

Embargoed until Friday, June 2

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*File: Children's Literacy
To Ann
O'Leary*

STUDY FINDS QUALITY BOOK GAP FOR VERY YOUNG CHILDREN: LOW INCOME CHILDREN BEAR THE BRUNT

GAP EXISTS DESPITE AN EXPANDING STRONG MARKET FOR QUALITY BOOKS FOR CHILDREN UNDER AGE 5

A new study assessing the availability and quality of books for children 0 to 5 has found that the significant consumer market for these books fueled by parents and teachers will only get bigger as state governments increase their investment in early childhood learning readiness efforts such as pre-kindergartens and expanded Head Start programs. Despite this powerful new market, however, the study also found that quality books are eluding low-income children because neither their parents nor childcare providers are exposing them to quality books that can enhance their ability to learn.

Dr. Susan Neuman, a nationally known literacy expert, is the study's director. She is a professor at Temple University and is slated to become the Director of the National Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Ability at the University of Michigan.

Commenting on the study's findings, Dr. Neuman said "We found that child care centers across all income levels do not have the resources to build libraries with sufficient numbers of quality books for young children. Their funding for books tends to be episodic and unpredictable, and depends in much part on the generosity of parents and community members. Once again, we see the children from low-income homes bearing the brunt of this disparity. Neither their parents nor their provider have the income or guidance to invest in the kinds of quality books that would boost their ability to increase their ability to learn."

Dr. Neuman added, "The economics of the issue of affordable quality books are compounded by another key finding: Parents and teachers lack adequate guidance about how to choose quality books for their children. We found that there are no guidelines for what constitutes quality books that build developmentally appropriate learning skills and abilities for very young children. As a result, parents and providers who want to choose books for very young children have no way of assessing whether a book is appropriate for building their child's learning skills. They are flying blind when they are buying books for their children."

Key findings of Dr. Neuman's study, funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Heinz Endowments and the Institute for Civil Society, include:

- Juvenile books account for 16% of the book market and are an exceptionally important component of the US book publishing industry; individual consumers are the largest purchasers of juvenile books

- Most childcare centers are unable to build adequate libraries because they lack predictable funding for these purchases; instead of the recommended 5 books for child, centers have on average less than one book per child
- An increase in pre-k programs will have a dramatic, positive impact on book sales
- In 1998-99, states invested nearly \$1.7 billion on pre-kindergarten; however, few states make any recommendations about choosing particular books, expecting teachers to make these decisions even though teachers often lack that expertise

Recommendations include the following:

- To make better use of money, states should move toward creating pre-k guidelines
- Publishers should consider packaging pre-k libraries with more consumable books
- The American Library Association, International Reading Association, National Association for the Education of Young Children, and the Association of American Publishers should work together to create guidelines for quality selection of books in early childhood

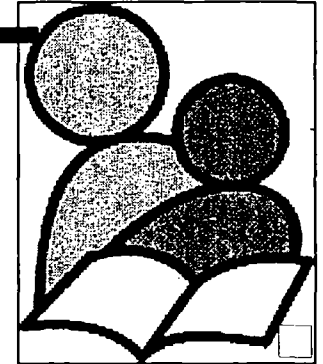
Patricia Schroeder, President of the Association of American Publishers, said, ""While everyone is discussing the 'digital divide', we should also address the book gap for children in this country five and under just as vigorously. Children who are not literacy ready when they start school are too often left behind. A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. On the information highway, that journey begins with books. Unless we reach out to book-deprived kids early in life and help them begin that journey, they will spend the rest of their lives trying to catch up."

The study provides the basis for a groundbreaking symposium to take place on Saturday, June 3 at Book Expo 2000 in Chicago that will assess the findings from a unique coalition including literacy experts, publishers, librarians, child development experts, child care providers, and pediatricians who will use these findings to discuss the need for a comprehensive set of publishing and selection guidelines for publishers, parents and providers. These guidelines will build on efforts of the American Library Association and others to help consumers choose books for enjoyment and other critical factors.

"The time is ripe to establish partnerships that support children, their families and child care providers in helping children learn to read," says Susan Roman, executive director of the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association. "We need to build on these findings to develop workshops and other outreach efforts that stimulate communication among parents, providers, librarians and others to ensure that children are exposed to quality books that are developmentally appropriate."

Another report on early literacy and the need for quality books in homes and child care centers, underwritten by Penguin-Putnam Books and conducted by Child Care READS!, a project of the Child Care Action Campaign, will also be discussed at Book Expo. It underscores the key finding that parents and providers need better guidelines on what and how to read to very young children and that literacy learning not only involves direct experiences with print, but ongoing and effective communication between providers, parents and child.

Faith Wohl, President of Child Care Action Campaign, said, "Our focus groups made it very clear that today's harried parents and hurried children face new obstacles when it comes to learning to use books in a way that builds language and early literacy skills. Our findings highlight the importance of better communication between provider and parent. They also support the need for stressed-out, short-of-time parents to engage children in simple everyday activities that can also help foster language development."



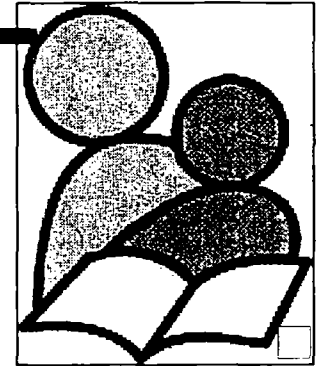
Access for All: Closing the Book Gap for Children in Child care



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Forces of Change in Early Literacy



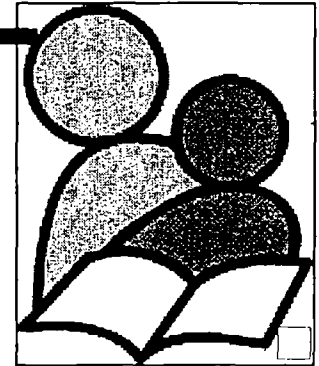
- National Assessment of Educational Progress (The Reading Report Card)
- Brain Research
- National Academy of Sciences Report (Preventing Reading Difficulties)
- IRA/NAEYC Position Statement
- Head Start Performance Guidelines



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Data Sources



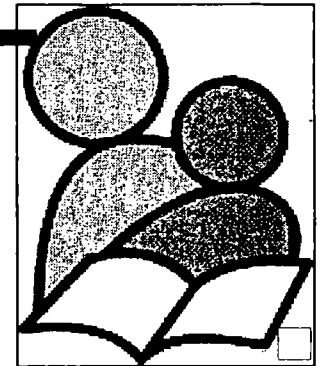
- Book Industry Study Group
- NPD Group, a 12,000 panel study, examining purchases for children below the age of six
- National survey of book purchases for children in 300 child care centers
- National survey of Prekindergarten Initiatives in 41 states
- Case Studies, selected states



