

Who else writes like?: a reader's guide to fiction authors

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The readers' guide to fiction authors, the forerunner of *Who else writes like?* was first published in 1985 by Peter Mann. It was based on a list of 61 'core' authors, to which alternatives submitted by over 600 librarians were added. A new edition was published in 1993. These books, including the edition under review here, were compiled with the intention of answering one of the most frequent questions heard in public libraries: 'I have exhausted all the books by my favourite authors. What can I read next?'. The aim is to solve the dilemmas of public librarians as well as those of enthusiastic

fiction readers and to help both to explore the vast array of contemporary fiction. The main benefit is finding an author one has never dreamed of reading otherwise!

Who else writes like? (also known as *The guide*), lists popular fiction authors currently in print. For each author between four and 14 alternative authors with similar styles are suggested. Fiction authors popular in public libraries in the United Kingdom, the United States and in many Commonwealth countries are included. Popularity statistics were provided by the Registrar of Public Lending Right. Older favourites and classic writers not so readily available are not included since they can be traced by means of other publications. A wide variety of public librarians assisted in indicating the alternative authors but, as the compilers admit, these choices are subjective. There is therefore no guarantee that the reader will agree with the suggestions – no author writes exactly like another. Even so, *The guide* can be a simple but valuable tool in promoting fiction reading.

The latest edition of *The guide* lists over 1 200 authors of whom 25% are claimed to be new. It includes the following sections:

- Introduction and acknowledgements
- How to use this *Guide*
- The Readers' guide: an alphabetical list (the main component)
- The Teenage supplement
- Authors listed by genre
- Literary prizes and awards
- Bibliography of other guides to fiction.

The arrangement in the main list is alphabetical according to authors. The authors are listed in two separate columns. The names which follow each author are suggested alternatives. For example if you like Robert Ludnum, you might also like the work of Ted Allbeury, Geoffrey Archer, George Brown, Victor Canning, Clive Egleton, James Follett, Frederick Forsyth, Duncan Kyle, Derek Lambert, Julian Rathbone, Lawrence Sanders and Sidney Sheldon. Authors of various nationalities (other than British) are included, such as Canadian, Danish, French, Japanese, Russian and South African. South African authors included are Lindsay Armstrong, Andre P. Brink, J.M. Coetzee, Bryce Courtenay, John Gordon Davis, Nadine Gordimer, Christopher Hope, Alan Paton, Nicola Thorne and Antony Trew. The author's nationality (if not British) as well as date of birth and death (if known) are also indicated.

The Teenage supplement lists 50 authors writing for teenagers, focussing on their latest works. Two to four works are indicated for each author, as well as a short description of their type of work. Authors listed include Judy Blume, Anne Fine, Margaret Mahy and Sue Townsend.

Writers are also listed under a variety of genres, namely adventure, crime, family stories, fantasy, general, glitz and glamour, historical, humour, romance, science fiction, sea, supernatural, war and western. Sometimes subgenres are included, and for crime the character or environment of the crime author is indicated. The genres are rather problematic

the compilers admit, since writers' works do not always fall within a clear-cut genre, and some authors write in more than one genre.

A list of award-winning works is included, as well as a bibliography of other guides to fiction.

The well-bound, hard-cover publication is of a convenient size; easy to manage and use by both the librarian and library patron. The layout is clear and the font easy to read. *The guide* is recommended for all public libraries, as well as for the individual who is an enthusiastic fiction reader. The price is reasonable enough. A further benefit for libraries is that the compilers say that parts of the book may be copied to promote wider awareness of fiction amongst library users.

The guide was prepared under the auspices of the Library and Information Statistics Unit at Loughborough University which is funded by the British Library Research and Innovation Centre. (The Unit is also responsible for a number of other publications.) *The guide* can be ordered from Library and Information Statistics Unit (LISU), Publication Section, Loughborough University, Loughborough LE11 3TU United Kingdom. Fax: +44 (0)1509 223072; E-mail: lise@lboro.ac.uk

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