

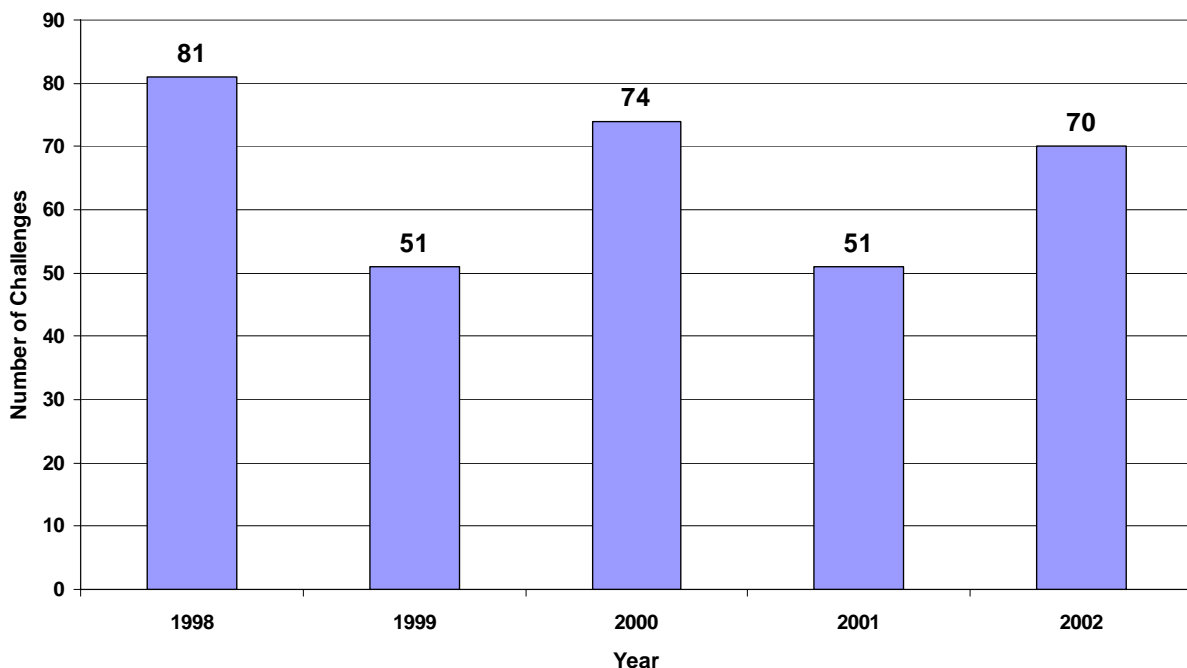
CHALLENGED MATERIALS IN COLORADO PUBLIC LIBRARIES, 2002

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Each year the Library Research Service administers the Colorado Public Library Annual Survey, collecting data on various aspects of Colorado's public libraries. Among the information collected is data on formal challenges to materials received by public libraries. In 2002, sixteen Colorado public libraries reported a total of 70 challenges to books, materials, events or exhibits. This is up from the 51 challenges reported in 2001, but slightly below the 74 reported in 2000. It's near the average of the previous four years (See chart 1). In addition to the 70 formal challenges to physical materials and events that were reported, public libraries in Colorado reported 29 challenges to Internet access or content. Prior to 2002, Internet content challenges were not separated from materials challenges.

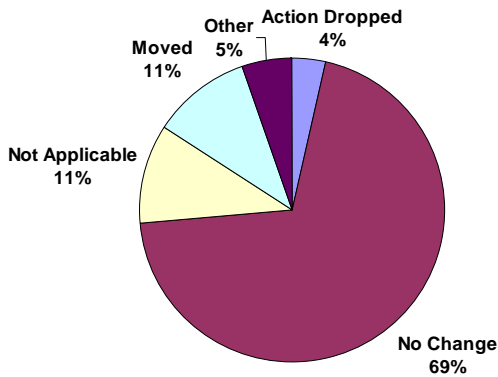
**Chart 1: Number of Challenges Reported by Colorado Public Libraries
1998 - 2002**



A follow-up survey requests further information from libraries indicating any challenges. Libraries are asked for information regarding the format, title and author, reasons given for the challenges, and action – if any – that the library took as a response to the challenge. Thirteen of the 16 libraries that had reported challenges responded to this follow-up question, providing information on 57 of the challenged items. Of these 57 challenges, 40 (69%) resulted in no change – i.e., the item was left in the library, in the same location. Two more were resolved when the person challenging the material dropped the action before the library could finish its

formal challenge process. Another six challenges resulted in a response of “not applicable,” primarily because they consisted of people challenging the content of a one-time event after the event took place. In other words, 84%, or about five out of every six challenges, were resolved without changing the status of the materials (Chart 2).

