**Genrefication of the Fiction Section responses: Michlib-L**

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**Jaema Berman. Oxford Public Library**

**Jon Deahl, Waterford** **jdeahl@waterfordmi.gov**

You know that we organize by genre here, which I have always found to be extremely helpful as a library user.  But I also worked at another library that filed everything together.  So many patrons would ask where our mystery section was located, only to be disappointed when I told them everything was together but highlighted with stickers.  Many of those same patrons told me they did not find this helpful because it is very easy to overlook an author who doesn’t have as robust of a catalog.  Some are so set in their reading patterns that they don’t care about materials outside of it and therefore found it less enjoyable to come to the library.  At that same library, I had patrons only come in to renew their card because it was difficult to find something that they wanted.  To be fair, that was also a very small library.

The problems you would encounter are from patrons that do not like change, but also when you need to create space within the section.  You sort of need to free up an entire bookcase worth of materials to avoid to sections crashing together somewhere in the middle.

**Donald Priest, Southgate, <dpriest@southgate.lib.mi.us>**

We've long had our fiction broken up by genre.  Our sections are Fiction (general fiction, thrillers, anything that doesn't explicitly go in another section), Mystery, Science Fiction, Short Stories, Westerns, and Large Print.  We also have the paperbacks divided into a regular Paperback section (similar to the general Fiction section, though mystery paperbacks are included), Science Fiction, Western, and a Romance paperback section.  I would say it has definitely been worthwhile, plenty of patrons gravitate directly to the Mystery or Science Fiction sections, and it saves them hunting through a larger, general fiction section for their interests.  It can be difficult to know what should go in each section sometimes, especially what is enough of a mystery to go in that section (a thriller will have a mystery component, for instance, but is that enough the point of the story to put in the Mystery section?)

I can't guess what problems creating such distinctions would make, this organization structure has been here longer than me.  Hope that helps!

**Stephanie Herm, Taylor, sherm@ci.taylor.mi.us>**

This is a very informal observation from a mid-level staffer:  Here in Taylor, we have in the past had Sci Fi/Fantasy, Short Stories and Westerns labelled and shelved separately. Recently we rearranged our shelving with considerable weeding of unread and scrubby books, and these categories are labelled still, but are interfiled with regular fiction.  We do still maintain a Mystery section at the end of our fiction. I seem to remember hearing that Mysteries are still much sought after here, whereas the other categories are not as much in demand, and are as likely to be checked out because they are found as because they are looked for.  We also have a separate section for paperback Romances, and one for Classics which is in the teen area. As you probably know, the classics are often sought by students assigned to read certain titles for school work. This also helps us find them quickly for anyone else.

Hope this helps you.

**Amy Winter @ West Branch District Library.amy@westbranchlibrary.org>**

Our library did that many years ago.  After moving into our new building, we switched the fiction authors to strictly alphabetical order by last name.  We found that patrons liked their favorite authors,  but these authors also wrote under different genres. Patrons did not like how they had to go to each genre section (Western, mystery, romance and suspense)  to look for their special/favorite author.  Too much walking, etc...

What we learned, no matter what you do, people won't be happy.

With the authors alphabetical on the shelf, it is much easier finding them all in one spot rather than separated into genres. Another thing we did was place genre stickers on the spine next to the spine label. This is working out for all.  Especially for interlibrary loan when all the books on an author are in one spot.   It makes it easier for patrons plus staff.

**Julie @ Leelanau, director@leelanautownshiplibrary.org>**

We have mystery pulled out separate from the rest of the fiction and are considering putting it all back together.

One of the problems is having authors that write in more than one genre, it can be confusing for patrons to find the book on the right shelf.

Also 'thrillers' aren't the same as 'mysteries'  so they aren't together on the shelf, I know many 'mystery' readers might enjoy the 'thrillers'

but they don't stray too far from the 'mystery' section. If all the fiction was together patrons may discover new books easier.

Those are my two cents worth.

Thank You,

**Valarie Long, Ann Arbor, longv@aadl.org>**

Four of our five branches use a BISAC system of organization. One of the best things we've ever done. I wish we'd hurry up and do our last branch! We already had Mystery, Sci-Fi and Fantasy genre'd out, but now there's a Thriller section, Horror, Historical, Classics, Religious, General Romance, Historical Romance, Western, and more. Mysteries have been broken down into General, Classic, Cozy, and Historical. Sci-Fi has General, Classics, and Film & TV. Fantasy has General and Paranormal.

Not all the patrons were happy. Some of their favorite authors are now in more than one and they don't like that, but most people love it and find it much easier to find what they're looking for.

**T.J. Smith, Sherman Twp., shermandirector@gmail.com>**

Our fiction collection is still organized alphabetically, but we did add colored circular stickers to the spines to mark genre for improved browsing. Patrons really like it because it allows them to browse the collection more easily. The biggest con for us has been feeling accurate in marking some genres, specifically something like romantic suspense since we do not have a color designated for that. It can also cause some patrons to skip a book they may enjoy (think a christian suspense title) since they don't particularly like the genre we ended up labeling the item with; we remind patrons they stickers are just there as a guide. We use seven colors for the following categories- action & adventure, horror & thriller, sci-fi & fantasy, religious & amish, romance, western, and mystery & suspense. Those items we don't mark generally fall into historical, contemporary, or literary fiction. I feel like it was absolutely worth it for us. It has greatly helped our stacks circulate at a rate much closer to our new items.

When I came to Lapeer District Library, the picture books were organized in a few core genres that are referred to as "picture book neighborhoods". It separates books by Concepts, Things that Go, Nature, Community, Growing, etc.

**Mary Cowles, Lapeer, <mcowles@lib.lapeer.org>**

I was skeptical at first, but my families do like them because it is easier for them to casually browse for books. It is especially helpful for the younger children to browse in a section they like.

The main problem is that not every book has a clear single genre. I don't like to split works of an author that may write some really different materials. It also makes it difficult for consistency when multiple staff members are helping with a project like this.

Another problem we encountered is that if someone is looking for a specific book and they don't check the PAC first to get the neighborhood information, they end up checking multiple neighborhoods to find it sometimes. We are small, so it isn't a lot of walking, but it is frustrating for them.

I am considering just keeping the "Concepts" neighborhood (abc's, counting, colors, etc) because I think that one is the most useful, but I haven't decided yet. Once the patrons are trained to search one way it is hard to switch back. It was also a lot of work for the staff to do and it would be a lot to undo.

Overall, I think I remain on the fence about the neighborhoods. If I were to have a normally organized picture book collection, I don't think I would convert it all into neighborhoods unless we had strong patron support. Maybe you could survey your patrons on how they would like to see the fiction separated by genre. They might not realize all of the pros and cons yet, but it might help you decide. Mary Cowles, Lapeer,

**Bethany Romanowski, Richfield library@richfieldtownship.com>**

I have actually spent the last few years undoing genrefication of our Library, and circulation of many categories has gone up. Particularly we saw an increase in circulation on our faith-based fiction, as patrons who wouldn’t go directly to that area may pick up a title from the general fiction shelves just because it looks interesting. It also saves staff time, both in shelving and in locating materials (for example if part of James Patterson’s work is in mystery and another series is in fiction…).  The only genre that’s still on its own is Western, because there doesn’t seem to be much (if any) crossover interest on that one.