

Books and Authors: The Top 5 of Another 5

Genres: Historical Fiction, Literary Fiction, Romance, Science Fiction, Suspense/Thriller

Notes on the original 5 covered at PLA 2010 can be found online at:

<http://shelfrenewal.com/programs/pla2010presentation/>



Historical Fiction : Barry Trott, Digital Services Director, Williamsburg Regional Library. btrott@wrl.org

Barry Trott received his MSLS from The Catholic University of America School of Library and Information Science in 1997, and has worked at the Williamsburg Regional Library as reference librarian, as readers' services librarian, and as Adult Services Director prior to taking on responsibility for digital services. Barry is the past-chair of the RUSA CODES Readers' Advisory Committee for ALA, edited the readers' advisory column for *RUSQ* for eight years and is currently the editor of *RUSQ*. He also writes for the *NoveList* readers' advisory database. He is the author of *Read On . . . Crime Fiction* (Libraries Unlimited 2008) and is series editor for the Read On series. In 2007, Barry was awarded both the Public Library Association's Allie Beth Martin Award and the ALA Reference and User Services Association's Margaret E. Monroe Library Adult Services Award in recognition for his work in readers' advisory services.

Top 5 must-know historical fiction writers:

- Mary Renault – *The King Must Die*
- Michael Shaara – *Killer Angels*
- Philippa Gregory – *Earthly Joys*
- Dorothy Dunnet – *Game of Kings*
- Edward Rutherfurd – *Sarum*

Top 5 must-read historical fiction books:

- *Regeneration* – Pat Barker
- *Lonesome Dove*—Larry McMurtry
- *Captain Alatriste* – Arturo Perez-Reverte
- *Colony of Unrequited Dreams*—Wayne Johnston
- *Master and Commander*—Patrick O'Brian

5 Up-and Comers in historical fiction:

- Peter Behrens – *The Law of Dreams*
- John Crowley – *The Four Freedoms*
- Robert Olmstead – *Coal Black Horse*
- Jo Graham – *Black Ships*
- Jane Borodale – *The Book of Fires*

Top 5 trends in historical fiction:

- **Woman's Roles** – Women making their way in nontraditional roles
- **Naval Fiction** – Patrick O'Brian may have been the most popular, but nautical fiction in historic settings continues to be a hit with readers.
- **Fictional Bios** – Readers love the mix of real and fictional characters in this increasingly popular sub-genre.

- **Historical Mysteries** – Crime novels in historic settings have never gone out of fashion.
- **Immigrant Stories** – Exploring a new element via historical fiction. These are often the stories of the not so famous and not so powerful.

5 of Barry's personal favorite historical novels:

- *At the Seven Stars*—John and Patricia Beatty
- *Three Day Road* – Joseph Boyden
- *Carter Beats the Devil* – Glen David Gold
- *Devil Water* – Anya Seton
- *The Known World* – Edward P. Jones



Literary Fiction: David Wright, Reader Services Librarian, Seattle Public Library. David.Wright@spl.org

David Wright is a reader services librarian in Seattle Public Library's Central branch, where he contributes to the library blog, advises readers both online and in person, presents a bi-weekly storytime for grownups, and is pleased to welcome visitors from all over the city, and all over the world. David also teaches readers advisory at the University of Washington, and writes articles and reviews for *Booklist*, *NoveList*, *Library Journal*, *Alki* and other places.

Top 5 must-know literary fiction writers:

- William Faulkner
- Jane Austen
- Franz Kafka
- Charles Dickens
- Charlotte Bronte
 - Honorable mentions: James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, J.D. Salinger, Ernest Hemingway, Jorge Luis Borges, Graham Greene, Willa Cather, Alexandre Dumas, Edith Wharton, Flannery O'Connor.

Top 5 must-read literary fiction books:

- *Cutting for Stone*, by Abraham Verghese
- *Middlesex*, by Jeffery Eugenides
- *The Poisonwood Bible*, by Barbara Kingsolver
- *My Sister's Keeper*, by Jodi Picoult.
- *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, by Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

5 Up-and Comers in Literary Fiction:

see also: *The New Yorker's* "20 under 40" (June 14, 2010): Foer, Ferris, Obrecht, Russell, Shteyngart. etc. If you don't know these writers, you've got some catching up to do.

- Lydia Millet – 42 in June 2010.
- Jonathan Evison – 42 in June 2010.
- Yannick Murphy – 48 in June 2010.
- David Mitchell – 41 in June 2010.

