

# 2004 ROMSTAT REPORT

by Olivia Hall

## A New All-time High

Bowker, the leading compiler of bibliographic data in the U.S., released its preliminary study for 2004 in May of this year. Publication of new titles and editions reached an all-time high of 195,000 in 2004. Most of this growth was in adult fiction. After three years of stagnation, with the number of adult fiction titles hovering a bit above 17,000, this figure leapt to more than 25,000 new titles and editions, an increase of 43.1% over the previous year. Adult fiction accounted for 14% of all titles published in the United States. Bowker reports this is the highest percentage since 1961. However, growth in adult fiction titles from the largest publishing houses increased by 3.5%, a much more modest amount than the industry as a whole.

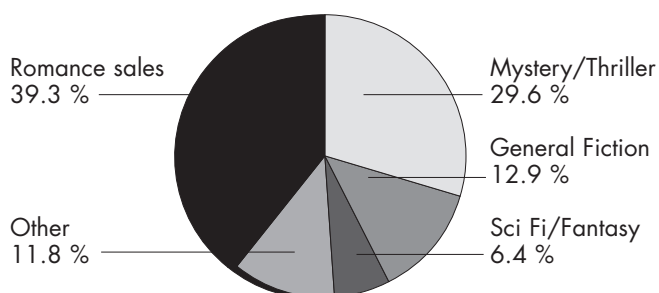
Bowker also noted that 11,458 new publishers registered with the U.S. ISBN Agency, an increase of 5.3% over 2003. Their Books-in-Print data service represents input from 81,000 publishers in the U.S.

Adult fiction hardcover price averaged \$25.08 while adult fiction trade-size paperbacks increased, on average, seven cents to \$14.78. Adult mass-market paperbacks went up 14 cents to \$7.35 on average. Novels from the largest houses averaged 359 pages in 2004.

So, what's happening on the sales side of the equation? Of the 1.3 billion total trade fiction/nonfiction market (does not include education/research sales), popular fiction accounted for 53.7% of sales. Out of 678,048,000 popular fiction sales, 98.7% were in print format and 1.3% in audio/digital format, down from 1.65% in 2003 for audio/digital.

Romance claimed an impressive 39.3% of all popular fiction sales, up from 33.8% in 2003. Mystery/detective/espionage/thriller/suspense combined for a total of 29.6% of the popular fiction market, up from 25.6% in 2003. General fiction accounted for 12.9%, down from 24.9% of the previous year. This may be due to more publishing houses listing the novels under genre classifications rather than in the general category. Science fiction/fantasy totaled 6.4% of popular fiction sales, up from 6% in 2003, with fantasy accounting for almost 60% of those. The remainder (religious, occult, historical, Western, male adventure, adult, movie tie-ins) took in 11.8% of sales.

THE POPULAR-FICTION PIE IN 2004



Looking only at *print-format* data, romance accounted for 39.7% of the total popular fiction print market. Romance mass-market paperbacks went from 48.8% in 2003 to 54.9% in 2004, a fact that led me to recheck the 2003 figures, and yes, that's what the numbers say. Hmm. With the overall increase in titles and new editions, there has been a corresponding increase of sales. Great!

ROMANCE MASS-MARKET PAPERBACKS INCREASED IN 2004

54.9 % in 2004

48.8 % in 2003

Romance novels in hardcover format rose for the third straight year, comprising 8.3% of sales. Last year, 10.5% of trade paperback sales were in romance, which is down quite a bit from 2003's 24.9% of trade-size paperbacks. It appears a number of publishers switched back to mass-market paperbacks in 2004, which enjoyed a significant increase over the prior year.

## On to Romance

In researching romance titles through Books-in-Print, over 4,700 titles appeared in the search results. However, in my own searches on the Internet, at publishers' Web sites, and through Ingrams and other sources, I found 2,285 romance titles in readily available print format (not print-on-demand or digital) for 2004. This was an increase of 192 titles over the 2,093 titles of 2003.

### ROMANCE RELEASES BY YEAR

2001 - 2,143 romances out

2002 - 2,169 romances out (gained 26 books)

2003 - 2,093 romances out (lost 76 books)

2004 - 2,285 romances out (gained 192 books)

Of the 2,285 titles, 1,468 were contemporaries (734 single titles, 734 series titles), 477 were historicals (90 of which were Regencies), 167 were inspirational titles and 173 were paranormals. While historicals held steady, contemporary titles were up by 97 over 2003 (1,371 titles). Inspirational added 50 titles more than in 2003, and paranormals increased by 53 titles compared to 120 in 2003.

