

Pulps

1850	George C. Jenks b. London
1880	Anna Alice Chapin b. NYC
1886	Jenks begins writing for U.S. dime novels
1889	Carroll John Daly b. Yonkers
1894	Samuel Dashiell Hammett b. Maryland
1896	Munsey's <i>Argosy</i> switches to pulp paper
1901	"Charles Westbrook," "The Mysterious Highwayman," <i>Ainslee's</i> 7, no. 1
1910	Ridgway debuts <i>Adventure</i> magazine
1912	Chapin and Jenks, <i>The Deserters</i> (New York: H.K. Fly)
1915	Street & Smith reboots <i>Nick Carter Weekly</i> as <i>Detective Story</i>
1915–20	Hammett works as a Pinkerton detective
1917	"Sgt. Ryan," "The Mysterious Highwayman" in <i>DS</i>
1918	Chapin, "Through the Dragon's Valley," <i>DS</i> , December 10
1920	Pro-Distributors (George Jean Nathan and H.L. Mencken?) debuts <i>The Black Mask: A Magazine of Mystery, Romance, and Adventure</i> Chapin d.
1922	Hammett and Daly's first stories in <i>Black Mask</i>
1923	Daly, "Knights of the Open Palm" (<i>BM</i> 6, no. 5) introduces Race Williams Hammett, "Arson Plus" (<i>BM</i> 6, no. 7) introduces Continental Op Hammett, "Crooked Souls" (<i>BM</i> 6, no. 14)
1927–29	Hammett, <i>Red Harvest</i> (serialized <i>BM</i> ; Knopf)
1929	<i>Black Mask</i> reaches peak circulation of 125,000 Jenks d.
1930	Hammett's last Continental Op story, in <i>BM</i>
1930–40	peak decade for US pulp magazines
1934	Hammett, <i>The Thin Man</i> (Knopf): last mystery
1939	Hammett involved with CPUSA
1949	last issue of <i>Detective Story</i>
1951	Hammett jailed for contempt after refusing to betray comrades
1955	Daly's last Race Williams story, in <i>Smashing Detective Stories</i>
1958	Daly d.
1961	Hammett d.

Sources: Wikipedia s.v. [Carroll John Daly](#); chronology in Hammett, *Crime Stories & Other Writings* (New York: Library of America, 2001); R.D. Mullen, "From Standard Magazines to Pulps

and Big Slicks: A Note on the History of US General and Fiction Magazines,” *Science Fiction Studies* 22, no. 1 (March 1995): 144–56, [JSTOR](#); Phil Stephenson-Payne, ed., [The Crime, Mystery, and Gangster Fiction Index](#), 2023; Brooks E. Hefner et al., Circulating American Magazines, [osf.io/533ck](#), 2022; Library of Congress Name Authority File, s.v. “George C. Jenks,” <https://id.loc.gov/authorities/names>; Wikipedia, s.v. “George C. Jenks”; Wikipedia, s.v. “Anna Alice Chapin.”

DIGITIZED CHEAP PERIODICALS

Internet Archive, [archive.org](#), especially the [Magazine Rack](#) and [Pulp Magazine Archive](#). Deep, aggressive on testing copyright boundaries, but metadata is a mess.

Pulp Magazines Project, [pulpmags.org](#): selected issue scans, magazine histories, background information. Last updated 2014 (?) and showing its age.

Galactic Central, [philsp.com](#): an extraordinary library of cover images and [digitized indices to fiction magazines](#).

Chronicling America [chroniclingamerica.loc.gov](#): loads of scans of newspapers, 1756–1963.

Dime novels and story papers: a couple of special collections websites, NIU’s [Nickels and Dimes](#) and Villanova’s [Dime Novels and Popular Literature](#).

