

Anthologies & Collections

Just Desserts theme for January 2017

Short Story Collections featuring works which are all by the same author are *almost always* cataloged and shelved in the Fiction section under the individual author's name. For example: Agatha Christie for Miss Marple: The Complete Short Stories, Craig Johnson for Wait for Signs (a Walt Longmire collection), etc.

Anthologies are collections of short stories, novelettes or novellas – often assembled around a particular theme – with works by multiple different authors in the same volume. These have been extremely popular for decades, and you will find examples of mystery anthologies ranging from contemporary writers dating all the way back to Golden Age collections.

Anthologies are mostly filed under Literature in the non-fiction collection under the **813.08** Dewey Decimal call #, although you'll find specific anthologies featuring works by British authors under **823.08**, and you may occasionally find anthologies in the English Language from other cultural backgrounds (German writers, French writers, etc.) under 833.08, 843.08, 853.08, 863.08, 873.08, 883.08 and 893.08. This last batch of call numbers is uncommon, and more likely to only be at the *Bennett Martin Public Library* downtown.

The 813.08 call # went into common use back in the 1970s. Prior to that, you would find many anthologies cataloged under **808.08**, and you will *still* find a few anthologies under that number, primarily at the *Bennett Martin Public Library* downtown.

Anthologies (rather than mere collections) are an excellent opportunity to sample the writing styles of a variety of different authors, without committing yourself to an entire novel by an unknown author. Stories in most anthologies are relatively short, and focus more on the plot, puzzle or crime-solving, and less on character development. If you read mysteries mainly to follow the lives of particular sleuths, because you're more interested in *them* more than in their cases, then reading an anthology will be a different kind of experience for you.

However, if you'd like to enjoy a nutshell sampling of a dozen or more different writers in one compact package, you may discover an author whose writing style appeals to you enough to pursue some of their longer works. How should you pick which anthology to read? My suggestion is to just browse the 813.08 section of any library, although Bennett Martin Public Library downtown will have the largest variety. Or, browse the New Mysteries section of our local Barnes & Noble or independent bookstores. Cinnamon and Kat, the owner and manager of A Novel Idea used bookstore, are knowledgeable about the mystery field and can give recommendations based on what they have in stock. **One Note:** Older anthologies (prior to the 1970s) are an example time capsule of some of the most popular authors of different eras!