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The Juvenile Market



Key points

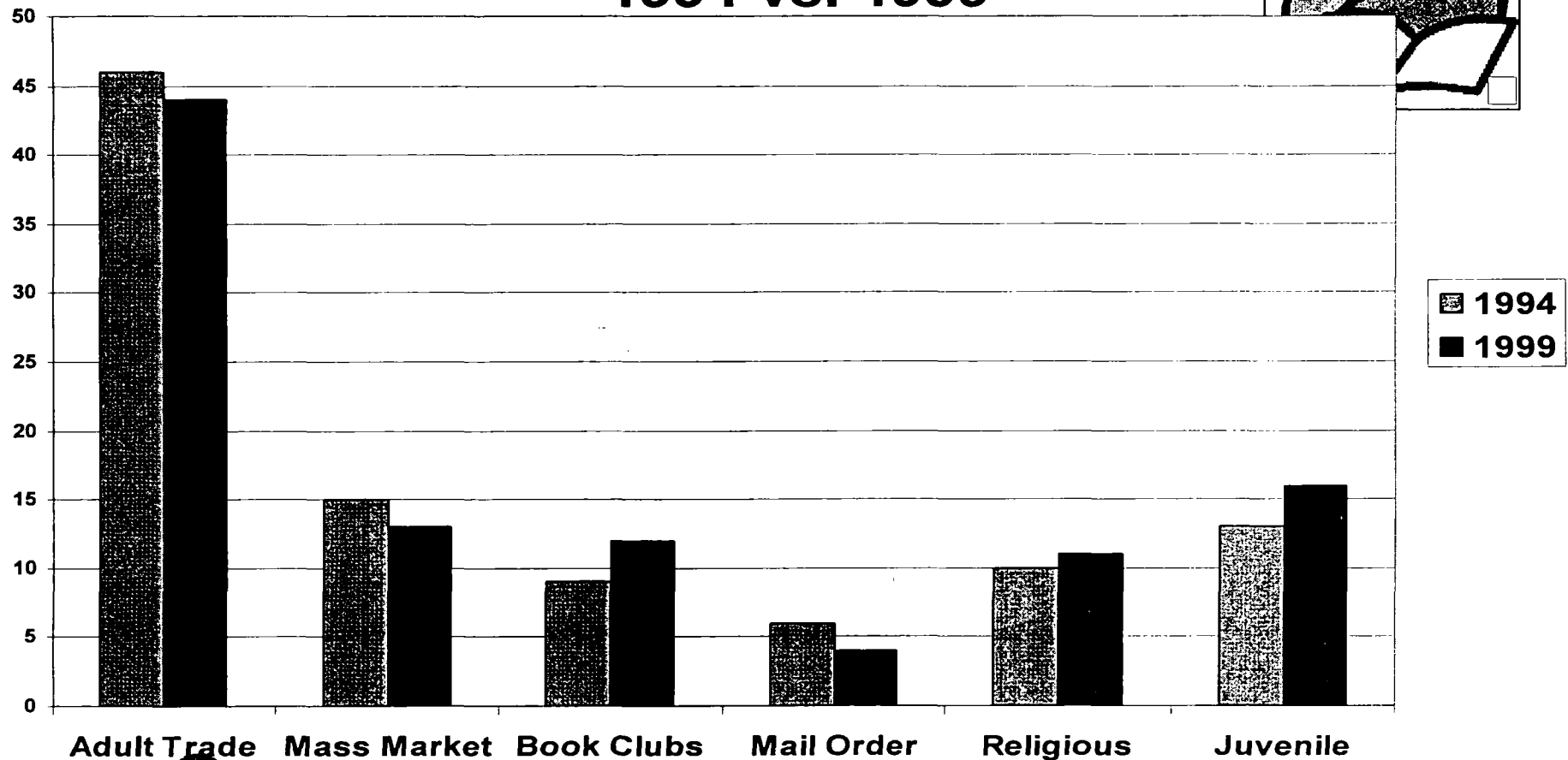
- Total juvenile market is growing
- Represents 16% of all books purchased in the U.S.
- Total juvenile book market accounted for \$1.72 billion dollars in 1999



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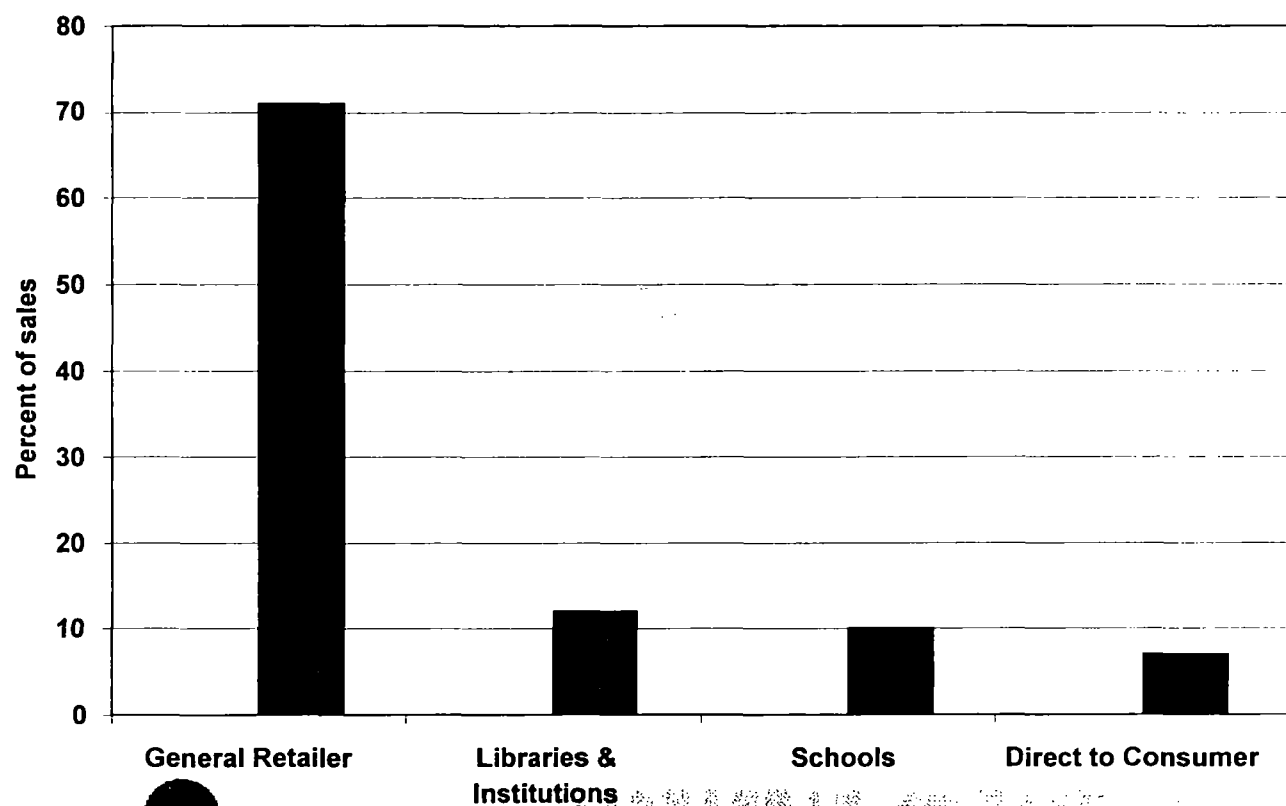
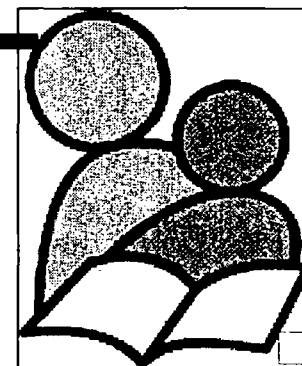
Percent of Total Books Sales: 1994 vs. 1999



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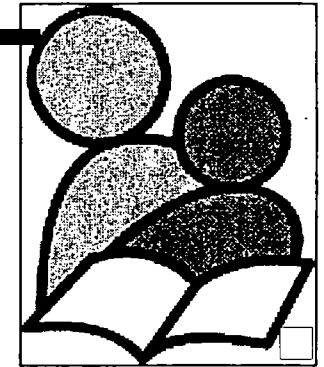
Juvenile Trade Book Market:1999



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The Juvenile Market



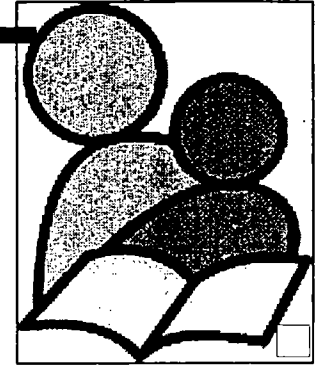
- Consumers, not schools or libraries/purchase the vast majority of all juvenile books in the U.S.
- 72.91% Sold by general retailers directly to consumers



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Top Ten Juvenile Book Publishers



- Random House
- Penguin Putnam
- Golden Books
- Simon & Schuster
- Harper Collins
- Scholastic
- Landoll (Tribune)
- Disney
- Avon/Morrow
- Pleasant Co. (Mattel)

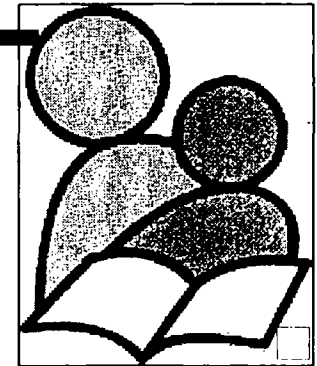


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Early Childhood Juvenile Trade Book Purchasing: Market Share Percentages by Channel of Distribution



