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## Staying Grounded



BY  
PATRICK  
HEATH

**O**n a recent warm (hot!) evening, we attended a concert by the Boerne Village Band on Boerne's Main Plaza. It was the fourth concert in this 19th season of the Band's summer *Abendkonzerte* (evening concerts).

The Boerne Village Band, founded in 1860, is the oldest continuous German-music band outside the Federal Republic of Germany. These concerts regularly draw from 500 to 1,000 listeners for each performance from Boerne, San Antonio, and the surrounding Hill Country. We old-timers know that, no matter how high the day-time temperature, it will be cool when you're sitting in your lawn chair on the grass-covered plaza.

As it happens, the historic Dienger Building, which houses the library next to the plaza, was built by Joseph Dienger, an immigrant from Germany and one of the early members of the Boerne Village Band. For many years now, the Band has held its Monday evening practice sessions in the library's meeting room.

This snapshot of local history is part of my definition of the community which the Boerne Public Library serves. We have a strong German heritage (with an admixture of Hispanic and English culture), but that legacy is being obscured by new residents from throughout the United States with different backgrounds. Our local economy *was* based on ranching but *now* depends on tourism and a mix of professional and managerial talent serving nearby San Antonio.

I am focused these days on the definition of community. I feel that all types of libraries need to be as grounded as possible in understanding the community we serve as we proceed with the transformation of our local institutions and TLA. Trained librarians know the technical jargon and the professional trends that I cannot grasp. But I have a feel for my own community and its library, and from that perspective, I offer these comments about staying grounded.

**Where am I?** You may think your community – town, academic campus, school building – is a “known” quantity, but accept the challenge to look at it again with fresh eyes. Define its uniqueness. Describe its eccentricities. Rehearse and celebrate its history. Assure yourself that you know where you are. If you don't know where you are from, when you set off into the brave new world of transformation, you may become disoriented.

**Respond to what you hear.** One of the “lessons” of the Transforming Texas Libraries Summit was that we must learn to offer our constituents what they want/need, not what *we* think they need. This kind of tuning in involves active listening and seeking out the opinions and requests of our users. We may not like what we hear, or we may not have the resources to respond, but at least we need to listen.

**Consider the corollary.** If we turn our primary attention to what is happening in the community we serve, we may need to turn down the volume on the national voices we admire. The corollary of local focus may well be more critical consideration of what the wide-ranging experts are saying. What is happening in the typical library may not be definitive for your library. Fads do bloom and fade: look at each one in the context of what your users are saying and doing.

**Support locally-grown.** Many libraries depend on day-to-day volunteers and Friends groups. These resources are budget-stretchers and using them builds a sense of investment in the library among valuable allies. Business and civic groups may also want to team up with you for continuing or short-term support. Of course, a fine-tuned sensitivity to governance officials is also one of the key elements of developing local support.

**Get outside.** Many libraries now have the capacity to invite their constituents to discover the library's riches electronically – no need to leave home or the dorm to search the databases. But taking the library's “presence” to the classroom, plaza, coffee shop, county fair, nursing home, or mall presents very different opportunities to offer services. This kind of unexpected presence may also be a very effective advocacy tool for engendering library support.

In summary, the bottom line in an era of change is to remember *where* you are, as well as who you are. A sense of place can be the foundation and focal point for our forays into the virtual world. Being able to walk into the library – with all its sights and sounds and resources – is still an important occasion for many of our users. This simple presence of a building – and its staff and volunteers – can still inspire a community to celebrate and use its lasting cultural heritage. Here is our community and our opportunity. ★

# Strategic and Sustained Continuing Education

When crafting the association's strategic plan for the next few years, TLA made a deliberate choice to center energy and commitment on key areas essential to the long-term growth and vitality of the library community. These areas cut across library type, apply to library practitioner and supporter, and work from a "big picture" perspective.

Powerful communication, collaboration, leadership, and innovation are essential characteristics of any dynamic and professional organization. These principles are the heart of TLA's strategic plan.

In a recent survey, TLA members affirmed the primacy of these areas. We understand that, as a statewide

community, investing in these areas will not only help us better serve our libraries; it will also better position us within the multiple environments in which we must operate.

In this spirit, the *Texas Library Journal* and the TLA Continuing Education Office are partnering to provide dynamic and multi-leveled training on the topics listed above. We have framed this new initiative so that it is convenient, accessible through multiple media channels, and both broad enough to serve all types of libraries while focused enough to provide effective results.

For the next year, the *Texas Library Journal* will feature articles exploring communication, collaboration, leadership, and innovation. The authors of these articles will also hold live online talks, or webinars, to further discuss those topics with the Texas library community. This fall issue of *TLJ* focuses on communication and features articles by Susan Mann, Julie Todaro, and Robert Walton.

Susan Mann, director of Hillsboro City Library, will provide "in the trench" training on cultivating and influencing elected officials and making sure libraries, librarians, and friends groups are at the decision-making table. Having skillfully negotiated the art of being heard, Mann offers a unique, creative, and practical program for the taking charge of your library's future. Mann will also follow up with a live online discussion on October 20 on building relationships with elected officials. The webinar will also cover "making a good friendship count" with topics related to dealing with controversial or delicate

matters, using relationships to support PR, fundraising and grant-writing, and reviewing real examples of when things go right and when things go wrong.

Julie Todaro, dean of library services for Austin Community College, will show how to use the school data from the recent TLA voter opinion survey to market school library programs and improve communications with local PTAs, support groups, and administrators. She has worked with school library administrators on this issue and chairs the TLA PR Committee. Todaro's webinar will take place on October 13, when she will provide realistic, replicable strategies for convincing others to speak out for school libraries.

Robert Walton, chief executive officer of Claremont University Consortium, and former executive vice president and chief financial officer for Innovative Interfaces, Incorporated, will address the trends and changes he sees facing academic libraries. Now, as an academic administrator, he'll share strategies for advancing academic libraries for the next generation of higher education. Walton's webinar, October 27, will feature a panel of Texas academic librarians reacting to Walton's ideas and discussing what, from an administrator's perspective, makes librarians credible in the higher education arena.

CPE credit will be available to any participants to the live webinars. For additional details, see the TLA Continuing Education page at [www.txla.org/CE](http://www.txla.org/CE). ★

**COMMUNICATION:** The transfer of knowledge for education, persuasion, or administration, whether within the library community or with customers and the broader public.

