

EDITED BY JESSICA E. MOYER
& KAITE MEDIATORE STOVER

THE READERS' ADVISORY
HANDBOOK



ALA READERS' ADVISORY SERIES

Serving Boys through Readers' Advisory

The Readers' Advisory Guide to Graphic Novels

The Readers' Advisory Guide to Genre Fiction,
second edition

Research-Based Readers' Advisory

The Readers' Advisory Guide to Nonfiction

Serving Teens through Readers' Advisory

The Horror Readers' Advisory:
The Librarian's Guide to Vampires, Killer Tomatoes,
and Haunted Houses

The Science Fiction and Fantasy Readers' Advisory:
The Librarian's Guide to Cyborgs, Aliens,
and Sorcerers

The Mystery Readers' Advisory:
The Librarian's Clues to Murder and Mayhem

The Romance Readers' Advisory:
The Librarian's Guide to Love in the Stacks

The Short Story Readers' Advisory: A Guide to the Best

The Readers' Advisory Handbook

EDITED BY
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and
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—Jessica

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While he thinks he didn't have "a damn thing to do with it," my husband, Mike Stover, is correct in a sense. There's nothing of him in this book. Just like there's nothing of me in any of his music compositions. But someone had to do the cooking, keep the cats fed, and buy me a new laptop. Mo

important, whenever I gave in to the little demons and despaired whether this thing would ever be done and who the hell did I think I was anyway to do a book, what am I crazy or something, I can't do this, he'd look at me calmly and say, "Yes, you can."

Of course, my half of this book is for Mike, Mom, and Dad. Without whom, nothing.

—Kai

INTRODUCTION

It almost seems ludicrous to point out that libraries have seen a tremendous growth in services for readers. What *else* would a library be doing if not serving readers? Yet as many dedicated staff and loyal patrons know, this ain't your grandma's "liberry" anymore. Between the homework help center, computer classes, job search training, and a plethora of other programs and services too numerous to count, libraries are seeing a significant increase in the use of all services, especially in this unpredictable economic climate. In addition to the uptick in everyday library traffic, staff are seeing workloads broadening, services expanding, and budgets tightening. This translates to less time and fewer resources for training, continuing education, and professional development off-site.

One of the fastest-growing services in libraries is readers' advisory. This service has long since sprinted past merely suggesting books to faithful library patrons while chatting at the circulation desk. Readers' advisory encompasses many different leisure reading formats and means of communication and working with patrons of all types and ages, in and outside the library. Books will always hold a pride of place among readers' advisors and library patrons. But the volcanic increase in digital formats, higher demand for programming, and savvy promotional materials require new skills and tools for library staff dedicated to serving their readers in the best ways possible. *The Reader's Advisory Handbook* is an introductory resource designed to be used by anyone involved in readers' advisory, but one that we hope will be especially helpful to students in readers' advisory courses, new librarians, and all library staff involved in readers' advisory services. With a practice-oriented focus, the *RA Handbook* will help staff and librarians answer day-to-day RA service dilemmas and questions such as How do I create a good display? How do I make a read-alike list? How do I write an audiobook review? These are basic skills every member of a library's RA team should possess.

Almost all the skills, techniques, and practices presented in this book have been included in a briefer form in workshops or seminars or both on basic readers' advisory training. But we know that only a minority of library staff providing readers' advisory services are actually able to attend these events. Even those lucky enough to attend might only be able to work with their new knowledge if they take detailed notes. This book is intended to be a one-stop source for all kinds of basic readers' advisory issues, from learning how to read a book in ten minutes to creating read-alike lists. Besides covering the basics, there are chapters on more elaborate library programming that serves the reading interests of patrons. Author visits and book groups, both mainstays of library programming, receive detailed treatments that will not only instruct a newcomer but offer refresher training for programming veterans. Storytelling has never fallen out of fashion for children and is now moving over to a more adult audience. See how to craft an inexpensive, high-impact program that will amuse adults and draw them back into the world of story. Readers' advisory services are also expanding to assist more specialized audiences. This book includes expert guidance on providing services to senior citizens, teens, and readers who are incarcerated.

