

Readers` Advisory Core Competencies

OPLA Readers' Advisory Committee

Collection Knowledge

Definition: Understanding of, and familiarity with, the depth and breadth of materials and resources in the branch and/or system, including material in all formats and media, both fiction and non-fiction.

This involves:

1. Using reading lists, suggestions from the media, schools and community groups, and personal knowledge of current culture;
2. Customizing reading lists using library holdings;
3. Creating read-alike lists or reading maps;
4. Knowing the different formats of reading materials: audio, e-book etc.;
5. Being aware of current titles and trends.

Reader Service Skills

Definition: Developing and maintaining a system for exchanging information in a non-judgmental environment for the purpose of suggesting reading materials that support the reading interests of our customers.

This involves:

1. Developing and maintaining an understanding of the needs of our customers, and potential customers, through a variety of tools;
2. Developing the appropriate skills and motivations in staff at all levels, so that staff are able to deliver consistently high quality reader services;
3. Ensuring that reader services and resources are promoted through a variety of mechanisms to raise readers' awareness of what is available to them.

Readers` Advisory Conversation

Definition: Interacting with readers to match their needs and interests to library materials.

This involves:

1. Using interview skills to clarify customers' interests;
2. Assisting and advising customers on the selection of materials in a variety of genres, subjects and formats and at an appropriate reading level;
3. Understanding the appeal factors of books, i.e. subject, treatment, characters, setting, ending, and physical size.

Reader Development

Definition: developing customers` awareness of their own reading interests, the ability to articulate why certain books appeal, and the ability to make connections to similar books.

This involves:

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