

## **Booktalking in the Stacks**

### **Readers' Advisory Tool Kit 2**

BOOKTALKING IN THE STACKS lets you interact with patrons on their turf. Taking clues from what they have in hand or what they say, you point out other books or authors nearby that you think might appeal to them.

#### **BASICS OF BOOKTALKING IN THE STACKS**

Opportunistic, not pre-meditated.

Take clues from body language of patron – not everyone wants help or to talk.

Stay within your comfort zone – you don't have to talk with everyone.

Talk with patrons, not to them – build the conversation around what brought them to this area of the stacks, to this genre, to this author.

Develop a patter for those who are looking at authors or genres with which you are familiar - and some leading questions if you feel you must talk to others.

Stay in the general area of the collection – don't drag the patron hither and yon.

Keep the book center stage — keep yourself out of the way.

Keep it simple — don't throw in too many extraneous details.

Be upfront in differentiating between what you've actually read, what you've heard others talk about, and what you've learned from reviews and such.

Be prepared to change course if you misunderstand.

Cheerfully admit it when you don't have a clue, but offer to find out and make an "appointment" for follow-up.

Offer only what's available right now and try to offer choices so the reader can decide.

Be enthusiastic, but don't overwhelm – again, watch body language.

Mention displays, RA tools and resources that might help patron find even more new authors.

Make your suggestions, then leave so the patron doesn't feel bound to take something and not hurt your feelings.

Have exit strategies to escape patrons who really want more than a short conversation.

## FROM THE READERS' ADVISOR'S POINT OF VIEW

This is the reader's turf. You are making the initial contact. This is light conversation offering "openings" to a mutually enjoyable chat about books. It's more like engaging in conversation than a readers' advisory reference interview

Suggest, rather than recommend.

Think about how you would phrase a suggestion based on speed reading vs. cover-to-cover reading vs. what you might have learned from reviews or other readers.

Use this as an opportunity to introduce patrons to reference resources for readers, displays, booklists, the library's web page.

## BECOMING PROFICIENT AT BOOKTALKING IN THE STACKS

### Listen

For clues about what interests the patron about an author or book.

Respect what patrons want to read.

Put yourself in the pace of the reader and learn to use words that allow choices.

### Practice

Stand in an area of the stacks; note authors you know well and think about who else you'd suggest among authors no more than an aisle or two away. Then try this with popular authors you know a little about.

Develop some leading questions, opening gambits with which you are comfortable.

Chat with staff or friends IN THE STACKS or anywhere that books are nearby. You can do the same with complete strangers in the bookstore, comic shop, or waiting in line at the supermarket – places where your expectations are lower and the "patron" has no expectations at all.

Set a goal; gradually build confidence and expertise.

"and some days are better than others" – Joyce Saricks

*Loosely based on a presentation by Vivian Mortensen, Park Ridge Public Library, Illinois (April 2000) and adapted by Joyce Saricks .*