

## The State of Intellectual Freedom In Colorado Public Libraries and School Library Media Centers

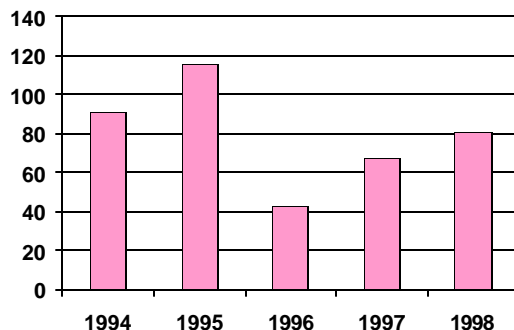
Every year the Library Research Service surveys public libraries and school media centers in Colorado. These surveys include items concerning the number of challenges received and policies and practices related to Internet filtering. Such data have been collected from school library media centers for the last two years and from public libraries since 1994. Chart 1 shows the history of Colorado public library challenges. The 1994-95 peak was largely attributable to the Madonna book, *Sex*.

### Highlights

- Public libraries saw the number of challenges almost double from 1996 to 1998.
- A similar jump in school media center reconsiderations was observed from 1998 to 1999.
- The majority of items challenged remained in collections with no change in status.

### Challenges Increasing Again

Chart 1: Public Library Challenges  
1994-1998



Over the last three years, the number of challenges has increased steadily for public libraries. From 1996 to 1998, the number almost doubled from 43 to 81 reconsideration requests. A similar increase occurred for Colorado school library media centers (LMCs). In 1998, 4.6 percent of LMCs reported challenges. That number went up to 6.7 percent in 1999 for an increase of less than 50 percent.

### Reasons for Challenges

Data on public library challenges collected for the past five years included the number of challenges; the title, author or description of the material; the audience targeted; copyright date; the reason for the request for reconsideration; and the resolution of the challenge. In 1998, 81 challenges were reported by Colorado public libraries. Of those 81, 116 reasons were given for wanting materials removed (multiple reasons being permitted). Those most often given are reported in Table 1.:

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**Table 1: Reasons for Public Library Challenges Ranked by Frequency, 1998**

26	Unsuited to age group
25	Sexually explicit
19	Offensive language
12	Homosexuality
8	Nudity
7	Violence
4	Anti-family
4	Sex education

### Status Unchanged for Most Challenged Items

Ninety-three percent of the materials receiving reconsideration requests remained in the collection with no change in status. Items were moved to another part of the library in three percent of reported cases. Status of challenged materials was

not decided at reporting time in another three percent of cases and only one percent of the items went on restricted access (adult websites).

### Most Challenged Titles from 1994 to 1998

- **Daddy's Roommate** by Michael Willhoite, (homosexuality, anti-family)
- **It's Perfectly Normal** by Robie Harris, (sex education)
- **Mommy Laid an Egg** by Babette Cole, (sex education, unsuited to age group)
- **Sleeping Beauty**, Fairy Tale Theater video, (sexually explicit, unsuited to age group)
- **Tale of the Frog Prince**, video with Robin Williams, (adult humor, homosexuality, nudity)



### Filtering

Responses to questions about filtering in LMCs in 1999 showed that 13 percent offered Internet access only via pre-selected menus. In addition, 53 percent say no terminals are filtered in their media centers, 33 percent filter all terminals and four percent have some filtering. Of LMCs reporting any filtering of any student terminals, 38 percent report the decision was made at the district level and nine percent indicate it was at the building level.

The four "most popular" filtering software products for LMCs in 1999 were Bess, Smart Filter, Websense, and CyberPatrol.

Before 1999, data was not collected on filtering in Colorado public libraries. That data will be available after summer of 2000.