



We Owe Our Work to Theirs

Celebrating the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library

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Anniversaries are a time for celebration. We are provided with opportunities for looking back at the beginning of a journey, its triumphs and hardships and taking time to reflect on the foundation that the anniversary was built on. For this issue, the RA column is celebrating a special anniversary: the twenty-fifth anniversary of Joyce Saricks and Nancy Brown's publication *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library*. We are also fortunate to have Neal Wyatt author this piece, which includes an audio file capturing her interviews with Saricks and Brown. While it is easy to describe the benefit and contribution that Saricks and Brown made to readers' advisory, I believe Wyatt has provided us with the perfect words as she concludes this article:

On this 25th anniversary of their work we celebrate their participation in that conversation and their unique contribution to its vibrant continuation. *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library* articulated appeal and RA service in a manner that resonated with librarians—because both were designed by librarians for librarians, and perhaps more importantly, designed by readers for readers. Twenty-five years ago, armed with fierce curiosity, sharp intelligence, and an abiding interest in what made reading such a grand pleasure for themselves and others, Joyce Saricks and Nancy Brown changed our profession.

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This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library* by Joyce G. Saricks and Nancy Brown, published by ALA Editions. If this column prompts you to look for a copy in the stacks you might not notice it. It is a slight volume with a dark green spine that easily gets lost on the shelf. It is unlikely that you will find it no matter how keen your eye, however, as most libraries withdrew it in 1997 or certainly by 2005, the years the second and third editions were published. Why celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of a book most libraries discarded years ago? Because it changed our profession.

In the early 80s readers' advisory (RA) was not the robust field it is today. There were few resources, fewer official RA librarians, and scant professional attention. That today's advisor enjoys many opportunities to practice RA

and innumerable resources to aid that practice can largely be traced to the publication of Saricks and Brown's slim green book. This is the story of that book. As the best stories do, it starts on an odd note. *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library* owes its existence to the fact that the Downers Grove Public Library (IL) ran out of shelf space. In late 1982, to gain needed square footage, Kathleen Balcom, the library director, decided to split the collection between two floors, moving reference and adult nonfiction upstairs and creating a new department focused on adult fiction and AV on the first floor. Balcom asked Saricks, the then head of technical services, if she wanted to run the new fiction and AV department. Saricks, who was also working a few hours in reference and running the library's book discussion group, jumped at the chance, even though, until Balcom told her about RA, she had never heard the term. Balcom was willing to staff the department with two full-time librarians as leads and left the selection of a colleague to Saricks. Nancy Brown was her immediate choice. The two had met years previously when Brown worked at Downers Grove while earning her MLS. They clicked and kept in touch after Brown left the library to work for the school system.

A new department needs staff; staff needs training. As will become clear, the story of *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library* is not so straightforward as "and Saricks and Brown created that training." Saricks and Brown, as it turns out, floundered. The questions their department faced were daunting and largely unexplored. Just what should a modern advisor do? How did one suggest a book to a reader? Based on what and why? It is because they floundered that the field grew to what it is today. It is because they did so that appeal exists. The modern processes of RA owe their existence to Saricks and Brown planning what would occur in their department. The appeal framework arose because readers asked for answers neither had a clue how to provide.

The history of *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library* is now largely one of memory and as such this column draws upon interviews conducted with Saricks and Brown, a sample of which accompanies the column as an audio supplement. Just as librarians did not think to keep the 1989 edition in their collections in case it became part of our professional heritage, Saricks and Brown were too busy running a department to document their work. Their memories of that time are like all memories—subject to odd omissions, recalled with great precision, and changed by the inevitable alterations that occur when one tries to turn disparate events into a cogent story. These memories, as precise and cloudy as they may be, illuminate an astounding moment in time: the summer of 1983 when Saricks and Brown first began serving readers and a new vision of RA commenced.

BEGINNINGS

"The first thing that struck us was how nothing was true."¹ This is how Nancy Brown describes the state of RA services

she and Joyce Saricks encountered as they began to help readers in their newly formed Literature and Audio-Visual Services Department. Nothing they thought they knew was right. The standard practice of the time was to suggest any mystery with a female detective to any reader who liked mysteries with female detectives. Based on that logic Ruth Rendell was offered to fans of Mary Higgins Clark. The same happened with thrillers. If a reader enjoyed Robert Ludlum, then John le Carré seemed the obvious next suggestion. After all, both wrote thrillers and both were popular.

