




Get Inspired!


Exploring the World of Inspirational Fiction

Presented by Sarah Evans






What We're Covering Today

- Ground rules
 - What is inspirational fiction?
 - What's the trouble with inspirational fiction?
 - Who on earth is reading this stuff and why?
 - What's out there? Genres and subgenres, featuring special guests
 - Book exploration
 - How to conduct the interview
 - Where to learn more
- 



Ground Rules

- We will be talking about religion today.
 - We may also be talking about politics.
 - Alternative world views are just as acceptable in fiction as in non-fiction.
 - You don't have to declare, clarify or defend your own beliefs.
 - Speak up and be honest.
 - Question me all you want.
 - Laugh and have fun!
- 




What is inspirational fiction?

- Sarah's definition:

A fictional story that represents the spiritual life, struggles, or growth of characters and inspires readers to understand and/or think positively about a particular system of beliefs or way of worship.


- Sound right? What's your definition?

- Religious or Inspirational?

- Stephen King's *The Stand*
 - Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*
 - Chaim Potok's *The Chosen*
- 

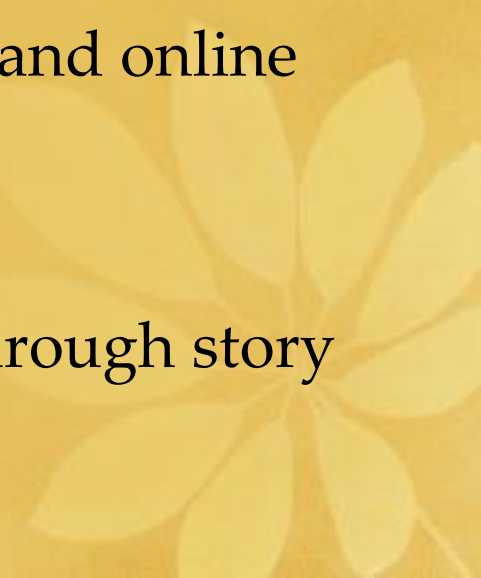


What's the trouble?

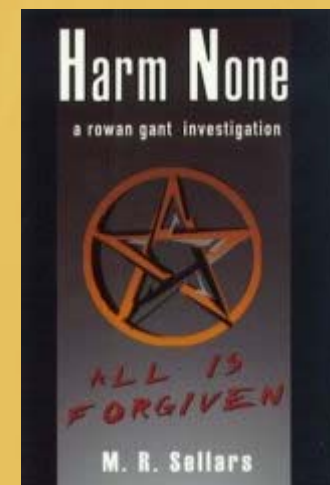
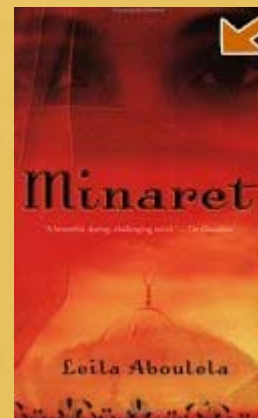
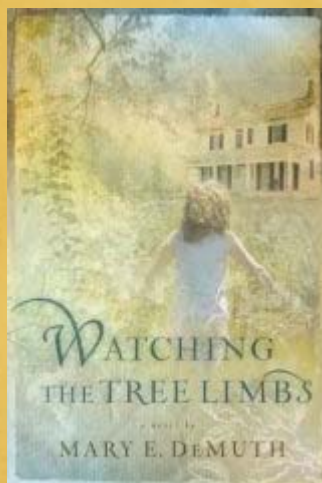
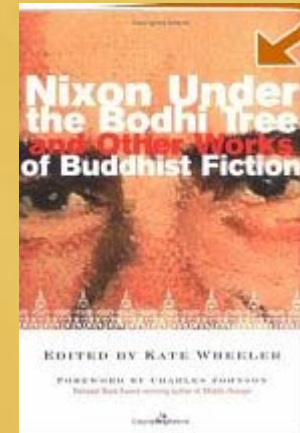
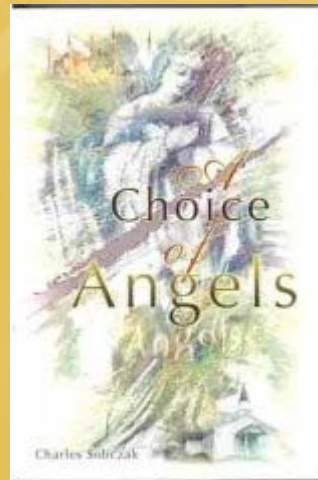
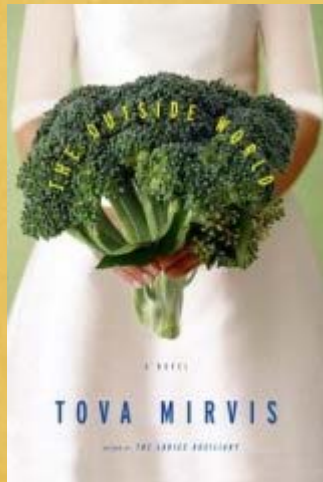
- Discomfort around topic
 - Fear of attempts at conversion
 - Fear of seeming biased or promoting
 - Bad experiences with genre
 - No interest in genre
 - Unaware of subgenres
- 




