
The Drood Review

of *Mystery* ™

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Mystery in 2003: A statistical portrait

The numbers reported here are derived from The Drood Review's new titles database, compiled by Jim Huang. This is the information you see in the back of each issue in our Guide section. Comparison numbers are drawn from 1989 and 1996 to illustrate (some) of the changes in the genre. While we make every effort to cover everything that's published in the US, it's likely that we miss a handful of titles each year, especially from smaller companies that do not report new releases to us. For more information about submitting new titles data, please visit our website at www.droodreview.com.

Overall growth

After about ten years of relative stability in the 1500 to 1600 range, over the last two years we've seen dramatic growth in the number of titles that we track.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Titles tracked</u>
1999	1599
2000	1535
2001	1624
2002	1738
2003	1952

Subgenres

We loosely categorize books into subgenres. "American" indicates traditional mysteries (including cozies). The "Hardboiled" category is mostly for private eye novels (by men or women). "Unclassifiable" is largely for crossover books: science fiction mysteries and supernatural mysteries (including what's commonly called "woo woo" mysteries). "Suspense" is a catch-all category into which we put anything that doesn't fit another category. (It's interesting to note that suspense is a growing category — is there an increasing reluctance to identify a book as belonging to a subgenre?) Note that while these are loose categorizations, we do try to be consistent.

Between 1996 and 2003, we saw a 22.1% overall growth in the number of titles tracked. Each subgenre's change is also shown in relation to overall growth. A positive percentage in the last column (relative change) indicates that this subgenre grew faster than the genre as a whole, while a negative number indicates that growth — if any — is below the curve.

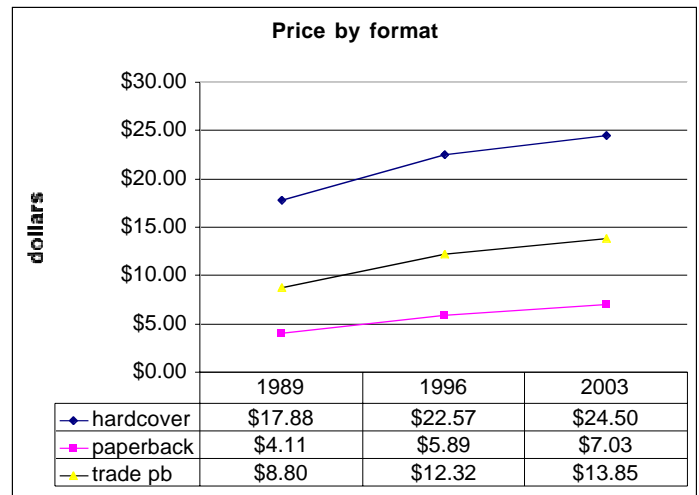
	<u>1996</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>change</u>	<u>rel. change</u>
American	441	502	13.8%	-8.3%
Anthology	36	34	-5.6%	-27.7%
British	158	142	-10.1%	-32.2%
Espionage	39	53	35.9%	13.8%
Hardboiled	164	99	-39.6%	-61.7%
Historical	104	216	107.7%	85.6%
Legal thriller	50	54	8.0%	-14.1%
Police procedural	88	84	-4.5%	-26.6%
Reference	27	22	-18.5%	-40.6%
Sherlockian	11	22	100.0%	77.9%
Suspense	461	677	46.9%	24.8%
Unclassifiable	20	47	135.0%	112.9%
Total	1599	1952	22.1%	

Format and pricing

Where is all the growth coming from? Trade paperbacks. We categorize paperbacks based on their size. What we're listing as "paperback" is the standard or rack-sized pocket book, sized at approximately four inches by seven inches. Trade paperbacks are anything larger. (Our definitions are independent of the industry's "mass-market" or "strippable" designations.) In the 12-year period we're examining in this data, hardcover publication is up some and paperback publication is fairly stable, while trade paperback publishing is up more than three times. It's also worth noting that we do not count republications from the same company where an existing mass market title is converted into a trade paperback. Had we included these, the figures below would be even more dramatic.

	1989	1996	2003
hardcover	698	743	827
paperback	791	730	758
trade paperback	109	126	367

It's no surprise that book prices should go up. What is



surprising is that book prices do not go up evenly. In our survey period (see chart), the price of the average hardcover has gone up 37%. At the same time, the price of the average trade paperback has gone up 57.4%, and the price of the average "rack-sized" paperback has gone up a whopping 71% — a variation that we can't explain.

Top five mystery publishers/imprints

1989	1996	2003
St. Martin's 196	St. Martin's 239	St. Martin's 248
Bantam 86	Berkley 90	Berkley 128
Mysterious 80	Bantam 71	Pocket 86
Pocket 62	Mysterious 67	Warner 62
Doubleday 50	Avon 64	Forge 60
		Ballantine (tie) 60

On these tables, we track titles per publisher/imprint. We count as separate each of a conglomerate's imprints, so, for example, St. Martin's and Forge are counted separately, even though they share a corporate parent. Most companies will say that the imprints are editorially independent, something that's sometimes credible and sometimes not. Your belief in the imprint system probably determines your reaction to the consolidation in New York publishing.

On the other hand, the sheer number of publishers working in our genre has grown substantially. But it's important to note that most of the newcomers are small firms. Of the 188 publishers/imprints we counted in 2003, 75 produced just one title each.

Total number of companies/imprints by year

1989	137
1996	140
2003	188

Books by men and women

It's been a very dramatic time of change in the genre, in terms of the numbers of books by men and women that are published each year. The numbers speak for themselves. (Anthologies, reference books, books by both men and women writing together, and books with bylines of ambiguous gender (that we can't identify) are omitted from this table.)

We welcome your comments

Send letters to The Drood Review, 484 E Carmel Dr #378, Carmel, IN 46032, or via email to: letters@droodreview.com.