**COLLABORATION:** The integration of the efforts of different types of libraries, or between libraries and representatives from other fields, to reach common goals.

**LEADERSHIP:** The art and science of combining knowledge, vision, feeling, management, communication, and integrity to support libraries into the future.

**INNOVATION:** The practice of conceiving, developing, and implementing new ideas to better serve our communities, our libraries, and our profession.

# School Library Data:

BY JULIE BETH TODARO

## *I've called you all here today to...*

I have noticed throughout my loooong career that, whenever someone is going to be interviewed by the press, they want to be seated in front of shelves full of books. I've had my fill of politicians (who don't support libraries) taking press conferences in the library. I've seen would be and wannabe officials (who don't support libraries) positioning themselves near children reading and, often, in a library story time setting. The list goes on: administrators making announcements in front of reference desks, professionals holding receptions in libraries.... You name it, we've seen it. Sometimes it seems like books are treated just like props. They can be old, hold out-of-date information, and have nothing to do with contemporary educational support or settings, yet don't they make a swell backdrop?

Now, I'm not saying don't let these type of events into your library; we should be receptive to activities that provide opportunities for us to showcase who we are and what we do. We need to make political friends. In fact, I think we need more opportunities to highlight how students are more engaged and more successful when the library has a student and teacher-centered facility as well as a robust collection and a certified school librarian. We need decision-makers in the library, and I want politicians, administrators, officials, and professionals thinking of us during the funding process and policy discussions.

So, how do we get them to do this? How do we build relationships, be "at the table," collaborate with partners, and provide information designed to convince decision-makers that we play a vital role in student engagement and success? The answer to this question is daunting but, in the "providing information" arena, Texas librarians through the Texas Library Association have recently made great strides in gathering and packaging information and data for school librarians, school administrators, and parents to use in explaining, perceiving, and justifying our existence and the importance of what we do for students, faculty, and staff.

### Gathering Information and Data

For many years, TLA has successfully worked within the legislative arena on behalf of Texas libraries. Yet – always trying harder – we have investigated, interviewed, cajoled as many experts as we could to determine even better ways of making our case. Universally, the discussion has always been that data, data, and more data are needed. To this end, TLA partnered with a number of other funding groups, including the Brown and Tocker Foundations, and supporters to create avenues for

gathering that much-needed information.

The *Texas Voter/Public Opinion Survey* is our exciting new data set on Texas school libraries.

How did we do it? TLA contracted – after an extensive search – with the KRC firm. After working with TLA to construct a research plan, they conducted 1201 statewide telephone interviews with a random sample of Texas voters from October 17 to November 2, 2008 on behalf of TLA. An extremely robust survey (800 interviews is considered a solid number for a national level poll, and news shows will often use polls with an 800 interviewee total), a "random-digit dial" sample was used, where households in our defined geographic region have an equal probability of being reached. Participants were screened by age (adults 18 and older) and voter registration status (currently registered to vote in Texas at the address where they received the call), and data were grouped by several factors, including age and party affiliation.

### Packaging Information and Data

All survey data, including findings divided by Texas regions (Southeast, Central, Northeast, Northwest, West, and South), can be found at [www.txla.org/html/pr/survey.html](http://www.txla.org/html/pr/survey.html). The TLA site also offers executive summaries of data, press releases, handouts, and a power point presentation for anyone to use and/or repurpose for their parent groups, budget requests, school administrators, building level use, or marketing. It's there for you!

### Information and Data Content

In general, we gathered the data to measure perceptions and support of Texas school libraries. Formal research objectives for information and data gathered included our intent:

- To gauge perceptions of school libraries (and public libraries) and librarians among Texas voters;
- To determine levels of support for and satisfaction with school (and public) libraries;
- To understand drivers of support and desire for library services;
- To serve as set of benchmark measures; and,
- To measure voter support for a greater public commitment to community libraries.

A simple summary of this incredibly valuable information shows:



- School libraries are vital to education – and Texans are willing to vote in support of them.
- Nearly all Texans (99% including 84% who *strongly* agree) believe school libraries are an essential part of the education experience and more than nine in 10 agree (94%) that school librarians are critical to student achievement.
- The vast majority (93%) would support legislation that would require public schools to provide students with a school library and librarian that meets statewide standards. In fact, more than eight in 10 voters across every demographic segment and geographic region support the legislation, including 88% of Republicans, 95% of Democrats and 96% of Independents.
- Texas voters support increasing funding for school libraries.
- Strong majorities (82%) support *increasing* public funding for school libraries. In fact, at least seven in 10 voters across every demographic, geographic, and political segment support increased funding for school libraries (and public libraries as well.)

The data show some clear results:

- School libraries in Texas enjoy strong and intense voter support—regardless of parental status or any other demographic, political, or regional variance.
- TLA has a solid foundation of voter support from which to conduct outreach and organize.
- Voters believe libraries are a good value and deserve more funding.

- Majorities across the state and various demographic groups, as well as political parties, support increasing library funding.
- Voters are very satisfied with their libraries and believe they improve the quality of life in communities.
- School libraries are seen as an essential component of education.

## Using Information and Data

Although assessment has always been a major theme in Texas education, there is a major focus now on assessment. We need to focus on our assessment commitment as well on the data available. Clearly, the survey – as an assessment tool - represents:

- An investment of resources to determine if libraries are *going in the right direction*;
- Content on: *Are school libraries providing resources and services that people need?*;
- Hard answers on the question: *Do Texans value school library resources?*;
- Answers to the important question: *Are they willing to support them?*;
- A commitment to measure our own operations and services to verify their success;
- A strategy to determine priority needs in communities and among voters for continued library services and programs;
- Objective measurement demonstrating the will of Texas voters; and
- A partnership with governing officials to assess funding and policy requests based on the will of Texas voters.

