Speed Dating Through the Genres
RA in a Half Day
Hosted by the BCLA Readers’ Advisory Interest Group
October 30, 2013 – VPL Central, Alice McKay Room

Genre Title: Self-Help
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Description of Genre:
From Wikipedia: Self-help, or self-improvement, is a self-guided improvement—economically, intellectually, or emotionally—often with a substantial psychological basis. Many different self-help groups exist and each has its own focus, techniques, associated beliefs, proponents and in some cases, leaders. Alcoholics Anonymous, probably the best known self-help culture has given us new language: recovery, dysfunctional families, and codependency. Self-help is about getting information, finding a support group, maybe on the Internet or in person, where people in similar situations join together. Potential benefits of self-help groups include friendship, emotional support, experiential knowledge, identity, meaningful roles, and a sense of belonging.

- psychology 150s
- co-dependency 158.2, 362.29, 613.8, 616.86
- success/healing/change 158.1
- depression/mental illness 616.8527
- anxiety 616.85233, 152.46
- relationships 158.2, 306.7, 362.837
- memory 153.1, 616.89
- addiction/recovery 616.8527
- techniques 158.1, 305.42, 616.85223, 616.8527
- emotions 152.4, 158.1082
- grief 155.937
- dating advice 646.77
- parenting 649
- business books have a lot of self-help for people who don't want to read self-help books 650.1
- novels & poetry

Important titles and authors:
- 50 Self-Help Classics - Tom Butler-Bowdon
- How to Read How-To and Self-Help Books: getting real results from the advice you get - Janne Ruokonen

Well-known authors: Dale Carnegie, Robert Atkins, Dalai Lama, Stephen R. Covey, Suze Orman, Anthony Robbins, Wayne Dyer, Eckart Tolle, Deepak Chopra, Gail Vaz-Oxlade, Mitch Albom

Helpful resources
BookLists:

- USAbooknews - http://www.usabooknews.com/selfhelp.html
Other tips:

Common misconceptions:
• "It’s a cult" – good self-help is not a cult
• I’m too smart to need self-help” – take a chance that it will cover the basics, embrace humility and the power of simple ideas repeated, you don’t know everything, you can’t, no one can
• “I read it and it didn’t work” – there is no magic, you have to make it work.

Criteria for Evaluating Multicultural Self-Help and Guidance:
• Tailored guidance: does the author offer advice that is special to the targeted audience?
• Accuracy: does the author offer advice that is accurate, ethical, feasible and appropriate? Does the advice conform to established norms in the field?
• Form and features: non-fiction readers have an expectation and a preference for checklists, forms, self-tests, lists, and examples [From: Non-Fiction Readers’ Advisory, edited by Robert Burgin, Chapter 10: Books That Inspire: Nonfiction for a Multicultural Society by Alma Dawson and Connie Van Fleet, p 191]

Self-help is the development of your potential, including beliefs, goal setting, learning new habits, making positive changes re: your mental attitude and your ideas. We live in a state of constant learning for new skills and habits. We need to have a healthy dose of realism: if it sounds too good to be true, it is.

The most successful people seek new knowledge, internalize it and turn what they know into effective action. You often need someone else to tell you what you already know because it reinforces the ideas and the message, which helps you internalize it. Taking action doesn’t guarantee success but it boosts the odds.

There are not necessarily clear-cut answers or solutions to certain issues – at best, you learn you aren’t alone, that you can live with it and look forward despite reality. Does it seem too simple to be true? Does it seem like just commonsense? It will nonetheless require motivation and discipline to achieve. A great deal of effort has gone into making it easily communicated and understood. Yes, there are scams, as there are everywhere.

The dirty little secret of Self-Help: everything works....for a while (placebo effect). Just by intervening in the current situation or the status quo by focusing your attention, consciously paying attention will get some results.

The value lies in actually doing it, taking the advice, and making changes. The most important thing: get started. One book isn’t enough, use several. Beware the quick fix – the quick fix may is rarely sustainable. Jump-start your system. Use your commonsense and be open to discovering new things. Action produces initial changes. Habits produce permanent changes.

When we are drowning in information, we benefit greatly from someone who can provide succinct key ideas in a structured and organized manner. Structure brings better results than willpower. Great ideas are not necessarily new ideas. Focus on the message, not the messenger.

Good self-help asks you a set of questions which leads to a diagnosis of your present situation and then sends you down the right course of action.

Life: your biggest DIY project.