Form-based Readers’ Advisory

A new model for working with readers

Barry Trott
Williamsburg Regional Library
btrott@wrl.org
What is Readers’ Advisory?

- Conversation between a reader and a librarian
- A question with many possible answers
Why do Readers’ Advisory?

- Story is important to people
- Offers users a human touch
- Moves older and mid-lists titles
- Reinforces the value of the library in the community
Faulty Assumptions of the Traditional RA Model

- Readers will approach librarians with readers’ advisory questions
- The librarian approached with a readers’ advisory question will be the right person
- Enough information is obtained in a typical readers’ advisory interview to provide good service
Faulty Assumptions of the Traditional RA Model

- Quality readers’ advisory service is possible, given the time constraints of library encounters
- Resources needed by readers’ advisors can be easily used in face-to-face discussions
- Face-to-face readers’ advisory encounters are documented sufficiently to support follow up
What is Form-Based RA?

- Users fill out a reader profile form in print or online
- Form is routed to an appropriate library staff person
- Reader receives a reply giving them a number of reading choices
What are the benefits of form-based RA Service?

- Re-establishes the library as a source of reading guidance
- Creates a sustainable connection between library staff and the library’s readers
- Allows users to seek reading advice in a more comfortable manner
What are the benefits of form-based RA Service?

- Provides physical objects to promote RA service
- Gives readers the vocabulary to understand their reading choices
- Melds technology with service successfully
What are the benefits of form-based RA Service?

- Routes RA inquiries to appropriate staff
- Provides the time and information to successfully respond to RA questions
- Enhances circulation
What are the benefits of form-based RA Service?

- Aids in collection development
- Documents RA results
- Results in happy readers!
Who is doing form-based RA?

- 64 libraries providing form-based RA (blue)
- 61 libraries have asked about starting a form-based RA service (green)
More information on form-based RA services

- WRL Reader Profile Form

- Hollands, Neil. “Improving the Model for Interactive Readers’ Advisory Service.” *RUSQ* 45-3 (Spring 2006)