The book is organized into five parts. Part 1, "Getting to Know Your Materials," is about becoming better acquainted with the collections that are the foundation for readers' advisory, including fiction, nonfiction, audio-books, and graphic novels. The last chapter in this section covers genre studies as a way for readers' advisors to study their collections in depth. Part 2, "Reviewing and

Evaluating Materials,” includes chapters on writing reviews and annotations for fiction and nonfiction, audio-books, graphic novels, and reference materials. Part 3, “Marketing, Promoting, and Sharing Materials,” gets into the important day-to-day work of advisors: creating booklists, bookmarks, displays, themed booklists, read-alikes, and book group kits. The last chapter in this section addresses the critical area of websites and readers’ advisory in an electronic world. Part 4, “Programming,” opens with a primer on book groups, moves to the increasingly popular author event, and closes with a chapter on storytelling programs for adults. The final part, “Expanding Reader Services,” covers unique situations, including readers’ advisory by proxy, readers’ advisory for older adults, readers’ advisory for incarcerated populations, and crossover readers’ advisory (suggesting young adult books to adult readers and working with teens who enjoy reading adult books).

Each chapter breaks down the step-by-step methods for a variety of readers’ advisory skills and services. Worksheets are included in many chapters to help you develop and practice the skill of a service. These chapters can be used as single courses of study for the eager readers’ advisor or adapted for in-library staff development training or department meetings. Chapters are designed to be read alone or as part of their larger section. Feel free to skip straight to the chapter(s) that best address your needs, or, if you are new to RA, reading the book straight through will provide an excellent introduction to the field.

Both new and seasoned library staff in public or school libraries will find ways to create, revitalize, or expand services to readers with *The Readers’ Advisory Handbook*. Once these missions have been accomplished, we encourage you to share all your experiences, tips, successes, and failures with other library staff. We are all only as good as the shared body of knowledge.

Part 1

Getting to Know Your Materials

HOW TO READ A BOOK IN TEN MINUTES

Jessica E. Moyer

One of the easiest ways to get to know your collections is to use the “Read a Book in Ten Minutes” strategy. This standard RA technique has been taught in numerous workshops and conference programs and is considered a basic element of a readers’ advisor’s skill set. The late Jane Hirsch of the Montgomery County (Maryland) Department of Public Libraries was one of the original developers of these guidelines, which were later expanded by Lisa Sampley (Springfield-Greene County [Missouri] Library) and published in *Missouri Library World*.¹ Mary K. Chelton and Joy Saricks made further modifications for their workshops and presentations. The guidelines draw on all these forebears as well as on Saricks’s descriptions of appeal factors from the 2005 edition of *Readers’ Advisory Service in the Public Library*.²

To get started, grab a book you haven’t read before, by an author you don’t know, and preferably one that you don’t intend to read later. Advance reading copies or editions (ARC or ARE) are good options as long as they include full-color covers, descriptions, and author information. As you follow the steps listed here, be sure to make notes. Remember, you have only ten minutes, so read and write quickly! Use the worksheet at the end of the chapter as a guide and a place to take notes.

HOW TO READ A BOOK IN TEN MINUTES: EIGHT EASY STEPS

1. Start with the cover: all the colors, images, and text on the cover are meant to convey a message. These elements are critical in the publisher’s marketing of the book and can tell a reader a lot about the book. What does the cover tell you about the book?
 - a. Do the cover images look like they are aimed at a particular sex or age?
 - b. Is the cover image off-putting to its intended audience or obviously dated?
 - c. Does it give you an idea of the potential readership or genre?
 - d. What does the cover say about the author? Has he or she won any awards?
 - e. Is the author’s name or title in larger print? A very large name is a good clue that this author might be a best seller.
 - f. Is an unusual font or color used? Bright red text that drips like blood would be a good indication that this is a scary book.
2. Open the book and read the jacket blurb or the back cover or both.
 - a. What does the blurb or cover tell you about the book? Is a plot summary given? Is the book directly compared to any other books?
 - b. What about the author? Is a bio given or a list of previous books?
 - c. What do other authors think of this book? Who are those authors? Use these to help you start

making read-alike connections.

3. Flip to a random page. Check the typeface.

- a. How easy is it to read?
- b. Is the typeface better for younger or older readers?
- c. Is there anything especially noticeable or unusual?
- d. Is more than one typeface used?
- e. Are there illustrations? Do they have captions or enhance the text? Do they add to the overall story? Are they an integral part of the story?