Independent Book Store

Chain Book Store

Book Clubs

Mail Order

Mass Merchandisers

Other Discount Stores

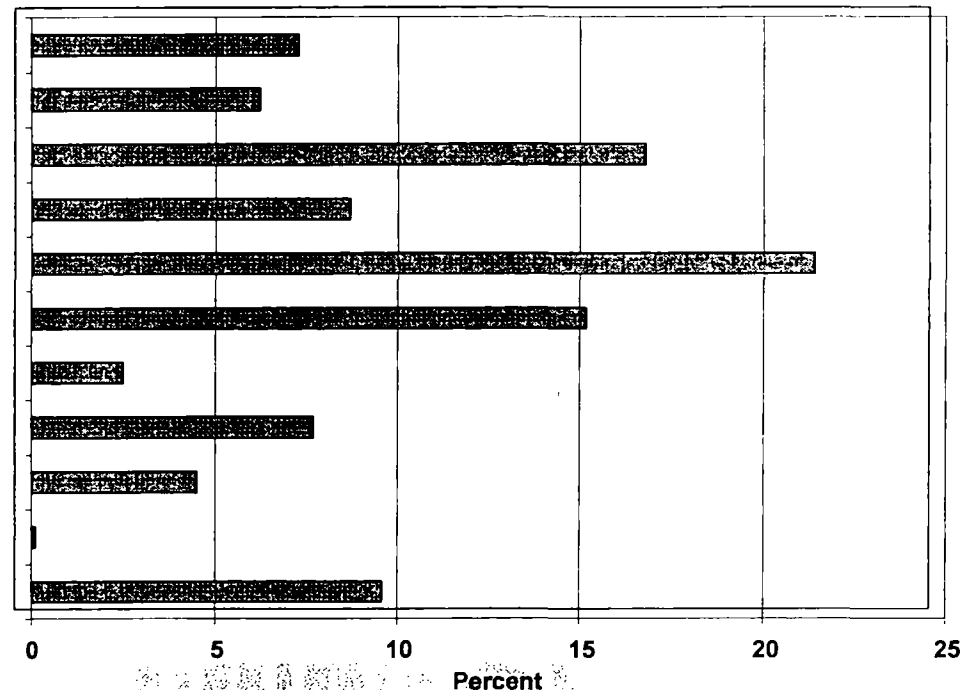
Wholesale Clubs

Food & Drug Stores

Toy Stores

Multi-Media Stores

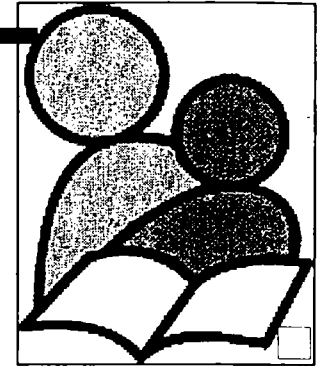
Other outlets



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Book Purchases are Price Sensitive



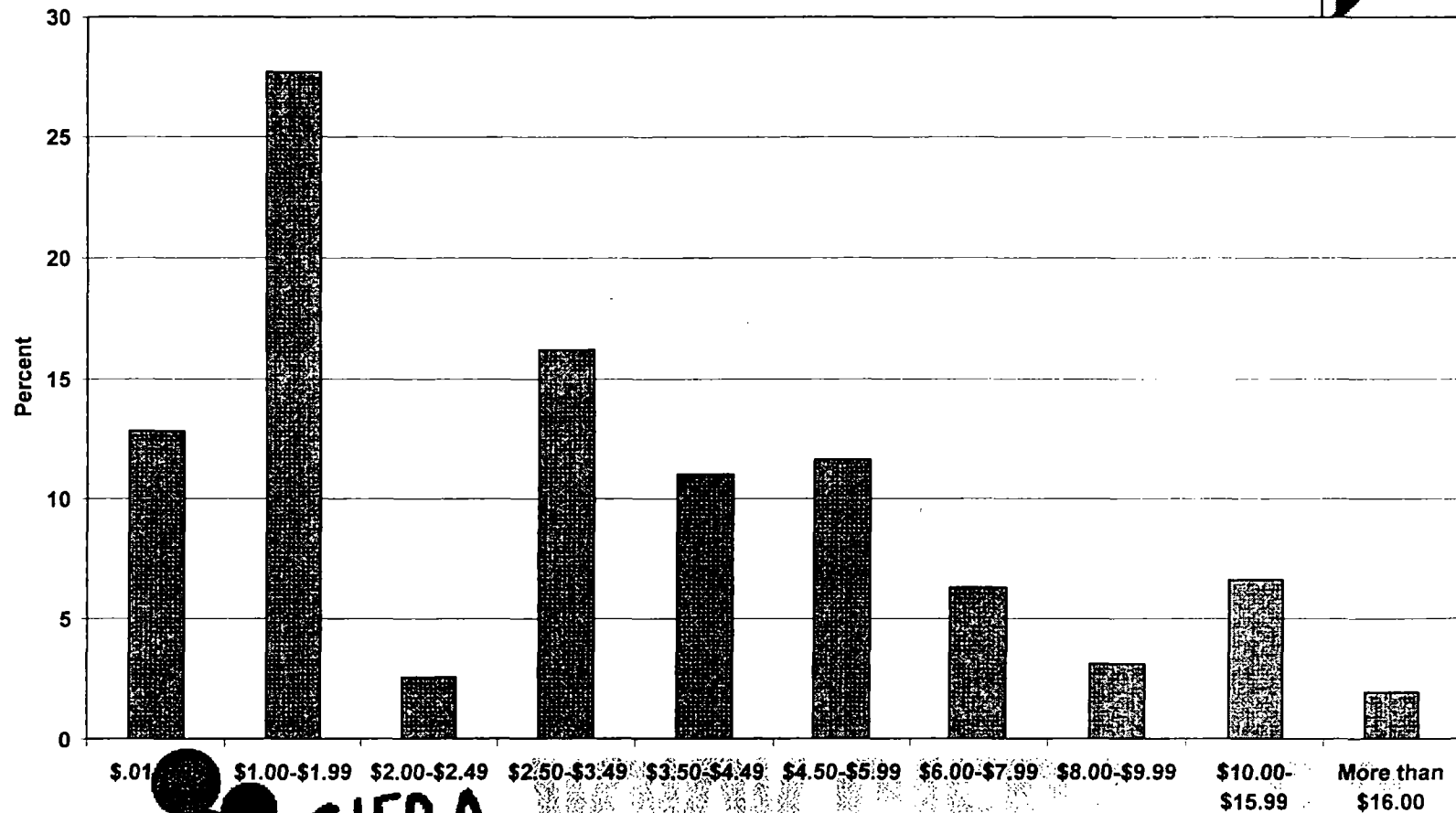
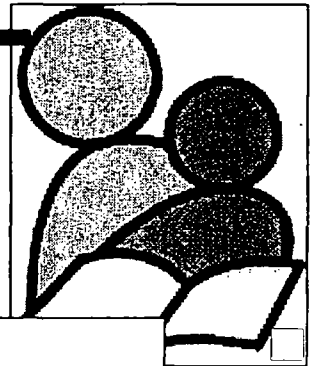
- In 1999, 21% of all early childhood books were purchased in mass merchandise stores--
- Book Clubs were second (16.8%)
- Other Discount Stores



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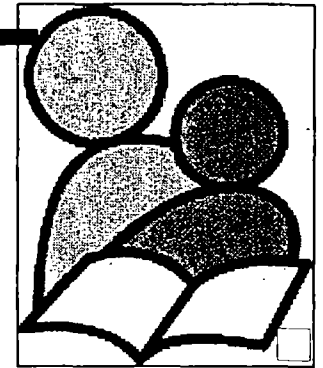
Early Childhood Trade Book Purchasing: Market Share Percentages for Book Retail Price Points



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Demographics of Book Purchasers



- Early childhood books are considered important purchases
- Household heads earning under \$30,000 buy books, but far fewer than those who have greater income



