

CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN COLORADO PUBLIC LIBRARIES

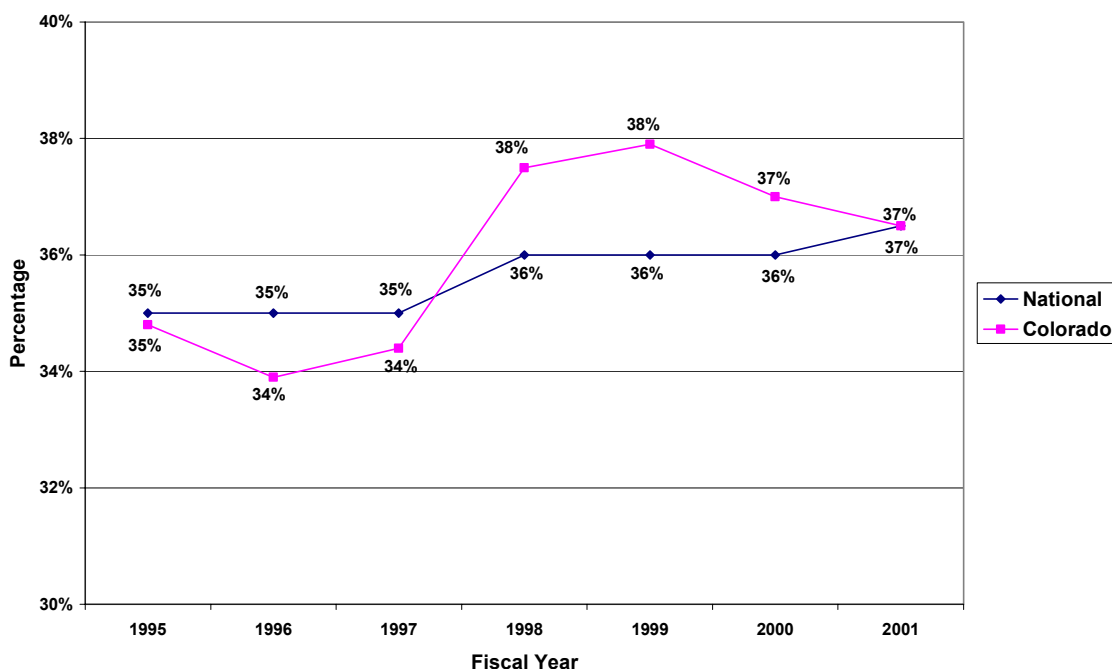
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Children's services have traditionally been an important part of most public libraries. Libraries try to cultivate love of reading and school readiness skills through story times, programming, and building good children's collections. Recent research establishing the critical importance of early learning and stimulation to child development and later success in school confirms the importance of children's services in public libraries. But how are children's services faring in Colorado's public libraries in the current difficult economic environment?

In 1995 Colorado's circulation of children's materials as a percentage of total circulation (35%) was about the national average (35%). (See Chart 1.) In the years leading up to fiscal year 2001, the most recent year for which national data is available, the national percentage increased steadily from 35% to 37% while Colorado's circulation of children's materials has fluctuated. In 2001, the national average for children's circulation was 37% of total circulation and Colorado's statewide percentage was also 37%. Preliminary statewide data in for fiscal year 2003 shows a drop in circulation of children's materials to 35% of total circulation.

Chart 1: Children's Circulation as a Percentage of Total Circulation

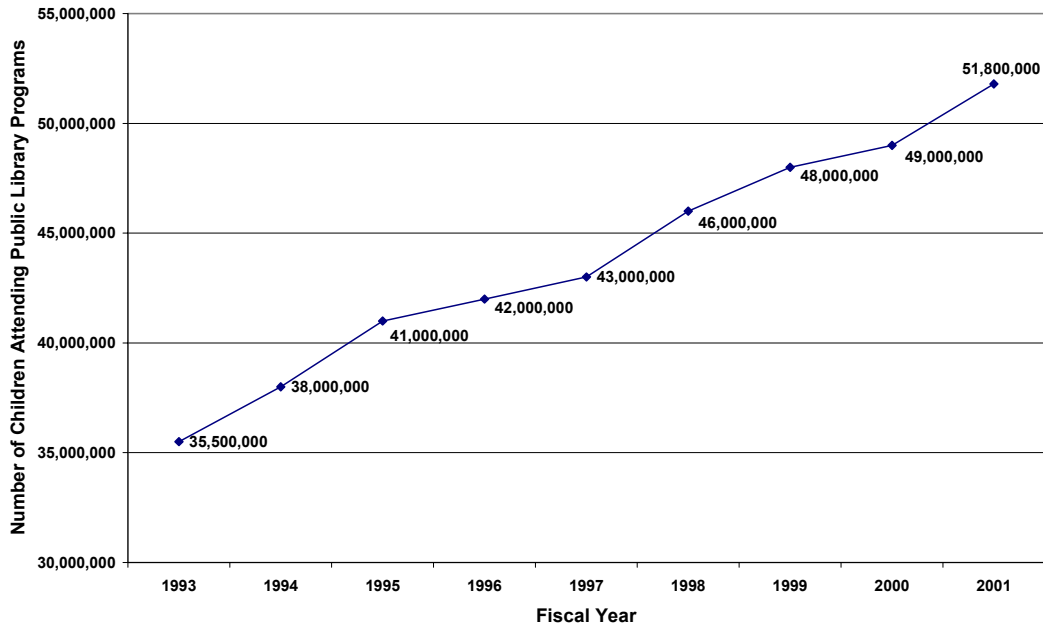


Source: E.D. TABS: Public Libraries in the United States

Children's attendance at programs in public libraries is another measure of services for children in public libraries. Like the circulation percentages, the national figures for this measure have been going steadily up, as seen in Chart 2.

