

# 2003 ROMStat Report

by Olivia Hall

Romance takes a small dip last year, but trade paperbacks are on the rise. Mathematician and veteran author Olivia Hall breaks it down for 2003.

**S**omething new for 2003. IPSOS, our source for overall sales and trends in popular fiction, is now tracking the audio/digital market. While they aren't separating out the two types of sales at present, we should be able to follow the up/down trend in this market on a year-to-year basis.

At present, sales are small in relation to the overall market. Audio/Digital sales accounted for 11,124,000 units sold in 2003, or 1.65% of the popular fiction market. It is routine now for publishers to list audio versions of their super releases when they advertise hardcover/paperback versions, and digital releases are on the publishers' Web sites in several downloadable formats as well.

## Popular Fiction

The following information applies only to sales of popular fiction books in print formats — hardcover, trade, and mass-market paperback. It does not include the audio/digital numbers listed above. Overall sales increased from 652,101,000 units in 2002 to 662,696,000 in 2003, a gain of 1.6%. While 1.6% is nice, it isn't quite as impressive as the gain of six percent the previous year. For romance, units sold totaled 223,940,000 books or 33.8% of popular fiction sales. This is down slightly from 34.6% in last year's report. Again, romance made a significant leap in trade paperbacks, with 24.9% of total print sales, up from 13.5% in 2002 and 8.1% in 2001. In mass-market paperbacks, romance accounted for 48.8%, 182,916,000 units, of 2003 sales, off from 53.3% the previous year. Hardcover sales of romance rose to 7.1%, up from 5.7% in 2002.

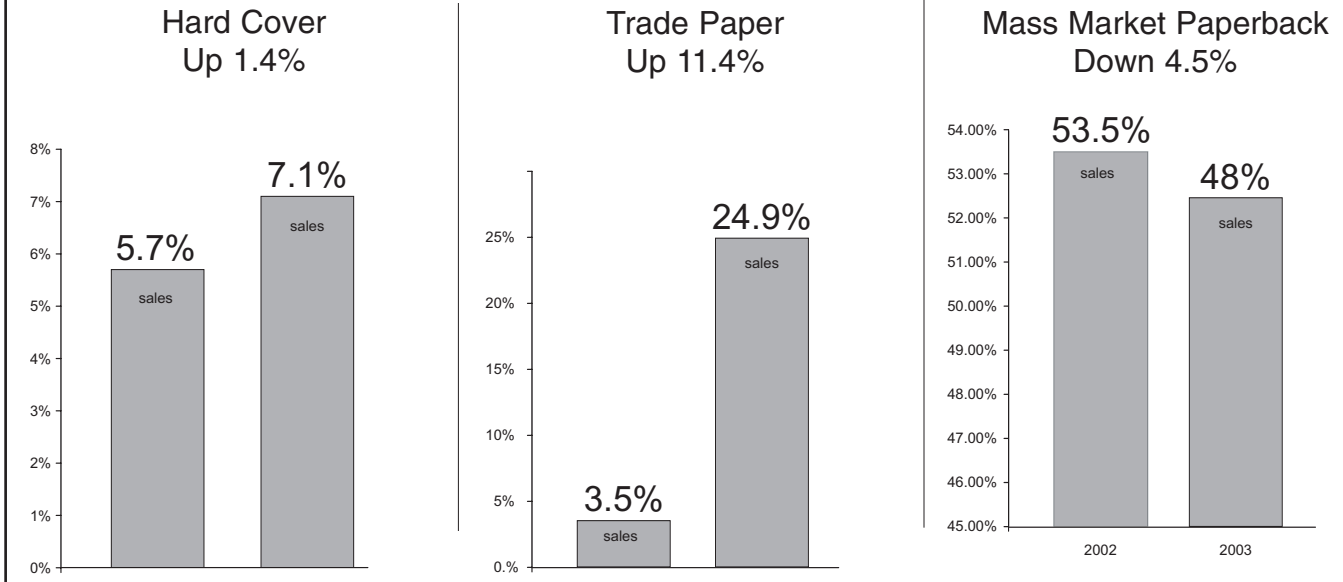
Here's how other genres fared:

- Mystery/Spy/Suspense was 169,378,000 units or 25.6% compared to 23.1% in 2002.
- General Fiction accounted for 164,781,000 sales, 24.9%, slightly up from 24.1% for 2002.
- Science Fiction/Fantasy totaled 40,181,000 or 6%, down a half point from the previous year.
- All others (religious, occult, historical, western, male adventure, adult, movie tie-ins) equaled 64,421,000 units or 9.7% in overall print sales, which was down from 11.9% in 2002.