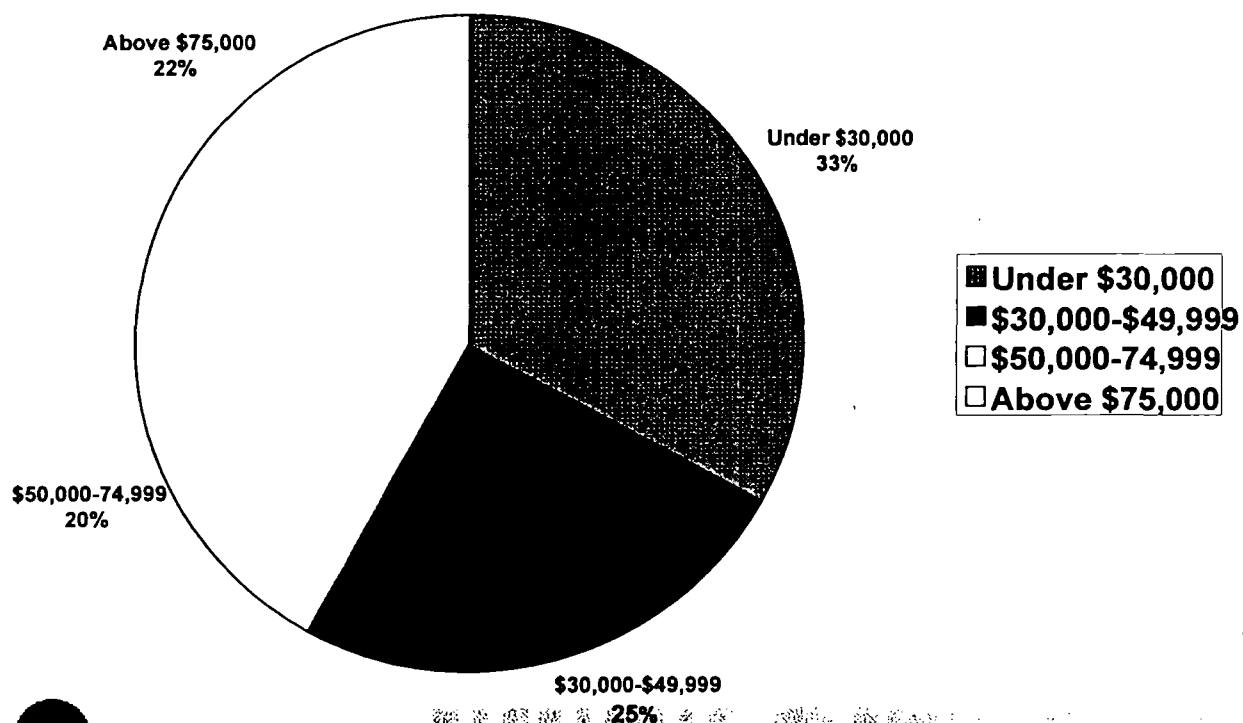
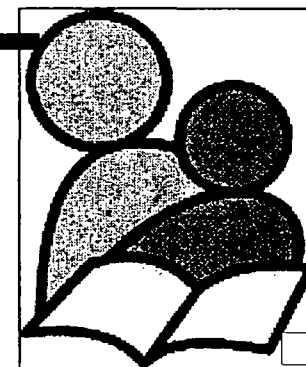
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Early Childhood Tradebook

Statistics:

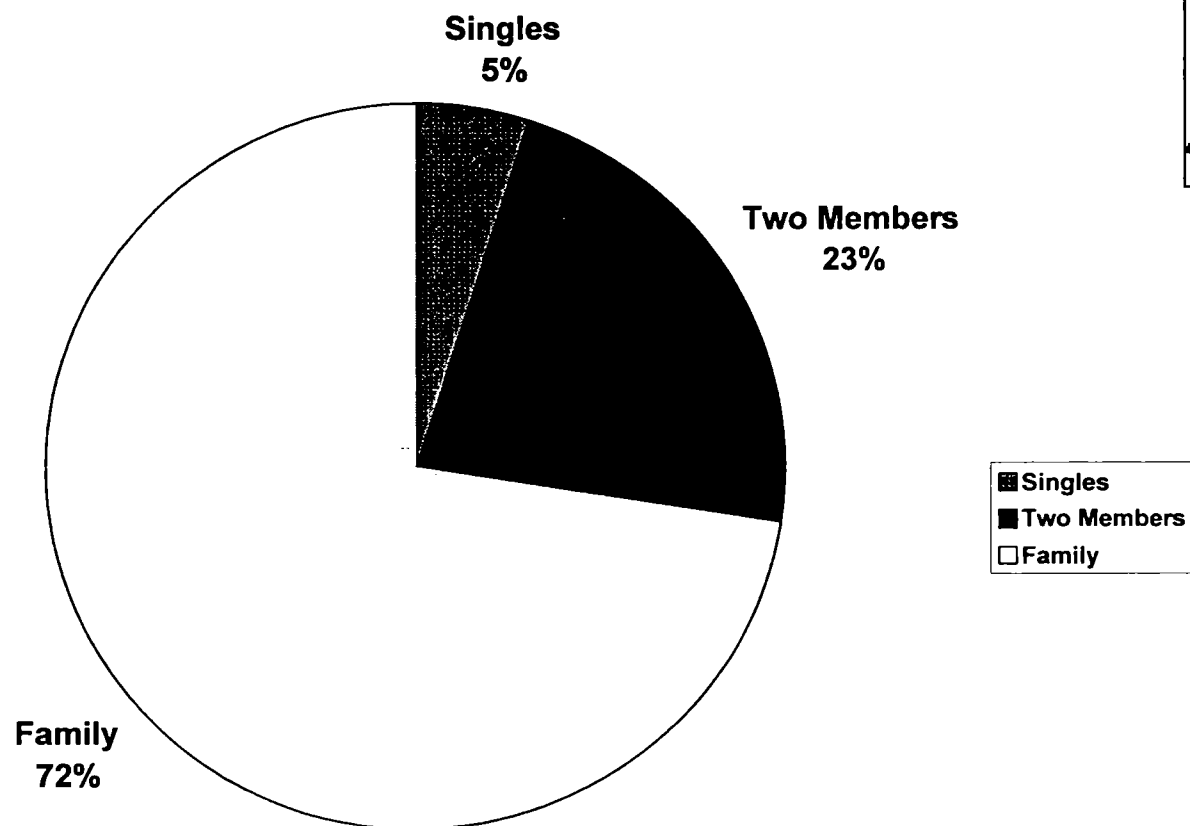
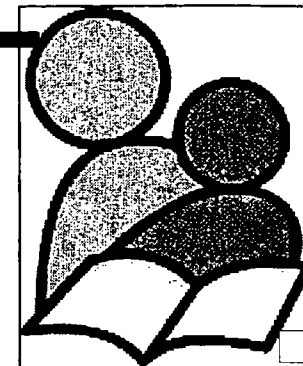
Household Income Trends: 1999



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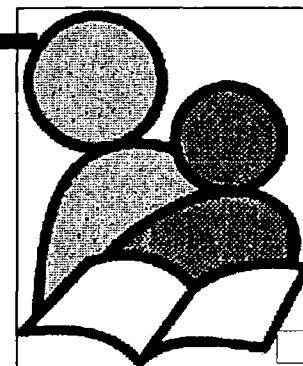
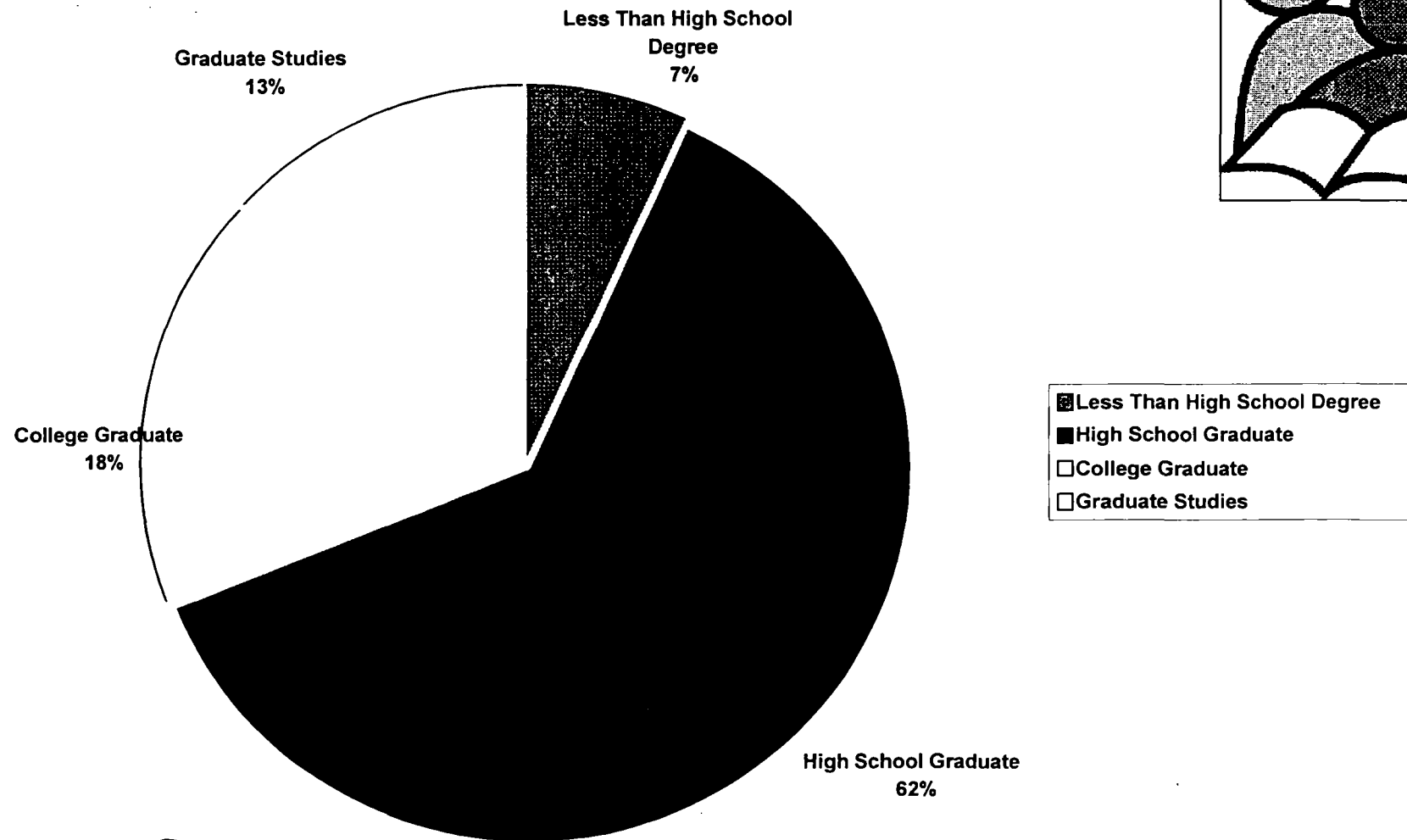
Size of Household



