how to use them. Librarians can both introduce customers to these books, and teach them how to use them so that customers can access them confidently in future.

When arranging fiction or other popular materials, libraries should consider readers' advisory principles and include resources that will aid customers in developing insights into their reading experience and motivation. Displays and booklists can act as do-it-yourself discovery tools for readers.

We should not forget that staff can be a valuable resource for readers; often library users feel uncomfortable "disturbing" staff to ask "silly" questions about recreational reading. Promoting and marketing ourselves as a reader's resource is an important element of any RA service. When users are aware that they can ask for reading recommendations, the library is in a better position to help them and staff can share their expertise.

Now more than ever, customers are accessing library materials electronically and interacting with their library virtually. As customers often start with the Library's online catalogue, we should offer them readers' advisory services such as staff picks, themed booklists, recommended reads, bestseller lists, etc. When customers visit the Library, staff should point out tools that are available online. They could also offer training to encourage customers to use the catalogue in a more complete way to track their reading and find new titles. The Library's website can also be a key tool in helping customers access online resources such as websites, blogs, and newsletters which are able to provide them with more insight into their own reading tastes.

What other online resources are there for readers?

There are many websites available to assist readers with locating new reading choices – a sampling is given below. These are online resources that readers can access themselves to find new books, as well as engage in the social aspects of reading. Libraries can share these options with readers, especially those who may be just starting to explore the online reading world. We might even offer education sessions such as "How to use Goodreads."

Social reading:

- [Goodreads](#)
- [Shelfari](#)
- [Library Thing](#)

Organizational resources:

- [Whichbook](#)
- [Bookish](#)
- [FictFact](#)
- [FantasticFiction](#)

Individual resources:

Book blogs are available which focus on nearly every genre. It is impossible to keep up with the hundreds of book blogs that are active currently. However, it is good to be aware of some industry blogs and well-known individual blogs on various genres. We also recommend that librarians locate some of the active book bloggers who reside in their geographic area for interest's sake.

Organizational “big” blogs:

- [CBC Books](#)
- [49th Shelf](#)
- [Open Book Ontario](#)
- [Chatelaine BookClub](#)
- [Book Riot](#)
- [BlogHer Books](#)

Personal blogs

There are too many individual book blogs to list or keep updated – try searching [Canadian Literature's blog list](#), [RabidRead's blog list](#) (mainly genre-based blogs), or even [Canadian Book Bloggers](#) as a start. Each personal blog often includes a blogroll that will lead you to new bloggers.

Library staff can assist readers locate blogs that discuss their own area of interest – romance, YA, literary fiction, nonfiction, etc. They can suggest good starting points and/or search terms that may help them begin.

Libraries may also add links to their list of self-directed RA resources. An introduction to popular blogs may be a good “lunchtime learning” event. It could be extended into a class about creating a personal book blog, which may be of interest to the more avid readers among our customers.

3 – Expanding one’s own reading tastes in order to share knowledge with a wide and varied clientele

Finding new titles to read can be a struggle for both novice and experienced readers, and it is important that library staff explain why particular titles or authors outside their regular reading tastes may appeal to them. It is not uncommon for readers to get frustrated when something new ends up disappointing them. According to *Reading Matters: What the Research Reveals about Reading, Libraries, and Community*, many practiced readers will simply give up and try another title, but “novice readers give up, not just on the particular book but on reading in general.”¹⁰

Library staff need to be aware of current trends and changes in publishing so that they can encourage readers to try titles they may not have previously considered. Readers who have found authors or genres they enjoy are typically quite content to continue reading titles that fit into their comfort zone. When offering different suggestions to readers, library staff should let them know it is fine if they do not enjoy a particular book since that may help them to narrow down the search and find a story or author they love.

How do you find books to read?

