

# Challenged Materials in Colorado Public Libraries, 2011

ED3/110.10/No. 310

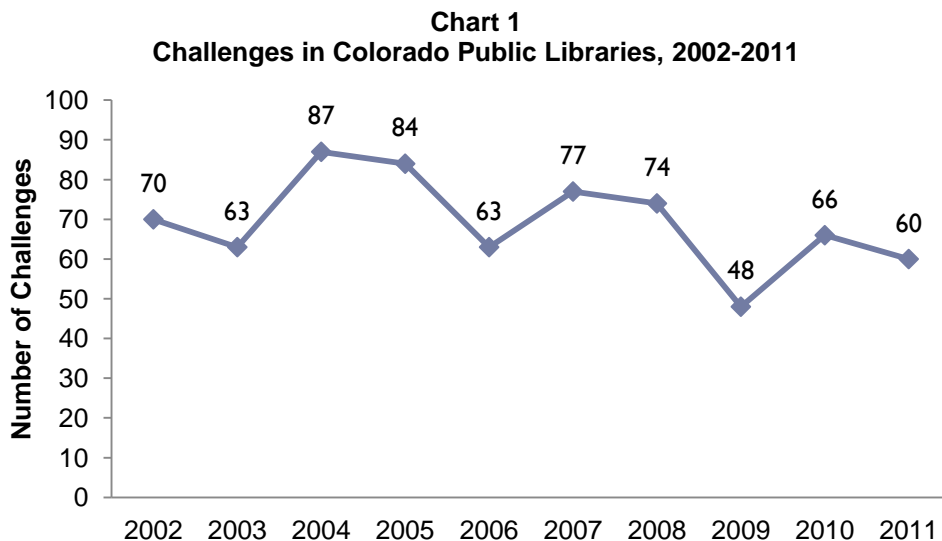
September 10, 2012

In 2011, 60 challenges to materials were reported by 13 of Colorado's 114 public libraries. The number of challenges was reported through the Colorado Public Library Annual Report, and library staff responded to a follow-up survey to provide details about these items, including the items' formats, the reasons for the challenges, and the resulting outcomes.<sup>1</sup> This information is tracked annually and is also reported to the American Library Association (ALA).<sup>2</sup>

ALA defines a challenge as an attempt to remove or restrict materials, based upon the objections of a person or group.

## Challenges over Time

2011 was a fairly typical year for the number of challenges reported, with 60 falling slightly below the 10-year average of 69 (see Chart 1).



## Formats

Books were the most common type of item challenged (63%), followed by videos (28%). Only one Internet challenge (information about a library's matching grant from the Gay and Lesbian Fund) was reported in 2011, marking a change from 2010, which saw Internet challenges rise and book challenges drop. In 2010, a number of requests to have materials unblocked from filtering software were reported; though this was expected to mark the beginning of a trend in rising challenges to computer resources, these challenges were largely absent in 2011. Two periodicals, one activity (a Dungeons and Dragons club), and one audiobook were also challenged in 2011 (see Chart 2).

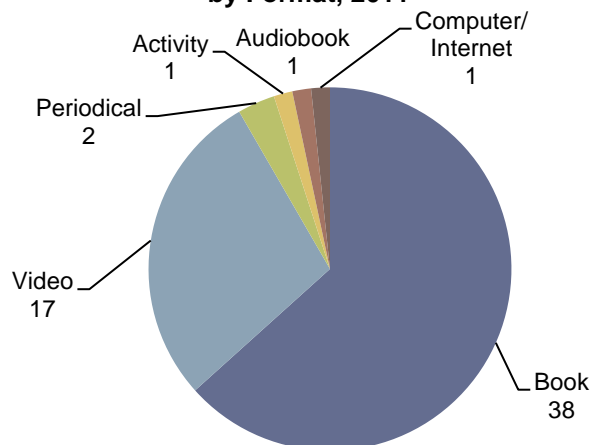
<sup>1</sup> For a full list of the titles discussed in this report, see:

[http://www.lrs.org/documents/plstat11/2011\\_Public\\_Library\\_Challenges\\_Website.pdf](http://www.lrs.org/documents/plstat11/2011_Public_Library_Challenges_Website.pdf). No title was challenged more than once.

<sup>2</sup> While 67 "challenges" were technically reported by libraries, some of these were challenges to library policy or did not otherwise fit the ALA definition.