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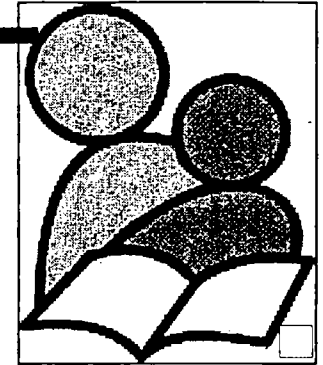
Education of Household Head



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Demographics of Book Purchasers



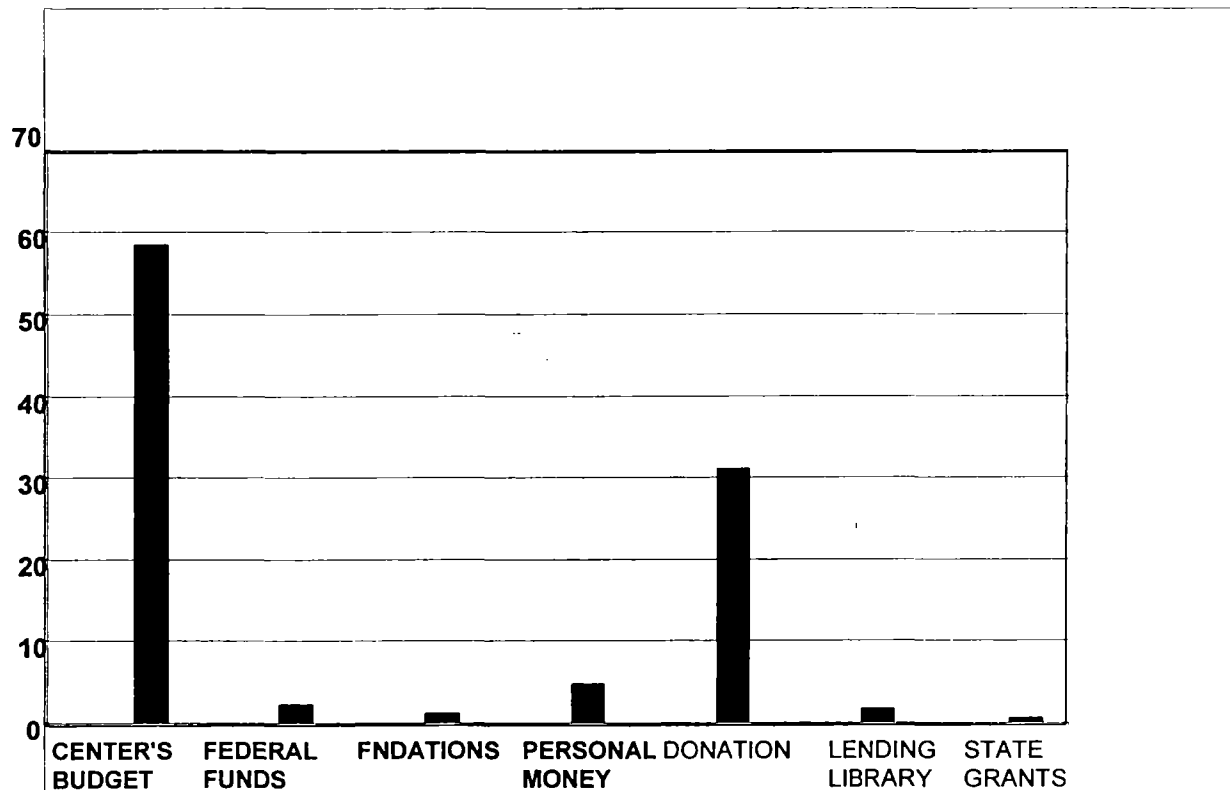
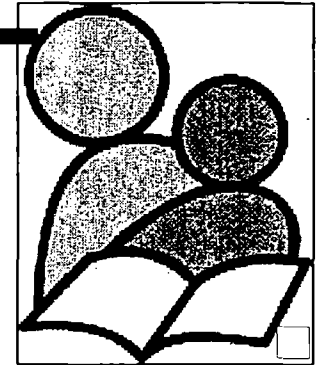
- Families account for 72.6% of the sales
- High School Graduates account for 62% of all sales
- Occupational level affects the decision to buy books, with unskilled labor lagging behind professional/manager group
- Peak buying years are 30-34, and 35-39



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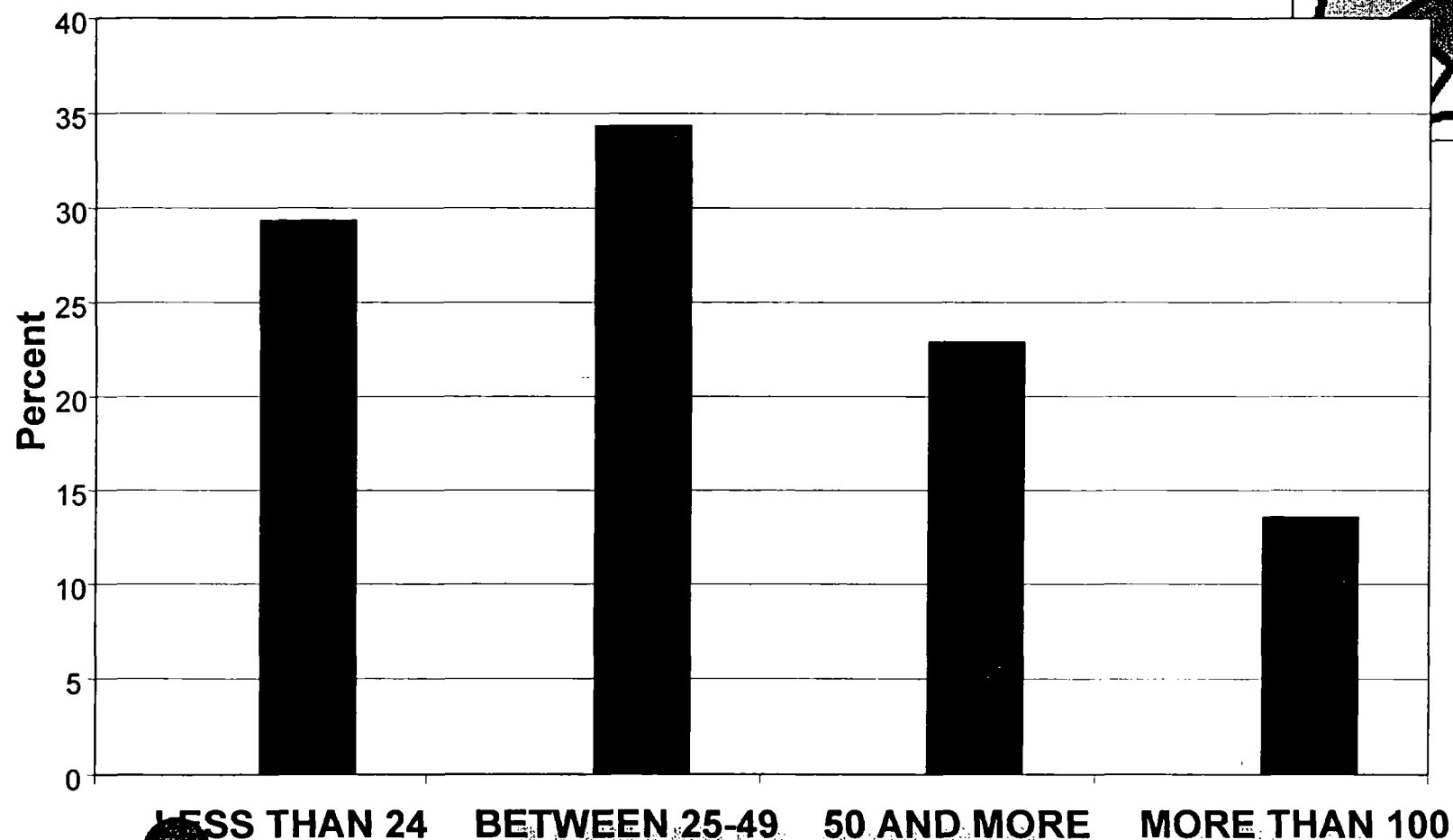
Source of funding for books



