Crime Fiction Genre Study
Wrap-up, Book Talking, and Resources

Glenview Public Library
December 3, 2015

The 2016-2017 Genre Study topic is going to be Speculative Fiction. While we are still going to organize it based upon the authors in the ARRT Adult Popular Author List, we are not going to focus on subgenres but upon appeals.

We talked about what the genre study felt were “Member Benefits”, and whether the notes from the Genre Study should be password protected. We talked about how often participants preferred to receive emails from ARRT and the Genre Study

Book Talks

We are making the book talks, as written down by their presenters, available for everyone.

Nota Bene from the Book Talks:

- If you haven't read it, it's new to you – classics being reissued.
- When you write up a book talk, it feels much more formal than when you are actually talking to a person.
    - When talking to a person, you can use the person's interest in each phrase you say to judge where to go next.
    - One way to start this practice is build from one sentence. If they look interested after that hook sentence, what are you going to say next?
        - This method is similar to the “record three words” about every book you read – that are not genre or plot. If you record three words and work them into your initial hook, you can know quicker if the book is right for that person.
- However, writing up book talk is a great way to become more comfortable with giving book talks. The better you get at book talking, the less formal you may find your write-ups.
- Some people only ever write key phrases or points they want to get out.
- Other people use the trick of writing it up in complete prose, but then not looking at it while they are talking.
- As you read over the book talks, it's obvious that some books have a clear setup that is easier to capture in a few words. These are generally easier to book talk.
    - Cozy mystery with music hook
    - Peeping Tom
- Where do you give book talks?
    - Senior Centers
    - Civic Organizations

    - Before/During programs on any topic have a few books ready to book talk
    - Literary Latte (lunch hour) or Reader's Night Out (dinner hour) – program centered around staff and patrons book talking books they have recently enjoyed. The variety and spontaneity become part of the appeal.
    - If you have a cooking program or crime book club, but bring up **The Cozy Writer's Cookbook.** Merge these two great and popular ideas. Summit of cooking and crime.
- Overall, people liked adding the book talks to the genre study.
    - Great chance to talk about authors hadn't gotten to mention because they were dead.
    - Also more mixed genre mysteries: urban fantasy and steampunk. Also authors like J. D. Robb who aren't really romantic supsense, but half straight police procedural, half romance.
    - Craig Johnson has become even more popular after the TV series. He's a good direction to steer Westerns readers, or to introduce someone to Westerns. The feel is very much contemporary Western plus police and crime elements.
        - Another person tells patrons (of the right age) that they are a lot like the Rockford Files.
    - A lot of the classic authors retain popularity long after their death. For example, Robert B. Parker is long dead, but his books still are popular and still go out. (Agatha Christie still has demand too.)
        - While the ARRT Popular Fiction List takes off dead authors, crime is an area where dead others maintain their popularity a long time.
        - Check out Parker's completion of Raymond Chandler's novel (**Poodle Springs**) and series (**Perchance to Dream**).

Resources

Most of our first go to stop is **NoveList**.

- Remember to use the Refine Results Section
- Remember to use “Browse By – Genre”. Can get new, popular, and upcoming books.
- Remember to use the Genre lists, where you can click on subgenres.

A great website is **Stop, You're Killing Me!**

- If you are talking to the patron who wants the novel to have a specific frame, the **Job Index** is great. Wonderfully tool for working with cozy readers.
    - It is also great when you want to make a display, or add a few mysteries to some other display.
- Also has a **Location Index**. This was invaluable when trying to do an *Around the*

World in 80 Books program.
    - Also great for people who want a specific or exotic setting.
- Overall, this is a great site if your patron wants a SPECIFIC type of Mystery.
- It also has Historical Index and Read-alikes, but on average we thought these tools only OK. They aren't bad, but people tended to use other resources for these. However, you should still give them a peek.

If you are looking for a specific holiday Mystery, check out **Mystery Reader International**. (The parent blog **Mystery Fanfare** was also recommended.
- She has mysteries for all kinds of holidays
    - Chinese New Year
    - Day of the Dead
    - Tax Day
    - as well as the more obvious holidays.
- Her Reading Groups Index is also a great place to find mystery genre book clubs. You can follow links to get title suggestions. There is an article on how to start your own group as well.

