Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library

Joyce Saricks

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It has been expanded and improved with:
- Easy ways to create "read alike" lists, identifying what else is "like" a favorite book
- Practical guidelines for conducting the advisory interview so it's a comfortable exchange
- Confidence-boosting tactics for drawing on reviews to make recommendations
- Methods for incorporating nonfiction into the discussion
- More resources and online tools

Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library Details

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Emilia P says

Blah blah blah blah library geekitude. There were some really useful things in this book like talking about how to describe a book by appeal words e.g. "depth of plot" vs "fast-paced" rather than by plot summaries and criticism. Recommending v. suggesting. Using displays as a way to measure what people are into slyly. Ways of making reading plans for library departments to sort of divvy up. The overwhelming number of genres (thrillers, suspense, mystery,caper, horror are all so vastly different!) was interesting too, if not totally hit upon. There's a jerky English major in me that balks at kinds of books that you have to keep in your head for Reader's Advisory to adults, but I think the literary populist is winning out. My biggest complaint, other than of course the procedural nature that is endemic to this kind of book, was that it was geared towards the entrenched librarian. What's a not-currently RA-ing gypsy librarian type to do to prepare for this without the direction of a departmental emphasis? Yeah. A little bit more creativity and joy and a voice with character would have made this a better read. As is, I'm sure it's just fine for coursework.

Andrew says

3rd Edition of this book; It was better than almost any other RA print book I've come across, even though it was still outdated (hey at least this edition regularly discussed using NOVELIST as an outlet); my other issue is, having been through multiple trainings for reader's advisory, Intellectual freedom and working on RA certification, I don't mean to be rude and I know I'm nowhere near the skill level of our Information/Reader's Services team, but I could've written this book (it wouldn't be as well edited, but still).... It's seriously a pity that the print resources become outdated so quickly, though to be fair, this was published in 2005.

Lelita P. says

Warning: This is not a proper review--mostly just a rambling about my struggle to get this book in my hand.

First time I heard about readers' advisory service was two years ago when I attended *Information Sources and Services* class as a sophomore. I was so interested--never did I hear such service at library before. I was thinking back then, I would write about either readers' advisory or bibliotheraphy for my undergraduate thesis.

That dream really comes true. Now I'm working on my thesis proposal with readers' advisory as the main topic.

Unfortunately, there are no readers' advisory services at any library in my country, Indonesia. Readers' advisory is something new here--even strange. I bet there's just a few people ever heard about this service.

This makes me cannot get any reference book about readers' advisory in my native language.

I searched on Goodreads for readers' advisory reference book and I found this book by Mrs. Saricks. I was very excited to read this book, but I didn't know how to get it. Local bookstores here do not sell this kind of book, of course. I visited online bookshop and found this book there, but the price was so high. I had no chance to buy it at the moment--but I needed it *right now*!

So I searched again on Google Books. Thanks God they have it. I downloaded it, but--as usual, I stopped reading after several pages. Reading e-books on gadget is not something I can befriend with.

I was so desperate. Time to collect my proposal was getting closer and closer. Then I remembered I hadn't tried to look for it at my majoring department's library. They *do* have good books (even some import books), although the shelving is really a chaos.

And I was like .... "Oh God WHY DIDN'T I COME HERE FIRST?!" when I found this book there!

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The book is wonderful. I like it very very much. Mrs. Saricks wrote it in a light language so that it's easy to understand for a non-native English-speaker like me. All I need for my thesis is on its pages .... I'd like to "eat" them all!

This book explains almost everything a librarian need to know about readers' advisory service: the definition, history, required things for preparing this service, designing a reading plan, fiction elements that a librarian should understand, way to do readers' advisory interview, the training to be a great readers' advisor, etc. To describe it by one word: COMPLETE. Even she gave four useful appendixes, especially the popular fiction and nonfiction list. Those all really help me since my thesis is a feasibility study to provide this service at a public library.

There's only one thing I need that I couldn't find in this book: about the types of readers' advisory. I read it on Wikipedia; there's two types: direct and indirect. Seems that I didn't find it here--as a written text, not just implied. I needed that as a written text because I have to cite every definitions properly in my thesis (that's why I can't just simply use Wikipedia as a source for my research).

Apart from that, I do want to thank Mrs. Saricks for thousand times over! Thanks for writing this great book; thanks for doing such a great effort to socialize readers' advisory service and try to make it better. Hope I can be a librarian like you, who become a very fantastic bridge for readers and books. :)

Elizabeth says

Ok, I admit I did not pick this up on my own; I read it for my readers' advisory class. That being said it had a

lot of interesting things to say about the subject.

One of the biggest things I took away from this book was how to talk about books in terms of appeal. Appeal looks at pacing, characterization, story line, and frame to give readers a better sense of the book and whether or not they would enjoy it.

Mary Kinietz says

Excellent reference book for librarians focused on helping readers find their next boo.pk.

Scott says

I thought this was an insightful discussion of Readers' Advisory. I intend to use the concepts for areas other than RA, implementing the appeal concepts in book discussion groups for nonfiction. There is plenty of good advice here if you are interested in RA. I found it useful personally as I thought about my patterns of reading, and how to put together an individual reading program for myself in a new genre. Right now, I'm exploring more science fiction, and the concepts and techniques mentioned in this book are helping to inform my reading list.

