

ROMstat

Romance Industry Statistics Report

by Libby Hall

Total sales of romance novels exceeded \$1.23 billion in 1998.

This year there were approximately 2,523 romances on the market.

Please notice the "approximately." It's getting harder to keep up with the changes and consolidations in print publishers and the increase in electronic publishers, which by last count numbered over 70 sites. With other publishers offering books from their Web sites, plus some doing serializations of original work, "short reads" and works-in-progress, often with readers taking part, it is more difficult to figure out exactly what should be counted in the totals.

Another problem contributing to the "approximate total" involved hardback books versus their paperback releases. Publishers sometimes offered the hardback edition of a book with "General Fiction" printed on the spine (one was listed as a Psychological Suspense) but in paperback, the same novel was listed as a "Romance." After much wrangling, I stuck with the original premise: if it's marketed as a romance, it counts; if not, it doesn't.

Major Publishers' Releases

Publisher	1999	1998
Avalon	36	10
Avon/Harper	124	75 (Avon before merger); 27 (Harper before merger)
Barbour	52	not listed
Bertlesmann (Ballantine, Bantam, Dell, Delacorte, Doubleday, Fawcett, Ivy, Waterbrook)	127	186
BET	64	49 (before leaving Kensington)
Bethany	16	12
Dorchester	123	104
Kensington	307	241
Pearson (Berkley, NAL, Dutton, Jove, Onyx, Putnam, Penguin, Signet, Topaz, Viking)	176	142
Pocket	55	49
Questar/Multnomah	18	26
St. Martin's	41	33
Torstar (Harlequin, MIRA, Silhouette, Steeple Hill)	733	860
Warner	19	15

The Count

With that warning in mind, here is the count for 1999. Of the 2,523 titles, 242 were e-books and 63 were Young Adult, while 2,218 novels appeared in print as romance originals or reprints, single titles, series, anthologies and/or paperback releases.

While the 2,218 tally in 1999 reflects an increase of 13% and appears to be an impressive jump over the 1,868 print titles published in 1998, the increase can be partially attributed to some publishers' release of an extra "month" of titles. This double-release month schedule was an effort to make release dates and on-shelf dates match.

Also, anthologies (87) and reprints (107) were a large part of the total this year.

E-Books

The 242 e-book romances were divided as follows: 129 contemporaries; 61 historicals; 32 paranormals and 20 inspirational. E-book romance titles jumped from 4.8% (95) to 9.6% of the total titles published this year.

Young Adult

Young Adult, books marketed as YA rather than romance but with a definite romantic theme, were overwhelmingly published as parts of series, such as Sweet Valley High, Baby Sitters Club (for a much younger adult reader), and the University Series (for much older young adult readers). There was also a YA romance sub-series with mystery/paranormal elements.

Many YA writers still report they are offered and signing work-for-hire contracts for YA series books. Some receive a flat-fee as low as \$1,500 for books that sell for the same price as adult category books that were contracted for an advance anywhere from \$8,000 to \$15,000.