4. Check the physical characteristics.

- a. Heft: Can readers easily carry the book? How big and heavy is it?
- b. Will the intended audience be willing or able to hold the book and carry it around?
- c. Is it hardcover or paperback or mass market?
- d. Can the book be easily opened while reading?

5. Read a sample.

- a. Read the first chapter. What happens at the very beginning? Which characters or what setting is introduced? How does the story start—with a description or with action?
- b. Read some pages in the middle. Are the same characters or setting still present? What kinds of events are taking place? Is the text mostly dialogue or mostly description? How much white space is on the page?
- c. Read the last chapter (this is why it is best to choose a book you don't actually plan on reading). How does the story end? Is the ending resolved? Left wide open? Left a little open with room for a sequel? Is it a cliffhanger that demands a sequel? Who is still alive/ giving the final speech?

6. Consider the book's appeal factors.

- a. Pacing: How quickly are characters and plot revealed? Is there more dialogue or more description? Check for white space; the more dialogue, the more white space. Are there short sentences, short paragraphs, and short chapters? The shorter the sentences, chapters, and paragraphs, the faster it will read. Are there multiple plotlines, flashbacks, or different points of view, or does the book have a linear plot? Is the ending open or closed?
- b. Frame: Is the background detailed or minimal? How is the book supposed to make the reader feel? Is a special background integral to understanding the story? Is the reader assumed to have certain types of knowledge—for example, subject information essential to full understanding of previous knowledge of the world in which the story takes place (e.g., books in a series)?
- c. Story line: Does the story emphasize people or events? Is the focus interior/psychological or exterior/action? What is the author's intent—serious versus light; comedy versus drama?
- d. Characterization: Are characters fully developed or are they easily recognized types? Is the focus on a single character or on several who intertwine? Is characterization the most important aspect of the story? Are characters developed during the series or in one book? Are there memorable or important secondary characters?
- e. What's the most important or most dominant appeal factor?

7. Consider other factors.

- a. Plot: What is the book actually about? Can you summarize the book in thirty seconds or less? If someone asked you, "What is this book about," how would you respond?

- b. Genre: Is the book part of a recognized genre? If so, which one? What about subgenre? Is it a genre blend? Does the book conform to genre formulas in terms of plot or characters, or does it break the rules?
- c. Series: Is the book part of a series? First in a series? Must the other books in the series be read before this book, or does it stand alone? Based on the ending, how eager are readers going to be for the next one?
- d. Author: Who is the author? What else has the author written? Does the author usually write in this genre, or is this a new direction for the writer? Is this book a return to a subject the author hasn't written about for several years?

8. Using all the information gathered in the preceding questions, connect this book to other books.

- a. What genre or subgenre might this book fit in?
- b. What other books or authors share similar appeal factors?
- c. What kind of reader might enjoy this book?

When you finish, organize all your notes in a reading log or a book journal or even an online book social networking site so that you not only remember your ten-minute books but have a way to review everything you've read. The more you practice reading a book in ten minutes, the easier the process will become. One way to get better is to set a goal, such as reading a book in ten minutes once every week or reading five books in a genre you don't usually read. Any of the ideas suggested in chapter 1 of this book for professional development and genre studies can be adapted for ten-minute book reading. Once you get in the habit of reading books in ten minutes, you can easily and quickly expand your book and author knowledge and learn about many more books than you ever could just by regular reading.

NOTES

- 1. Lisa Sampley, "How to Read a Book in Five Minutes," *Missouri Library World* 3 (Fall 1998): 33–34.
- 2. Joyce Saricks, *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: American Library Association, 2005).

How to Read a Book in ten Minutes Worksheet

- 1. Look at the cover: What does it tell you about the book?
- 2. Read the jacket blurb or back cover or both:
 - a. what does it tell you about the book?
 - b. Author?
 - c. Other authors' opinions?
- 3. Check the typeface.

