

ACKNOWLEDGING THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Hands up all those whose first instinct is to browse the acknowledgements page in books. Anyone? Anyone else apart from me? Readers don't hang around bookshops and book sites flipping pages only to deliberately land on the acknowledgements or dedications. Those who land on these pages via 'look inside' mechanisms from online book sites can feel outrageously cheated if this is the only material available to gauge whether to buy a book. Come on, isn't the point to get to the good stuff from page one and beyond?

For some of us though, the acknowledgements are the 'good stuff'. You know who can't get enough of acknowledgements? Cataloguers. And people who wish to publish books.

Why? Because cataloguers are as deranged as writers? What do you mean neither cataloguers nor authors are unhinged? Or have you been hanging around with rascalion Chuck Wendig who declares, "I, like most writers, am a crazy person" in *Confessions Of A Freelance Penmonkey*?

Okay, I'll stop perpetuating stereotypes of mad writers and mad cataloguers. Both read these pages for information to get on with their jobs. An unpublished author will read the

acknowledgements pages to see who the agent, editor, and even book designer of the published author is, so that they can approach the acknowledged agent and so on.

But there's more information to be eked out from the acknowledgements, such as sources used in crime novels. Members of police forces are often thanked. In Elizabeth George's *Just One Evil Act*, she thanks her Italian language teacher. Libraries are often thanked. Writing mentors, writing forums, and critique group members are thanked. The aspiring author may also be able to plug into this information if, for example, the mentor is available for hire.

Truth be told, the acknowledgements page is not such a big tool in the cataloguer's arsenal (prefaces and forewords are more useful to determine subjects when making an original record) but the acknowledgements are often skimmed along the way. If the cataloguer has some interest in stories, there's a wealth of writing prompts in the acknowledgements.

What of the book dedicated to the subject expert who died in the Lockerbie tragedy? Or Steve Peterson, the dissertation author who thanked the "various telemarketers I've sued", the proceeds of which allegedly (wink, wink) funded his final year? Authors who thank glasses of wine, Tim Tams, and Doctor Who?

I hereby acknowledge I'm a big old acknowledgement reader.

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FICTIONAL FACTS OR FACTUAL FICTION?

How many of us have assisted authors (maybe without knowing our client is an author) in their quest for information and images that facilitate the writing process?

How many of us have been tempted to write our own fictional work based on some interesting snippets of information, or inspired by a photo?

Author librarians are especially aware of research is an important part of the writing process. Barbara Fisher, in her book *True Lies: Libraries, Research And The Facts Of Fiction*, wrote, "As a librarian, I've always been curious about how people use libraries. Now that I'm writing fiction, I've become even more curious about how writers use research to make their fiction work. When I started writing fiction, I thought the basic idea was to make things up, let my imagination fill in the details; it soon dawned that research was necessary to help me invent a convincing fictional world."

A newly published online resource – itself compiled by a librarian – may be the assistance many authors and librarians are looking for. I 'met' Daniel Cornwall last year when we were both participants in the Hyperlinked Library MOOC. He currently works full time as the Digital Librarian for the Alaska Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums and part-time as a reference librarian for the Egan Library of the University of Alaska.

Daniel has put together the *Writer's Guide to Government Information: Resources To Inject Real Life Detail Into Your Fiction* (writersguidetogovinfo.wordpress.com/). He is more than happy to share this resource 'down under'. While it's American-centric, it does provide a wealth of information and is easy to navigate. If you are picking up your fictional pen, this factual collection may well help get you started.

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