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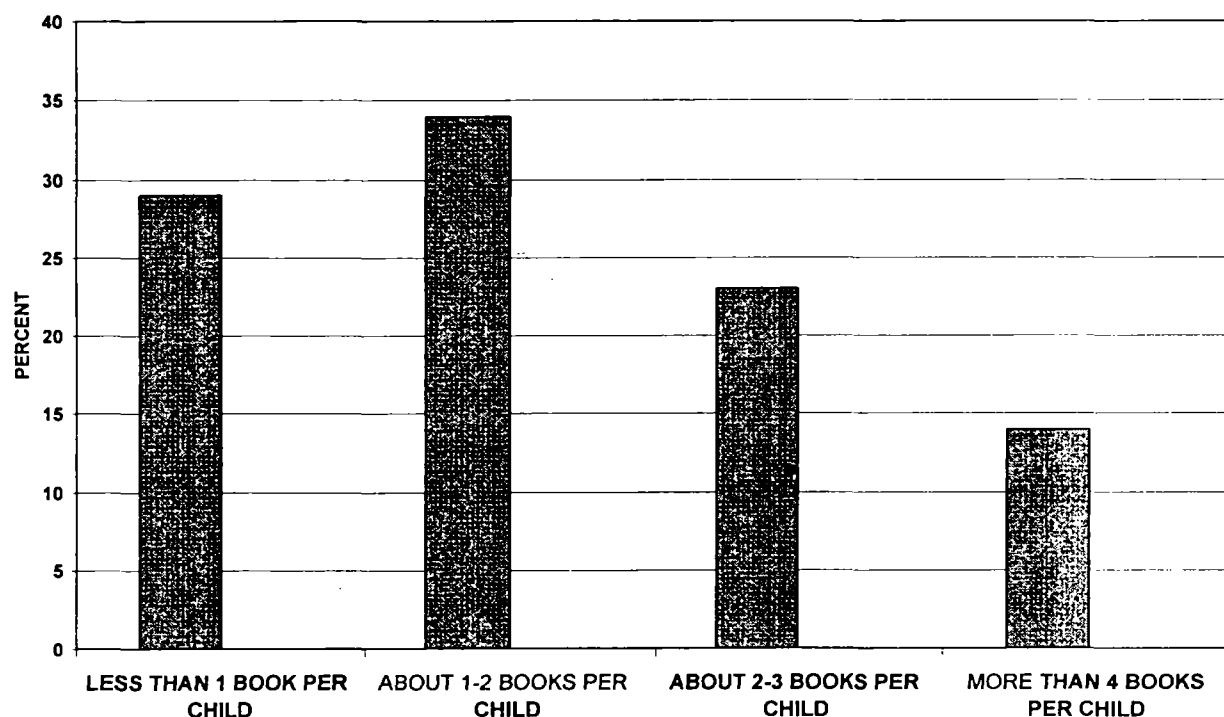
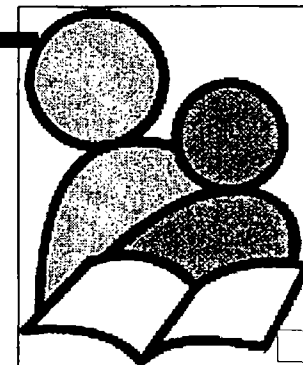
Number of Books Per Classroom



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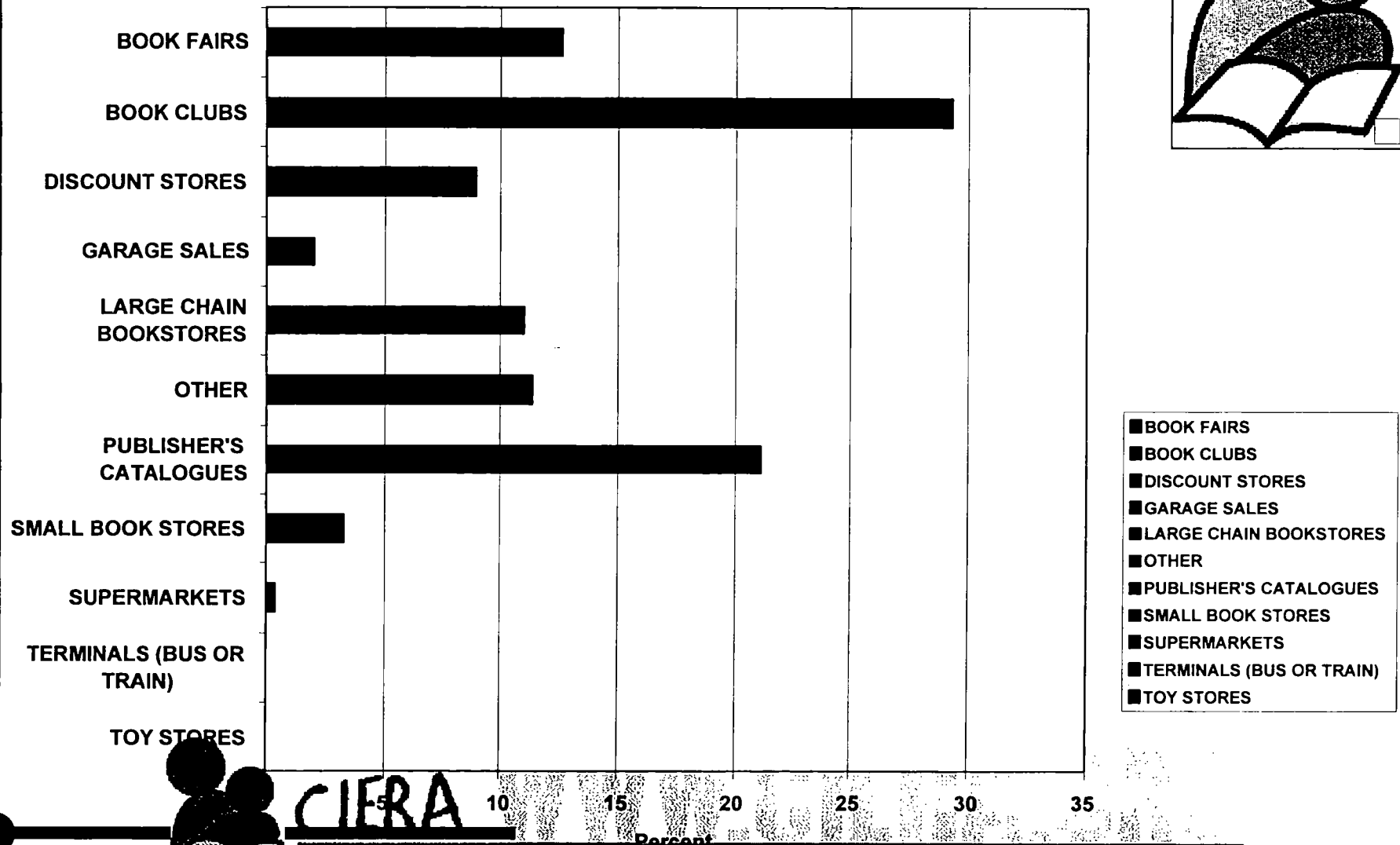
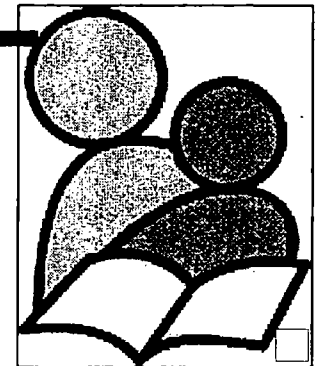
Estimated Number of Books Per Child in Classrooms