4. Check the physical characteristics.

5. Read a sample.

- a. First chapter
- b. Middle section
- c. Last chapter

6. Consider the appeal factors.

- a. Pacing
- b. Frame
- c. Story line
- d. Characterization

7. Consider other factors.

- a. Plot
- b. Genre
- c. Series
- d. Author

8. Connect to other books.

NONFICTION SPEED DATING

Sarah Statz Cords

We all know the feeling. You look across the room, and something catches your eye: a flash of color, the promise of an interesting story, the feeling that the two of you just might have something in common. So you cross that room, and you make your move . . . to pick up that new and alluring book from its spot on the display table.

It may seem strange to describe the first encounter with a new book in terms of a new romance possibility for love. But isn't that how readers pick up books? Go anywhere books are displayed and you'll feel that same sense of delicious anticipation, that unspoken question: "Will you be the one for me?" Every time we pick up a book we feel it could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship. It's important to remember that we can feel that way not only about fiction and novels but about nonfiction as well. But for anyone more knowledgeable about and more interested in novels, it can seem a daunting task to "get to know" nonfiction, both as individual books and as a larger collection. Getting to know specific non-fiction titles as well as their place in a larger nonfiction and library collection can relieve a lot of uncertainty about working with nonfiction books and readers, and can even lead to new relationships; for this reason, I call this course of action "nonfiction speed dating."

FIRST IMPRESSIONS: THE COVER AND THE TITLE

As superficial as it may sound, a large part of the appeal of any book is its cover, and nonfiction books are no exception. Pick up a specific nonfiction book and closely inspect its cover. Don't be afraid to form those first impressions—you can always change them, and first impressions, intense as they are, are easy to remember and can help you quickly evoke feelings and perceptions about both titles and genres. Cover art is meant not only to be alluring to possible readers but also to help you ascertain a book's genre, subject matter, and sometimes even tone. Covers that prominently feature photographs or illustrations of people or groups of people are often autobiographies or biographies—in short, books in which the people are the story. The types of photographs used also provide a valuable clue. Celebrity bios of well-known stars tend to feature glossy and glamorous shots, while more scholarly tomes about less notorious individuals combine portraits with other photographs or illustrations and tend to be slightly more muted in color. Some other types of nonfiction books known for their covers are business, self-help, and political titles, the covers of which often consist solely of headshots of their authors (think Jim Cramer, Dr. Phil McGraw, Ann Coulter, or Keith Olbermann). And that personal touch is not limited to portraits of people—remember John Grogan's *Marley and Me* featuring a picture of Marley looking right at you with his gorgeous liquid dog eyes?

Of course nonfiction book covers are infinite in their variety, but when you start to study them you'll be surprised how closely they conform to certain conventions. Memoirs, while often as person

as, if not more so than, biographies, will often feature less obvious photographs or illustrations, meant more to evoke tone and mood than to showcase the person being described. Augusten Burroughs's best-selling *Running with Scissors* is a prime example: sepia in tone, rather disturbing in its image of a small child with a box over his head, the cover sets the perfect unsettled mood for what is a truly disquieting family story. Books in which setting and location play key roles—environmental titles or travel books, say—will often show that location on the cover (think Frances Mayes's Tuscany books).

And of course, one of the most important things to learn about a non-fiction book can be found on its cover: the title. Unlike novel and fiction titles that can often be obscure or more ethereal in nature (Who is *The Kite Runner*? Is *Water for Elephants* primarily about elephants?), nonfiction titles are often wonders of description, efficiency, and occasional wit. Even when nonfiction titles are meant to be punchy, short, or thrilling (*Alive!*; *The Perfect Storm*; *Freakonomics*), the intrepid reader can always depend on those beautiful things, their subtitles, for the real story: *The Story of the Andromeda Survivors*; *A True Story of Men against the Sea*; *A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything*. There's nothing coy about nonfiction book titles. They may try to woo you with an exciting or clever title (*Blink*), but they'll always tell you all about themselves in their subtitles (*The Power of Thinking without Thinking*).

“ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE . . .”: BLURBS AND DUST JACKET COPY

Whoa, hold on there. We're not ready to do anything crazy like open that book yet. After you've mined the front cover for subject, genre, and tone clues, the time has come to turn it over in your hands and see what the back cover has to offer. More specifically, it's time to see who's recommending the book you're holding: I'm talking about those “blurbs” that authors and publishers solicit from other authors to help sell their books. I've heard these complimentary phrases derided many times, with many people feeling that they're simply purchased advertisements, but I'm a huge believer in blurbs. For one thing, authors and publishers are very interested in selling their own books and they've been doing it for a long time—they know that readers often put a lot of stock in the opinions and words of other authors they've enjoyed. In a way, they've also done the readers' advisory work for you; when I'm stumped for read-alikes for history titles by Stephen Ambrose, for example, I'll always try to track down some of his books and see which other historians provided blurbs on his books. I should clarify that I don't often read the *text* of the blurbs—I've only got so much time and I know they're going to be positive if they're printed there—but I do love seeing which other authors are represented.

Other important parts of the jacket, of course, are the inside front flap, which you should always read, as it will nicely nutshell the book's subject and focus for you (learn to focus on valuable words and phrases like “quickly paced,” “suspenseful,” “comprehensive,” “scholarly,” “definitive,” “evocative,” “meticulously researched,” etc.), and the back flap, which will often provide a paragraph about the author and his or her other titles.

Now—and only now—should you take the plunge and open the book.

THAT FIRST CONVERSATION: INTRODUCTIONS, PROLOGUES, TEXT, AND OTHER CLUES

One of my very favorite attributes of nonfiction books is that so many of them include introductions. Book introductions (and last chapters or conclusions) are largely what got me through college.

because so much great and telling information is packed into introductions that you almost don't have to read the rest of the book (unless, of course, you want to, which I almost always do). Introductions are particularly helpful in books of history, investigative journalism, and more subject-based books such as business and political titles, as they can provide a lot of information not only about the story but about how the author will tell the story. If the introduction is long, skip to the last few pages before the first chapter starts: that's often where authors will lay all their cards on the table and explain how they wrote about their subject and what structure their books will follow. Introductions can also provide valuable clues about the narration of a book: nonfiction authors who are giving the readers the inside or hidden stories often adopt first-person and highly personal tones, promising that secrets will be revealed, while authors relying less on personal experience will adopt a more formal tone and structure. Not all nonfiction titles offer introductions, and when they don't, they might offer a prologue instead. This is particularly true in more emotion-driven works, or titles in which literary style is more of a concern than the story or characters—prologues can therefore often be found in memoirs, true crime, true adventure, and histories that are told more as stories than as scholarly works. Introductions let readers know what they're in for; prologues provide only enough information or atmosphere to tantalize.

If I've gotten this far in my cursory perusal of a nonfiction book, I've already amassed quite a bit of information. At this point I like to step back just a bit from the process and simply absorb the feel of the book. How thick is it? How heavy is it? I like to just flip through the pages as I heft it, not really reading anything but just considering little factors like the density of text, the length of chapters, whether or not there are illustrations or photo sections (which I always, always, always look through in their entirety at this point), and whether or not there are other sections like charts, appendices, notes, bibliographies, or indexes. Without considering each of those things too carefully individually, taken as an aggregate, they can provide other important clues about a book and, more important, about the types of readers who might consider picking the book up. All books, including novels, can offer wide variations in text size and spacing, depending not only on the genre but also on where the author is in her or his writing career (my husband jokes that Robert Parker's Spenser novels, while still a lot of fun to read, now feature more white space than text), but text size and spacing in nonfiction books are good indicators of the reading experience. A memoir with short chapters and more generous spacing or larger text will read much differently than will history, science, or even biographical books with denser text. Again, all these surface attributes will tell you much more about how a nonfiction book will "read" than will its subject classification number or interest category. Popular science books, written for a wider audience, will read much differently than will hard or more detailed science books featuring denser text, more references, or even scientific notations, numbers, or illustrations. When deciding between two such books, the popular science book might well have more in common with other, more recreational nonfiction (popular history, say, or more investigative or current affairs books) than it does with the similarly subjected hard science book.