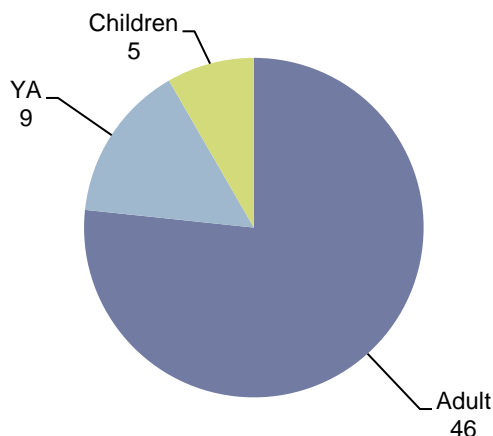
**Chart 2**  
**Challenges in Colorado Public Libraries**  
**by Format, 2011**



### Audience

Most of the items (77%) challenged were adult items. Just 9 were young adult (YA) items, and 5 were children's items, numbers more or less consistent with previous years (see Chart 3).

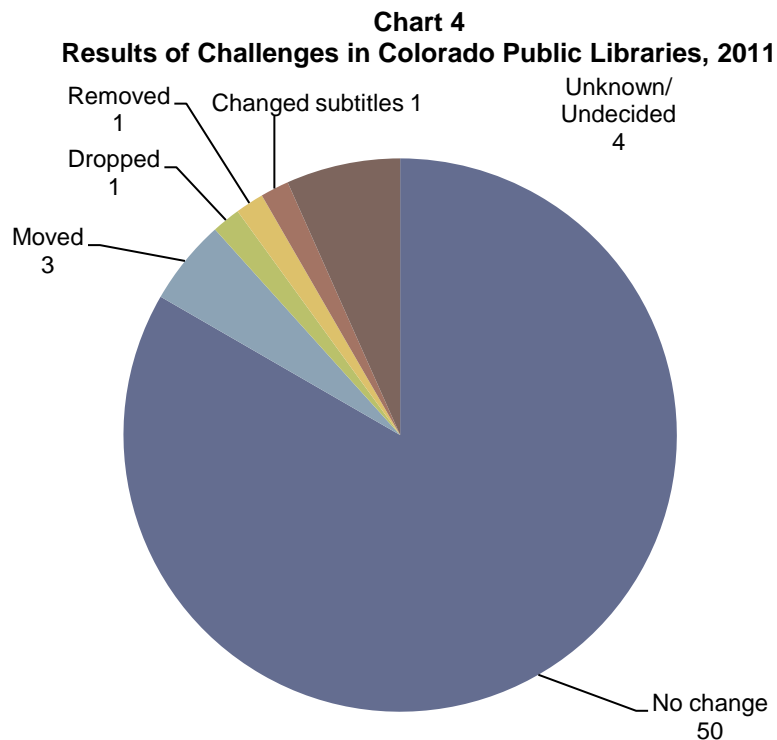
**Chart 3**  
**Challenges in Colorado Public Libraries**  
**by Audience, 2011**



### Results of Challenges

One book was removed from Colorado public libraries in 2011. The title was *The Two Babylons or Papal Worship Proved to be the Worship of Nimrod and His Wife*, and the basis for removal was that the book relies on faulty research and incorrect information and is also widely available online. Most items (83%) saw no change in status. Another 3 items were moved to a different section of the library; 1 was given new subtitles (the American subtitles apparently being less explicit than the Japanese version of the video); 4 others were either undecided at the time of reporting or not reported by the library; and 1 challenge was dropped by the patron (see Chart 4).





### Reasons

More items (42%) were challenged based on a religious viewpoint than for any other reason in 2011. Sexual explicitness was the second most frequently cited reason, with 16 challenges. Other reasons for challenges are detailed in Table 1. This is the first time in 10 years that “religious viewpoint” has been among the top three reasons for challenges. Since 2002, the most common three reasons for challenges have been “sexually explicit” (the number-one challenge for seven out of ten years), “unsuited to age group,” and “offensive language.”



**Table 1**  
**Reasons for Challenges in Colorado Public Libraries, 2011<sup>3</sup>**

Reason	Frequency	Percent
Religious viewpoint	25	42%
Sexually explicit	16	27%
Homosexuality	7	11%
Violence	7	11%
Nudity	6	10%
Unsuited to age group	6	10%
Insensitivity	3	5%
Inaccurate	2	3%
Offensive language	2	3%
Anti-family	1	2%
Available online	1	2%
Drugs	1	2%
Flashing lights caused epileptic seizure	1	2%
Inappropriate	1	2%
Occult/Satanism	1	2%
Pedophilia	1	2%
Racism	1	2%
Sex education	1	2%
Suicide	1	2%
Unknown	1	2%

**For more information on challenges and intellectual freedom, visit:**

- the Colorado Association of Libraries Intellectual Freedom Committee website:  
[http://cal-webs.org/Intellectual\\_Freedom.html](http://cal-webs.org/Intellectual_Freedom.html)
- ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom (OIF) website:  
<http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/index.cfm>
- ALA's OIF "Banned and Challenged Books" page:  
<http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/banned/index.cfm>

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<sup>3</sup> Items could be challenged for more than one reason. The percentages here were calculated based on the total number of items, not the number of reasons given.

