**Slide Notes for Readers’ Services and Readers’ Advisory PowerPoint**

**SLIDE 1**

Hello everyone. I’m Kaite Mediatore Stover, Readers’ Services Manager at the Kansas City Public Library in Kansas City, Missouri. I’ve spent most of my library career focused on Readers’ Advisory or Readers’ Services and some of you may be wondering exactly what ARE Readers’ Services?

Readers’ Services can include, but is not limited to, the following, Circulation Services, Programming, Book Clubs, Author Events, recommended reading lists, story-times, book talks, placing holds on bestsellers and conversations with patrons about what they like to read. Readers’ Advisory can cover a wide range of library services and if you examine most library services, readers’ advisory is an element of each one. This includes inter-library loan, acquisitions and collection development, holds management systems, ILS, mobile websites, database selection and use, even facilities. Readers’ Services means taking the readers perspective into account when engaging in any facet of library service.

At this time, I will focus on Readers’ Advisory specifically at a public service desk. What it is, why it’s important to library staff and library users, and then I will run through the elements of books that readers find appealing, however, they may not understand this.

We’ll be getting a whole new vocabulary to describe pleasure reading that will help you work with readers at the public service desk and help you interpret what the reader is telling you he or she likes about what they read. Hopefully you will understand what the reader is telling you and then you will be able to make suggestions for further reading. And don’t be concerned about all the genres, subjects, and format you may not be exceptionally familiar with.

**SLIDE 2**

Reading is one of the first library activities we were all introduced to. Remember story-time? Story time is typically the first experience many children have with libraries. We teach children the value of story and reading and do it in a way that they find enjoyable. Remember the fun attached to reading will be helpful when working with adults. Reading is still important. It’s not just an valuable skill to have on the job, it’s a valuable part of an enriched life.

If you are reading, you are engaging your mind. You are being mentally active. No, the laundry’s not getting done. But which would you rather see on a tombstone: Hortense finished *The Thorn Birds* AND *War and Peace* or Hortense finished the dishes? Which is more interesting?

Don’t make judgments based on the reading tastes of others!

Romances are not trash read by lazy housewives. Science Fiction is not for dateless geeks. Mysteries are not for nosy neighbors. Westerns are not for nice old coots who have finished putting in the crop.

Just because you’re in the mood for Danielle Steel today doesn’t mean you won’t be in the mood for Jane Austen tomorrow.

When asked, people will tell you they like everything. Like they do when asked about music.

But we know everyone doesn’t really like EVERYTHING. And today, we’ll learn how to listen to readers figure out what it is they like about their books. And we will also learn how to evaluate books to suggest to readers. We will have a new vocabulary to use when talking about books, our own language. So when someone says, give me something GOOD to read, we know where to go from there.

**SLIDE 3**

Everyone has rights. Even Readers. Keep these “rights” in mind when working with adults.

**SLIDE 4**

Why would you devote a library career to Readers’ Advisory?

1. That’s a big collection of books. And a good chunk of it is fiction. You already know how to navigate your nonfiction collection, why don’t we learn the pathways in fiction, too? Think about how Fiction is arranged. Thousands of books shelved alphabetically by author last name. These can be daunting stacks for any reader, but particularly the mood reader.

2. If you can easily work your way through your fiction collection, then you will KNOW it much better.

3. If you KNOW your collection, you are likely to be much more enthusiastic about it, with coworkers and patrons.

4. The more familiar you are with your collection, the easier it will be to keep up with the bestselling books and publishing trends. It can be as easy as watching the spines on the backs of the books, and as difficult as viewing *The New York Times’* bestseller list online.

5. It will be much easier for you to create a book display, a book list, find a book “just like the one that’s checked out.”

6. The more you know about readers, reading and popular books, the more you will hear about readers, reading and popular books from other library staff.

7. The best reason? You’ll NEVER run out of conversation topics at all those swanky cocktail parties you go to.

**SLIDE 5**

Briefly, these are the parts of a book that readers like. But they may not understand these elements. Sometimes readers don’t know how to tell us what they like. Once you understand what these “parts” are, and what readers like about them, you’ll be much better equipped to help the reader figure out what it is about a book that satisfies them and then offer something “just like it.”

**SLIDE 6**

Readers who enjoy pacing want to turn pages all night long.

Pacing is the speed of the story. There will be plenty of cliffhangers at the end of chapters, quick dialogue and easily recognizable characters that readers will love or loathe immediately. The author’s intent here is to pull the reader into the story as quickly as possible, take the reader on a roller coaster ride, and then drop them off, breathless from the experience.

Some authors who are known for pacing:

Mary Higgins Clark

Stuart Woods

Harlan Coben

Suzanne Collins

Dan Brown

**SLIDE 7**

Readers who enjoy characters like people who are multi-layered, likable and unlikeable at the same time, in other words, real people they can get to know.

Mystery series are one of the genres where fans of characters are found quite often. If you’ve ever met a fan of Janet Evanovich’s Stephanie Plum series, then you know readers don’t really care how Stephanie brings in the bad guy. Readers want to know how Stephanie will crack up latest vehicle and how her zany Grandma will get the gun out of the cookie jar.