## TEXAS VOTERS SAY...

<b>99% total agree (84% strongly agree)</b>	<i>School libraries and professional librarians are essential to the education of Texas children.</i>
<b>98% total importance (90% very important)</b>	<i>School libraries are as important as classroom education. (Q. 27-32 asked voters their ranking in importance of several items to the educational process, including classroom education, school libraries, athletics, afterschool programs, field trips, and theater and arts programs.)</i>
<b>82% (major contribution) More than eight in 10 say...</b>	<i>School libraries make a major contribution to children's education.</i>
<b>93% total agree</b>	<i>School libraries serve as another classroom.</i>
<b>98% total agree (84% strongly agree)</b>	<i>School libraries are essential because they help children develop reading and research skills.</i>
<b>97% total agree (77% strongly agree)</b>	<i>There is a link between academic success and strong school libraries.</i>
<b>94% total agree (71% strongly agree)</b>	<i>Professional school librarians are critical to student achievement.</i>
<b>93% total support (77% strongly support)</b>	<i>Texas voters are willing to take their support of school libraries to the legislature. More than nine in 10 voters support statewide legislation to require access to a school library and professional librarian.</i>
<b>(82% total support (and at least seven in 10 ACROSS EVERY demographic, geographic, and political group support increases)</b>	<i>Even in these difficult budget times, voters want more funding for school libraries.</i>
<b>87% total agree</b>	<i>They would be bothered by cuts to school libraries.</i>

## Leveraging Goodwill

The survey findings point to the significant public goodwill towards school libraries. Various discussions over this last legislative session point to the fact that the public simply doesn't understand that school libraries may be in danger of losing funding. Given the strong responses to certain questions, a few key strategies emerge for action.

Communications with decision makers should *emphasize the strong support for funding increases across all demographic, geographic, and political voter groups*. The survey results are also broken down geographically and may provide you with some additional insight as to how to discuss support in your area.

School library advocates should *emphasize the essential contributions of strong school libraries*. The message that school libraries provide a forum for every child with an opportunity to read and learn should be central.

Here are some potential action areas:

1. Plan messaging back at home for administrators, school board members, PTAs, teachers, student groups, relevant associations, and of course, legislators.
2. Integrate messaging and lists of planned actions by the school library community into TLA's administrators' conference.
3. Integrate planned actions *suggested for* administrators/ attendees into TLA's administrators' conference.
4. Replicate the school administrators' conference model (partnerships, education, advocacy, leadership) locally (either through the school district or ESC) or at other state-level venues (library related, such as the Book Festival, or at allied association meetings). Content should be geared and presented to:
  - a. School board members (partnered with association leaders and association staff)
  - b. PTA leaders (partner with general leaders, officers, members, association leaders, and association staff)
  - c. Teachers (partner with leaders, officers, members, association leaders and association staff)
  - d. Other relevant associations (partnered with general leadership, officers, members, association leaders, and association staff)
5. The findings underscore the strong voter belief that school libraries are as essential as classroom education and make major contributions to the education of Texas children. The findings also suggest that focusing on the unique contribution of school libraries to round out and encourage student development and achievement may be more persuasive than casting libraries as an actual extension of the classroom.
6. Voters believe students should have access to a school library and a professional librarian and are willing to support legislation, although reduction in library staff as

a potential result of funding cuts was not as concerning as fewer books and resources being available. Messaging should focus on the impact of the need for overall quality school library programs.

7. Creating specific programs and content/integrating data into:
  - a. Local, regional and statewide advocacy training for school librarians
  - b. In-service programs for teacher staff development
  - c. Annual reports
  - d. "Advertising/marketing" content on school library websites (pop ups, etc.)
  - e. Using statistics/integrating content into logos/ taglines talking about library services
  - f. "About School Libraries" brochures and marketing pieces
8. Proactively preparing and integrating school library data gathering and assessment into:
  - a. Statewide assessment of the school in general (e.g., TEA blue ribbon);
  - b. Any TAKS, TEKS, etc. assessment and announcements;
  - c. Conclusions and actions needed post-assessment from Texas School Library Standards;
  - d. Conclusions and actions needed post-assessment from national School Library Standards;
  - e. Grant applications;
  - f. Articles (print and online focus) for association publications; and
  - g. Programs delivered at other association conferences.
9. Creating a Texas school librarian wiki (with information searchable through legislative districts) with links from TASL and TASLA, perhaps, for identifying and sharing:
  - a. Available Texas data,
  - b. Available national data ([www.lrs.org](http://www.lrs.org)),
  - c. Texas school library examples of use,
  - d. Texas school library examples of success,
  - e. National examples of use, and
  - f. National examples of success
10. Add Texas state data from this study to national links including AASL, LRS.org, and Eduscapes.

And, if you're like me – a data junkie – by now you want "more, more" data to support school libraries by developing strong and persuasive messaging.

**AASL – Research and Statistics** ([www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/researchandstatistics/researchandstatistics.cfm](http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/researchandstatistics/researchandstatistics.cfm))

**Davidvl.org** ([www.davidvl.org/research.html](http://www.davidvl.org/research.html)), 1963-2005: The site provides access to programs and links to research posted including the 2005 12-page PDF ALA presentation "Keeping Up with the Research Linking School Library Media Center Programs to Student Achievement."

**Eisenberg – Presentations** (<http://projects.ischool.washington.edu/mbe/presentations.htm>) offers 17 (out of 23) presentations relevant to the school library community.

**IASL Online** ([www.iasl-online.org/advocacy/make-a-difference.html](http://www.iasl-online.org/advocacy/make-a-difference.html)) provides other state, national, and international data through *School Libraries Make a Difference to Student Achievement* and *School Libraries Work*.

**Library Media Program: Data Sources, The School Library Media Specialist** (<http://eduscapes.com/sms/program/data.html>): This source offers over two dozen links (some redundant from other recommended resources) but excellent content specifically selected for data generated.

**Library Research Service** ([www.lrs.org](http://www.lrs.org)) generates library statistics and research for library and education professionals, public officials, and the media. LRS reports and analyzes statistics on **school**, **public**, and **academic** libraries, and conducts studies on major library issues that are reported in the **Fast Facts** and **Closer Look** series. Topics of continuing interest to the LRS and its clients are the **impact of school librarians on student achievement** and the **changing library workforce**. More specifically for schools: national statistics, other state statistics (see #9 above), and impact studies are also available.

**Resources for School Librarians** ([www.sldirectory.com/libsf/resf/studies.html](http://www.sldirectory.com/libsf/resf/studies.html)) offers categories/links to best practices in school library standards, job descriptions, evaluation forms, school library mission statements, action plans for library improvement, conducting action research, annual library reports, and school library statistics.

Enjoy the recognition and bask in the positive feedback but most importantly...use the information your association has gathered for you. You deserve more and Texans want you to have more. Together we are making great strides toward getting it! ⭐

Julie Beth Todaro is dean of library services at Austin Community College and chairs TLA's Committee on Public Relations.