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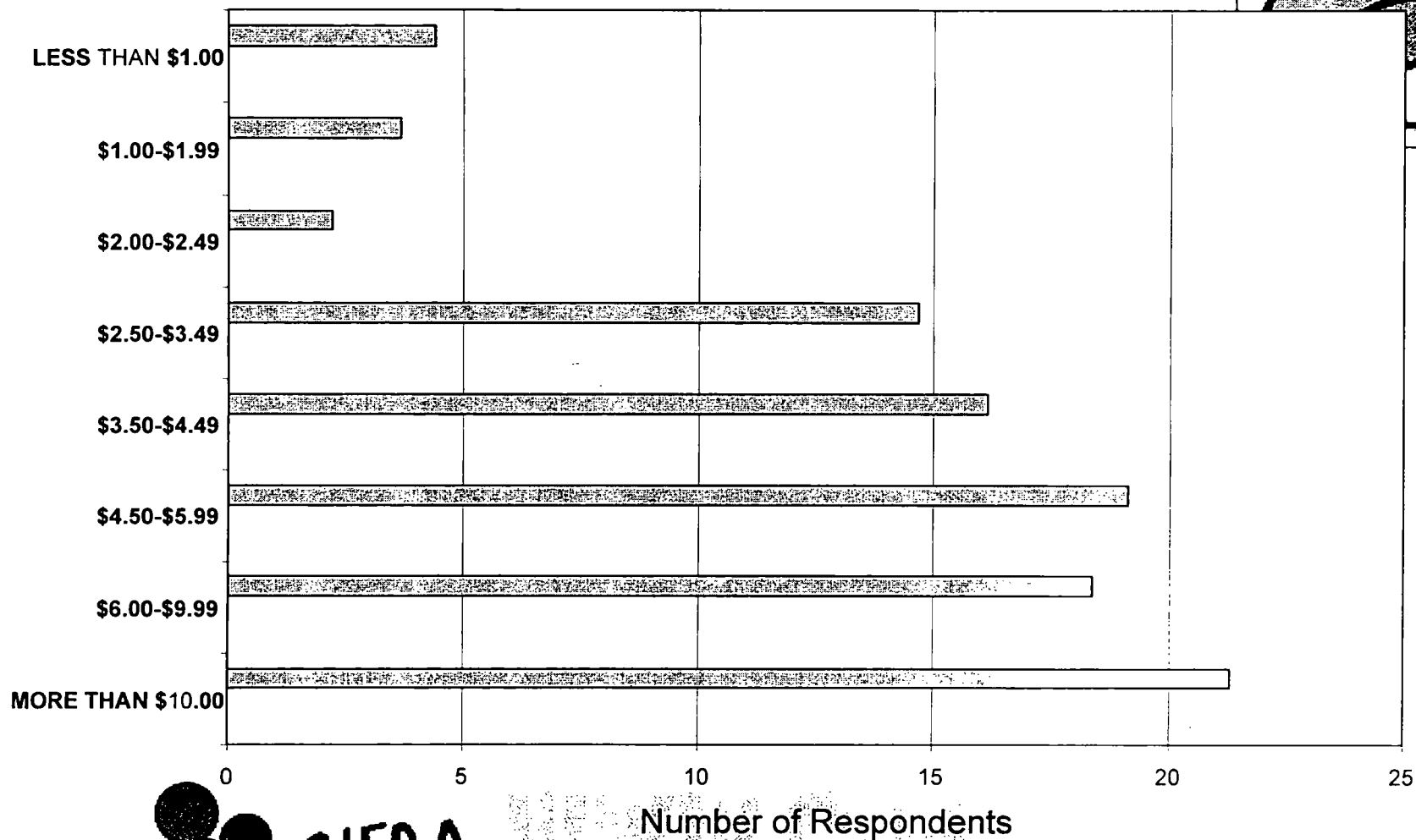
Book Source



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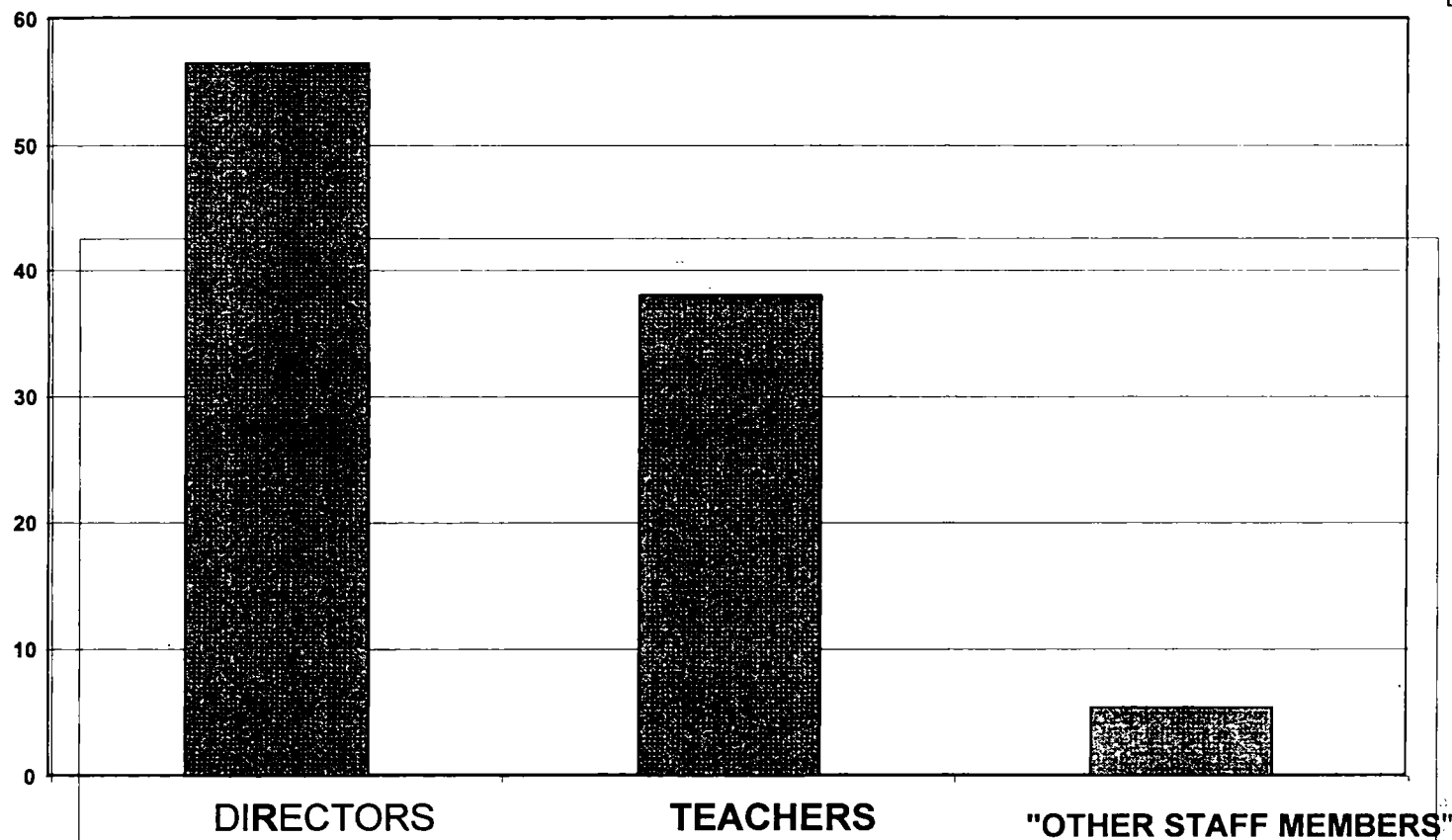
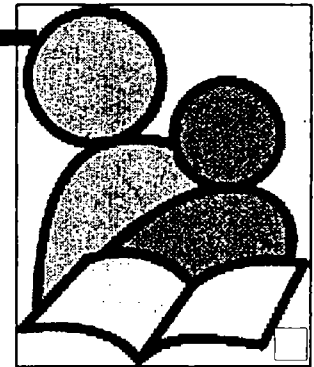
Average Price of Purchased Books



