

## Half of Colorado School Library Books More Than 15 Years Old

Spending on Library Books Down  
More Than 25% Since 1994

### Selected Statistics on Colorado School Library Book Collections, 2001

School Level/ Enrollment Range	Number of schools	Volumes per student	Average copyright year	Print spending per student
Elementary	774	28.1	1987	\$10.24
Middle/Jr High	240	21.3	1985	\$13.31
High	208	21.8	1983	\$15.44
Combined	62	39.1	1987	\$28.59
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2,000+	10	8.2	1987	\$6.56
1,000-1,999	95	10.8	1982	\$8.54
700-999	99	15.0	1986	\$10.77
500-699	231	17.5	1988	\$9.86
300-499	394	23.6	1988	\$10.28
< 300	455	39.2	1985	\$17.44
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<b>Total</b>	<b>1284</b>	<b>26.3</b>	<b>1986</b>	<b>\$12.55</b>

A lot has happened in the world since 1986:

- DNA was first used to convict criminals (1987).
- Pan Am flight 103 was bombed over Lockerbie, Scotland (1988).
- The Berlin Wall fell (1989).
- Lech Walesa became President of Poland, Nelson Mandela was freed, and Iraq invaded Kuwait (1990).
- The Soviet Union collapsed (1991).
- Riots in Los Angeles followed the Rodney King verdict (1992).
- The World Trade Center was bombed—the first time (1993).
- The Channel Tunnel linked Britain and Europe (1994).
- The Oklahoma City federal building was bombed (1995).
- Mad Cow disease hit Britain (1996).
- A sheep was cloned (1997).
- President Clinton was impeached (1998).



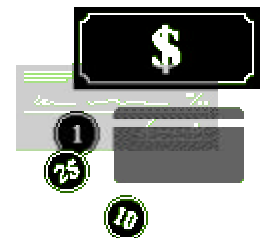
Throughout much of the European Community, the Euro became the new currency (1999).

Every personal computer in the world did not crash due to the dreaded "Y2K bug" (2000).

What do these events have in common besides happening since 1986? Public school students will not learn about them from half of the books in Colorado school libraries. Why? **Because those books have copyright dates of 1986 or earlier.** (In other

words, 1986 is the median for average copyright year.) The average copyright date for school library books is 1987.

Why are book collections in the state's school libraries so old? In 1994, the earliest year for which data are available, Colorado schools spent \$17.36 per student on library books. In 2001, they spent only \$12.55 per student. According to **School Library Journal**, the average price of a school library book in 2001 was \$18.78—almost half again the current rate of spending per student. In other words, on average, Colorado schools add less than one book per student to their library collections each year.



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The extent of the damage to school library collections over the past decade and a half is worse for some schools than others.

Statewide, in 2001, school libraries had 26 books per student; but, middle and high schools averaged only 21 to 22 books per student, and the largest schools—those with enrollments exceeding 1,000—averaged only 8 to 11 books per student.

Likewise, some school library collections are older than others. For high schools and for schools with enrollments between 1,000 and 2,000, the average copyright year was only 1983, compared with 1986 statewide.

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**Sources**

Library Research Service, Survey of School Libraries in Colorado 2001. Preliminary data file available at: <http://www.lrs.org>.

Evan St. Lifer, SLJ's Average Book Prices: *Enhancing Your Buying Power*. **School Library Journal**, April 1, 2002. Available at: <http://slj.reviewsnews.com/index.asp?layout=article&articleid=CA202828>