Join Julie Todaro for a live online chat on October 13, when she will expand on the article and provide replicable strategies for convincing others to speak out for school libraries using data. See [www.txla.org/CE/index.html](http://www.txla.org/CE/index.html) to register for this free continuing education event.

# Building Relationships and Influence That Will Help Your Library

BY SUSAN MANN

PHOTO BY  
ARTHUR MANN



LEFT TO RIGHT: Gloria Meraz (TLA Office), Patrick Heath (TLA President), Representative Jim Pitts, Susan Mann, and Pat Smith (TLA Office). Rep. Pitts served as keynote speaker for TLA's Annual Assembly luncheon in July. members at the Annual Assembly luncheon in July.

**I**f all politics are local (and indeed they are), then the real sphere of influence is in community organizations, local boards, hometown papers, and city or county events. So often, library supporters and librarians tend to think of power-brokering as something that happens in granite buildings and hearing rooms. Of course, those places are often where decisions are rendered but often NOT where decisions are made and certainly not where sympathies and loyalties are cast.

The place for that type of influencing building is at home in the local community. Here, library board and commission members, friends members, and librarians can carry and exert a tremendous amount of influence. We often don't see ourselves in this light; we tend to think of ourselves as subject to others' prioritization rather than those who can shape it. But, we can have that power; and it isn't far out of reach or impossible to gain.

Library supporters often focus much of their communications efforts on advocacy campaigns and public relations. Don't get me wrong; these activities are crucial and must absolutely be a part of all our library's efforts, but they are only one part of the equation. Librarians and library supporters must also take on the more personal and active role of relationship builder and influencer. We, as individuals, must be part of our own plan for increasing the power of our libraries. We must not only shape local opinion about libraries, we must become the "authority" of that local opinion. And, we can do so by *building relationships, building credibility, and sustaining both to help us turn that credibility into clout.*

## I. How to Build a Relationship

The trick is to build friendships slowly, deliberately, and strategically. Just like we wouldn't ask someone we just met for a ride to the auto shop or for a business loan, we shouldn't expect immediate support of library programs and initiatives. Of course, there will always be some elected officials who will want to help right off the bat; there will also be others who may remain fairly immobile despite repeated attention. The majority, however, are in that wonderful, "persuadable" middle. The more we reach out to them, get to know them, involve them, and let them see that we really do have a good pulse and respect of the community, the more fruitful those relationships can be.

To build a relationship with an elected official, begin laying the ground work before he or she is elected. Attend as many meet-the-candidate events as possible and prepare by creating an opening statement. (*Hi! I am Susan Mann, the library director at the public library.*) You'll want it to be simple and straightforward. It should be a statement that you can use for many years in all kinds of situations. I make my statement while I am looking them straight in the eye and offering a firm hand shake. I try to continue the interaction by asking if they have ever seen the local library, or which library they visited when they were growing up. You can always offer some other comment to break the ice and continue the conversation.

It's helpful to extend an invitation to your institution whenever possible. To be able to effectively continue the conversation, research the candidate before the meeting



and get to know the person's position on key issues. Most candidates and elected officials have websites that list their priorities or opinions on issues. Try to ascertain how they feel about libraries and their stance on educational issues. If you have trouble finding out their position, you can ask simply ask them. Open-ended questions will give you an indication as to their stance on the issues that are important to you and will let them spend time with you. Learn something of their background (again, often included in official websites) and find out things such as if they have ever served on a library board or school board, are they a member of the Friends of the Library or do they or their families have a library card. Find out if they or their spouse, parent, or mother-in-law, etc., are librarians or teachers.

Attend as many events as possible in an effort to build familiarity. Always try to stay afterwards and introduce yourself (remember to use your opening line every time you see them). By commenting on their speech, discussing a recent news article, or expressing how much you enjoyed the program, they'll recognize that you are current in local matters and are interested in what is going on. Tell them that you'd like to learn about their thoughts on libraries and the support they receive. Keep in mind, it's all about starting a dialog.

Hosting an event at your institution is always a good idea. Host a meet-the-candidate night and after the election, host a town hall meeting or a meet and greet for the newly elected official. If you host it in the library, then you know they will see and visit your facility.

Attend their fund raisers. Often, you can go even if you have not made a major contribution. Many times, they just like to have a good crowd to make people (or the press) think they have a lot of support (this will of course depend on the event). A hint is to get to know the campaign staff. This is very important. Staff will be able to guide you very effectively and can provide good information during the election. Plus, campaign staffers often end up on the payroll if the candidate gets elected. Be sure and include staff in your invitation to visit the library.

Once a candidate is elected, you have already met them and should know their stance on many issues from the meet-the-candidate events. You will still need to attend as many events as possible. It is more important than ever to seek them out when they are in your community. Go to the Lions or Rotary Club when you know they are going to be speaking. Make sure to use your opening line every time you see them. Use it even if you think they should remember you. It will keep them from feeling awkward if they cannot remember your name. They will appreciate you helping them out by stating your name and organization every time. Always introduce everyone with you or anyone who is standing around. Again, they will appreciate the help! Check their websites often for their event schedule.

## Case in Point

*You never know what an impact a small contribution can have on your candidate. I remember early on there was a freshman representative from a neighboring district that I made contact with through mutual friends. I went to the Texas Library Political Action Committee (TLPAC) and asked that a donation be made to him. Surprisingly, there was enough money at the time to make a very modest contribution.*

*In early January right after the session began, I called to make an appointment and, much to my surprise, the representative answered his own phone. I must admit I was taken aback but tried to quickly regain my composure. I asked what on earth he was doing answering his own phone. He quickly told me his office staff was off being trained on the computer system and that he had a new aide starting next week, thanks to the kind donation I was able to pass along to him from the "librarians."*

*Of course, there was no immediate reward for this contribution, but several years later, this freshman representative is now a state senator sitting on some very important committees such as Senate Finance and has been instrumental in preventing library programs from being cut and helping to secure additional funds in very tough economic climates.*

Make it a priority to schedule an appointment at least once, but preferably twice or more times, a year. A few months prior to the start of the legislative session or before a local budgeting cycle is always a good time to visit. Be prepared when you visit. Also, try to have a single one-page statement outlining specifically what you need or what you want the elected official to support. Explain what you do, how you help people, what your current needs are, and what those needs are going to be in the near future.