Marissa says

I used this book as the textbook for an online class on Reader's Advisory taught by the author herself. I found the book very helpful especially in how to articulate why you like a book- ie. appeal terms. I had never known about those and they've expanded my abilities to do reader's advisory work. The chapters on annotations and marketing were helpful as well. The biggest downside to this book- it needs to be updated. A lot has happened in the online world of RA since 2005. Luckily, we've discussed everything that's missing from the book in class. But for someone reading this on their own, discussions on online tools and printed materials need to be revamped. Goodreads and Library Thing should be mentioned as well as the explosion of Amazon reviews, blogs, and modern RA online sources.

David says

I know - super nerdy, right? To give this 5*****. And I'm not saying it is deathless, heart-stopping prose or anything - BUT this book is the Bible of the reader's advisory field with good reason. I can't tell you how many times I've been thinking about various specific aspects of what we do that I've picked up (or failed to pick up) in my work, only to find them discussed in detail in the pages of this guide. As such, it is pretty densely packed, and needs some unpacking, but for that reason is a good one to mark up and highlight and refer to. Saricks sets a high standard without being a jerk about it, and so she encourages the reader and practitioner to examine and re-examine what they do and how they do it. Excellent.

Greg Fisher says

I am a librarian assistant at a surburban library. I work in the adult services department. My library is too small to have its own readers' advisory department, but if it had that is where I'd be. I love readers' advisory more than any other aspect of my job and I don't get to practice it enough.

Joyce Saricks was a readers' advisor and headed a small department at Downers Grove Public Library when she and Nancy Brown wrote what is considered by many as the seminal book on readers' advisory service in the library. I've read the book twice and some parts of it many more times than that. I'm looking to purchase a copy of the new third edition soon.

Anyway, I learned a lot about readers' advisory from her work.

Thea says

This book is a must read for anyone who works in Readers' Advisory. I started my RA journey by reading this book and it has helped me tremendously with my job! I plan on using many ideas from this book to make the RA experience at our library even better.

karen says

gather round chilluns - it is that time of year, where i get to review textbooks!! i will only do one today, because i do not want to overstimulate your excitement-panels, but seriously - this book is so much fun, i can hardly stand it!! it's probably not much fun if you don't love books, but for me, it is a total curl-up-on-the-body-pillow funtime read. it should be required reading for anyone who wants to talk about books on this website or amongst friends or to strangers on the subway - or wherever you do your best book-talking.

it has everything: the r/a interview, articulating appeal factors, promoting the collection, highlighting unknown titles, book talks and book lists, topics like "differentiating between hard and soft-edged suspense"; all the shit i nerdily love!

readers' advisory is by far the most fun thing in all of library school; it is like being a book detective or a book matchmaker - setting people up on blind dates with books and hoping they find a life together (well, in a library setting, i suppose i would hope they find a two-week period of happiness together and then - a painful severance). and it is the hardest class to get into because the demand is so great, and it is not offered every semester, and it ends up being like a book club, but with papers, and rarely any wine. and although i complained about a lot of the books i had to read for the class, i still feel like i learned a lot about genre fiction (which is the other textbook - stay tuned!)

but so my professor, the reigning queen of all readers' advisory says this book is flawed because it does not go into enough about indirect readers' advisory through merchandising and effective displays, but shhhh!! that is my ace in the hole, the gladiola in my back pocket - displays are the only thing in this world i am truly good at, and someday when i myself am the queen of all readers' advisory, it will be because of this advantage i have from my years of retail servitude. and the book does go into that enough, i think. shit like

that is more intuitive - you either know what you are doing, or you don't. but i know how to move books. i can make really good displays to attract the peepul with colors and covers and proximity and subliminal connections (and as ariel would tell me - bears)

and i don't want joyce g. saricks giving away the secrets.
yet.
when my unauthorized biography comes out, then you will all know the secrets.
until then - this book should suffice.

Kate says

This is a really short book! Goodreads says 211 pages but mine is less than 80. It also has no edition number noted anywhere, which makes me assume it's the first and also that a lot was added since then. So I probably need to buy a more recent edition.

But I still learned a lot! I'm really tired so I can't form a coherent review right now, but clearly this is essential for anyone interested in reader's advisory. Thanks to karen for the recommendation.

James F says

I'm taking Joyce's class on RA service now. This is a totally different way of looking at books for me, not judging whether a book is good or whether I personally like it, but trying to analyze the appeal factors to know whether to suggest it to someone who likes a particular kind of book or a similar author. The key is, we do not *recommend* books, we *suggest* them. There is a lot of good information in this book about where to find reviews and information about books and series in various genres, and how to train your staff to do this sort of work. I've seldom read a textbook that I could so immediately put into practice.

September Michaud says

Classic textbook by Joyce Saricks about administering readers' advisory for patrons. Like most textbooks, the writing was often dull, but the content was useful. A good resource for teaching library staff and students to describe books based on appeal rather than personal opinion. It shows how to "suggest" books as opposed to recommending them, and how to explain them based on pace, characterization, storyline, and frame-- introducing patrons/potential readers to the "feel" of the book (rather than the core plot) so that he/she can make an informed decision.

Moreover, this book offers a new way of thinking about books. One that if employed regularly, will become second nature. The more time you spend reading, thinking, and talking about books, the more easily you'll be able to make connections between the themes and patterns found in various authors and genres, and the more successful you will be as a readers' adviser. For this reason, Saricks includes several lists of questions to ask yourself about the books you're reading or looking up and how these books might relate to other books. Good start for anyone who needs a working knowledge of books/genres.

Marta says

This book is current, easy to read, and offers a variety of excellent examples and tips for RA service. Whether one takes Readers' Advisory in library school or not, I think this should be required reading in intro or reference classes. It's an excellent resource for librarians and library students alike.