

**Beyond Genre: Exploring the Perception, Uses,
and Misuses of Genre by Readers, Writers, and Librarians**
RUSA CODES Readers' Advisory Research and Trends Committee
ALA Annual Conference
Chicago 2013

BOOKS ABOUT GENRE

GENERAL WORKS

- Bawarshi, Anis S. and Mary Jo Reiff. *Genre: An Introduction to History, Theory, Research, and Pedagogy*. West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press, 2010. (Available as a free download at http://wac.colostate.edu/books/bawarshi_reiff/).
- Bazerman, Charles, Adair Bonini, and Débora Figueiredo, eds. *Genre in a Changing World*. Fort Collins, CO: The WAC Clearinghouse and Parlor Press, 2009.
- Berger, Arthur Asa. *Popular Culture Genres: Theories and Texts*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 1992.
- Cords, Sarah Statz. *The Real Story: A Guide to Nonfiction Reading Interests*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006.
- Frow, John. *Genre: The New Critical Idiom*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Integrated Advisory Service Breaking Through the Book Boundary to Better Serve Library Users*. Jessica Moyer, ed. Santa Barbara, California: Libraries Unlimited, 2010.
- Orr, Cynthia and Diana Tixier Herald. *Genreflecting: A Guide to Popular Reading Interests*. Santa Barbara, California: Libraries Unlimited, 2013.
- Saricks, Joyce G. *Readers' Advisory Guide to Genre Fiction*. 2nd Edition. Chicago: American Library Association, 2009.
- Wyatt, Neal. *The Readers' Advisory Guide to Nonfiction*. Chicago: ALA Editions, 2007.

SPECIFIC GENRES

For studies of specific genres, the following series are excellent places to begin. Each offers titles focusing on a fiction or nonfiction genre.

ALA Editions series. Joyce Saricks and Neal Wyatt, eds. ALA Editions. Includes titles on mystery, science fiction, historical fiction, street literature, and graphic novels.

Genreflecting series. Various eds. ABC-CLIO. Includes titles on all major fiction genres, a wide range of nonfiction areas, teen titles in fiction and nonfiction, graphic novels and manga, LGBT titles for adults and young adults, multicultural fiction, and urban fiction.

Read On series. Barry Trott, ed. Libraries Unlimited. Includes titles on crime, fantasy, science fiction, graphic novels, audiobooks, biography, teen speculative fiction, horror, historical fiction, women's fiction, and memoir.

ARTICLES ABOUT GENRE

GENERAL READINGS

- Baker, Sharon L. & Karen L. Wallace – *The Responsive Public Library*, 2nd ed. – pp. 66-74; 139-144; 282-91 – Covers patrons' use of genre, concerns about shelving separately or interfiling.
- Chabon, Michael – "Trickster in a Suit of Lights," in *Maps and Legends*, pp. 13-26 – Some of our most interesting writers today are working at the boundaries between genres.

- Derrida, Jacques and Avital Ronell – “The Law of Genre” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 7, No. 1, (Autumn, 1980), pp. 55-81. The classic essay on literary genre.
- Le Guin, Ursula K. – “On Despising Genres” in *The Birthday of the World*, pp. 213-248. Genre is a useful term, but should not be used as an evaluative term.
- Moretti, Franco – *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, pp.4-33. Maps the rise and fall of various genres in British history.
- Smith, Erin A. – “Genre Reading,” *Encyclopedia of Recreation and Leisure in America*, pp. 391-395. Available in Gale Virtual Reference Library. Genre fiction took the guesswork out of the business of publishing. It offers publishers a way to sell similar books to the same customers over and over again.
- Wyatt, Neal – “Keeping Up with Genres” – *Library Journal* v. 133 no. 18 (November 1, 2008) – On doing a genre study.

THE GENRE WARS (Literary fiction vs. Genre fiction)