If an elected official or well-known local citizen is coming to your area, a good idea is to call and invite them to come by the library (before their speaking engagement, for instance). Let them see first hand what services you provide and what needs you have.

Offer to host an event such as a Chamber of Commerce after hours or a meet and greet with the elected official as the guest of honor. It is a great way to highlight your library with the community and your special guest. Make sure you offer personal invitations to influential members of your community (i.e., city council, school board, county officials) to ensure a good attendance. If you have a good crowd, the officials will always want to come back. They love to come to well attended events. Remember to serve good food and drinks, and you will get a positive reputation for "throwing good parties." It will be the place everyone will want to be. If you have a limited budget, this is a great way friends groups can help, and it is an absolutely excellent way of supporting the library.

## II. Build Your Own Credibility

Whether you are a librarian or library supporter, building your credibility is important and will help you accomplish any effort you wish for the library. I think it should be a standard “job duty” for any librarian (especially directors) and for members of boards, commissions, and friends’ groups. Here are some basic rules I live by.

When meeting officials, always *look professional, be nice, and be happy*. Appearances and demeanor not only matter – they will absolutely shape the impression you make (and consequently, the reception you get). When officials think of you, make sure it will be a nice thought: “he/she is always smiling,” “he/she’s so pleasant,” etc. Never appear to be shy. Shyness is often perceived as a weakness. Avoid being too “chatty” when you speak. Make sure you have something to say. Don’t be too pushy. You want them to like you, and you will want to see them again.

You must **VOTE!** Every elected official has a list or access to a list of every person in their district that voted in the last election. They may not know how you voted, but they know you voted!

Build your position in the community by becoming a “joiner.” Join the Lions or Rotary Club, become a chamber member, or be a member of whatever the “it” club or organization is in your community. Join and volunteer for community service organizations. And, if at all possible, serve as an officer of the organization. That shows others – especially decision-makers – that you are a leader in your community with people who support you. Be a willing speaker for programs and events. Don’t forget to toot your own horn and share your successes with these organizations. The number one priority is to be sure that you are a well-respected member of your community. That way, when you visit someone in power, they will recognize your power as someone with a voice in the community.

Make sure you build your institutions credibility in the community. Publicity! Publicity! Publicity! Have articles and pictures in the newspaper as often as possible. You (as a librarian, friends’ group member, or board member) can write guest editorials or columns. Papers love to get local input – and they use it. This is incredibly effective and easy way to increase the library’s visibility. Politicians or their staff read all the community newspapers from their district so they know when you are featured in the paper.

Make your library impressive! Most people don’t know how to judge if you have a good collection, only if you have what they want. That is why customer service is extremely important. It is critical that your library make a good first impression. People notice things as they drive by. They know if people are going in and out of the building and if it looks nice and inviting. They notice and remember if

staff members are friendly and helpful. You want to impress people with what they see!

## III. Sustain your relationship or influence with your elected official

Of course, developing a relationship is only the beginning. Sustaining a relationship is as important and, in some ways, more so. The longer and richer a relationship develops, the more benefit your library will likely see. The more trust and familiarity decision-makers have in you, the more they will listen and the more they will act. As with any relationship, the fundamentals apply: always be honest and ethical; never threaten; and never embarrass them, especially in front of others. In fact, do the opposite: help them look good, and you will have a loyal friend who will do the same for you.

### **Introduce your elected officials and administrators to everyone.**

Be the one they depend on to introduce them to new community leaders. “This is our new school superintendent, this is the new mayor, or this is our new city manager” (this will impress both the elected official and your new boss). You can be the first person to congratulate a newly-elected official and say that you are planning on setting up a meeting with Rep. X and would they like to join you. Be the one to make important introductions. This role is yours for the taking!

### **Be their informant.**

Call them with local news that they will need to know when they make their next visit to your community. “There is a new school superintendent and her name is... We have a new city manager who comes from ... The city has just approved plans for a new...” And when possible, give them advance notice of library activities and local events, topics. Elected officials love to be “in the lead” of news.

### **Be a resource and be their friend.**

As someone affiliated with libraries, you are in a terrific position to help them with information. You can compile and send them articles you think might be of interest. Help staff if they have any research question. If elected officials know that you know your community, they will listen to you.

### **Keep your message consistent and to the point.**

If you respect their time, elected officials are more likely to keep visiting with you. Always speak the same message: libraries, libraries, libraries! Avoid talking to them about several topics.

### **Be cheerful always!**

They will never be happy to see you if you are always complaining. Be friendly and cheerful when you are with them *even if* they are telling you something you don’t want to hear. You want elected officials to be honest with

you and not just tell you what you want to hear. To ensure this, you must not react negatively when you don't get your way. A negative reaction on your part could destroy your relationship with the official in seconds. You can tell them that this is not what you had hoped to hear, but you appreciate them doing their best to help you. It may be incredibly difficult, but you must be pleasant and understanding, because there will be another day.

## All in an Ongoing Day's Work

Building and keeping a trusted relationship with an elected official is not easy or fast. It is, however, doable. To me, having a plan for building and maintaining influential relationships is as important as having a collections policy – and it works pretty much the same way. It takes time and commitment, but tenacity can pay big rewards for libraries. You don't have to be Norma Rae—just a smart, credible, and committed library supporter or librarian. You'll not only strengthen your library, but you'll find that you have gained much for yourself as well – a truly affirming sense of your own power to serve your library, community, and elected officials. ✪



Susan Mann is director of the Hillsboro City Library.

Join Susan for a live webinar on October 20 to continue the discussion on building relationships with elected officials. The webinar will also cover "making a good friendship count," with topics related to dealing with controversial or delicate matters; using relationships to support PR, fundraising, and grant-writing; reviewing real examples of when things go right and when things go wrong; and interacting with Susan Mann (Q&A). See [www.txla.org/CE/index.html](http://www.txla.org/CE/index.html) to register for this free continuing education event.

# “Big” Challenges (and Opportunities) for Academic Libraries

BY ROBERT WALTON

Every reader of an opinion piece benefits from a bit of context. Mine involves experience in libraries and higher education, nuggets of wisdom and tested strategies gleaned from empirical studies and research, and (of course) a healthy amount of opinions formed as a reaction to other opinions ranting against change, ranting for change.

