

“Wasting Time on Romances”: Uncommon Ground in Reader Advisory Education and Professional Practice

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LIS Education

- Master’s level course descriptions reviewed for 50 ALA-accredited programs in the U.S. and Canada.
- Of those 50 programs, RA courses are offered by 11 programs and RA-related courses by another 19. RA or RA-related courses were offered at 60% of LIS programs.
- The total number of RA and RA-related courses offered was 49, out of 3176 master’s level classes listed on the 50 programs’ web sites. RA and RA-related courses make up less than 2% of the total number of master’s level classes available.

Library Practice

- Survey about romance novel collection development practices and attitudes distributed to 1,020 public libraries – 396 usable returns.

Of libraries surveyed:

- 63% stock romance novels
- 56% offer romance reader advisory services
- 55% make general reader advisory tools available
- 41% have romance displays
- 23% carry romance-specific reader advisory tools
- 13% host romance author visits
- 8% carry romance-oriented journals
- 6% host romance discussion groups

Of all respondents:

- 47% read romance “sometimes” or “often”
- 53% did so “rarely” or “never”
- 48% read between one and five romances per month
- 5% read six or more romances per month
- Only 27% read romances for work-related reasons
- 53% “rarely” or “never” discussed romance novels with colleagues
- 43% “sometimes” or “often” discussed romance novels with colleagues

Comparing MLS to non-MLS respondents:

- Approximately the same number of MLS and non-MLS holders read romances “sometimes” or “often”
- 30% of MLS-holders read romance for work-related reasons, compared to 20% of non-MLS holders
- 55% of non-MLS holders “never” or “rarely” discussed romance at work, compared to 53% of MLS holders
- 6% of MLS holders discussed romance at work “often” compared to only 3% of non-MLS holders

Attitudes toward Romance

Romances are very popular, high-circulating items in my library.	MLS	Non-MLS
No answer	1%	1%
Disagree	10%	24%
Agree	89%	75%
Romance readers are less educated than women who read other kinds of fiction.	MLS	Non-MLS
No answer	4%	2%
Disagree	88%	90%
Agree	8%	8%
Romance readers learn attitudes and behaviors from romance novels.	MLS	Non-MLS
No answer	11%	5%
Disagree	69%	71%
Agree	20%	24%
Romance novels show women as strong, active characters who forge their own destinies.	MLS	Non-MLS
No answer	15%	13%
Disagree	18%	28%
Agree	67%	59%
Romance novels are pornography for women.	MLS	Non-MLS
No answer	8%	4%
Disagree	88%	85%
Agree	4%	11%
Romance novels are instruction manuals on how to “catch a man.”	MLS	Non-MLS
No answer	6%	2%
Disagree	92%	95%
Agree	1%	2%
Romance novels suggest that a woman’s happiness	MLS	Non-MLS

is bound up in the traditional roles of wife and mother.		
No answer	8%	3%
Disagree	77%	80%
Agree	15%	16%