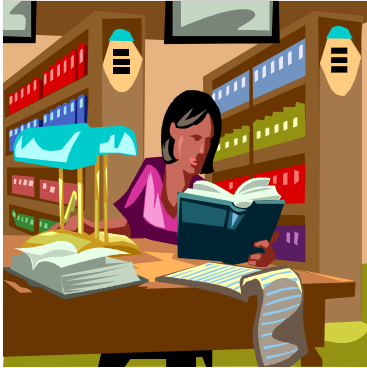


School Library Budgets Down in Colorado Print Collections Suffer



The annual Colorado School Library Survey shows that annual operating expenditures in school libraries decreased in 2002. Expenditures per student benchmarks for the state were also down. This is a troubling trend in light of studies like Colorado's *How School Librarians Help Kids Achieve Standards* (2000) that have shown strong school libraries contribute measurably to student achievement.

Total operating expenditures for school libraries in Colorado for the years 1999-2002 are shown in Table 1. Totals are extrapolated for the entire state by weighting survey respondent answers. The years 2000 and 2001 showed increases over 1999 expenditures at all but the high school level, but 2002 shows decreases at all levels almost back to the year 2000 totals.

Table 1: Total Operating Expenditures (not including staffing)

	1999	2000	2001	2002
All Colorado	\$10,175,112	\$11,617,587	\$13,147,638	\$11,866,906
Elementary	\$3,991,324	\$5,272,355	\$4,728,180	\$4,584,976
Jr. High/Middle	\$2,053,720	\$2,269,555	\$2,714,074	\$2,481,304
High	\$4,130,068	\$3,403,335	\$4,695,051	\$4,097,962
Combined	Not available	\$672,342	\$953,555	\$702,664

Source: Colorado School Library Statistics available at http://www.lrs.org/School_stats.asp

Average operating expenditures per student for 2001 and 2002 are shown in Table 2. These operating expenditures include money spent for print and electronic materials, equipment, and other operating expenses excluding staffing. Statewide per pupil expenditures for school libraries went down by \$2.44 in 2002, a 10% decrease. Examining the figures at the school level shows that only the elementary schools increased per pupil expenditures and by only \$0.26 or 1%. At the other school levels there were significant reductions in per pupil expenditures, ranging from 16% for Jr. High/Middle Schools to 23% for the Combined level schools.

Table 2: Average Operating Expenditures per Student (excluding staffing)

	2001	2002	% change
All Colorado	\$24.20	\$21.76	-10%
Elementary	\$15.82	\$16.00	+1%
Jr. High/Middle	\$23.14	\$19.52	-16%
High	\$41.65	\$34.22	-18%
Combined	\$70.62	\$54.22	-23%

Source: Colorado School Library Statistics available at http://www.lrs.org/School_stats.asp

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School Library Budgets Decrease



School library collections reflect these funding trends. *School Library Journal* conducts a biennial survey of school library funding at schools throughout the nation. The latest available survey was published in October 2001. Its summary of findings showed that in 1999 and 2000 school library budgets nationwide were up in terms of per pupil spending, but that school libraries were using the funding to beef up technology collections rather than book collections. School librarians reported their print collections were out of date. Funds used for computer technologies and resources are growing, but this leaves less for print materials, particularly when inflation and book prices continue to rise.

The Library Research Service wrote about how outdated collections are in Colorado's school libraries in a September 2002 issue of *Fast Facts*, *Half of Colorado School Library Books More Than 15 Years Old*. Statistics also show print collection sizes in many school libraries are shrinking. Table 3 gives the totals for all Colorado school libraries of print volumes in the library collection and compares those numbers with some averages reported by school libraries in selected levels and enrollment ranges for 2000 and 2002.

Table 3: Number Print Volumes in School Library Collections

School level (# of students)	2000	2002
All Colorado	12,254,682	12,171,931
High (over 2,000)	28,101	21,169
Junior high/middle (700-999)	11,229	9,105
Elementary (500-699)	12,340	11,700
Combined (300-499)	9,907	7,776

Source: Colorado School Library Statistics available at http://www.lrs.org/School_stats.asp

The Colorado School Library Survey showed disappointing statistics for school library budgets and print collections in 2002 after several years of growth. These trends are cause for alarm as we face the possible elimination of the Regional Library Service Systems. The loss of regional networks and statewide courier service provided by the systems will make it difficult or impossible for all libraries—not only school libraries—to rely on each other for materials not in their own dwindling and aging collections.

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CONTACT ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Becky Russell, Research Analyst - Library Research Service
201 East Colfax Ave., Suite 309 - Denver, CO 80203-1799
Tel.: 303.866-6992 - Fax: 303.866-6940
E-mail: russell_b@cde.state.co.us - Web site: www.lrs.org