By far, people's favourite site for determining series was **FantasticFiction.co.uk**
- If you look at Michael Connelly, you can see how different series by the same author are still represented. Also, note the cross-over book between series (**The Brass Verdict**) is listed under both series.
- Look at Neil Gaiman to see a great example of how they list every series to which an author has contributed.
- If the author wrote a short story that is part of the series, it is generally designated with a decimal number to show it's order within the series. For example, check out David Baldacci's *Bullseye* which is 2.5 in the Will Robie series.
- Christopher Golden is an example of how they include any anthologies edited.
- If you start on the home page, you'll see the Awards section.
    - They give both nominees and winners.
    - By far the best read-alikes for the popular Mary Higgins Clark are the nominees for the Mary Higgins Clark award.
    - If you pick an author who has been nominated or won an award, that will also be noted on their page like on Louise Penny's page.
    - Scroll down until after the specific awards are listed to find the “Most Awarded Books” section which is also fun and interesting.
- Before using the “This Author Recommends” section at the bottom of the page:
    - Realize this is generated from all the books an author blurb-ed for another author.
    - But it is good at telling you whose fans a new book might be for.
- Before using the “Visitors Who Looked at this Page also Looked At”, realize it's

computer generated from click through linkages.

- So, for example, James Patterson shows up on A LOT of the lists.
- However, used wisely, it can help jog your memory. (See Literature Map below.)

- **Note**: When you print an author's page, the book jackets are removed. Many of the sections below “What they've written” sections are removed. So these pages are great to print out as a checklist for patrons who are fans. They print quick (no images) and are complete, in order lists of works.
  - **Personal Note:** The webmaster is also a really nice guy. When Naperville Public Library wanted to be able to make QR codes that linked to series instead of just authors, within days, he changed the code and propagated it across the entire site so that all the series were anchored.
    - Just FYI – the pattern for links is this
      - http://www.fantasticfiction.co.uk/c/michael-connelly/#harry-bosch
      - http://www.fantasticfiction.co.uk/c/michael-connelly/#mickey-haller
    - Contact Karen if you have any questions about what I mean by “anchoring” or the “pattern”.
    - I realized while writing these notes that the section headers aren't anchored. I'll probably contact him again to suggest that modification.
- **REMEMBER**: They are a UK site. So when you see release dates for new titles, be sure you read the date for the right country! Mostly only fouls you up with British authors released in UK Commonwealth before US, or other foreign authors.

CriminalElement.com is a great online news magazine that is updated every day. They cover all types of crime in all popular formats and genres.

- They have great conversations about the genres and the different appeals. They entertain while inform.
  - This is the creator of the wonderful Death Brackets: Toughest Dicks versus Baddest Thriller Heroes which is almost guaranteed to tickle any fan of both genres.
- If you hover over Categories, you'll see a drop down with a broad range of crime types.



- This site provides great coverage of all crime in a broad perspective.

Gnooks Literature-Map is a fun site to play with, or a good resource if you mind goes blank.

- From this access point, you can enter an author's name. It then creates a cloud of authors who may be similar.
  - If your mind tends to go blank at random times, this is a great link to keep nearby.
- From this access point, you can enter a list of authors you enjoy. It will then start prompting you with authors you might enjoy.
  - Becky likes to show this to patrons who have “read everything”. Sometimes they find new authors, but they often enjoy fixing it.
- This is a computer generated list.
  - Doesn't work as well for niche authors, because they get less press.
  - People can recommend one author as being similar to another author to improve the system. – Some patrons find “fixing” Literature Map great fun.
  - The base data was gathered from linkages between authors found throughout the web. So, remember, you often have to mentally “correct” the maps.
- Gnooks has similar tools for Music, Movies, and Art.

Again, a reminder that if you haven't read it before, it's new to you! So a lot of patrons haven't read, but would really enjoy, authors of the Golden Age of Crime. Even deceased authors aren't “dead” – they circulate! (True in Speculative Fiction as well.)

- Libraries still have these older titles, because they circulate. However, bookstores don't.
- Also, you can get these titles on OverDrive and Kindle.
- Donna brought us a list of the resources she has found helpful in her long running Mystery Book Club. Many of these are print, and also remind us not to forget print in this Internet age.
  - Edwards, Martin. (2015). **The Golden Age of Murder: The mystery of the writers who invented the modern detective story**. Harper Collins.
    - Check out some of the chapter headings – “Murder, transvestism and suicide during a trapeze act”.
    - He presents new ideas about classic authors. The authors may be older, but

