

Readers' Advisory Interest Group: Survey Snapshot

By Barbara Edwards.

As reported in the last BCLA Browser (<http://bclabrowser.ca/index.php/browser/article/view/341/420>), a group of librarians from across the province with an interest in readers' advisory services has formed BCLA's latest interest group. One of the first tasks the group set for itself was to survey the membership regarding the state of readers' advisory service in their library constituency, along with any issues and trends they have noted. We are pleased to share some of the results from the survey forwarded to BCLA members towards the end of 2011. In all, there were 27 respondents from across the province.

Some survey results

Booktalks and booklists continue to be a popular means of delivering readers' advisory service (RA); however, online resources continue to grow in prominence. Not surprisingly, library staff members are using more online tools (such as Novelist and Amazon) to respond to readers' advisory inquiries and develop local readers' advisory resources.

Contrary to popular belief, the majority of respondents reported that the number of readers' advisory questions they answer has not dropped, but remains the same. Some libraries report having few resources to market their services; others are posting online reviews, sending out RA-focused electronic newsletters, and Twittering.

Responses to a question about how RA service has changed over the last three to five years suggest a more sophisticated and pro-active readership, which

is using online tools to gain information and news about upcoming books.

It was evident from participants' responses that the core service of bringing readers to great books remains the same, if not more important, in an environment of changing formats and digital media.

One respondent stated: "We need to generate more ideas on how to reach out to patrons and begin book clubs, blogs and more to advertise our ability to find them great reads." Another respondent mentioned the challenge of developing readers' advisory services for a growing e-book readership.

As a way to meet upcoming challenges, a survey respondent mentioned that a place where library staff can share resources would be appreciated, and the Readers' Advisory Interest Group certainly agrees!

Looking ahead

Please watch for more news from the Readers' Advisory Group in the near future. We look forward to seeing you at the 2012 BC Library Conference.

Please contact Barbara Edwards Barbara.Edwards@vpl.ca with any questions about the survey. For questions about the Readers' Advisory Interest Group, please contact co-chairs, Robbie Burma, Robbie.Burma@vpl.ca and Jenny Fry, jifry@surrey.ca.

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