It may take some encouragement for library staff to get readers to consider new authors or genres. Often customers will not know what else they may be interested in reading if they have been attached to a particular genre; however, they may know what they are *not* interested in. For example, they may enjoy British mysteries, but they do not want stories that are particularly graphic. A more detailed conversation with readers may reveal that they like the setting of certain novels, so gentle British reads may be appropriate, in addition to books set in different locales that have a similar tone.

Understanding what readers do not enjoy is another way to discover what authors or genres library staff can suggest to reluctant readers. Readers who are not looking for romantic stories or mystery novels with excessive violence or sex likely will not be interested in books from the romance section, but they could enjoy a cozy mystery that has little to no detail about the murder and the forensic details. Learning what readers want to avoid can usually be a good indicator of what books they might enjoy. When making suggestions, staff should think about their library’s collection and remember the readers’ advisory conversation to ensure their suggestions are readily available and suit the reader’s tastes.

1. Online recommendations

Websites such as [Goodreads](#), [Whichbook](#), [Fantastic Fiction](#), and [Bookish](#) offer suggestions based on past reading tastes. Granted, many of these sites are only as good as the information the user has offered, so the suggestions may not always be the most appropriate.

Goodreads and Bookish offer recommendations based on previously read titles, and the more books the user rates, the more likely the reading suggestions will be accurate and to their liking. Whichbook provides suggestions based on the reader’s appeal factors, and these sites do not require the user to create an account or continually update their information. However, unless readers are able to identify what appealed to them about previous books, the suggestions these

¹⁰ Catherine Sheldrick Ross, *Reading Matters: What the Research Reveals about Reading, Libraries, and Community* by Catherine Sheldrick Ross, Lynne (E.F.) McKechnie, and Paulette Rothbauer (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006), 201.

sites offer could be less successful. Fantastic Fiction is a UK-based website that will list all titles written by specific authors, and also arrange those titles according to series, if applicable. This structure makes it an excellent resource for library staff to recommend to readers wanting, for example, the fifth book in a series by a particular author.

In addition to some of these sites, library staff should encourage readers to check community-based book sites such as [Canada Reads](#) from CBC and [One Book, One Community](#) from Waterloo, Ontario. Each of these sites recommends titles that were unanimously chosen by local readers based on their reading tastes. Many communities have started programs similar to Waterloo's, so it is worth going online to check other library websites for excellent recommendations.

2. Recommendations from co-workers

Library staff often have a wealth of recommendations they offer to one another. Even staff members who are not avid readers may have picked up a title they really enjoyed and can recommend to their co-workers. Putting together a display or list of "staff picks" can also be very useful in helping readers find titles of similar themes or genres or simply books that staff enjoyed.

3. Join a book club

Joining or moderating a book club is an excellent way for library staff to broaden their reading tastes. Depending on the group, members may choose books based on genre, author, theme, tone, or a combination of any of these. Since the titles selected by libraries are often ones that generate good discussion, library staff may discover new authors or writing styles they would not normally choose if browsing on their own. They can then discuss and recommend these selections to library customers during the RA conversation. Participating in book club discussions may also lead readers to other titles that will appeal to an otherwise reluctant reader.

4. Bestseller lists, book reviews, newsletters

Several major newspapers and magazines, such as *The New York Times* and *The Globe & Mail*, include extensive lists of bestselling fiction and non-fiction titles and/or reviews of recently published titles. Bestseller lists can give library staff an excellent sense of the authors, titles, or series that are popular among other readers. While not all of the books may appeal to everyone, perusing titles that are on these lists may lead to something new and exciting for both library staff and customers. It is important to take note of the books that are on the lists if only to be able to recommend titles to library customers looking for a popular item.

Book reviews can offer readers more detailed insight into particular titles, giving them an opportunity to understand why a book may appeal to them. Whether it is characterization, pacing, setting, tone, or style, book reviews will often touch upon each of these areas and provide a strong sense of what readers can expect. Of course, it is important to remember that reviews are subjective, so while a title may not appeal to a reviewer, it may be exactly what a reader looking for something different would enjoy. The US-based [Library Reads](#) is a very useful resource for finding your next favourite book. Library staff from across the United States submit reviews, and each month, ten titles are chosen for their newsletter. One is also chosen as the top pick of the month based on the number of reviews received.