Contemporary novels included 108 reprints, many from series that have been repackaged, often as two novels in one volume. 92 contemporaries were in hardcover format, 64 in trade size and 33 were anthologies.

Historical novels had 42 reprints, 20 hardcovers, 3 trade size and 20 anthologies. Paranormal had 8 reprints, 4 hardcovers, 2 trade and 12 anthologies while inspirational had 1 reprint and 6 hardcovers.

### SUBGENRE RELEASES COMPARED TO LAST YEAR

	2003	2004	
Contemporaries	1,371	1,468	▲ up 97 titles
Historicals	479	477	▼ down 2 titles
Inspirational	117	167	▲ up 50 titles
Paranormal	120	173	▲ up 53 titles

## Romance Publishers' Releases for 2004

Avalon	.24
Baker Books	.39
<i>(Bethany, Brazos, Chosen, Revell)</i>	
Barbour/Heartsong	.48
Bertlesmann	.125
<i>(Ballantine, Bantam, Broadway, Crown, Delacorte, Dell, Doubleday, Fawcett, Knopf, Ivy, Random House, Waterbrook)</i>	
BET	.48
Dorchester	.113
<i>(Leisure, Love Spell)</i>	
Ellora's Cave	.21
Five Star	.23
Harper Collins Avon	.112
Kensington	.195
<i>(Brava, Dafina, Kensington, Pinnacle, Strapless, Zebra)</i>	
Pearson	.180
<i>(Berkley, Dutton, Jove, NAL, Onyx, Putman, Signet, Topaz, Viking)</i>	
Pocket	.59
<i>(Atria, Pocket, Sonnet)</i>	
St. Martin's	.41
Torstar	.117
<i>(Harlequin, HQN, Luna, Mills &amp; Boon, MIRA, Red Dress Inc, Signature Select, Silhouette, Steeple Hill)</i>	
Warner	.43

Other publishing houses include Broadman, Broadway, Downtown, Genesis, Harvest House, ImaJinn, Tor, Tyndale House and Zondervan, usually with less than 15 romances per year.

## Some Interesting Information from IPSOS Booktrends

Each time any books, fiction or nonfiction, were purchased in America in 2004, 18.5% of the time that purchase included a romance title.

For popular fiction buys, 36.5% of the buying occasions included purchases in the romance genre.

21.6% of individual households reported purchasing romance titles in the past year. Of those households who bought popular fiction titles, 36.5% reported romance novels as part of their shopping.

Those households that bought books reported spending \$32.47 per occasion or book shopping trip. An average of \$23.77 was spent on popular fiction books while \$18.29 on an average went for romance titles.

For the year, the average household spent \$193.30 on total

books, \$126.33 on popular fiction and \$93.37 for romance.

According to Booktrends analysis, the percentage of U.S. households who bought books last year was 51.7%. Those who bought popular fiction comprised 30.6% of American households, while those purchasing romance was 11.2% of households. (These numbers do not include those individuals who may live in housing or situations other than the typical American single-family household, which has 2.98 family members per the Census Bureau.)

## Show Us the Money!

Total fiction/nonfiction sales in 2004 came to \$11.3 billion. Popular fiction accounted for \$4.4 billion. Of the \$4.4 billion, romance earned \$1.2 billion. With both titles and sales up, 2004 was a very good year for romance.

**ROMANCE EARNED  
\$1.2 BILLION IN SALES IN 2004**

## A Special Thanks

RWA has reached out to several sources to track the publishing industry including Bowker's Books-in-Print, IPSOS Booktrends and Corona Research. With BookScan online for members, we are very well covered in the field. I would like to thank our visionary RWA Board of Directors, past and present, for making this information available. I would also like to thank our executive director and her excellent staff for all the help, advice, and general support they unstintingly provided whenever I called. And as always, a special thanks to Claudia Yates (and Carol, her daughter and helpful computer person) for her hard work in compiling new releases each month. Claudia has retired from bean counting, uh, service.



*Libby Hall, writing as Laurie Paige, has been published in romance for over 20 years. Upon completion of her current contract, she will have 70 romance novels in publication. She considers RWA an important source of information for writers and has been a member since 1983. She has served as PAN Liaison, vice president, and president, started the first "Conferences and Contests" column and compiles the yearly ROMSTAT report.*



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