Who is reading it and why?


- The old (1979 to 1990's) stereotypes
 - Cozy, self-righteous, or dreamy women
 - Inspirational titles are a niche market, generally unavailable and unknown
 - Today's world
 - Interest in spiritual concerns has grown
 - Diversity in American spirituality has grown
 - Availability increase from big-box stores and online retail
 - It's a scary world out there
 - Time is tight
 - Beliefs and practices often best learned through story
- 

What's out there to read?

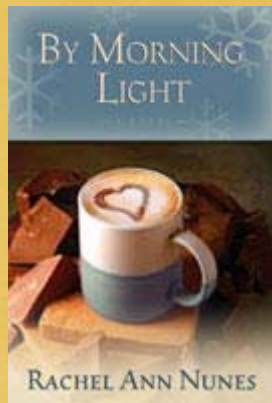
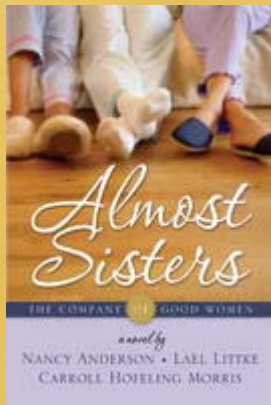




What's out there to read?: General Trends

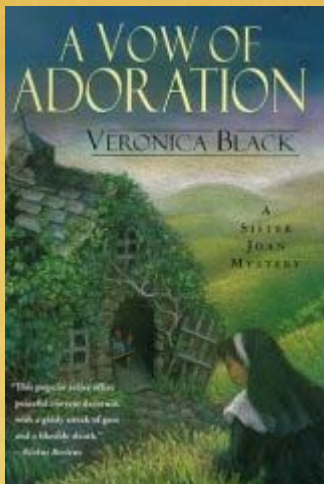
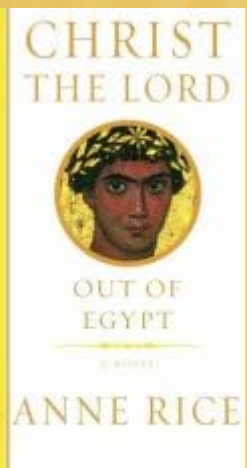
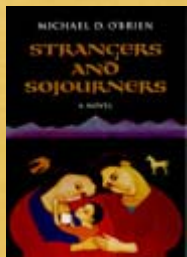
- Developed for
 - Community interests
 - Need for expression
 - For the youth
 - Western traditions still dominate publishing
 - Eastern traditions are typically represented through translated works
 - Teen literature is becoming more popular and has an increasingly diverse representation of faith
 - Overall rate is not slowing down
- 

What's out there to read?: LDS / Mormonism



- Fast-growing, mostly outside the U.S.
 - Limited publicity
 - Genres mirror Evangelical Christian
 - Popular Authors
 - Dean Hughes
 - Rachel Anne Nunes
 - Jack Weyland
 - Josi S. Kilpatrick
 - Anita Stansfield
 - Orson Scott Card
 - Niche Publishers
 - Deseret Book
 - Cedar Fort
- Predictions: Steady output, but interest likely to remain static unless hot author/better buzz. More interest around LDS non-fiction titles and feature films.