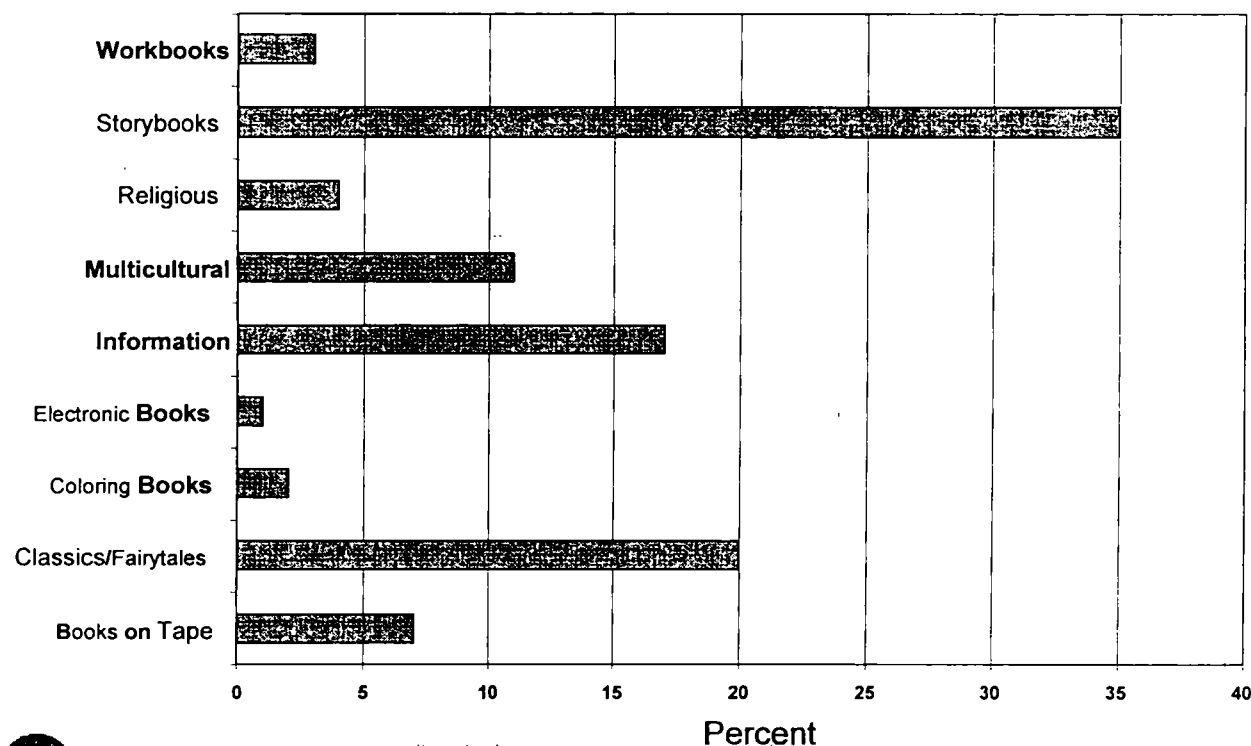
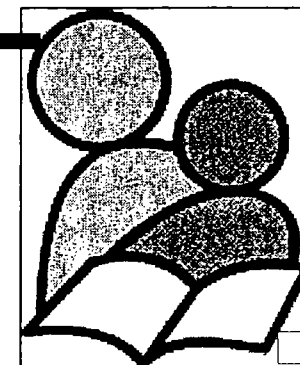
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Person responsible for making purchasing decisions



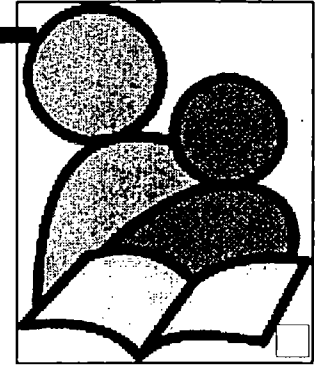
Percent of Books by Genre in Child care classrooms



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State Initiatives



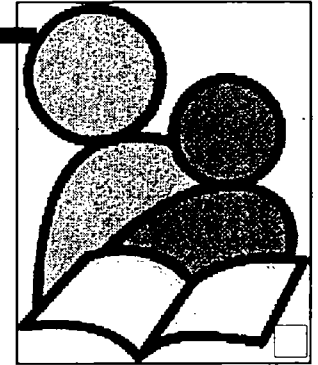
- In 1998-99, states invested a total of nearly 1.7 billion in prekindergarten initiatives; 2 1/2 times as much as 1991-92
- 41 out of 50 states have prekindergarten initiatives
- Georgia is the only state that invests sufficient funds to make prekindergarten available to all children



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State Initiatives



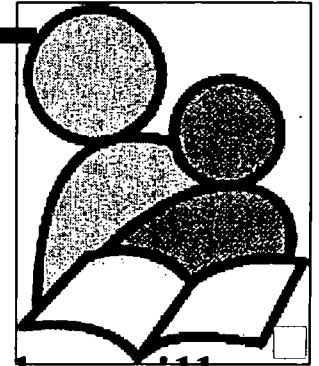
- 37 state initiatives do not require prekindergarten teachers to have teacher certification, but do require some credential like a CDA
- Few curriculum guidelines for states in prekindergarten (ex. NJ; MA; TX)



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Potential Consequences



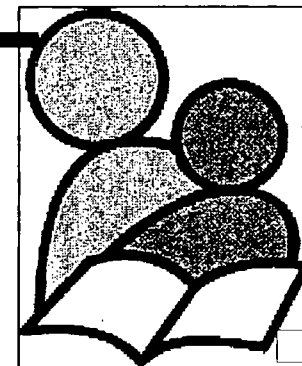
- Those children who are most in need of books will be least likely to get them
- Little guidance for decision-makers on how to use books in early literacy
- Book use may not be tied to cognitive activities in early literacy
- No guidance for selection of quality books in early childhood



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Potential Solutions



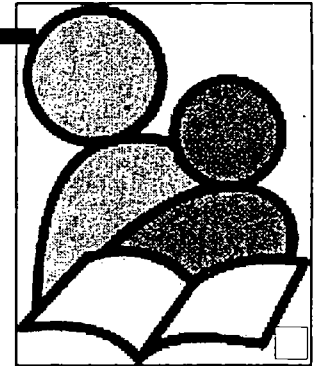
- **Child care Centers**
 - Capacity for buying is low; varies by SES of families served; fairly tight budgets
- **Solutions**
 - Child care Reads
 - Better packaging of low-cost books to ensure quality libraries
 - Bulk buying (I.e. state agencies or R & R networks)



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Potential Solutions



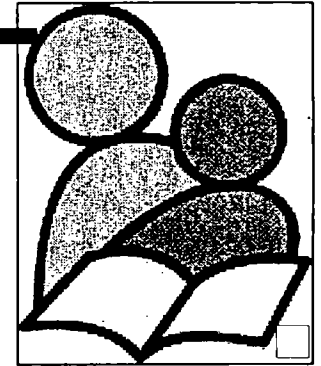
- Pre-kindergarten programs
 - Capacity for purchasing varies by state; some are well-funded, others minimal
- Potential Solutions
 - Create educational expectations in pre-k that specify how books may further literacy achievement
 - Offer guidelines to help decision-makers select quality books



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Potential Solutions



- Professional Associations
 - IRA
 - NAEYC
 - ALA
 - AAP
- Potential Solutions
 - Recommendations for classroom libraries
 - Guidelines for selection of books
 - Guidance to book publishers on instructional needs in early childhood



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