- Appleyard, Bryan – “Science Fiction” – *London Times* December 2, 2007 – Salman Rushdie came this close to being labeled a science fiction writer until his publisher stepped in and withdrew his first book from a prize competition. <http://bryanappleyard.com/science-fiction/>
- Foster, Jordan – “Crime fiction: breaking the wall; When mystery becomes literary fiction, and vice versa” – *Publishers Weekly* November 23, 2009 – “Categories are like walls,” says bestselling author Michael Connelly, “and walls keep people out.” <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/print/20091123/27835-crime-fiction-breaking-the-wall.html>
- Grossman, Lev – “Literary Revolution in the Supermarket: Genre Fiction Is Disruptive Technology” – *Time Magazine* May 23, 2012 – In response to Krystal (see “Easy Writers” below). <http://entertainment.time.com/2012/05/23/genre-fiction-is-disruptive-technology/>
- _____. “Pop Goes the Literature” – *Time Magazine* December 5, 2004 – “The highbrow and the lowbrow, once kept chastely separate, are now hooking up, which is why we have great, funky, unclassifiable writers like Margaret Atwood, Neal Stephenson, Susanna Clarke and David Mitchell.” <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,880271-1,00.html>
- Kelly, Stuart – “Is This the End of Fiction's Genre Wars?” *The Guardian Books Blog* May 17, 2013 – A member of this year’s Man Booker Prize committee says, “I don't know of a single serious critic nowadays who would dismiss genre writing solely on the basis that it is genre writing.” <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/booksblog/2013/may/17/genre-wars-fiction-book-trade>
- Krystal, Arthur – “Easy Writers: Guilty Pleasures Without Guilt” – *The New Yorker* May 28, 2012 - Stick around long enough, develop a cult following, gain the approval of one or two literary dudes, and you, too, can become respectable. www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/atlarge/2012/05/28/120528crat_atlarge_krystal
- _____. “It’s Genre, Not That There’s Anything Wrong With It!” – *The New Yorker* October 24, 2012 – In response to Grossman (see “Literary Revolution” above): When we open a mystery, we expect certain themes to be addressed and we enjoy intelligent variations on these themes. But one of the things we don’t expect is excellence in writing.

- <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/books/2012/10/its-genre-fiction-not-that-theres-anything-wrong-with-it.html>
- Le Guin, Ursula K. – “Le Guin’s Hypothesis” – *Book View Café* June 18, 2012 – “I keep telling myself that I’m done writing about Literature vs. Genre, that that vampire is buried at the crossroads with a stake in its heart and garlic in its coffin. And then it pops up again, undead.” <http://bookviewcafe.com/blog/2012/06/18/le-guin-s-hypothesis/>
- McCrum, Robert – “The Return of the Cracking Good Read” – *The Guardian* – October 3, 2009 – For years the Booker shortlist has eschewed narrative in favor of sometimes unreadable literary fiction. But the tables are turning. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/oct/04/robert-mccrum-booker-prize-story>
- Read, Cornelia – “Weasel Vomit and the Whole Genre v. Literary Debate,” *Murderati*, September 26, 2009 - For me what is most essential about writing as an art is happening a lot more these days in genre fiction than outside it. <http://www.murderati.com/blog/2009/9/26/weasel-vomit-and-the-whole-genre-v-literary-debate-thing.html>
- Sicha, Choire – “No Better Spirit: The Incredible Stories of Ursula K. Le Guin Make Arguments About Genre Seem Foolish” *Slate.com* Nov. 2, 2012. http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/books/2012/11/ursula_le_guin_s_the_unreal_and_the_real_collected_stories_reviewed.html
- Walter, Damien G. - “Are We Now Post Sci-Fi?” – *The Guardian Books Blog* – October 13, 2009 – Are we moving into an era where science fiction writers like China Miéville are breaking down the walls of genre from within, and literary authors like Michael Chabon and Lev Grossman are working away at them from the outside? <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/booksblog/2009/oct/13/sci-fi-future>
- Wright, Kim – “Why Are So Many Literary Writers Shifting Into Genre?” *The Millions* September 2, 2011 - Is it a mass sellout, a belated and half-hearted attempt by writers to chase the market? Or are two disparate worlds finally merging? <http://www.themillions.com/2011/09/why-are-so-many-literary-writers-shifting-into-genre.html>

BLOGS AND WEBSITES ABOUT GENRE

GENERAL RESOURCES

- The Adult Reading Round Table <http://www.arrtreads.org/>
- Arts & Letters Daily <http://www.aldaily.com/> (Warning – huge time suck ahead...)
- Book Blogger Directory <http://bookbloggerdirectory.wordpress.com/>
- Bookbrowse www.bookbrowse.com
- Book Riot <http://bookriot.com/>
- Bookslut <http://www.bookslut.com/blog/>
- EarlyWord: The Publisher/Librarian Connection www.earlyword.com
- Fantastic Fiction www.fantasticfiction.co.uk
- Fiction_L Listserv www.mgpl.org/read-listen-view/fl/flmenu/
- Fictionaut <http://fictionaut.com/blog> (short form, alternative)
- Genrefluent <http://www.genrefluent.com/>
- Indie Bound www.indiebound.org
- The Millions <http://www.themillions.com/>

- Overbooked <http://www.overbooked.org/>
- RA For All <http://raforall.blogspot.com>
- The Readers' Advisor Online Blog www.readersadvisoronline.com/blog
- What's Next: Books in Series by Kent District Library
<http://ww2.kdl.org/libcat/whatsnext.asp> (series listings)
- Wicked Little Pixie <http://wickedlilpixie.com> (series listings)