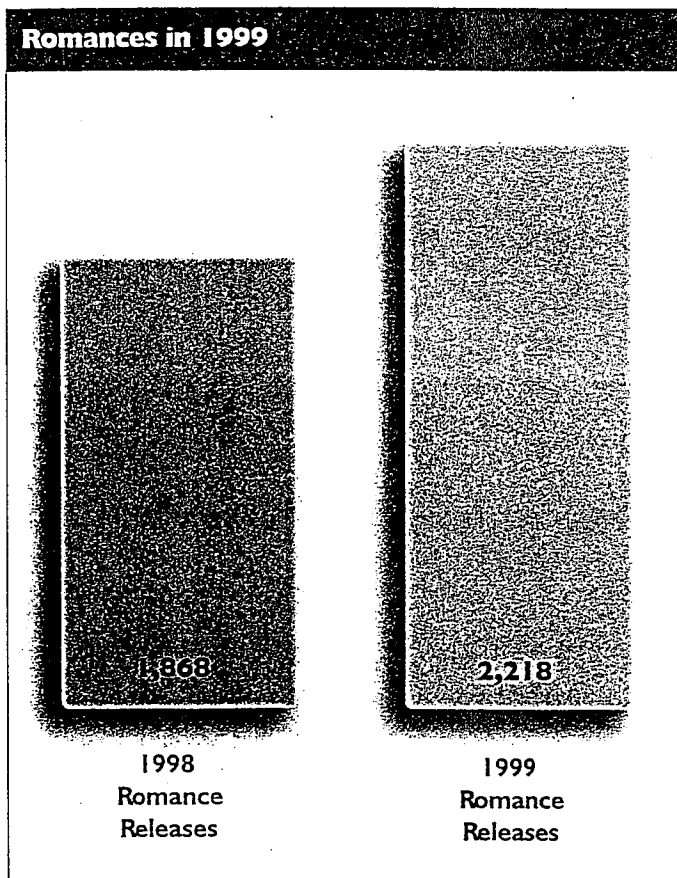
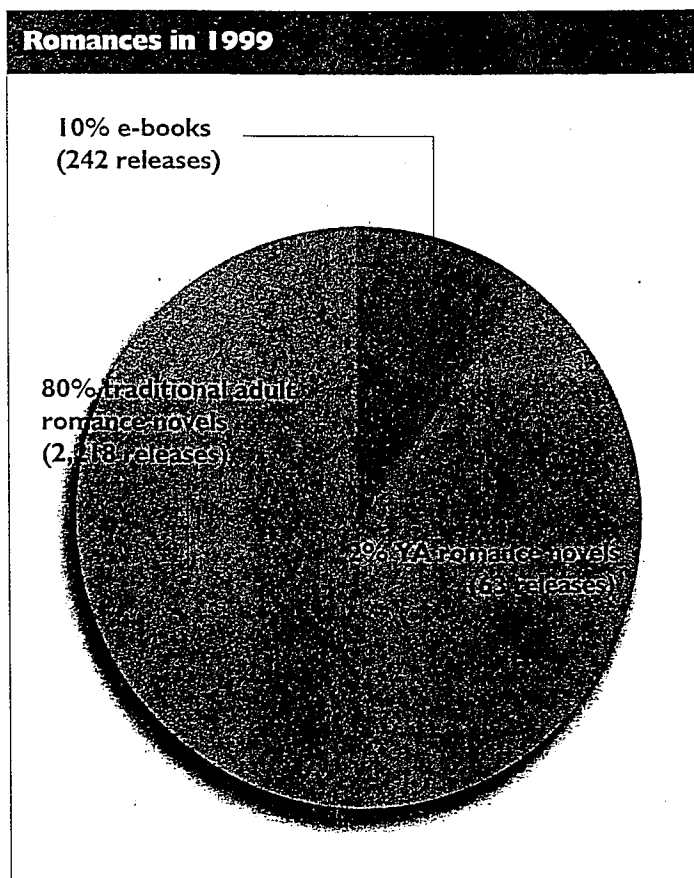
Because YA series books are ghost-written, it's difficult to track the number of releases per author, etc. Ghost-written books, such as the Francine Pascal stories, were counted in the "ROMstat Report" this year — as they were in the past — because this report attempts to look at the overall market.

Who's Writing How Much

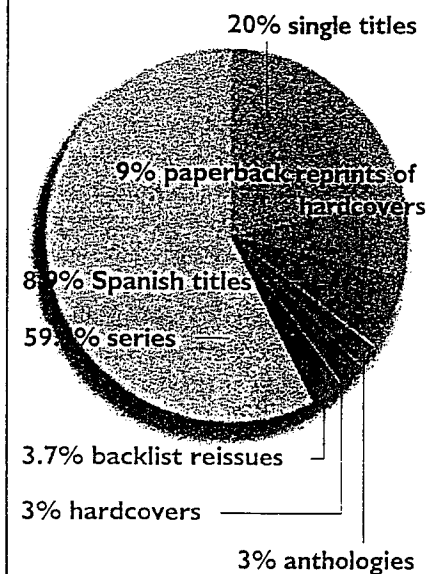
The 2,218 print titles were written by 1,361 authors. Of the 1,361 authors, 312 had two books out, 101 had three, 46 had four, 19 had five, seven had six, seven authors had seven books, four had eight, two had nine and two authors had eleven books out. The other 854 authors each had one title out last year. These totals include reprints and originals written under one name/pseudonym.

Contemporaries

Contemporary books numbered 1,342 (60.5%) with 277 released as single titles, 799 as series, 43 as anthologies (14 of which contained reprints and five containing original stories mixed with reprints). Twelve were paperback releases of earlier hardcovers. There were 40 hardcover contemporary romances and 50 reprints. In addition, there were 120 Spanish (some with English and Spanish in the same book) romance releases in 1999, a number expected to increase in 2000. One title was a trade-size edition.