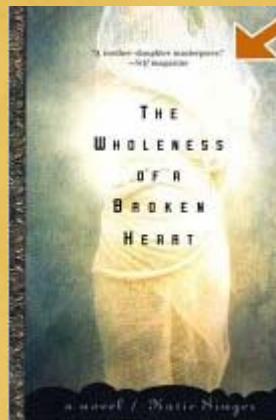
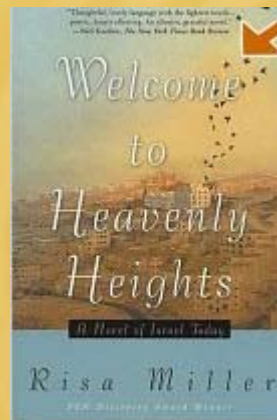
What's out there to read?: Catholic



- Much cross over with Evangelical Christian interests
- Classic authors still popular
- Much deals with ecclesiastical lives
- Mysteries a very popular subgenre
- Popular Authors
 - Evelyn Waugh
 - Graham Greene
 - Flannery O'Connor
 - Joseph Girzone
 - Michael D. O'Brien
 - Veronica Black
- Niche Publishers
 - Idylls Press
 - Ignatius Press
 - Loyola

Prediction: Interest in Catholicism as a plot device will continue, but new titles with a Catholic world view are currently few. More in the future??

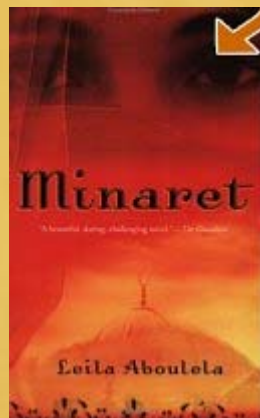
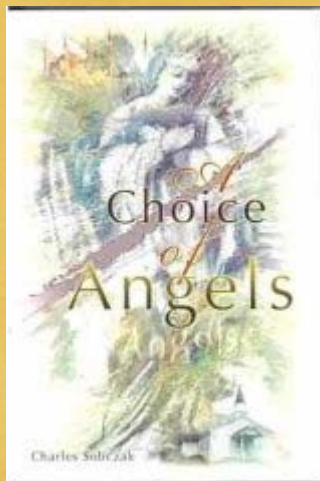
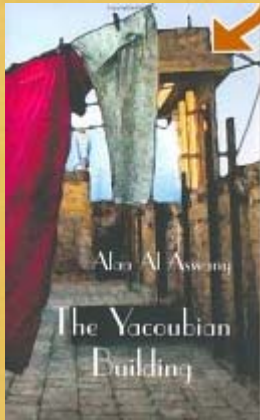
What's out there to read?: Judaism



- Last few years have brought out new and interesting stories
- Less literature on the Holocaust and Jewish-American Identity and more on life in Israel and America and Jewish cultures.
- Popular Authors
 - Naomi Ragen
 - Jonathan Rosen
 - Tova Mirvis
 - Amos Oz

Prediction: More stories exploring additional aspects of Jewish life will come to the forefront. Look for more on Jewish mysticism.

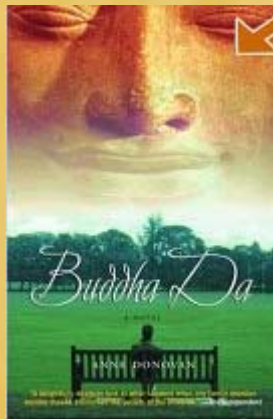
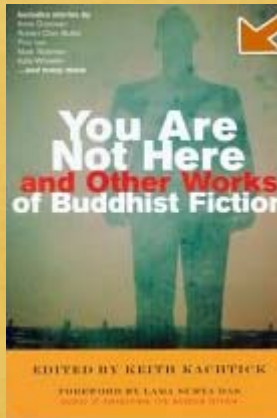
What's out there to read?: Islamic / Muslim