Series books offer a leisurely way for readers to get to know characters. Jan Karon’s Mitford series appealed to readers who wanted to know how Father Tim and his parishioners were dealing with the tribulations of daily life. They liked Father Tim’s love interest Cynthia, his meddling secretary Emma, and his lovable pooch, Barnabas.

Historical fiction also offers intriguing characters that will keep readers glued to the pages. Philippa Gregory is the current bestselling favorite with her connected novels about the various queens and consorts of the British courts.

Other authors known for their strengths in creating complex and interesting characters are:

Alice Hoffman

Richard Russo

Barbara Kingsolver

Paul Auster

**SLIDE 8**

Readers who describe what’s going on in a book are likely fans of the story.

Pacing and Story usually work very closely together, but storyline can also work closely with characterization. Two good examples of this are *Shutter Island* by Dennis Lehane and *Book of Illusions* by Paul Auster.

In *Shutter Island*, two detectives in 1950s Boston are sent to a remote island off the coast of the city during a hurricane. They are looking for a missing psychiatric patient who doesn’t exist and couldn’t possibly have escaped the isolated island. The patient is a convicted murderer and the two detectives begin to question if they will ever be able to leave the maximum security facility. Readers get to know the characters fairly quickly so they can become involved in the complex plot.

In *Book of Illusions*, an academic, recovering from a devastating tragedy, writes a book about a man, long believed to be dead. When the man’s wife writes a letter to the author inviting him to discuss the book with his subject, who is not dead, readers get caught up in the lives of the characters (who is telling the truth) and the story.

The storylines for both books are the main attraction, but both books will also offer quick pacing and layered characters to enhance the story.

**SLIDE 9**

Frame is everything else in a book that is not pacing, character or storyline. It includes writing style, tone, mood, description, setting, background, and sometimes subject matter.

Frequently, Frame works with any one of the other three appeal elements. Rarely is Frame the primary appeal. That said, there is one book that is known for its Frame, *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* by John Behrendt. It’s kind of about a murder, but it’s really about this quirky Southern city and the oddball characters who live there. Readers who enjoyed this book would say they liked the leisurely pace, the attention to detail of the various neighborhoods, the unique voices of the characters who live in Savannah.

Frame can also be the subject matter. *Bringing Down the House* by Ben Mezrich is a great mix of frame and story. Readers are fascinated with the gambling and con game aspects of the book. The author paces it well so the reader is drawn into the story of a gang of MIT students who can count cards well enough to take the casinos to the cleaners.

Some books can combine all of the above appeals and that makes them difficult to match when someone wants a book “just like this one”. Here’s a few examples:

*The Prince of Tides* by Pat Conroy

*The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown

*The Silence of the Lambs* by Thomas Harris

*The Help* by Kathryn Stockett

*Water for Elephants* by Sara Gruen

These are books that fire on all appeal cylinders and unless the patron pinpoints a preference for one aspect over another, it can be difficult to make a match.

**SLIDE 10**

It almost goes without saying that readers will judge books by their covers. Of course they will. Readers also pay attention to the jacket blurb and many a library patron has said they no longer read the descriptions on the inside flap because too many spoilers are given.

Book size can be equally important and if you don’t believe me, then you haven’t helped a teenager at the public service desk who has a book report due tomorrow. ☺

Titles can be intriguing, puzzling, and occasionally, completely off-base. However, readers have turned down a book for less reason. And there have been times all it took was a great title to get a reader hooked.

**SLIDE 11**

You can’t read EVERY book cover to cover. You’re not a literary critic and you’re not a database like NoveList. You are a patron’s guide to reading. Take time to look over the handouts provide and practice this skill. You may not become an expert in every genre or subject area out there, but you will feel more familiar with the more popular areas among readers.

This is a quick way to become familiar with many books in a short amount of time. This skill takes practice and there’s a handout that goes along with this slide. When you try this exercise for the first time, allow yourself about 20 minutes for the first book you do. You’ll get quicker the more you do it and I can’t stress enough that you take notes while you try to read a book in 15 or 20 minutes. You’ll remember so much more about it.

**SLIDE 12**

Practice talking about books. This will help you shed that “deer in the headlights” look if someone asks for a good book. Think about what is the most important thing a reader needs to know about book.

Talk about books at staff meetings. Make talking about books part of your regular conversation. Aren’t you always looking for something to talk about at cocktail parties? Talk with friends, family, coworkers.

Know your own library’s shelves: the new shelf, the genre shelves, the return carts. Take a peek into the book return bin if you have access to it. When you look at your library’s shelves, don’t just think about what’s on the shelf, think about what’s not on the shelf. Those are the books that people are usually asking for.

Browse bookstores in the mall, the book racks in the grocery stores, Walmart, Target. Take a moment to duck into second hand bookstores every now and then. Look at what’s prominent. Think about what people are buying and why. Get ideas for your own library displays from the retailers.

**SLIDE 13**

Remember to read. And to keep track of what you’re reading. Read books and magazines you might not usually read: Danielle Steel, Stephen King, Janette Oke, Esquire, Details, Cosmo, even TV Guide. Don’t forget the major national newspapers and your local newspaper.

Talk to your coworkers, friends and family about what you are reading and ask them about what they are reading. Listen to how they describe books and try to put their descriptions into the vocabulary you learned today.

Share what folks tell you with your patrons.

Reading can be a community activity, even if you do it by yourself.