



How to stay informed as a librarian without all the reading

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So, you don't read, for whatever reason. I agree, a non-reading librarian sounds like an oxymoron. An uninformed librarian cannot do proper stock building, provide reader guidance, or guide staff. All library staff should read to some extent to comprehend what they are working with, and who they are working for.

But if you don't read, there are also other ways to stay informed; to keep a finger on the pulse of new tendencies and other new authors; to still do relevant stock building with new material; to do accurate weeding and more.

Ways to become book informed

- ✓ One of the best ways to get information on titles and authors is to quizz readers about their reading experience, to compare titles by the same author and listen to their recommendations of good reads. Get to know your readers to make it easier to remember the genres and type of books that they prefer and that may also appeal to other readers. An attentive librarian with a well-thought-out opinion of books will always be popular among book lovers.
- ✓ Keep a tab on book awards. Keep lists of book awards and annual award winners. This is a good tool to help recommend reading material to avid readers or staff when having to advise on authors and genres.
- ✓ Keep a list of classic authors. Two of the Library Service's regional librarians have compiled a list of authors regarded as classic that should always be in the Library Service stock. Ask your regional librarian to find this list for you. Just by scanning through it at times, or by using it during weeding, will give you a good idea of authors who wrote material of more enduring value. This list will also be an invaluable source of recommendation to readers with a taste towards the classics.
- ✓ Book clubs and reading circles have regular discussions on books and authors, or they invite knowledgeable speakers. Take note of these activities and attend whenever possible, or read some of the book discussions if it is made available.
- ✓ A web site like <http://Amazon.com> is a lovely browse with comments from readers. Opinions are varied, but you will soon get an idea of the good reads.
- ✓ Media like newspapers and magazines are good sources of reviews and news on new publications.
- ✓ Listen to books in audio format while you commute to and from work, take long drives, do ironing, sewing, cooking. On <http://Audible.com> you can find valuable recommendations on reading for book awards, best sellers, classics, certain genres, et cetera.
- ✓ Read reviews in the **Cape Librarian** and on web sites like <http://www.allreaders.com/>: it classifies books based on plot, setting, character, and writing style. If you know what kind of book you like, you can find other authors who write in similar vein. Other web sites for reviews are: <http://www.welovethisbook.com/>; <http://www.nytimes.com/pages/books/index.html>; <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/reviews/index.html>; and www.fantasticfiction.co.uk/
- ✓ Book blogs like www.goodreads.com/book_blogger_award will make for interesting reading if you are a reader of blogs where people discuss topics and titles.
- ✓ Keep reference resources like **Who else writes like, A reader's guide to great twentieth-century English novels** and **A**

reader's guide to fiction authors handy for information on authors writing in similar style.

- ✓ Read selectively. It might be a good idea to read at least one title of popular authors, for example, JD Robb or Dan Brown, to get to know the style and what the author is about.
- ✓ Listen to book talks on radio, even if it takes half an hour out of your busy programme. It will give you in-depth background on authors and specific titles that you would not have the time to do otherwise. Marie Heese's talk on her book **The double crown** gave me much insight into her writing, research and the beauty of the book.
- ✓ At festivals like the Literary Festival in Franschoek, the Woordfees in Stellenbosch, KKNK in Oudtshoorn and others, talks and discussions with participating authors are always very informative.
- ✓ Follow publishers' news on Twitter and get the news first-hand.
- ✓ Walk through book stores as often as possible and take note of the newest displays, read the blurbs on books and collect the pamphlets made available from publishing houses about their latest publications.

There surely are more ways to know what is out there, but the best medicine is curiosity and an active interest in books. Pierre Bayard said in his book, **How to talk about books you haven't read** (Bloomsbury, 2009): 'A book is an element in the vast ensemble I have called the collective library, which we do not need to know comprehensively in order to appreciate any one of its elements ... The trick is to define the book's place in that library, which gives it meaning in the same way a word takes on meaning in relation to other words.'

Njengomsebenzi kwithala leencwadi uzingcina njani na usazi ungakufundanga konke?

Masithi ke awufundi, ngenxa yesizathu esithile. Nangona kunjalo, kukho indlela ongazingci ngayo usazi:

- ✓ buza abo bafundayo ngamava abo okufunda, thelekisa izihloko zombhali othile uze umamele iziphakamiso zabo. Ukwazi abantu bakho abafundayo kwenza kubelula ukukhumbula uhlobo lweencwadi abazithandayo.
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Khumbula ukuba elona cebo kukufuna ukwazi nokusoloko unolangazelelo lweencwadi.