What is evident today—that Rendell and Clark are not the best read-alike pairings because their pacing and atmosphere do not overlap and that Ludlum and le Carré share little other than a roughly defined interest in the work of spies, was not at all obvious when readers' advisory services were regaining traction in the early 80s. Saricks and Brown had to discover what was true.

The pair spent the first half of 1983 hiring and training staff. They opened the department in July and found their first year to be rocky. While patron response to the new department was positive and circulation of the fiction collection increased, learning to work effectively with readers was problematic. Saricks and Brown could teach staff to talk cordially and supportively with readers, indeed it was a central part of their mission. Downers Grove was in the middle of a boom, as were many of the surrounding suburbs. The flood of new patrons, drawn by the expanding space and the accompanying new resources, changed the experience of the library. No longer was it the small town gathering place where everyone was a neighbor. Balcom, Saricks, and Brown wanted to reestablish the lost intimacy. While circulation counted, it mattered far more that the reading community of Downers Grove felt the library remained their special space. The new RA department took this as their mission and a focus on readers became a key aspect of their service. While conversations flourished and bonds between staff and patrons bloomed, the suggestion process did neither. It became clear behind the scenes that Saricks and Brown had no idea how to train staff to help readers find more of the books they enjoyed. Worse, they soon realized they were uncertain that they knew how to do so either.

In one of several early and critical efforts to impose some sense of order to what they did know and bring focus to the practice of RA, Saricks and Brown developed a core list of twelve authors in twelve genres. This guide, termed the *Popular Fiction List*, served as the initial training tool of the department. In the beginning, staff did not necessarily know that Danielle Steel wrote romances or Robert Ludlum wrote thrillers and the list provided much needed orientation to popular fiction. It could also be relied upon as a suggestion guide when all else failed. Eventually the list developed into a reading plan that enabled staff to move beyond identification to more sophisticated and knowledgeable conversations with patrons.

As useful as the list was, it was also problematic. It tended to reinforce the idea that only the authors on the list were

good suggestions and it lost much of its value once readers had exhausted the twelve authors in a genre. Saricks and Brown realized that the *Popular Fiction List* was only a stopgap measure, one that papered over their lack of progress. As a department they still had little idea what to suggest to readers. Faced with patrons who were re-reading books for the third and fourth time for lack of a suggestion of another author they might enjoy as well, everyone in the department knew they had to develop more than a list. They needed a system to generate read-alikes. They had opened the department over a year ago and it seemed they were back at square one.

Their early efforts were not in vain, however. They helped Saricks and Brown pinpoint the central difficulty the department faced: identifying the elements of a work that readers enjoyed sufficiently that they sought out those characteristics in other titles. Recognizing the problem triggered a sea change in their approach. Reading had fueled the department thus far. Saricks and Brown read voraciously and widely. They suggested titles to each other and frequently read the same book at the same time so they could discuss it point by point. They read reviews, looking for common statements and repeated key words. They talked about reading incessantly as well, holding daily tête-à-têtes about a given book's features and qualities. They solicited patron feedback and examined what they were told. At monthly departmental meetings the entire staff discussed books. Saricks and Brown had relied upon this reading, upon their belief that they were informed and knowledgeable readers, and upon the fact that they had a staff comprised of avid readers as well. They thought they could build on that foundation and teach the staff to meet readers where they were, endorsing all reading choices as valid and worthy of library support. That was not enough. Knowing a dozen authors and a dozen genres and steadfastly infusing the department with Betty Rosenberg's philosophy of unapologetic reading did not result in patrons finding new authors to enjoy. Instead, it led to a flood of titles that failed to cohere. It led to suggestions that were off the mark. Almost drowning in input they decided, once again, to order their investigations. Instead of a list, they turned to the deliberate and intensive study of one genre.

FORMULATING APPEAL

The first clearly articulated individual appeal terms grew out of genre studies. Given the order of the appeal framework (pacing, characterization, story line, and setting), it should be no surprise that they began with thrillers.² Saricks recalls they started with them because they thought thrillers would be the easiest of the genres to understand. It was also the genre's gilded era, offering plenty of examples for study. Moreover, better understanding of this popular genre would offer immediate and significant dividends in assisting patrons. The thriller genre, at least as experienced in their library, was remarkably straightforward as well. Brown remembers that at that time there were two basic types: espionage stories in

the school of Robert Ludlum and those in the vein of John le Carré. Saricks and Brown read both authors, as well as others popular in the genre, with great care and attention, asking what made each author resonate with patrons. They listened to reader input as well, incorporating a wide range of feedback into their considerations. Through this deep immersion and study, they developed a focus that would eventually lead to appeal terms and read-alikes: the identification of critical features that contributed to a reader enjoying one author in a genre but not another, and vice versa.

