

Who else writes like...?: A readers' guide to fiction authors. 4th ed.

Roy and Jeanne Huse (Eds)

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The fourth edition of *Who else writes like...* (as with the earlier editions) has been 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 editors hope to offer a standard fiction reference work and to promote reading by helping fiction readers to expand the number of authors they have read, an intention in which they should indeed succeed very well.

Who else writes like... is structured according to the following sections: acknowledgements, introduction, an explanation on how to use the guide, and a list of abbreviations on the nationality and place of birth of the authors. The

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main part of *Who else writes like...* is the Readers' Guide, which consists of an alphabetical list of core authors. The authors are selected according to their popularity derived from statistics that are provided by the Registrar of Public Lending Right (UK), and advice the editors receive from practicing professional librarians from England, Scotland and Wales. These are people who are considered to be closely in touch with their readers and their book collections. An author is only included if they have three books to their name, and if their novels are easily obtainable from bookshops and libraries.

For each author between three and twelve alternative authors are listed. For example, if one likes the work of Agatha Christie, Catherine Aird, Margery Allingham, Ngaio Marsh, Gladys Mitchell, etc. are listed as alternative authors that might also be of interest. It is admitted that no author can write exactly like another, but there may be some resemblance that could lead the reader to other authors of interest, sometimes authors he/she may never even have dreamed of reading!

For each author the following information is provided if known: author's dates of birth and death, nationality or place of birth of authors who are not English, the genre and/or sub-genre or type of novel, names of main characters, environment and/or occupation, pseudonyms, the author's own website, and any prizes won, with the dates.

The list of authors is followed by a section of authors arranged according to genre. The genres include adventure/thriller, 'Aga' saga (novels based upon the middle-class surroundings of the type of person who typically owns Aga cookers but who is not immune to the emotional dilemmas that can confront all classes of society), 'chick' lit (stories written by young women for other young women, usually with a central theme of mishaps with boyfriends and the problems of staying in shape), crime, fantasy, glitz and glamour, historical, horror, humour, 'lad' lit (the male equivalent to 'chick' lit and therefore written about men in the same age range who have trouble expressing their emotions), romance, saga, science fiction, sea, war and westerns. *Who else writes like...* also includes sections on main characters, literary prizes and awards. The book is concluded with a section on suggestions for further reading, including relevant website addresses.

The fourth edition lists over 1 800 authors. According to the editors there is an increase of almost one-fifth in the number of authors listed in the fourth edition (394 new authors were added) compared with the previous edition. About ten percent of the names listed in the third edition (188 authors) have been deleted because it was felt that they are no longer widely read. Authors of various nationalities other than British are included, such as authors from South Africa, Russia, Sweden, Taiwan, Peru and India.

The first edition of *Who else writes like...* was published in 1993, and it is now in its 4th edition. During this time the editors have built up considerable experience. Even though all earlier editions of *Who else writes like...* met with favourable reviews, from myself as well as other reviewers, the editors are still making every effort to improve the publication. For the fourth edition input from a reader survey was, for example, considered in order to make improvements. Some of the changes that have been made include the following: brief details of prizes are included in author entries as well as more comprehensive detail in the index. If available, author's website addresses are provided. The result is once more a publication that the editors and the University of Loughborough can feel proud of!

The well-bound, soft cover publication is of a convenient size, easy to manage and use. The layout is clear and the font easy to read.

Who else writes like... can with right be claimed to be "The essential tool for all who read adult fiction" (marketing pamphlet). The reviewer wholeheartedly recommends *Who else writes like...* as essential in each and every public library. Since it is so affordable, it is certainly an ideal companion for visits to the library or local bookshop, and especially for those wives who have to take out books on behalf of busy husbands!

Who else writes like... has been prepared under the auspices of the Library and Information Statistics Unit at Loughborough University. It can be ordered from the Library and Information Statistics Unit (LISU), Loughborough University, Loughborough LE11 3TU.

Tel.: + 44 (0)1509 223071; Fax: +44 (0)1509 223072

Email: lisu@lboro.ac.uk

Web site: <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/lis/lisu/whoelse.html>

Reviewed by: Professor Ina Fourie, Department of Information Science, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Tel.: +27 (12) 420 5216

Email: fouriei@postino.up.ac.za