Many publishers now offer library-specific electronic newsletters that staff may subscribe to for updates about upcoming authors and titles. These newsletters can be especially helpful in

notifying staff of a new title in a series from established, popular authors. Random House, Simon & Schuster, and Severn House are just a few publishers with electronic newsletters that anyone may sign up for.

In addition to publisher newsletters, there are several excellent book-related newsletters that will appeal to library staff including [EarlyWord](#) by Nora Rawlinson, which targets both publishers and librarians. Rawlinson has also created a second newsletter called Shelf Awareness that people can subscribe to at different times. Librarian Nancy Pearl includes a wealth of reviews and book information on her [website](#), which will keep library staff current on new releases. These are just a small sampling of the newsletters available to library staff who wish to find more titles that might appeal to them.

5. Browse your library or bookstore

Browsing through thousands of titles in a library or bookstore can be daunting when you do not have a clear idea of what you want. However to narrow down the many choices, library staff should check names of familiar authors to find out whether they have written outside their regular genre. Many popular authors such as Nora Roberts, James Patterson, and J. K. Rowling, have written novels in several genres that may appeal to readers who enjoy their traditional work. Nora Roberts writes contemporary romance, but as J. D. Robb, writes futuristic mysteries. James Patterson attracts a huge audience for his mysteries, but has also written several romances and, more recently, teen fiction. Library staff who read these titles have the comfort of knowing they are staying with a familiar author, but are also taking the opportunity to explore a new genre, which they can then recommend to other readers.

Displays at libraries and bookstores offer readers several options, whether they are debut titles by new authors or books related by theme or setting. Readers who are open to trying something different may enjoy perusing books recently returned by other library customers. If one person thought a particular title was worth checking out, it could be an interesting book for someone else.

What if you do not enjoy certain genres?

It is impossible to read every book that has been published. Considering the fact that more than 300,000 new titles are published every year in the United States alone, it can be difficult keeping up with just your regular favourite authors.¹¹ However, library staff can stay abreast of genre trends and debut authors by checking their library's website and those of bookstores for New Releases sections, perusing bestseller lists in *The Globe and Mail* and *New York Times*, and checking out carts of recent returns. Almost all of the titles that appear in these spots are popular and/or new, and will give readers insight into what is trending now and what might appeal to them if they are looking for a recommendation.

Skimming new books that may not be to your taste will give library staff a sense of the writing, themes, and characters. Reading the back cover copy or inside flaps will also give you an overview of the story. Skimming through a paragraph or two and the chapter headings (if any) can give readers a sense of the tone, all of which can help during the RA conversation with a library customer.

¹¹ International Publishers Association, *International Publishers Association Annual Report, October 2012 - October 2013: IPA Global Publishing Statistics*, 2013, 16, http://www.internationalpublishers.org/images/stories/MembersOnly/AnnualREPORTS/Annual_Report_201213.pdf

How do staff encourage others to read outside of their comfort zone?

Following the [readers' advisory conversation](#), it is important for staff to find out what appeals to readers, why they read certain authors or titles, and then suggest books that have appeal factors they are familiar with, but also have elements they might not ordinarily choose on their own.

Several suggestions on encouraging readers to read different or new genres are available in the first RA core competency [Collection Knowledge](#). Staff book clubs and genre talks provide no-pressure ways to broaden interest in titles that readers may not have considered before or dismissed as “not their type.”

Displays are an excellent passive way of encouraging readers to try new genres. The television shows “Game of Thrones” and “The Walking Dead” are two of the most popular and talked-about series on television right now. Libraries can develop displays which offer readalikes for each of them to encourage readers to go beyond books on these displays, and to hook those very reluctant readers. Why not include video games and other films or shows to encourage readers to try something new without the stress of enjoying a book?

Appendix: Bibliography and learning resources

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