- Not much being published in English (particularly of the positive vein)
- Some literary titles are being translated
- Small presses and self-published titles cropping up
- Sales popularity currently questionable

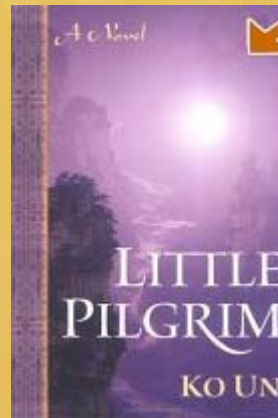
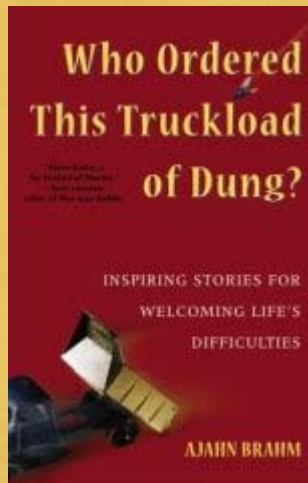
Prediction: As the West struggles to understand Islamic world-view AND the community demands literature, more books will be published and translated. Major potential growth, particularly for youth titles.

What's out there to read?: Buddhism

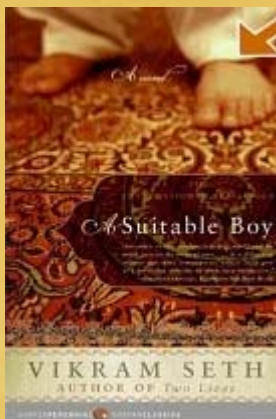
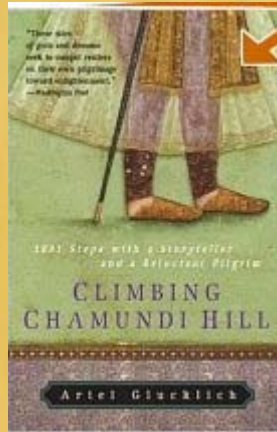
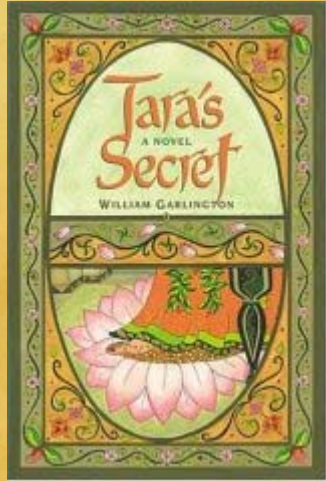


- Buddhism non-fiction in U.S. skyrocketed, now fiction is coming forward
- Popular Authors
 - Kate Wheeler
 - Eliot Pattison
 - John Burdett
- Niche Publisher
 - Wisdom Publications

Prediction: Expect more both from Westerners and translations from the East. Many youth titles have arrived and adult titles aren't far behind.



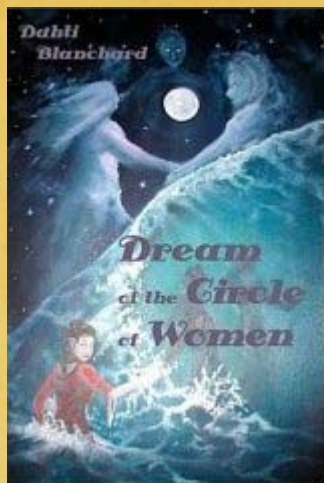
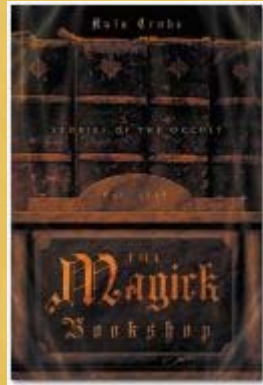
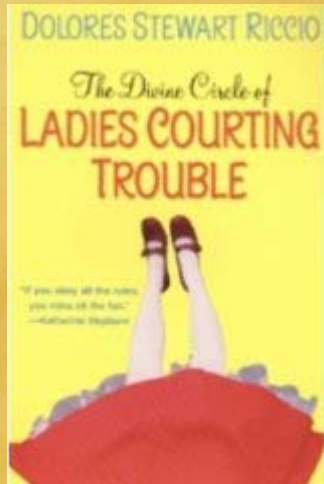
What's out there to read?: Hinduism