The presence of notes or references, bibliographies, suggestions for "further reading," chronologies or time lines, or indexes can also offer you more information about the book you're holding. Books with a long list of references and an index may indicate a more scholarly or challenging read, while many new nonfiction titles are being published without any references or indexes at all (this is seen increasingly in works of popular history and biographies). Titles such as Leslie Carroll's *Royal Affairs: A Lusty Romp through the Extramarital Adventures That Rocked the British Monarchy*, with neither index nor notes, are becoming more common and are meant to be read recreationally, not studied or plundered for research projects or book reports. The presence (

absence) of notes or an index can be particularly instructive in nonfiction books written in an investigative style: exposés and works of reporting undertaken by more independent journalists will often feature more endnotes and indexes, while current affairs books by pundits and more opinionated volumes will not (references are hardly ever offered in books by authors such as Bill O'Reilly or Michael Moore). Continuing

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION: LAST CONSIDERATIONS

If you've made it this far, you probably already have a pretty good feel for the nonfiction book you're getting to know. You could make an informed decision about this book's suitability for you (or for other readers you know) based on what you have. But if the bell hasn't yet rung and you're still enjoying yourself getting to know the book, there are just a few last things you can do, and they should largely be dictated by your personal tastes.

Although you've already had a good look at the book's introduction or prologue, you may also want to read a bit of the first chapter, or randomly choose a point in the book at which you'd like to start reading, just to get a better feel for the author's writing style. If I do read a bit in the book, I tend to do something that makes fiction readers very uneasy: I'll often flip right to the back and see what happens in the final chapter. To each her own. For the most part, if I've had a good look at the dust jacket description and the first few pages, I don't really need to know any more to make my choice. But some readers and advisors swear by a more careful look into the middle of the book or simply reading a couple of pages at random, and I'm certainly not going to pooh-pooh that. We all get to know our books in our own ways, after all.

One thing I will do, if I have time, is peruse the author's acknowledgments, which can appear either the very front or the very back of the book. Not only can these acknowledgments be quite heartwarming (I always like to see long-suffering family members get thanked), but sometimes I can pick up clues about other, similar books or about the author's connections. New authors will often thank or mention their authorial influences or mentors, many of whom have written books of their own—and those names can be a valuable source of read-alikes. Likewise, sometimes you can pick up a fun bit of trivia or find out why a book may suddenly and inexplicably have more “buzz” than you might expect—John Elder Robison's memoir, *Look Me in the Eye: My Life with Asperger's*, was an interesting book in its own right (with a fantastic cover, please note), but was also buzzed about because Robison is the brother of the more well-known memoirist and humorist Augusten Burroughs. I'm not even sure Robison thanked Burroughs in his acknowledgments, but that is just the sort of tangential but arguably valuable type of information that can be found amid the many thank-yous and I-owe-yous.

THE COLLECTION: THE NONFICTION BOOK AMONG ITS FRIENDS

Sometimes you're looking less for that one special book than for an opportunity to get out and mingle among a wide variety of nonfiction titles. It's possible to get to know nonfiction not only one title at a time but also as part of your larger collection. When is the last time you wandered in your stacks? How do your nonfiction shelves differ from your fiction shelves? How is your nonfiction organized, and how does that organization differ from your fiction collection? Does your library use nonfiction books in your book and other merchandising displays? All these factors will affect how you approach nonfiction books.

Because nonfiction varies so widely, from the purely informational to the more narrative, there often a wide variation in the physical format of nonfiction books. In the nonfiction collection, books that are closer in size and shape to the vast majority of hardcover novels and fiction often have to vie for shelf space with larger and heavier coffee-table books or other oversized manuscripts as well as with much thinner how-to guides and other smaller-format informational titles. This variation in physical formats often means that the nonfiction shelves can be a bit messier and harder to browse. Don't let the chaos get to you, and embrace nonfiction's diversity. Many of those oversized books that just don't fit on library shelves are gorgeously illustrated coffee-table books on subjects that might pique your interest in more story-driven nonfiction titles. An oversized book of photographs of small town America might get you in the mood for related nonfiction titles like Michael Perry's *Population 485: Meeting Your Neighbors One Siren at a Time* or even novels like Richard Russo's *Nobody's Fool*.

Another particularly valuable way to explore your collection is to immerse yourself in a subject area or Dewey number range in which you have absolutely no interest. For me, a wander through the science shelves (also known as the 500s) surprisingly yielded some of my all-time favorite reads, including Matthew Hart's *Diamond: A Journey to the Heart of an Obsession*. In addition to broadening your own perspective, browsing subject areas with which you are not familiar might help jog your memory when working with science book readers or even when answering reference questions or helping patrons with their homework. By seeing beyond subject matter you will start naturally to view nonfiction as a more intangible reading experience and one more similar to the fiction experience. Although subjects sometimes do act as entry points for readers seeking novels, more often the subject matter is not as important in fiction as are appeal factors such as complex characters, evocative and described settings, or avant-garde or unique writing styles.