- Joe Schmoe. The “Long Tail” is now endless, anyone can publish, and your next purchase request will be for... *who-was-that-again?*

Top Five Trends in Literary Fiction

- **Middlebrow Rises.** The “Great Divide” between Literary & Genre fiction is shrinking, as more literary authors write genre fiction, publishers market storytelling, titles labeled “Literary-__” draw readers from all sides, and plot is no longer a bad word.
- **Realism Takes Flight.** Increasingly popular literary fantasists, fabulists, surrealists and magical realists show that serious literary fiction is no longer synonymous with naturalism.
- **It’s a Big World.** As with mystery and other genres, American literary fiction seems to be growing less insular, as more works in translation are sought and published, and more popular domestic works look outward.
- **The 9/11 Novel Comes of Age.** They may not have tackled it head on, but serious literary novelists everywhere are touching this base, weighing in with their visions of the post 9/11 world.
- **Short Forms Stand Tall.** Maybe it’s shortened attention spans, hectic lives, zine culture or digital reading, but short stories and novellas are standing on their own, accompanied by an increasing array of small presses who have direct access to digital publication.

5 of David’s personal favorite Literary Authors

- Stewart O’Nan
- Nick Harkaway
- Percival Everett
- Joyce Carol Oates
- Joseph Conrad



Romance: Rebecca Vnuk, Reference & Collection Management Editor, *Booklist*. rvnuk@ala.org
 Rebecca is the new Editor for Reference and Collection Management at *Booklist*. She is the author of 2 Reader’s Advisory nonfiction titles for Libraries Unlimited: *Read On...Women’s Fiction*, and *Women’s Fiction Authors: A Research Guide* – with a 3rd on the way, hopefully out Summer 2012. A long time reviewer and collection development article writer for *Library Journal*, she was named their “Fiction Reviewer of the Year” in 2008. In 2010, Rebecca was named a Library Journal Mover and Shaker as well as the recipient of PLA’s Allie Beth Martin Award. Catch her online at <http://shelfrenewal.booklistonline.com/>.

Top 5 Must-Know Romance Authors: (Courtesy of John Charles)

- Nora Roberts – for millions of readers, Nora is romance. Consistently delivers a well-written, engaging book featuring compelling characters with whom readers can easily relate.
- Susan Elizabeth Phillips –Unrivaled when it comes to mixing humor and passion.
- Jayne Ann Krentz –three romance authors for the price of one! Writes historical romances as Amanda Quick, contemporary and romantic suspense books as Jayne Ann Krentz, and paranormal/futuristic as Jayne Castle love stories.
- Eloisa James – finding the right mix between history and romance in historical romances isn’t always easy, but James always manages to perfectly blend a sexy love story into an intriguing historical setting.

- Lara Adrian – Okay, you can just as easily nominate another paranormal romance writer like Christine Feehan or Kresley Cole or Sherrilyn Kenyon but the key point is that you should read at least one of these authors to understand the powerful spell paranormal romances can cast over readers.

Top 5 Must-Read Romance Books:

- Francine Rivers – *Redeeming Love* (inspirational)
- Sandra Brown – *In a Class By Itself* (contemporary classic)
- Jude Deveraux – *Lavender Morning* (series, family)
- Julia Quinn – *Ten Things I Love About You* (Regency)
- Brenda James – *Star of His Heart* (Contemporary, African-American)

5 Up-and Comers in Romance:

- Joanna Bourne
- Julie James
- Heather Snow
- Jessica Scott
- Susan Sey

Top 5 Trends in Romance (also courtesy of John Charles – the 5 “C”s)

- Connected Books - Think “series”. Romance authors are quite clever about finding ways to connect their books together, whether it be through a common geographic setting, common workplace, or some kind of family connection.
- Contemporary Romance – on the upswing
- Comedy - Since the world is already such a dark and dismal place, romance readers are looking for a love story that also delivers a generous dose of humor.
- Cowboys - Western romances – both historical and contemporary-set – are slowly coming back into demand.
- Christian - or “Inspirational” romances are hot. Well, not technically hot in the romance sense, but they have become extremely popular with romance readers

Rebecca’s 5 personal favorite Romances:

- *What I Did for Love* - Susan Elizabeth Philips
- *Bet Me* - Jennifer Crusie
- *Watch by Moonlight* – Kate Hawks
- *Big Girls Don't Cry* - Cathie Linz
- *A twist: a website!* <http://www.smartbitchestrashybooks.com>



Science Fiction:

Roberta S. Johnson, Assistant Director, Des Plaines Public Library. rjohnson@dppl.org
 Roberta S. Johnson looked around and she had become an administrator. She is currently Assistant Director at the Des Plaines Public Library in Illinois. Her fifteen minutes of fame came when she created Fiction_L fifteen years ago. And auto-correct STILL wants to change it to “fictional”.

Top 5 must-know Science Fiction writers:

- Arthur C. Clarke
- Ursula K. LeGuin
- Anne McCaffrey
- Larry Niven
- Kim Stanley Robinson

Must-read Science Fiction books: a twist!