The above Mystery/Spy/Suspense category is actually broken down into three categories by IPSOS: mystery/detective (13% of total print market); espionage/thriller (8.3%); suspense/psychology (4.3%). I consider these subgenres of one large category, just as contemporary, historical, inspirational, paranormal, and category are subgenres of romance.

While hardcovers of leading authors are often listed as general fiction on the spine, I've found the same titles in paperbacks and audio sold as romance, mystery, suspense, psychological thriller and women's fiction. The BISAC categories in publishing catalogs often list more than one genre, which makes it a tad difficult to know where to count them.

## Romance's Percent of Popular-Fiction Sales *by Format*



### Within Romance

Now for the breakdown of romance: There were 2,093 total romance titles published in 2003, which was 166 less than the prior year. Of the 2,093, 1,371 were contemporary, 479 were historical, 117 were inspirational, 120 were paranormal and 6 were young adult romances.

Of the 1,371 contemporary titles (65.5% of romance titles), 620 were published as single-title releases while 751 were series. In series, three were anthologies. In the single title category, 42 were hardcovers, 113 were reprints, 42 were anthologies and 10 were in trade editions.

For historicals (22.9%), 96 of the 479 were Regency period titles. Overall, there were 10 hardcover titles, 51 reprints and 21 anthologies with Regencies claiming 1 hardcover, 10 reprints and 7 anthologies of those numbers.

Inspirational romances (5.6%), were down somewhat from 153 in 2002. Of the 117 inspirational titles for this year, one was a reprint and 11 were anthologies.

Paranormal romances (5.7%), at 120 titles in 2003 went up from the 88 released in 2002.

The romantic suspense category seems to be vanishing, with the books containing these elements often being marketed under mystery and/or other headings, and also listed under romance. For instance, one hardcover I came across was listed in the following manner: fiction/romance/histori-

cal; fiction/war and military; fiction/espionage/intrigue. Did I mention it's difficult at times to figure out whether to count a title and under what category?

Spanish titles released in the U.S. continued as a steady market at 60 titles, which were not included in the above totals.

### Number of Books Per Author

Romance writers were a busy bunch in 2003, as follows:

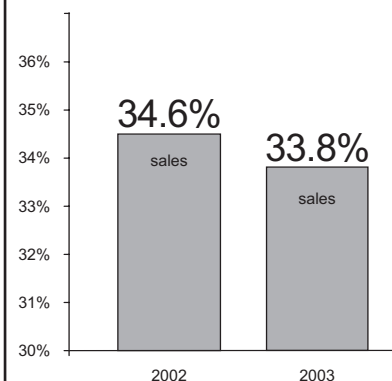
- 740 authors had one title out
- 246 authors had two books out
- 116 authors had three books out
- 49 authors had four books out
- 25 authors had five books out
- 10 authors had six books out
- 5 authors had seven books out
- 4 authors had eight books out
- 3 authors had nine books out
- 1 author had 10 books out

With Harlequin vigorously pursuing its reprint program, I found 28 titles by Betty Neels, usually issued with two books in one volume. Three of those appeared to be first-time releases in the U.S. market.

The 2,093 romance books published last year were written by 1,200 authors.