they are still original, intriguing, and relevant.
    - Includes biographies of the writers who made up The Detection Club as well as stories about the club itself.
  - Symons, Julian. (1992). **Bloody Murder: From the detective story to the crime novel**, 3rd edition. Mysterious Press.
    - A great history of the genre of detective fiction written by a crime writer.
    - Shows the interconnections between authors.
    - Excellent examination of the differences between English and American mysteries.
  - Winks, Robin W., ed. (1980). **Detective Fiction: A collection of critical essays**. Prentice-Hall, Inc.
    - An examination and history of the genre, literary analysis, and close look at specific authors, written with an eye to the future.
    - Includes the infamous essay *Who Cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?* by Edmund Wilson
  - James, P. D. (2011). **Talking about Detective Fiction**. Vintage.
    - Does a great job of talking about all types of fiction, including crime.
  - Sayers, Dorthy L., ed. (1929). **The Omnibus of Crime**. Harcourt, Brace, and Company.
    - The first 40 pages of this book are a great introduction to thinking about crime.
    - It is followed by numerous short stories across a broad range of crime: the story of Susanna from the Bible (analysis of testimony), the Greek story of Rhampsinitus (psychological method of detection), as well as crime stories featuring horror, magic, doom, and madness.
    - Sayers was the first woman to get a degree from Oxford.
  - Haycraft, Howard. (1941). **Murder for Pleasure: The life and times of the detective story**. Appleton-Century Company.
    - A history of the genre in England and America including a Who's Who in Detection.
- Monique recommended **Scandinavian Crime Fiction**, edited by Andrew Nestingen
  - Does a great job of telling about the roots of Scandinavian crime
  - Analysis the appeal of different authors
  - Talks about how the history, especially WW2, of that region that Americans may not know about shapes the crime novels from this region.

Remember: Reading about the books and about the genre is just as important as reading the genre itself.

Other Recommendations:

- Ross, Catherine Sheldrick. “If They Read Nancy Drew, So What?: Series Book Readers Talk Back.” Library and Information Science Research Vol. 17 No. 3 (1995): 201-236.
  - An article that all Readers Advisory staff should have to read at one point. Does a great job of defeating the desire to read series novels and formulaic genre novels to people who find those books “inferior” literature.
- **Three Coffins** by John Dixon Carr
  - Breaks the 4th wall and tells you how to construct a locked room mystery
- Sisters in Crime website
  - Chicagoland Sisters in Crime website
- The Crime Writers' Association website
  - The Dagger Awards
- The Outfit: A Collective of Chicago Crime Writers
  - Chicago Authors
  - Looks like it may have become inactive
- The Rapsheet is a classic source.
  - Creator does reviews for Kirkus
  - Does a great nonfiction about the genre
  - Sometimes covers great matchups
  - Good source for upcoming titles.
  - If you look up under “General Crime Fiction”, there is a long list of sites about crime.
- All Readers
  - Does a good job of telling the level of violence or sex in a novel.
- Detectives Beyond Borders
  - Great site for international mysteries, including stuff that may not be available in English yet.
  - Does a good job of predicting when an international author is about to go from obscure to famous.
  - If you have an avid reader of mysteries, this may be a good resource.
    - Source of authors they have never heard of.
    - Especially if they like novels in translation.
  - Under “Links” also has a long list of crime related sites.

Interesting Tidbits:

- A number of book discussion leaders agreed that they have had the best discussions when doing books that include genre blending. And, as Karin Slaughter said, almost all novels include a mystery or crime.
  - The most enduring stories in literature generally have some kind of crime at their center, whether it's the bloody butchery of **Hamlet**, the lecherous misanthropes of

Dickens or the lone gunman from **The Great Gatsby**. – Karin Slaughter

- If you want more information on book talking, check out this webinar Becky and others did for RAILS.
- And don't forget the article The Curious Case of the Appeal of Mystery, Thriller, and Suspense: Or how knowing the difference between seemingly similar genres can matter greatly

General Review of Genre Study

- A number of people learned more about themselves – like why they enjoy mysteries but not psychological suspense. It was a great experience on a personal level, as well as profession.
  - People may have read a lot of mysteries, but they didn't even realize the other categories in which they hadn't read.
  - There are always some subgenres that just aren't for you. Not every book is for every reader.
- Liked having the larger umbrella topic discussions
  - Easier to see the commonalities and limiters
- Authors are using the techniques of all the genres in one novel.

Speculative Fiction Genre Study

- Like Crime Fiction, this is an umbrella category.
  - So we'll see some similarities, but some differences
- There has been a lot of requests to do these genres again.
  - You will hear “these patrons don't need our help”, but its really a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- We aren't going to focus so much on subgenres, but more on the commonalities, differences, appeals. Pay homage to appeal more than specific genre boundaries.

The next genre study will be
February 4th
at
Lisle Public Library
where we will start a new study!
Introduction to Speculative Fiction
For more information, see
http://03c8e5a.netsolhost.com/wordpress1/genre-study/speculative-fiction/