



# One for the Books:

The Mississippi Book Festival

By Kristin Allen  
Photos Courtesy of The Mississippi Book Festival

Now in its third year, the Mississippi Book Festival, otherwise known as Mississippi's "literary lawn party," has established itself as a significant event on the author circuit and like all good parties, the word got out. Festival attendance more than doubled from year one to year two and on August 19<sup>th</sup> publishing rock stars including Greg Iles, Ellen Gilchrist and Ron Rash will join other national and local authors, as well as an expected 8,000 attendees on the grounds of the state capitol for the festival's next installment that indicates it will easily live up to the hype.

The festival's executive director, Holly Lange, calls it "a unique cultural experience, one only Mississippi, with such a rich heritage can produce." She continues, "the Mississippi Book Festival has quickly been embraced by our state, by book lovers throughout the region, as well as authors and publishers across the United States. It is refreshing and at the same time reassuring to know that our state can shine in such a positive way."

It's rumored author Paula Hawkins will attend the festival to discuss *The Girl on the Train*, her bestseller turned cinema blockbuster as well as her recent release, *Into the Water*. Bestseller Greg Iles will be on-site to discuss *Mississippi Blood*, the final installment of his epic Natchez Burning trilogy and author Michael Farris Smith will discuss his own Mississippi-set novel, *Desperation Road*.

These authors and others will participate as panelists in over 30 themed panel discussions scheduled throughout the day and covered by C-SPAN. Author and *Garden & Gun* Contributing Editor Julia Reed will moderate a panel on Southern food histories among two elite minds on the topic,





Susan Schat (*Reel Masters*) and John T. Edge (*The Potlikker Papers: A Food History of the Modern South*).

True bibliophiles won't miss the panel discussion between Congressman Gregg Harper and the Librarian of Congress, Carla Hayden. Hayden is the first woman and the first African-American to lead the national library and during her visit will unveil the state's new Mississippi Literary Trail Map. Another highly-anticipated event is a celebration of the release of the *Mississippi Encyclopedia*, a hefty tome that's nearly 15 years in the making. This collaborative volume includes over 1,600 entries contributed by more than 700 scholars on all things "Mississippi."

Industry insiders from top publishing houses Random House, HarperCollins and Perseus will share their book club picks. Additional festival attractions include a "Kids' Corner" and story time for children as well as capitol tours and exhibits. Expect book sellers, exhibitors, book signing events, food trucks and live music to contribute to this lively festival that's quite frankly, hardly bookish.



**The Mississippi Book Festival is scheduled for Saturday, August 19<sup>th</sup>. For more information on this free event, including a full list of panels and their venues, visit [msbookfestival.com](http://msbookfestival.com).**