They had a bit of a head start. Through their discussions with each other about books they had both read, they discovered that while there were some books they enjoyed equally, there were more that only satisfied one of them. Their prolonged discussions and reading sessions led to the insight that Saricks enjoyed books that were driven by their story while Brown enjoyed those in which a character was the central focus. It turned out that they were not alone in these preferences. Their staff divided along similar lines as did the patrons they queried. Ludlum and le Carré fitted perfectly into this division. Ludlum was clearly an action writer while le Carré focused upon characterization. At Downers Grove Ludlum fans seemed to desire a strong, capable, forward charging character while le Carré fans appreciated a character who was more cerebral, one they could see developing and thinking through the story. They also found that le Carré fans disliked the speed at which Ludlum novels unfolded, reporting that too much happened in too much of a blur. They had noticed this difference in speed as they read both authors as well, and, influenced by repeated mentions in reviews of the quick pace of Ludlum's novels, they eventually recognized that the pacing of a work was a base-line determiner of reader enjoyment as well.

Saricks and Brown were delighted with their realizations. They made intuitive sense and were supported by their own reading histories and by what readers had told them. The concepts "laid out" well with each other (a term Brown uses when appeal terms make sense on their own and work in conjunction with one another). Each could be used to explain frequent reader reactions and each could be applied to works other than those by Ludlum and le Carré. Not only had they had identified two features that could be used to suggest additional titles, both features could be turned into talking points with readers. Saricks and Brown could now train staff to ask readers about pacing as well as action and character. Finally, something was true. Their discoveries drove them forward. They had the beginnings of a process that identified why a reader enjoyed one title but not another and they could see a path leading to more discoveries. They were on the hunt. As Saricks put it, it was "like looking for the next planet."

As they moved away from thrillers and turned their attention to romances and mysteries, they found their next planet: the concept of background frame. The many sub-genres of romances and mysteries led to the discovery. When they studied thrillers they confined their attentions to stories of espionage. Those were the thrillers their readers sought and were dominant at the time of their study. Such a single

focus would not do for romance and mystery, as there were a number of subgenres popular at Downers Grove. Saricks and Brown developed detailed subgenre schematics and learned that there were significant differences within each. Regencies were decidedly dissimilar from romantic suspense; cozies were not the same as capers. This genre differentiation is a standard of the field today, but as Brown points out, appeal made it visible, it is only “once you see it [that] it’s obvious.”

As the pair read exhaustively in both genres they looked for meaningful differences that explained why a reader enjoyed one book but not another. They found among the subgenres of both romances and mysteries a key concept: a particular kind and level of descriptive background pleased many readers. Some regency authors filled their works with descriptions of dresses, manners, and carriages, and readers looked for this same kind of detail in other titles. Some historical mystery authors created a rich sense of time and place and provided enticing period details, and again, readers discussed their enjoyment of such additions and sought similar levels of background in other works. Saricks and Brown themselves also loved the inclusion of background detail and found many of their colleagues were of like mind. Books such as the Brother Cadfael mysteries by Ellis Peters (enriched by well developed historical detail of twelfth-century England) and Peter Watson’s *Landscape of Lies* (packed with details of art history and mythology) were favorites at Downers Grove, serving as sure bets. The strong and frequent positive reaction to the presence of such a descriptive background detail, what Saricks and Brown termed *frame*, assured them that they had found yet another element that enticed patrons and could reliably be counted upon to indicate potential reading pleasure.

Pacing, action and character (which they would eventually term *characterization*), and background frame flowed easily from their deep engagement with genres, readers, and the pair’s own reading, but the remaining appeal terms, *story line* and *setting*, were a struggle to conceptualize. Their reading and work on genres had resulted in a handful of additional concepts that mattered when suggesting books to readers. They found the point of view from which a story is told was significant in suspense and thrillers; it made a difference, for example, if the story switched perspectives between the hero and the villain or was only told from the hero’s point of view. The author’s treatment of the story mattered as well. Sara Paretsky told the story of a murder very differently than Agatha Christie; Anne Tyler wrote about women and their lives differently than Danielle Steel. They also realized that the amount of white space on a page almost always indicated the amount of dialogue present. Brown conjectured that books filled with dialogue were character-centered because such books always involved characters talking to one another. They came to believe that the proportion of white space served as an easy way to distinguish between action-focused and character-focused books. They were delighted with this discovery, appreciating an element of appeal that jumped off on the page.