After having graduated from and served as a lecturer for years at the School of Library and Information Science (the old name from the old days) at the University of Texas at Austin; and, having spent 15 years in the profession, as a documents librarian, then technology librarian, then library consultant, then a librarian vendor of technology to libraries; and, then spending 12 years as a senior executive in two focused library technology companies, including face time at over 50 ALA national meetings and the permanent impressions that comes from visiting literally hundreds of academic and public libraries in the United States and abroad, I professionally jumped ship.

My first stop was eight years as the often “dreaded” chief financial and administrative officer for a private liberal arts college in the Midwest. Then came a shift to the west coast where I now serve as CEO of a consortium of prestigious private and nationally ranked colleges and graduate schools called The Claremont Colleges. I have now lived, for more than a decade, exclusively in the world of senior college and university administrators. And, once again, I am directly responsible for managing a library director which means, of course, I am back in libraries. My expectations (like my perspectives) now though, while very sympathetic to libraries, have shifted.

## *Key Issues Facing Academic Libraries*

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) remains a central authoritative resource of leading research on issues, challenges, and strategies for academic libraries. Looking over some of the field’s literature, I focused on two short and “to the point” articles that exemplify, I believe, central concerns for academic libraries and those of academic administrators. A 2002 article by W. Lee Hisle<sup>1</sup> and an

ACRL Survey Results summary update<sup>2</sup> published in 2007 both tend to group findings in similar, clear areas.

The highest level conclusions are clustered below:

1. “Creating and managing physical and virtual spaces and services as environments for discovery” (ACRL) and “Role of library in academic enterprise” (Hisle).
2. “Increasing recognition of the value of libraries and librarians by leaders in higher education and campus decision-making” (ACRL) and “Recruitment, education, and retention of librarians” (Hisle).
3. “Keeping up with information technology, including practice, theory, and policy” (ACRL) and “Impact of information technology on library services” (Hisle).

There are many more smaller and useful findings, but in an attempt to keep my eyes on the ball, these three issues do reflect some of the best thinking about key issues of academic librarianship and align with my personal experiences in higher education administration. The difference is, the same questions can be stated equally well with the optimistic or pessimistic voice depending on whom you are talking to – librarian or administrator.

## *Looking at These Issues More Directly and Bluntly in the Context of Competing Demands*

Higher education has become very tough and competitive. Change is faster and more intense, and dramatic, and even harsh in some isolated areas of the college or university landscape. Where faculty of old in the liberal arts, as the anecdote typically is told, frequently could be found in their offices in the evenings for informal conversation with students or at their home hosting students for dinner, the liberal arts world of today is as competitive as every other. And, the lives and personal demands of faculty are (as with every other professional group) complex – filled with two-income families



balancing professional and personal lives, commuting to and from the campus, and spending much of their non-classroom time on research as part of the continuing and growing publications race historically more commonly associated with the R1-type research institutions. As an administrator, it's interesting to me to note how departments, including the library, are quick to account for the changing living and working circumstances of students but rarely acknowledge – or attempt to address – the changing environment for faculty.

During the 90's, the college and university accreditation review process found a new religion called assessment, wherein everything about the academic mission has to be shown to directly relate to measureable outcomes from the undergraduate experience at every accredited institution. During the last two years, the fiscal melt-down in the economy has hit most colleges and universities very hard, whether through pressure on tuition rates or increased demand for access by students without large financial means. Highly endowed private institutions must now struggle to fund existing obligations from smaller investment payouts for operations and growing demands for financial aid (not to mention the pressure to stop using higher student debt to fund education). In the dozens of senior administrator level meetings that I participate in each week, the library simply doesn't enter the conversation much, not out of a lack of caring about or valuing the role of the library but as a reality of the other loud institutional voices starving for or demanding attention.

And, when the subject does turn to libraries, the news may not always be encouraging, and sometimes, the news can be downright scary. At the annual meeting of the Association of Governing Boards held in Phoenix a few years ago, a two-hour plenary session featured five presidents of all types and sizes of academic institution – a statewide system chancellor, a state university president, a private university president, a liberal arts college president, and a regional community college executive. All had retired within the prior year and were clearly free to speak candidly, even more candidly than presidents usually do anyway, about what they witnessed and learned from their respective 30 years of higher education experience. The audience of 700+ higher education presidents and regent or board chairs listened to a diverse set of opinions on a wide range of education issues, until they came to the subject of libraries. The panel acknowledged that the one thing that they all agreed about – and the only unanimous advisory of the day – was that no university or college should build a new library and as collections shifted to electronic format and that as, existing library facilities were remodeled and/or repurposed, the library should always have a coffee bar. For the one or two of us who had formal library backgrounds in the audience of hundreds, the warm acceptance and embrace of this view by the group was, well, sobering.

So where do we go from here. Obviously libraries have been and should continue to be a vital part of the strongest higher education system in the world. What are the opportunities in front of us?

1. *What is the plan leading up to 2025?* While it may somewhat of a ridiculous discussion to talk about the library totally “going away,” I have heard various versions of philosophical speculation along those lines by students, faculty, and administrators who are extremely sensible and credible people. The library as a symbol of a quality academic institution and as one of the keys of a strong academic experience provides a shroud of protection institutionally that few would deny. That said, what the word “library” will come to represent in the next two decades is much more of a question. The key challenge for academic library leaders is not to get stuck in the tar pit of debating whether libraries will exist but to begin sculpting and then articulating a vision of what they will look like in the future. Library leaders must identify a path of how the library will evolve toward that goal and – here's an essential component – how moving toward that goal will help the broader institution move towards its goals.

The incorrect path (and the path of least resistance) is to align with the “loud” faculty who want the library to simply remain as it has always been or to try to persuade administrators that nothing major needs to change. That short-sighted tactic will likely be the greatest threat to the long term viability of the library in those institutions as academic programs aggressively strive to adapt to the quickly-evolving demands in the higher education environment. Faculty politics aside, if the library is not viewed by the administration as a leader and, in fact, a change agent – *a partner* – in the evolution of the academic life of the institution itself, political capital and financial investment potential will likely be threatened.