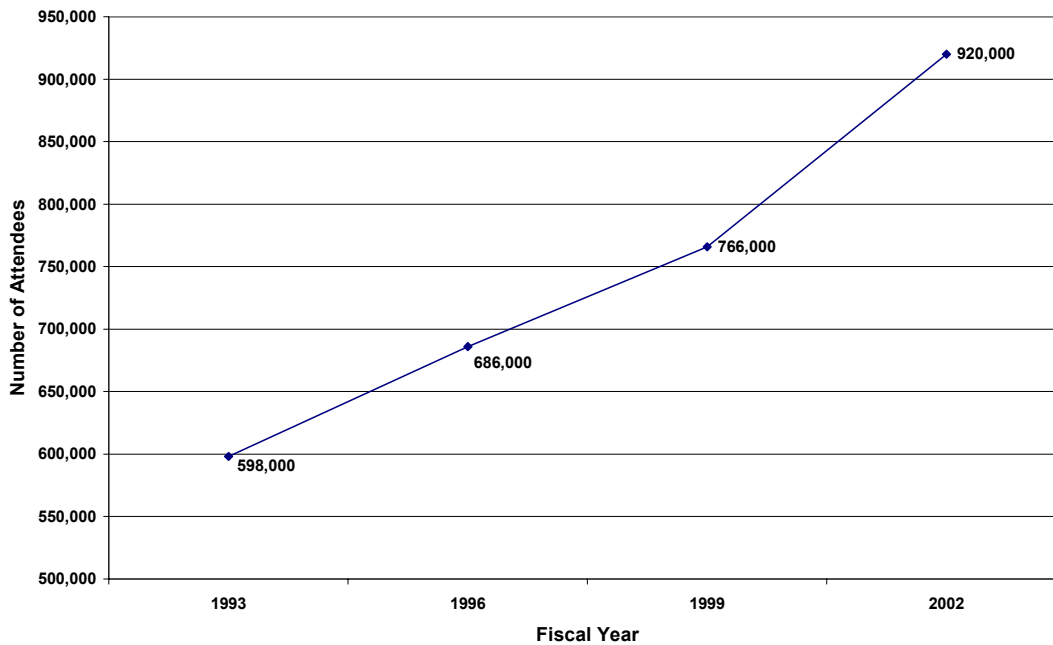
Colorado's figures show ups and downs from year to year, but attendance at children's programs in 2001 show an increase of 58% over attendance in 1993. (See Chart 3.) Some of this growth can be attributed to population gain.

Chart 2: National Attendance at Public Library Children's Programs



Source: E.D. TABS: Public Libraries in the United States

Chart 3: Colorado Attendance at Children's Public Library Programs



Sources: E.D. TABS: Public Libraries in the United States and Colorado Public Library Statistics 2002 from www.lrs.org

Colorado's population grew 5.8% from April 2000 to July 1, 2003. But participation in summer reading programs grew 23% over the same period of time. See Table 1 for details about Summer Reading program participation.



Table 1: Number of Summer Reading Program Participants in Colorado Public Libraries

Year	# Registered for Summer Reading Program
1999	125,432
2000	128,467
2001	125,774
2002	137,424
2003	157,884

Source: Colorado Public Library Statistics from www.lrs.org

Colorado's public libraries are bringing more children into the library for programming and involving more children in summer reading programs. But budget woes may be having an effect on collections. Circulation of children's materials as a percentage of total circulation in Colorado has not keep pace with national growth.

Most of Colorado's bigger libraries participate in the Public Library Data Service's *Statistical Report* series. The *Statistical Report* has included a questionnaire on children's services every three years since 1991. (See Table 2.)

Table 2: 2003 Children's Materials Data from Selected Colorado Public Libraries

Library	Children's Materials Holdings - % of Total	Children's Materials Expenditures - % of Total
Adams County Library System	23%	13%
Arapahoe Library District	36%	13%
Boulder Public Library	27%	14%
Colorado Springs (Pikes Peak LD)	33%	15%
Denver Public Library	25%	21%
Fort Collins Public Library	35%	22%
Garfield County Public Library System	28%	21%
Jefferson County Public Library	32%	21%
Longmont Public Library	29%	19%
Loveland Public Library	27%	29%
Mesa County Public Library District	64%	23%
Pueblo City-County Library District	34%	20%
Weld Library District	21%	6%
AVERAGE for these 13 libraries	32%	18%

Source: *Public Library Data Service Statistical Report 2003*

Figures from the *Statistical Report 2003* show that there is a wide range among the participating Colorado libraries in children's materials as a percentage of total collections and expenditures on children's materials as a percentage of total materials expenditures. (See Table 2.) Local decisions for local communities clearly make a big difference in how children's services fit into the public library.

Sources:

Colorado Public Library Statistics available at http://www.lrs.org/pub_stats.asp
 Cumulative Estimates of Population Change for Counties of Colorado and County Rankings: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2003 from the United Census Bureau. Accessed May 4, 2004 at <http://eire.census.gov/popest/data/counties/tables/CO-EST2003-02-08.xls>.
E.D. TABS: Public Libraries in the United States, National Center for Education Statistics, Washington D.C., annual reports 1993-2001. Available at <http://nces.ed.gov>.
Public Library Data Service Statistical Report 2003. Public Library Association, Chicago, 2003.

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