Saricks and Brown knew these various ideas were important but they struggled to find a way to bind them together.

The structure of their department turned out to offer a solution. In addition to fiction and AV, they also oversaw the reference 800s (P through PN in LCC). Both routinely helped students working on school papers. They were familiar with class assignments directing students’ attention to a novel’s characters, story, and setting, concepts that often organized the reference works in their collection as well. Since point of view, the author’s treatment of a topic, and the amount of dialogue present seemed obviously connected to the story itself, they settled on the term *story line* as a header to collect the three concepts together. Story line “laid out” and they both felt the term stressed that the focus of the appeal element was not on story summary, but on specific elements related to the way the story was told.³

Saricks and Brown conceptualized setting last. Having already adopted terminology connected to character and story, setting seemed the logical final area of appeal to address, yet setting meaning *geographic locale* troubled them. Luckily their previous revelation regarding background frame led the way to a larger concept, similar to story line, that brought several different ideas together under the umbrella of a general header term. Background frame was clearly different than setting. Contemporary romance authors peppered their pages with the names of high-end labels and exclusive locales but books with the same level and type of background could be set in New York City or Dallas and still be enjoyed in similar ways. Likewise, a Ludlum thriller could be set just about anywhere and still operate in the same manner. The lack of importance of geographic locale held true in many mysteries as well. Indeed, in both mysteries and thrillers other concepts mattered much more, such as if the mystery was funny or the thriller was dark and gritty.

Saricks and Brown slowly came to realize that they were thinking and talking about setting in a way that meant far more than locale. They meant the term to encompass mood and background frame as well as location (some readers did indeed simply want a book set in Ireland or California). Once they expanded upon the term, a broad concept of setting made great sense and “laid out” correctly. Brown remembers the realization that setting really meant mood as an “ah ha” moment. It allowed them to re-visit thrillers and understand their settings as emotionally laden and it helped clarify differences in cozy and darker English village mysteries. Thus, background frame, mood, and location coalesced into the final appeal term of *setting*.

Three years after they began their first genre study Saricks and Brown completed their first iteration of appeal. Although they would continue to develop and refine its features, to this day finding better ways to define and communicate aspects, the pair understood what was true. They knew how to train staff, how to read books to identify appeal, and how to have conversations with readers that led to suggestions those readers enjoyed, even loved.

The great felicity of the end result is not to suggest that the process was easy. Indeed, while this condensed and orderly history of appeal’s creation suggests, unavoidably, that Saricks

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and Brown were moving steadily forward on an exciting process of discovery; that was not the case. They were moving in a zigzag pattern among genres. They would get an idea they both thought was correct, only to see it fizzle when tested against multiple titles, in different genres, or with readers. They argued about appeal and about books, questioned each other's ideas, and repeatedly went back to the drawing board. They were experimenting, and as a result they weathered many failures. Their perseverance rests upon the conditions they had in their favor. They were, and remain, curious readers. They both enjoy intellectual puzzles, and they are both stubborn. Their habits, training, and personalities practically guaranteed they would solve the riddle of appeal. They were also fortunate to work in a small library with a supportive director who believed in RA and to have an outstanding staff. They benefited as well from a large group of popular fiction readers who, as Brown describes them, "were surprised and absolutely entranced to find [librarians] who would talk about books with them." Finally, their desk was directly in front of the new book display giving them frequent contact with readers at the moment those readers were receptive to discovery. The appeal framework owes its existence to all of these factors.

OF ITS OWN TIME AND PLACE

Appeal also owes much to the time in which it was conceived. Indeed, appeal and the content of *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library* are both specific to the era in which they were envisioned. Because Saricks and Brown had staff to train and a department to get on its feet, appeal was designed to triage the suggestion process. Appeal needed to help an advisor quickly winnow out titles that would not satisfy readers and focus attention on a smaller group that might. That is why appeal is so strongly binary. When Saricks and Brown studied genres and articulated appeal terms, they did so with a need to identify distinct differences between works within the same genre and between genres, as those differences could then be used to rule suggestions in or out at speed. Such sharp differentiations lend themselves to what have become the classic binaries of appeal: quick or leisurely pacing; action-oriented or character-driven; richly set or generally situated. As Brown says, when looking at the distinction between dogs and cats, "four footed is not going to help."