- Over 200% growth in U.S. adherents 1990 to 2000
- Much of the literature dealing with Hinduism comes via translations
- Lots of stories of India and Indian culture (Mistry, Lahiri) fewer explore the Hindu religion
- Focus on Indian history and the Indian Diaspora (post-colonial)
- Some self-published titles are cropping up

Prediction: If number of adherents in the U.S. continues to grow, we will likely see more fiction that portrays Hindu beliefs. But not right away.

What's out there to read?: Paganism / Wiccan



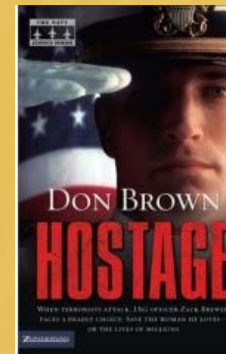
- 2 decades of growth in Modern Paganism
- Lay claim to ancient practices and texts plus any novel with magyck
- Adherents are now trying to raise their children in the path
- Popular Authors
 - Silver Ravenwolf
 - Elizabeth Cunningham
 - Mercedes Lackey
 - Marion Zimmer Bradley
 - Anne Bishop
 - Laurel K. Hamilton
- Niche Publishers
 - Llewellyn
 - Spilled Candy Books (small)

Predictions: While most embrace non-specific texts, strong desire for fiction that represents their world view. Lots for teens now, predict more for adults soon.

What's out there to read?: Christian

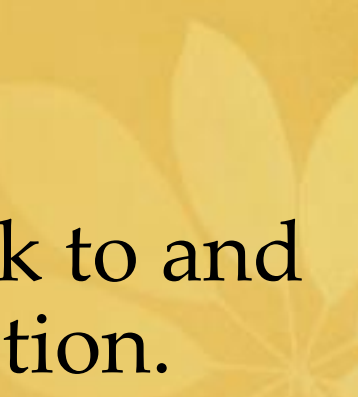
- Romance
 - Romantic Suspense
- Biblical
- Historical
- Women's Fiction
 - ChickLit, LadLit, LadyLit, MomLit
- Visionary (i.e. Fantasy and Sci-Fi)
- Mysteries and Thrillers
- African-American
 - More Hispanics characters on the horizon?
- Literary

Prediction: Difficult topics will continue to be explored and crossover novels will continue to evolve.





Book Exploration


- Find a seat near a book you would like to discuss.
 - If you haven't read the book, take a moment to look it over.
 - Briefly discuss plot, characters and setting with your group.
 - Identify appeal characteristics.
 - Who would you suggest this book to and how would you make the connection.
- 

The interview: what to consider

- You can **suggest** books that you don't like and/or that you haven't read to a patron.
- Talking with a patron about books with spiritual content does not equal a religious commitment on your part.
- Assume nothing that you haven't had a patron directly tell you.
- Talk to the patron about their beliefs in terms of books that appealed to them.
- Be aware of hot buttons
 - “Pure” religion (dogmatists)
 - Gritty subject matter vs. cozy and gentle
- Offer them two choices at a time to discern preferences.
- Be politely honest and encourage the patron to do the same.
- Ask them to report back in order to help you serve them (and others) better.
- Other useful techniques?



Where to learn more

- Christian
 - PW Religion Bookline
 - *The Faithful Reader*
 - Publishing Houses
 - Blogs, blogs, blogs
 - Online bookclubs
 - Amazon, with a grain of salt
 - Other spiritual traditions
 - Publishers with focus on a tradition
 - Online communities
 - Your patrons and your community
- 



Thank you!

Sarah Evans

sevens@sno-isle.org

<http://inspiredlibrarian.blogspot.com>

sarahe@u.washington.edu

<http://students.washington.edu/sarahe>