## Romance's Percent of Total Popular-Fiction Sales

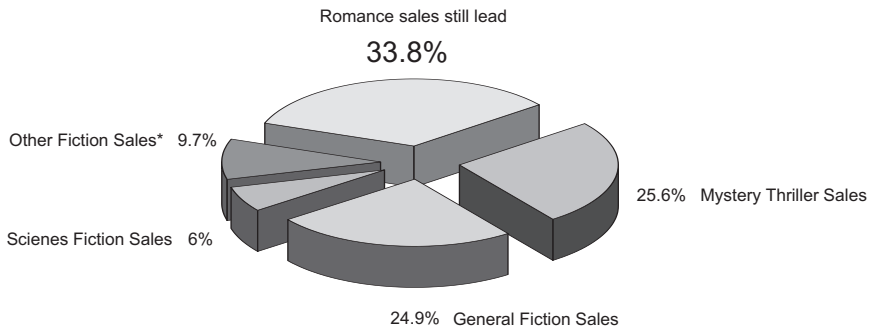
All Formats Combined  
Down .8%



## Romance Publishers and Number of Books Released in '03

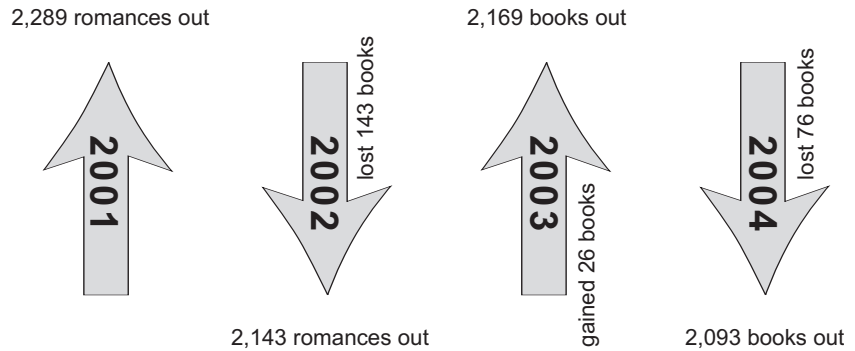
House	Number of '03 Releases
Avalon	24
Baker Books (Bethany, Brazos, Cambridge Bibles, Chosen, Revell)	15
Barbour	18
Bertlesmann (Ballantine, Bantam, Broadway, Crown, Dell, Delacorte, Doubleday, Fawcett, Knopf, Ivy, Random House, Waterbrook)	71
BET/Arabesque	65
Dorchester (Leisure, Love Spell)	104
Ellora's Cave	51
Five Star	22
Genesis	18
Harper/Avon	94
Kensington (Brava, Citadel, Dafina, Encanto, Kensington, Pinnacle, Zebra)	162
Pearson (Berkley, NAL, Dutton, Jove, Onyx, Putnam, Signet, Topaz, Viking)	154
Pocket/Sonnet/Atria	54
St. Martin's	43
Torstar (Harlequin, Mills & Boon, MIRA, Red Dress, Silhouette, Steeple Hill)	1,141
Tyndale House	13
Warner	36
Other publishing houses (Harvest House, ImaJinn, Multnomah) listed less than ten romances each.	

## The Popular-Fiction Pie in 2003



\*(western, male, adventure, histories, movie tie-in)

## Romance Releases by Year



## Sub-Genre Releases Compared to Last Year

		2002	2003	
↑	up by 33 titles	Contemporaries	1,338	1,371
↓	down by 101 titles	Historicals	580	479
↓	down by 34 titles	Inspirational	153	117
↑	up by 32 titles	Paranormal	88	120
↓	down by 4 titles	Young Adult	10	6

Romance made  
\$1.41 billion in  
sales in 2003

down slightly from  
\$1.63 billion in 2002

### Pricing

So what did all these 2003 releases cost the readers of romance fiction? While I found a few trade-size titles at \$9.95, about half were \$12, \$13 or \$14 with the other half priced at \$10.95, \$12.95 and \$13.95. The middle, \$12.95, was the most often encountered price. Hardcover covers ranged from \$20.00 to \$30.00 with \$24 being the most often noted. Twenty-two dollars, \$23, and \$25 were close behind. There were several books listed as \$22.95, \$23.95 and \$24.95. The average was again slightly below \$24.00.

For series, prices ranged from \$3.99 to \$5.25 with the average price being \$4.43. In 2002, \$3.99 and \$4.50 tied as the most often listed price. For 2003, \$3.99 occurred the most often, but \$4.75 was a close second. The single-title romance releases averaged \$6.56 per book with \$6.99 having a small lead over \$5.99 as the most often noted price.

### Money Generated by Romance Sales in 2003

Based on print sales of 164,781,000 books, the romance market for 2003 wasn't as high as the \$1.63 billion in 2002, but \$1.41 billion in 2003 sales is still a right goodly number.



*Libby Hall, writing as Laurie Paige, is working on her sixty-fourth book. Her novella, "Jenna's Having a Baby," appears in Mother by Design, lead-in anthology for the Logan's Legacy continuity series, a May release from Silhouette Books.*



## An Evening with Nora Roberts

**October 21, 2004, 7pm**  
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Program at 8pm  
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