Formats for Contemporaries



Historicals

The historical titles were up somewhat from 618 (31.5%) in 1998 to 653 (29.4%) in 1999, the percentage dropping because of the increase in titles in 1999. Of the 653 historicals, 92 were Regencies. There were 30 anthologies (ten Regency), 16 hardcovers (one Regency), four paperback releases of previous hardcovers and 53 reprints, including one trade edition.

Regencies

14% of Historical released were Regencies

Paranormals

Paranormals were 3.6% (80) of the total, significantly off from 6% (118) of the prior year. Seven of those were anthologies, including one anthology reprint, while five were in hardcover and four others were single-volume reprints.

Inspirational

Inspirational novels went from 118 (6%) in 1998 to 136 (6% of total) in 1999. This

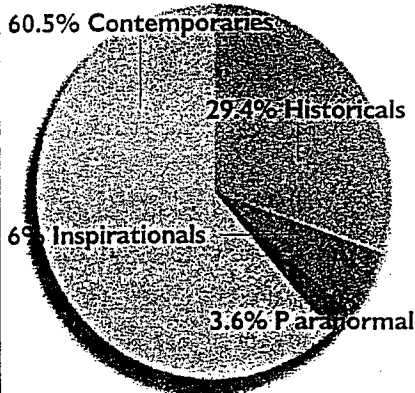
market still appears strong. Two YA titles were also marketed as inspirational.

Sales

There were 527,208,000 Adult Popular Fiction books sold in 1998 (down over 10 million from 537,296,000 in 1997) in all formats. Formats include hardcover at 127,972,000 units, trade with 58,350,000 units, and mass-market, or "rack-size," paperbacks with 349,886,000 units. Romance held strong at 202,209,000 units of that total. In fact, romance sold almost a million more units than the previous year, going from 37.5% of the Adult Popular Fiction market in 1997 to 38.4% in 1998.

Hardcover romance fiction is now 11.1% of the total Adult Popular Fiction sales, up from 7.2% in 1997 and 5.5% in 1996. Trade paperbacks went from 5.1% in 1997 to 6.4% in 1998. Romance paperbacks are — ta-dum — 54.1% of Adult Popular Fiction mass market sales, up more than a percentage point from the 53% of the prior year.

Sub-Genres



Pricing

The average price of a series romance is \$3.99, an increase of 13 cents over the previous year. Single-title paperbacks averaged \$5.62, up 26 cents. Some big-name titles had a cover price of \$7.50; the trade books were \$12.95 and \$14.00 respectively. The most frequently occurring cover price was a tie between \$4.99 and

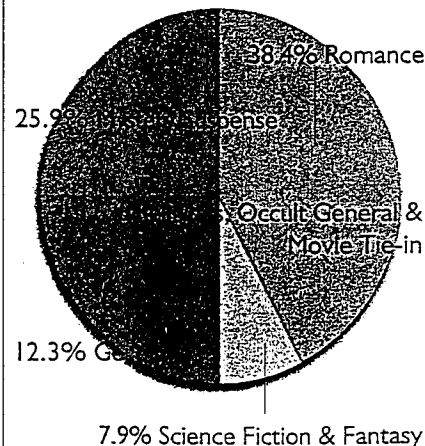
\$5.99, each occurring on 33.3% of the covers. Eight percent of the titles carried a price of \$6.99, the next most frequent cover price, while \$4.50 and \$5.50 were each listed on 5% of the titles. Ten percent and 20% discounts off the cover price were the two savings most often quoted by booksellers. Total sales of romance novels exceeded \$1.23 billion in 1998.

Other Genres

Other categories of fiction are Mystery, Detective, Espionage and Suspense: 25.9% (24.9% in 1997); General: 12.3% (16.2% previously); Science Fiction and Fantasy: 7.9% (8.1% prior year). The remaining 15.6% (up from 13.3%) was divided among Religious, Occult, General Historical, Western, Male Adventure, Adult and Movie Tie-ins.

Romance continues to outsell all other genres in the overall market and is steadily gaining in the hardcover market. Writers, keep up the good work!

Sub-Genres



Libby Hall, who writes as Laurie Page, was an honors graduate in math and a former NASA space shuttle engineer. She recently finished her fiftieth romance for Silhouette. Cheyenne Bride will be a July release from Special Edition's "Montana Mavericks" series.