CHRISTIAN FICTION

- Christian Fiction Blog Alliance <http://christianfictionblogalliance.blogspot.com/>
- Library Book Lists: Inspirational and Religious Fiction and Gentle Reads
<http://librarybooklists.org/fiction/adult/inspiration.htm>

EROTICA

- Little Black Book Blog <http://littleblackbookbloggers.blogspot.com/>
- Pages of Forbidden Love <http://www.pages-of-forbidden-love.com/>
- Under the Covers Book Blog <http://www.underthecoversbookblog.com/tag/erotica-romance>
- Up All Night Book Blog <http://upallnightbookblog.com/category/reviews/erotica/>

GRAPHIC NOVELS

- ALD Graphic Novels <http://aldgraphicnovels.blogspot.com/> (Library based)
- Bleeding Cool <http://www.bleedingcool.com/category/trending/>
- ComiciMix <http://www.comicmix.com/>
- ComiXology <http://blog.comixology.com/>
- Comics Alliance <http://www.comicsalliance.com/>
- Comic Book Resources www.comicbookresources.com
- The Comics Journal www.tcj.com
- Good Comics for Kids <http://blogs.slj.com/goodcomicsforkids/> (*SLJ*: kid-based, but has title for YA also)
- The Graphic Novel Reporter <http://graphicnovelreporter.com>
- No Flying, No Tights <http://noflyingnights.com/>

HISTORICAL FICTION

- Historical Novel Review <http://historicalnovelreview.blogspot.com/>
- The Historical Novel Society www.historicalnovelsociety.org
- HistoricalNovels.info www.historicalnovels.info
- Historical Tapestry <http://historicaltapestry.blogspot.com/>
- Medieval Bookworm <http://medievalbookworm.com/>
- Reading the Past www.readingthepast.com

HORROR

- The Horror Fiction Review <http://thehorrorfictionreview.blogspot.com/>
- HorrorWorld <http://www.horrorworld.org/>
- Horror Writers Association <http://www.horror.org/blog/>
- MonsterLibrarian www.monsterlibrarian.com

- RA For All Horror <http://raforallhorror.blogspot.com/>
- Too Much Horror Fiction <http://toomuchhorrorfiction.blogspot.com/> (vintage horror-1960's-1990's)
- Worlds Without End <http://blog.worldswithoutend.com/> (also Science Fiction and Fantasy)

LGBTQ

- Band of Thebes <http://bandofthebes.typepad.com/bandofthebes/> (GLBTQ adult focus)
- The Lesbary <http://lesbary.com/>
- Leewind <http://www.leewind.org/> (I'm Here, I'm Queer, What Do I Read? – Focus on YA lit)
- Piercing Fiction <http://piercingfiction.blogspot.com/> (lesbian adult focus) (Gay history)
- Speak Its Name <http://speakitsname.com/> (Gay history)

MYSTERY, THRILLERS, & SUSPENSE

- The Bloodstained Bookshelf www.mirlacca.com/Bookshelf.html
- Cozy Mystery List www.Cozy-mystery.com
- DorothyL Listserv www.dorothyl.com
- International Thriller Writers <http://thrillerwriters.org/>
- Malice Domestic <http://www.malicedomestic.org/>
- Murder by the Book <http://mbtb-books.blogspot.com/> (useful for in-library or community book clubs; Pacific Northwest book club, weekly posts, well-written)
- Mysteries in Paradise <http://paradise-mysteries.blogspot.com/>
- The Mystery Reader <http://www.themysteryreader.com/>
- Mystery Readers International <http://www.mysteryreaders.org/>
- Mystery Scene Magazine www.mysteryscenemag.com/
- Mystery Thrillers and Romantic Suspense Reviews <http://mysterythrillerandromanticsusreviews.blogspot.com/>
- Mystery Writers of America <http://www.mysterywriters.org/>
- Stop, You're Killing Me! www.stopyourekillngme.com
- Thrilling Detective <http://www.thrillingdetective.com/>
- Whodunit Mystery Book Club <http://mysteryandsuspensefiction.blogspot.com/> (useful for in-library or community book clubs; British book club, weekly posts, well-written)

NONFICTION

- Citizen Reader <http://www.citizenreader.com/>
- Non-Fiction Reader's Advisory Web Resources www.rburgin.com/sites/ranf.html

ROMANCE

- Aestas Book Blog <http://aestasbookblog.com/> (single voice, varied selection)
- All About Romance <http://www.likesbooks.com/>
- British Romance Fiction <http://britishromancefiction.blogspot.com> (get ahead of the curve)
- Fiction Vixen <http://fictionvixen.com/>
- The Romance Reader <http://www.theromancereader.com/>
- RomanceScholar <http://mailman.depaul.edu/mailman/listinfo/Romancescholar>