THE PULP SYSTEM

Fiction magazines continue to hold most of the prominent places on our newsstands, and a list of those recently seen will be interesting for a record of what is the best selling “literature.” Some of these story magazines claim nearly two millions circulation a month. It is really terrible to contemplate. One firm publishes ten magazines of which eight are on this list, and a month’s printing order was, for the ten, 4,970,000 copies. *Ace High*, *Action Stories*, *Adventure*, *Ainslees Magazine*, *Argosy-All Story*, *Black Mask*, *Blue Book*, *Breezy Stories*, *Clever Stories*, *Confessions*, *Cupid’s Diary*, *Dance Lovers’ Magazine*, *Detective Story Magazine*, *Dramatic Novels*, *Dream World*, *Droll Stories*, *Everybodys*, *I Confess*, *Illustrated Love Story Magazine*, *Monthly Magazine of Fiction*, *Marriage Stories*, *Metropolitan*, *Munseys*, *Illustrated Novelets*, *People’s Magazine*, *Popular Magazine*, *Radio Stories*, *Real Life*, *Red Book*, *Secrets*, *Sea Stories*, *Saucy Stories*, *Short Stories*, *Smart Set*, *Snappy Stories*, *Sport Story Magazine*, *Telling Tales*, *Ten Story Book*, *Top Notch*,

Triple X, True Detective Mysteries, True Romances, True Story Magazine, Western Story Magazine, Youngs Realistic Stories Magazine. Forty-six monthly, semi-monthly, or weekly “thrillers” for our youth to read, and the library is across the street and has but two of the forty-six on its rack!!

[Frederick W. Faxon], “What the Public Reads,” *Bulletin of Bibliography* 12, no. 4 (May–August, 1924): 66–67.

If there is one trait that the pulpwood reader has it is his predilection for sameness. If he subscribes to a smooth-paper sheet he may find one story on the theme he prefers; the pulpwood magazine, on the other hand, offers him nothing else. If he purchases a Western pulp he does so because he wants to read only fast-ridin’, quick-trigger cowboy yarns—and half a million of him do so every week. The love-fiction magazine supplies the romantic thrills that the girl wants, to the exclusion of everything else.

With the coming of competition [from cinema, allegedly] the pulp underwent an ameba-like division. Adventure, Detective and Western periodicals were broken down into component parts—the basic titles persisting, however. For example, in place of the ordinary he-man magazine given over to general adventure yarns, the publishers became more and more specific with such titles as Sea, Air, Submarine, War, Spy and Sport.

Harold Brainerd Hersey, *Pulpwood Editor: The Fabulous World of the Thriller Magazines Revealed by a Veteran Editor and Publisher* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1937), 2, 162.

categorization:	minimal	occasional/selective	systematic
1890s–1910s	trade books	cheap series	
1920s	most trade books	advanced book trade	some pulps
1930s	most trade books	some commercial book trade, book clubs	most pulps
1940s		hardbound books, “quality” paperbacks	paperbacks, fiction magazines
1950–		higher-status books	lower-status books

How fiction-genre categorization appears across publishing types over time. Reading down the right column indicates how the genre-fiction system was adopted by a sequence of print formats of increasing literary legitimacy. But the table as a whole shows the gradual movement of the whole field towards acknowledging this system, while maintaining distinctions as to status. AG, “Origins of the U.S. Genre-Fiction System, 1890–1956.” *Book History* 26, no. 1 (2023): 205.

MAKING “LITERATURE” OF IT


I was a Pinkerton’s National Detective Agency operative for a number of years; and, more recently, have published fiction, book reviews, verse, sketches, and so on in twenty of twenty-five magazines.

Letter to Editorial Department, Alfred A. Knopf [inc., his future publisher], February 11, 1928, in *Selected Letters of Dashiell Hammett, 1921–1960*, ed. Richard Layman with Julie M. Rivett (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 2001), 45.

I’m one of the few—if there are any more—people moderately literate who take the detective story seriously. I don’t mean that I necessarily take my own or anybody else’s seriously—but the detective story as a form. Some day somebody’s going to make “literature” of it.

Letter to Blanche Knopf [editor of Knopf’s mystery line], March 20, 1928, in *ibid.*, 47.

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TO BE PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 14

<p>THOMAS MANN</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>By the winner of the 1929 Nobel Prize in Literature</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">BUDDENBROOKS</p> <p>A new and cheaper edition of Mann's most popular novel. Over half a million copies have been sold in Germany in the last four months. 704 pages. Cloth binding. \$2.85</p>
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Publishers' Weekly, February 8, 1930: 683, [Publishers Weekly Archive](#).