One approach to thinking as an academic leader I witnessed as an effective method at a west coast university was the senior librarian who actually prepared a graphical diagram of how the collection will possibly evolve, physically, during the coming 15 year period. Despite making some faculty angry and dealing with isolated library staff members who were not on board, the library took the entrepreneurial stance of developing a collection development landscape approach which aggressively embraced electronic content and plotted out the conversion of space traditional reserved for monographs and print serials to new user interaction programming spaces and presented it in a way that was clear and exciting for administrators.

While I imagine that every academic library has a formal written plan and collection development approach taking into account the changing dynamics of electronic and paper content (and if any library doesn't, it should), I ask, is that policy forward-reaching – i.e., not just reacting to changes in publication formats but consciously formulating a plan to maximize institutional (and that refers to the whole university or college) assets and potential? And, is that plan being developed according to broader institutional goals and is it being shared, synthesized, and “marketed” to academic administrators in such a way to demonstrate that the library leader both “gets it” and can be part of the larger conversation

about the future evolution of the institution's overall academic program and curriculum?

2. ***Is a great academic library based primarily in a great collection?*** Obviously, yes, but that approach alone is a risky strategy. Whereas in my early career all of the great academic libraries I had the pleasure to use were based largely upon the strength of decades of building fantastic and deep subject collections and refined (and frequently customized and labor intensive "home grown") access tools, the paradigm shift to electronic access and the availability of both electronic licensing of extremely rich full-text collections and the reduced cost and availability of resource sharing systems has threatened any institutional academic library culture based solely or largely on collection strength. Bottom line, access to resources will always be important but who owns them is not that important. The academic library model of the future is clearly focused on the ability of the library staff to shift aspects of their roles and more intensively focus on alignments and partnerships with faculty in supporting the curriculum. There is nothing at all new about this except the need to expand and intensify the focus on this service model as equal to or perhaps even more important than collection building and to get the staff to enthusiastically embrace this approach to service expansion.

3. ***Do the traditional library tools still matter? Isn't it mostly about the single Google type search box?*** Given the reality of constrained library budgets and the need to dedicate (and likely reassign) increasing proportions of library staff and financial resources to new or expanded direct service delivery models, are we as librarians still clinging to procedures and techniques that may not add value? Is there real value to customizing local subject headings, for example, or otherwise enhancing metadata when most users really have moved on to the single search approach now referred to as the Google box? Do these investments actually provide meaningful value to your faculty and students? Increasingly, investments in these long-standing practices and methods are legitimately under scrutiny. The stories about the importance of students physically traveling to the library and running the maze through the traditional bibliographic instruction protocol is somewhat comparable to the stories of my elders gaining, as youth, character during those long multi-mile walks in the snow. Note, as an administrator, I'm not asking you about the depth of your search protocols; I'm asking you if the library's tools are helping students and faculty conduct successful research that helps them learn and meet course/professional requirements in the most efficient and time-saving manner.

4. ***The big elephant in the room – what is the future of librarianship?*** Will the explosion of the shifting landscape of electronic content, e-books, distance education, etc. eventually make the academic librarian less relevant? In the near term, certainly not. In the intermediate term, there will be increasing questions about where libraries really add value to the academic program. In the long term, realistic threats exist to the traditional library image and service models as generational shifts in the way faculty and students

value and approach information retrieval and use. Similar to the overall shift of emphasis of the accreditation process to move to academic assessment (outcomes) models as a key measure of institutional value to students, libraries need to proactively and aggressively expand and build better assessment models of the value libraries that directly link to student achieve and faculty research. Libraries remain vulnerable as long as the key assessment measures are based on mostly input and correlation data, such as spending per FTE or collection size per FTE.

At a recent meeting of presidents on the west coast, I voyeuristically observed an informal discussion of where the academic library of the future was heading. The conclusion was that books, except entertainment reading, were eventually going away and the library would increasingly be a study location, with coffee, and group meeting space. Lots of nods and general agreement, with conflict more about when this would happen, not if this would happen. I think that assessment is simple-minded thinking and does not reflect those activist academic libraries showing vision, close relationships with faculty and students, and places where change and experimentation are the norm not the enemy. It is an accurate assessment and possible outcome, however, for many academic libraries that are not nimble and adaptive to the significant changes going on in higher education.

There are many academic library leaders who are taking on change, embracing entrepreneurship, and who have a tolerance for failure and recovery as they experiment. Those are the librarians I am looking for. Those are the leaders most quality academic institutions are ready to add to the senior team.

Robert A. Walton is the chief executive officer  
for The Claremont University Consortium.

## Notes

1. W. Lee Hisle, "Top Issues Facing Academic Libraries: A Report of the Focus on the Future Task Force," *C&RL News*, Vol. 63 No. 10, November 2002.
2. ACRL 2007 National Conference Attendees Survey based on an update of "Charting Our Future: ACRL Strategic Plan 2020," ACRL. ★

Join Robert Walton in a webinar in which he'll further discuss the current operating environment for academic libraries and expands on two key questions: 1) how to make academic libraries more credible to administrators?, and 2) what does the administrator see as the future role of library staff? A reactor panel of academic librarians will join Walton for a lively discussion. The webinar will take place on October 27. See [www.txla.org/CE/index.html](http://www.txla.org/CE/index.html) to register for this free continuing education event.

# What's on Your Mind?

## Discussions & Opinions from the Field

### "Free Library" or "Freeloader"

BY STEVE BROWN

There was a time when many public libraries advertised their services as "free." Some libraries even put the word in their name. I always loved getting the chance to visit "The Free Library of Philadelphia." Closer to home, we have the Baylor County Free Library in Seymour. I haven't been to visit it yet. Perhaps someday.

Most people realize that library services are not free, no more than streets are free, or police protection is free. All these governmental services are free only in the sense that you don't pay at the time of use. They are "tax-payer supported," meaning that they are supported by the taxes paid by residents of the community.

Nevertheless, some people seem to think there really is a free lunch. It is fashionable in some circles to be against government and against paying taxes. Some folks think themselves clever if they manage to avoid paying taxes by using the "free" services paid for by others. Across the state and the nation, you can find whole communities who choose not to help shoulder the cost of running a library but seem quite happy to use the services paid for by their neighbors.

I thought it would be instructive to look at the real costs these freeloaders impose on themselves. I will use for a model a real Texas community, but as they used to say on TV's *Dragnet*, the names have been changed to protect the innocent.

Community X is one of the cities in Texas that does not have a public library. The suburban community has grown rapidly, populated by commuters from the inner city. Though some in the community have worked for years to create a library, their efforts have been frustrated by others who are quite pleased to drive to neighboring cities which maintain an open door and welcome all visitors.