DID YOU MAKE A LOVE MATCH?

Even if you didn't find the book of your dreams, never fear: new nonfiction books are being published every day. There's a ton of fish in the sea— chances are good that someday you'll meet a nonfiction book you'd like to get to know a little better. In the meantime, don't forget to get out there where books congregate and make yourself available, and keep in mind the best ways to get to know nonfiction books:

- covers and titles
- author blurbs and dust jacket synopses
- introductions and prologues
- size and weight, text density, notes and references, pictures and indexes
- random chapters and acknowledgments
- subject matter and placement in a larger nonfiction collection

Happy nonfiction hunting!

See the next page for a worksheet that highlights the steps in the chapter and gives you some space for note taking. It's important to write some notes so you can remember the book you just spent time learning about. These sheets can also be saved in a binder at the service desk for moments when your memory needs nudging.

Title: _____

Author(s): _____

Steps (for each of these you can add a sentence or two or phrases or reminder words):

1. *First impressions: the cover and the title.* What color is the cover, and does it include photos or an illustration? Make a note of both the title *and* subtitle.
 2. *Allow me to introduce: blurbs and dust jacket copy.* Who else has liked this book? Note summary and author's credentials on dust jacket copy.
 3. *That first conversation: introductions, prologues, text, and other clues.* Browse the index for a summary of the story and the structure of the book. What scene does the prologue set? Are there notes, references, or an index?
 4. *Continuing the conversation: last considerations.* Note literary style by browsing text; read acknowledgments for background info and possible read-alikes.
 5. *The collection: the nonfiction book among its friends.* Note the shapes, sizes, and weights of books; immerse yourself in subjects.
 6. *Did you make a love match?* What about it? Do you want to read this book?
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HOW TO LISTEN TO A BOOK IN THIRTY MINUTES

Kaite Mediatore Stover

The precursor to the following guidelines, “How to Read a Book in Five Minutes,” has many mothering influences, including the late Jane Hirsch, of the Montgomery County (Maryland) Department of Public Libraries, who developed the original guidelines. Lisa Sampley, of the Springfield–Greene County (Missouri) Public Library, expanded the guidelines and published them in *Missouri Library World*.¹ Further modifications have been made by Mary K. Chelton and Joyce Saricks, and Jessica Moyer has written the latest version in chapter 1 of this book.

These guidelines are suitable for books on cassettes, compact discs, Playaways, and digital audiobooks. Unlike printed material, audiobooks are much more difficult to “judge by their covers.” The narrator of an audio-book can be the sole deciding factor for a library patron. It is this quality of “listenability” that the evaluator should hone in on. The character and plot information can be gleaned from perusing the printed copy of the title. The audible qualities—narration and pacing and character voices—are the primary concern when engaging in this readers’ advisory exercise.

HOW TO LISTEN TO AN AUDIOBOOK IN SIX STEPS

Tools needed: an audiobook, a listening device, a notebook or other place to jot down notes

1. *Examine the audio cover:* For cassettes, CDs, and Playaways, start by reviewing the cover. It’s hard to look at the “cover” of a downloadable audiobook, but it is possible to view the online record, which usually includes an image either of the book jacket or of the audio cover.
 - a. Is the cover or image attractive?
 - b. Does it give the viewer a suggestion about the contents?
 - c. Is it the same as the print version of the book?
 - d. Is the narrator’s name prominently displayed?
 - e. Does the case/website clearly state whether the audiobook is abridged or unabridged?
2. *Read the jacket blurb:* Unlike on a print book, there is only one place for an audiobook blurb—the back of the case. This isn’t very much room, and the blurb may be short. Again, use the record for digital audiobooks.
 - a. If the print version of the book is available, peruse the flyleaf.
 - b. Look for a description of the book and a profile of the narrator.
 - c. Who is the narrator? Are previous works listed?
 - d. Are any “extras” listed (e.g., author interviews, music, sound effects)?
 - e. Do you get a sense of the story?
 - f. Are key elements of the plot revealed?

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