Chart 2: 2002 Actions in Response to Formal Challenges by Colorado Public Libraries

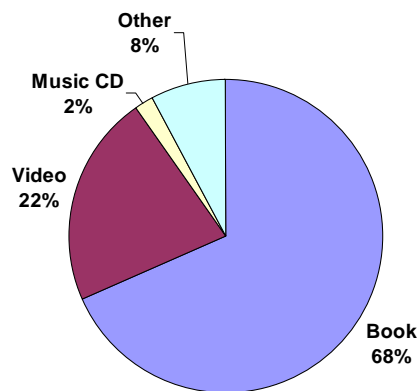


Of non-Internet-related challenges, books continue to be the most-challenged format. In 2002, books accounted for nearly two-thirds (63%) of the non-Internet challenges. Video materials were the other format that received a significant number of challenges, comprising 25% of the non-Internet challenges. These numbers are comparable to averages for formats for the five

year period between 1998 and 2003 (see chart 3), with challenges to video materials and music compact discs growing slightly in comparison to paper formats. (The “Other” category represents the following formats: events, exhibits, magazines/newspapers, audio books, and e-books.) Video materials accounted for twenty-five percent of challenges in 2002, while four

percent of 2002 challenges consisted of compact discs. The increase in challenges to video and audio formats is likely at least partially due to the fact that Colorado’s public libraries are purchasing a larger percentage of these types of media for their residents. In 1998, books and bound volumes accounted for 94 percent of materials in public libraries in the state. This percentage has steadily declined since, down to 90.6 percent in 2002. During the same time period, the percentage of audio and video materials has progressively risen. The percentage of audio materials as a part of total collections has risen from 3.1 percent in 1998 to 4.4 percent in 2002, while the percentage of video materials has nearly doubled, from 2.5 percent in 1998 to 4.7 percent in 2002.

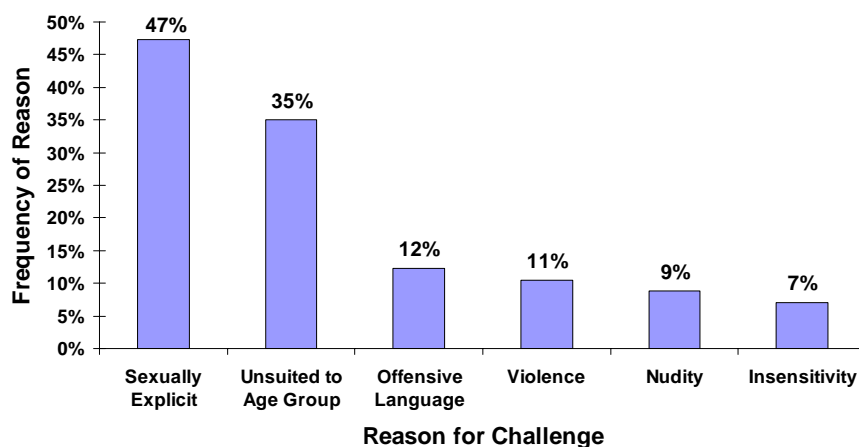
Chart 3: Format of non-Internet Materials Challenged 1998-2002



Of the reasons reported for challenges to materials in public libraries in Colorado in 2002, six accounted for a large majority of those given. Of the 57 challenges reported to the Library Research Service, 27, or 47%, stated the material being sexually explicit as a reason for the formal challenge (see Chart 4). Twenty, or 35%, asserted that the material was unsuited to the targeted age group. Offensive language, violence, nudity, and insensitivity were other challenge reasons that were often reported. Please note that multiple responses were allowed (i.e., there could be more than one reason for the challenge to occur). Therefore, the percentages total more than 100%, even without all possible reasons. The six reasons depicted in Chart 4 accounted for approximately 70% of all reasons.

No title was formally challenged more than once in Colorado public libraries in 2002. In the last five years, however, there have been a number of books that have received multiple challenges. Of these, Richard Cohen's "Alfie's Home" has received the most challenges with five, including one in 2002. Three books - "Mommy Laid an Egg" by Babette Cole, "It's Perfectly Normal" by Robbie Harris, and "Daddy's Wedding" by Michael Willhoite - have all been challenged four times during that time span.

Chart 4: Challenges to Materials at Public Libraries in Colorado in 2002, by Frequency of Reason



For online information on challenge policies and challenged titles see the following resources:
 The 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books of 1990–2000 (ALA): <http://tinyurl.com/bh6n>
 Support for Dealing with or Reporting Challenges to Library Materials (ALA): <http://tinyurl.com/sqrl>
 Intellectual Freedom Handbook (CAL): <http://www.cal-webs.org/ifhandbook.html>

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