- Romance Writers of America www.rwa.org
- RT Bookreviews www.rtbookreviews.com
- Smart Bitches Trashy Books <http://smartbitchestrashybooks.com/>
- Smexy Books <http://smexybooks.com/> (also Urban Fantasy)

SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY

- Alpha Ralpa Boulevard <http://www.catch22.com/sf/arb>
- Best Fantasy Books <http://bestfantasybooks.com/blog/>
- Dreaming About Other Worlds <http://dreamingaboutotherworlds.blogspot.com/>
- Fantasy Café <http://www.fantasybookcafe.com/>
- A Fantasy Reader <http://afantasyreader.blogspot.com/>
- Io9 <http://io9.com/>
- The King of Elfland's Second Cousin <http://elflands2ndcousin.com/science-fiction-fantasy-magazines-and-blogs/>
- Locus Online <http://www.locusmag.com/>
- Science Fiction & Fantasy Saturday <http://scififansat.blogspot.com/> (British and Fantasy)
- Science Fiction Fantasy Writers Association <http://www.sfw.org/>
- ScienceThrillers <http://www.sciencethrillers.com/> (medical, science)
- SciFan.com www.scifan.com
- SF Signal www.sfsignal.com
- SF Site www.sfsite.com/home.htm
- Steampunk.com <http://www.steampunk.com/>
- Strange Horizons www.strangehorizons.com
- Tor <http://www.tor.com/>
- World SF Blog <http://worldsf.wordpress.com/> (specifically Speculative -ha! just had to say that)
- Worlds Without End <http://blog.worldswithoutend.com/>

URBAN FICTION

- StreetFiction.org www.streetfiction.org
- StreetLiterature.org <http://www.streetliterature.com>
- The Urban Book Source <http://theubs.com/main.html>
- Urban Fiction Resources for Librarians
http://www.libsuccess.org/index.php?titlte=Urban_Fiction/Street_Lit/Hip_Hop_Fiction_Resources_for_Librarians/

WESTERN

- Cowboys & Indians <http://www.cowboysindians.com/Cowboys-Indians/Article-Archive/?tagID=280,297>
- Roundup Magazine <http://westernwriters.org/roundup/> (and follow the link on the left to Roundup)
- Western Fiction Review <http://westernfictionreview.blogspot.com/>
- Western Writers of America <http://westernwriters.org/>
- Women Writing the West www.womenwritingthewest.org

RECENT SURE BET GENRE TITLES

Sure Bets, those books that hold a wide appeal for a number of readers, are THE readers' advisor's failsafe. Try these books that, while firmly rooted in one genre, regularly pull in readers from all over the genre map!

ADRENALINE (Adventure, Suspense, Thrillers)

Josh Bazell. *Beat the Reaper*.
Justin Cronin. *The Passage*.
Gillian Flynn. *Gone Girl*.
Gregg Hurwitz. *Trust No One*.

FANTASY

Gail Carriger. *Soulless*.
Lev Grossman. *The Magicians*.
Erin Morgenstern. *The Night Circus*.
Patrick Rothfuss. *The Name of the Wind*.

HISTORICAL FICTION

Sarah Blake. *The Postmistress*.
Paula McLain. *The Paris Wife*.
Madeline Miller. *The Song of Achilles*.
Julie Orringer. *The Invisible Bridge*.

HORROR

Joe Hill. *Heart-shaped Box*.
Michael Koryta. *The Ridge*.
Adam Nevill. *Last Days*.
Dave Zeltserman. *The Caretaker of Lorne Field*.

MYSTERY

S. J. Bolton. *Now You See Me*.
Alan Bradley. *The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie*.
Lyndsay Faye. *The Gods of Gotham*.
Jo Nesbø. *The Snowman*.

ROMANCE

Joanna Bourne. *The Spymaster's Lady*.
Meljean Brook. *The Iron Duke*.
Kristen Callihan. *Firelight*.
Lauren Willig. *The Secret History of the Pink Carnation*.

SCIENCE FICTION

Paolo Bacigalupi. *The Wind-up Girl*.
Ernest Cline. *Ready Player One*.
Nick Harkaway. *Angelmaker*.
Robin Sloan. *Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore*.

WOMEN'S

Marisa de los Santos. *Love Walked In*.

Emily Giffin. *Where We Belong*.

Elin Hilderbrand. *Barefoot*.

Laura Moriarty. *The Chaperone*.

SURE BETS FROM OUR PANELISTS

Margaret Dilloway. *The Care and Handling of Roses with Thorns*

Laura Lippman. *Baltimore Blues* (first in Tess Monaghan series)

What the Dead Know (nonseries)

Naomi Novik. *His Majesty's Dragon* (first in Temeraire series)

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