Instead of choosing 5 books, here are 2 anthologies to grab. Pick 5 stories, and you'll be up to speed on the basics of SF. You'll probably find yourself reading more than 5, even.

- *Masterpieces: The Best Science Fiction of the Century*, edited by Orson Scott Card. A terrific sampling of the genre, including the most important writers.
- *The Year's Best Science Fiction* (annual), Edited by Gardner Dozois.

5 Up-and Comers in Science Fiction:

- John Barnes
- Elizabeth Bear
- Robert J. Sawyer
- Karl Schroeder
- Jo Walton

Top 5 Trends in Science Fiction :

- **Diversity** – strong female characters have been the norm for a while, but authors and characters of color are more commonplace. Science Fiction tends to reflect the world of science, so a look at our current NASA astronaut slate will tell you something about the state of the genre.
- **Humor** – Science Fiction never really had the sense of humor that Fantasy does, so it was a pleasure to discover that Kage Baker and Sean McMullen and Neal Stephenson crack me up.
- **Blurring of Science Fiction and Thrillers** – As our technology advances faster than we can write about it, an exciting SF novel is a hair's breadth away from a technothriller. Try *Directive 51* by John Barnes. The future is now
- **Young Adult Novels Trending to Science Fiction** – New series like *Matched* by Allyson Condie and *Divergent* by Veronica Roth explore brave new worlds with teens. Vampires got nothing on post-apocalyptic societies.
- **Steampunk** – Victorian-era characters with Jules Verne technology. Memorable books include Scott Westerfeld's *Leviathan* and *Boneshaker* by Cherie Priest.

5 of Roberta's Personal Favorites:

Note that several of these titles are decades old. SF readers feel profound attachments to books that brought them into the fold, or opened their eyes at a young age. In addition, we like to re-read our favorites, and all of these hold up for me.

- *Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card (1985, movie coming soon!)
- *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K. LeGuin (1969)
- *Eyes of the Calculator* by Sean McMullen (2001)
- *Ringworld* by Larry Niven (1970)

- *Red Mars* by Kim Stanley Robinson (1993)



Suspense/Thrillers:

Kaite Mediatore Stover, Director of Readers' Services, The Kansas City Public Library

Kaite manages to fit her day job in between writing "He Reads, She Reads" with David Wright for Booklist, contributing columns and reviews to Booklist and NoveList, blogging for Book Group Buzz, and writing chapters for other people's books. Sometimes she can be heard on the local Kansas City airwaves with the Book Doctors. She doesn't let any of this get in the way of her porch redecorating, yoga practice, or tarot card reading. Oh, and she co-edited a book, *The Readers' Advisory Toolkit*. And won the Allie Beth Martin Award for 2012. Word.

Top 5 must-know Suspense/Thriller writers:

- Michael Crichton—Science is out to get you.
- Tom Clancy—The Military is out to get you.
- John le Carre—Interpol is out to get you.
- Robin Cook—Modern medicine is out to get you.
- John Grisham—Corporate lawyers are out to get you.

Top 5 must-read Thrillers:

- *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown (arcane thriller)
- *The Bourne Identity* by Robert Ludlum (spy thriller)
- *Silence of the Lambs* by Thomas Harris (psychological thriller)
- *Presumed Innocent* by Scott Turow (legal thriller)
- *Native Tongue* by Carl Hiaasen (comic thriller)

5 Up-and Comers in Thriller Fiction:

- S. J. Watson - *Before I Go To Sleep*
- Taylor Stevens - *The Informationist*
- Elizabeth Haynes - *Into the Darkest Corner*
- Dana Haynes - *Crashers*
- Lene Kaaberbol - *The Boy in the Suitcase*

Top Five Trends in Thrillers:

- Arcane thrillers: The next thriller hero is a librarian/scholar. The answers to the puzzle are in the books or ancient documents only a dusty be-spectacled academic can interpret.
- Comic thrillers: Have never really gone out of style, see Elmore Leonard and Carl Hiaasen. But more authors are breaking into the thriller genre with caper novels. Probably easier to sell to Hollywood, too.
- Lady Thriller: As with all genres, as soon as women get in the game, the play is elevated in new ways. The most popular thrillers feature women as lawyers, investigators, medical professionals, or dogged survivors.
- Domestic Trauma: The stakes and emotions are higher when the family is involved.

- Chillers: Scandinavian Style: Not content with good old fashioned Chevrolet and apple pie thrillers, readers are now rabid for lutefisk, the lands of the midnight sun, ice and snow.

5 of Kaite's Personal Favorite Thrillers:

- *The Winter of Frankie Machine* by Don Winslow
- *Palindrome* by Stuart Woods
- *Trust Me On This* by Donald Westlake
- *Still Missing* by Chevy Stevens
- *Monkeewrench* by P.J. Tracy