Appeal also needed to be easy to learn and it had to help staff work with titles they had not read. That is why the first articulation of appeal included only four elements and why none stressed particular details of the story. Everyone in the department needed reassurance that they could suggest titles they had not read and have fulfilling conversations about books they knew little about. Indeed the entire success of the department rested upon that premise. No one, no matter how skilled and dedicated, could be assured of having read every title a patron might discuss. If RA could not be conducted in the absence of encyclopedic reading, then it could not be done at all.

Finally, appeal was designed to solve the big problems the department faced in its early years. Thrillers, mysteries, and romances were problematic. Saricks and Brown did not focus on literary fiction because they felt that fans of literary fiction could be more easily helped. Brown remembers that patrons were pleased with any title that had won a major literary award or any author who was identified in the standard review sources as a literary writer. Because the pair did not feel a driving need to focus attention on literary fiction, the appeal features of literary writing, in particular attentions to style, were not stressed in their appeal framework. Science Fiction was also not a central focus of early genre studies as the pair were not great readers of the genre and were reluctant to focus on it at the start of their process. If Saricks and Brown had been committed fans of SF or if the SF reading community at Downers Grove had been larger or had expressed a desire for assistance to the staff, then perhaps setting would not have been the last area of appeal to be articulated. Moreover, the articulation of setting might have included a sharper focus on world building and the accuracy of detail. Additionally, the concept of plausibility and rigor might have become part of the appeal conversation.

Timing plays a large role in the content of *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library* as well. Four years after the department began, the South Suburban Reference Librarians, a group who regularly sponsored continuing education programs, invited Saricks and Brown to lead a workshop on RA. In the audience was a woman connected to ALA Editions. She started the pair on a path that eventually led to conversations about writing a book, conversations that took place after Saricks and Brown had gained a measure of critical perspective over their department's work and mission.

During the early days of the department Saricks and Brown focused on the daily challenge of helping readers and training staff. Once appeal began to take shape, however, their attentions turned to questions surrounding the effective running of an RA department and its processes. Both remember those years as particularly enriching and intellectually stimulating and one can see their lively interest and commitment in the book they produced. Despite its prominence today, the pair allocated only a scant four pages to appeal in *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library*. The vast majority of the book reflects their interests in the skills, habits, and attitudes necessary to become an advisor and in the resources and activities that support RA service. Those interests define the content of their book. After a brief opening historical chapter, *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library* models the creation of an RA department. Chapter two addresses resources that support RA work and includes a section on creating a local Popular Fiction List. It enjoins advisors to read widely, with deliberation, and with an eye towards their communities' interests. Chapter three focuses on the RA interview, teaching librarians how to think about books and talk with readers. Chapter four addresses the background and skills advisors need, including how to write annotations, develop a reading plan, and study a genre. Appeal is addressed within

this chapter, slotted between writing annotations and genre studies. Chapter five stresses promotion, including building displays, giving book talks, and making bookmarks.

It took Saricks and Brown over a year to draft the seventy-four pages that form the body of the first edition. Over coffee brewed in Brown's Chemex pot, they gathered in her kitchen once a week for intense discussions about ideas and the most precise way to convey them. They wrote separately, both composing on Apple IIe computers, and each working on different sections while the other offered input and feedback. They ended up trading versions of each section so many times that today they are not certain who actually wrote which parts. Indeed, so seamlessly did they write that ALA Editions asked for a second chapter before signing the final paperwork, as they wanted proof that both were in fact writing the book.

THE LEGACY OF APPEAL AND READERS' ADVISORY SERVICE IN THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Saricks and Brown wrote *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library* to articulate and explain the practices and tools of RA service. They were not attempting anything more (or less). As Saricks explains, "we weren't trying to revolutionize the world and the way people thought about books . . . we were trying to train readers' advisors." They had no thought of the long lasting legacy their book would have. Indeed, they would have been shocked by any suggestion that it might engender a legacy at all. Regardless of their own thoughts at the time, their book, the appeal concept it so briefly outlines, and the model of RA service they advocate have had profound effects. Two are critically important to the very operations of libraries.

Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library shifted the ways librarians were suggesting books from a haphazard approach based on a book's general popularity and on the readers' advisor's own personal preferences to a systematic and tested framework focused on patron preferences. Moreover, in an era when reference services and processes were given significant attention and care, Saricks and Brown provided librarians with a well-developed process for RA that could make an equal claim to professionalism. Their work was also an early and crucial step in convincing librarians that they not only could offer RA service but that they should do so. Their book signaled that the provision of such service was important—just as important as providing reference assistance. In company with Betty Rosenberg, who laid the path Saricks and Brown followed with her groundbreaking *Genrelecting*, *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library* was a signal publication advocating an important professional tenet: fiction reading of all kinds is valuable and needs to be supported by professionals conducting themselves in the best traditions of the field—with seriousness towards the process and with respect toward those requesting assistance.

Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library also defined the job description of a readers' advisor. Before its publication,

librarians learned to be readers' advisors, if they did so at all, in the very few classes focused on the topic (such as Rosenberg's course at UCLA). The publication of *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library* allowed librarians without formal training to teach themselves. It also modeled an ideal version of the job, setting a standard librarians continue to strive toward.

In addition to its critical role as an advocate for and model of a professionalized approach to helping readers find books they may enjoy, *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library* has had important practical effects as well. While defining the position of readers' advisor, Saricks and Brown outlined the daily work such librarians conduct. RA librarians talk with readers, at the desk, in the stacks, and outside the walls of the library. They identify read-alikes and sure bets, create displays, and develop booklists. They cultivate a particular attitude towards readers and the activity of reading. They read widely, including works they do not themselves admire or enjoy. They monitor publishing trends and develop an expert knowledge of genres, key authors, and titles. RA librarians identify and use the best resources to help them conduct their duties and they make in-house resources in response to their own readers' needs. RA librarians discuss the pleasures of all books in positive, non-judgmental terms, talk about books with other staff, and create an atmosphere where reading is supported within the library. They advocate for the importance of RA services in libraries and to readers.

As critical as *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library* is to the profession, it would be a grave disservice to the field to suggest it was the first or only articulation of RA services or the only expression of an appeal framework. There is a small but useful body of work recounting the history of RA and within it clear evidence that such services were considered with serious intent and great care from the late 1800s through the publication of Saricks and Brown's book, and beyond. While there is not space here to review the history of RA, there is no doubt that Saricks and Brown owe a debt to the work of Rosenberg, as they acknowledge in *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library*. Rosenberg's philosophy deeply influenced their approach to readers and *Genrelecting* served as a model for their own genre studies and the Popular Fiction List. Many of Rosenberg's descriptions of genre features also clearly suggested appeal terms.

Saricks and Brown were also fortunate to be working in suburban Chicago, an area that would become, and continues to this day to be, a nexus of RA activity and interest. Their work benefited from their friendship and working collaboration with Ted Balcom (who wrote the seminal *Book Discussions for Adults: A Leader's Guide*, ALA Editions, 1992), Vivian Mortensen (who ran the RA department at Park Ridge Public Library, IL), and the many librarians who were part of the Adult Reading Round Table (a group that Saricks and Mortensen helped launch in 1984 dedicated to developing RA skills and promoting reading for pleasure). They were also deeply fortunate in the department's staff, their director, and the many readers who gamely served as guinea pigs to their experiments with read-alikes.

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As with almost all creative endeavors, Saricks and Brown were part of a larger conversation, one they learned from and furthered. On this twenty-fifth anniversary of their work we celebrate their participation in that conversation and their unique contribution to its vibrant continuation. *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library* articulated appeal and RA service in a manner that resonated with librarians—because both were designed by librarians for librarians, and perhaps more importantly, designed by readers for readers. Twenty-five years ago, armed with fierce curiosity, sharp intelligence, and an abiding interest in what made reading such a grand pleasure for themselves and others, Joyce Saricks and Nancy Brown changed our profession. They did not do so on purpose, nor were they the only librarians investigating and advocating for RA. Yet, through their work RA service found new wings and took flight—and is now all but ubiquitous in libraries across the nation. All of us who have been lucky enough to work as advisors owe Saricks and Brown an immeasurable debt of gratitude.

References

1. Nancy Brown, interviewed by author, April 12, 2011. All subsequent quotations, both direct and indirect, by Saricks and Brown are from same. Historical details are drawn from that interview, subsequent emails with both Saricks and Brown, and a second interview conducted with Saricks and Brown on August 12, 2014.
2. The 1989 edition of *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library* offers a set order of appeal terms. Saricks and Brown numbered them, suggesting advisors first consider pacing, then characterization, followed by story line, and ending with setting. While characterization was the first appeal the pair articulated, when they wrote the book they put pacing first because they believed it was straightforward and easiest to determine.
3. In the subsequent editions of *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library* Saricks reconfigured both point of view and the concept of white space on the page. She decided that point of view was an aspect of characterization and that dialogue (white space) was related to pacing.