What does it cost these people to avoid paying for their library service with their taxes?

If a library user from Community X visits the library once a month, he or she will make 12 trips a year. Because the two cities are relatively close together, the trip is only 4.5 miles farther than it would be if the city had its own library. The round-trip distance is about 9 miles farther and, in good traffic conditions, takes about 25 minutes extra out of the day.

If we base our analysis of costs on only two factors, the extra mileage and the time spent, we can calculate the costs with only a few assumptions.

Assume that the real cost of driving extra distance can be calculated using the IRS standard mileage rate, which is currently 55¢ per mile for 2009.

Assume that time has a value and that it is fair to calculate the extra time required to make the trip at the federal hourly minimum wage, which just rose to \$7.25 per hour.

The marginal cost of each trip is the sum of the extra mileage - \$4.95 (or 9 miles @ \$0.55 per mile) - plus the extra time spent - \$3.02 (or 25 minutes @ \$7.25 per hour).

That equals an extra \$7.97 per trip to the library. Our tax rebel makes 12 trips to the library in a year, so he (or she) incurs an additional cost of 12 X \$7.97 over the course of a year. That's \$95.64 a year to avoid supporting a local library through taxes.

In 2008, the most recent year for which statewide figures are available, the average cost per capita for public libraries statewide was \$22.05. The highest cost per capita among all of the 52 libraries serving populations in the size range of Community X was \$39.89.

Our freeloader cost himself \$95.64. Some bargain!

Steve Brown is director of the North Richland Hills Public Library.

*To find out what other librarians and library supporters are talking about, visit TLA's Facebook page. ☛*

# *Dozens of Teens/Tweens in the Library at One Time? Why Not?*

BY SIAN BRANNON

**A**lmost a decade ago, someone at the library had the idea of constructing a new branch on the north side of town. This was a great idea, considering the central area and southern side of town were already served by two high-traffic libraries. Now, citizens residing up north, as well as the north-side-of-the-county residents, would have a location closer to them, and every library patron could benefit from a larger library with an expanded collection. After looking for a site, a (non-library) city employee suggested a patch of land where a grocery store had closed down. The lot was huge, the building would require just a few changes, the space was adjacent to a junior high school, and it was one block from an elementary school. There was a city bus stop immediately in front, and one of the high school buses dropped off at the corner of the lot. It seemed like a godsend – automatic patrons!

**Some days, I wish I could travel back in time and smack this city employee upside the head.**

At 3:00 pm, the elementary school releases its children, and they start to trickle into the library around 3:10. The middle school kids are released at 3:35 pm, and they burst through the front doors at 3:45. This after-school deluge of around 60 or more non-chaperoned children presents a number of problems for the library. These “issues” include an increased volume level, messy areas left after sneaking in food, roaming packs of youth, and a two-hour wait for a computer with Internet access. The children head here, to a “safe place,” to wait for the parents to come pick them up; occasionally, youth are left here after hours! With a guideline in our behavior policy stating that children age eight and over are allowed in the library without parents, it’s kind of like we brought this on ourselves...

Our regular patrons notice the disruption; quite a few have stated that they plan their visits so as not to be here after school. The library regularly received complaints, both formal and informal, from adults, homeschooling parents, Internet users, and staff about language, noise levels, fights, and attitudes. The teens spread out across this large former grocery store and try to wind down after school. Assessing these circumstances, we knew we needed to do something immediately.

The first change we made was to convert our Internet Lab into a permanent “adults-only” area. We still had computers on the service floor that had Internet connections for the kids to use, but we wanted a quiet, kid-free zone. We toyed with the idea of hiring a security guard, but after a few trial runs with off-duty police officers, that idea was abandoned for a number of reasons. Not only did it cost a good deal of money, but it did not seem to deter the behavior of the youth. They quieted down when the police were nearby, but this remained disruptive, and sometimes more surly, after the officer moved on.

Next, we blocked off a few separated reading areas during the high-youth time. These areas had become make-out rooms and hiding places for the youth. Also, the visibility into the reading areas is low, and the size of the rooms seemed to amplify every little noise. From now on, they would be off-limits to all patrons for three hours immediately after school, from 3 – 6 p.m.

The library made efforts to cooperate with the schools nearby, in hopes of alleviating the daily problems we faced. After talking with the principal of the middle school, the branch manager drafted a letter that was sent home to each student’s parents. The letter explained the rules at the library and the possible results of misbehavior. Staff also hosted an “Open House” for the teachers. It was an opportunity for them to learn about the resources we had to offer, as well as an opportunity for us to develop relationships with the teachers, who could possibly help forestall possible future behavior issues. The smartest investment we made was to purchase a yearbook from the middle school. Now we had names to go with faces!

The middle school adjacent to the library wasn’t the only source of our young patrons. All public services staff met with the principal of the “alternative” high school whose bus let students off in the library parking lot. He helped us firm up our responses to disorderly youth and encouraged us to contact him regarding any problem students that we encountered. He was very helpful in reminding us about the backgrounds of some of the students and how our behavior needed to adapt for these more disruptive teens.



Staff also initiated a couple of different programming ideas to help. The first of these was called “A.S.K.” for “After School Kids.” The basis of this program was providing instructional crafts, creative drama, book-talks, and music lessons during the hour immediately after school in our youth program room. These programs were well-attended at first, but after a few weeks, it became hard to keep the interest of the teens for longer than 15 minutes. The programs also tied up one or more staff in an area separate from the bulk of the teen activity. Other programs we tried and discontinued included Dungeons and Dragons, regular movies, and cooperative programs with a local university. All were cancelled due to low attendance. The teens seem to want to be in the library, but not to have to “do” any prescribed activity.

After many failed attempts, we realized that we were not in competition with the Parks and Recreation Department. It wasn't our responsibility to create a form of after-school daycare for these patrons. They had the right to be here and the right to engage in whatever activities they wanted as long as they followed the rules. Although some staff might disagree, we could not force all youth into the program room after school. So what could we do? Get to know them. Public services staff made an effort to get to know students' names, figure out who hung out with whom, and overall, build a trusting rapport with the youth. We did maintain a once-

a-week regular program of video games on Fridays, because that seemed to be the only activity that held their attention besides being on the Internet.

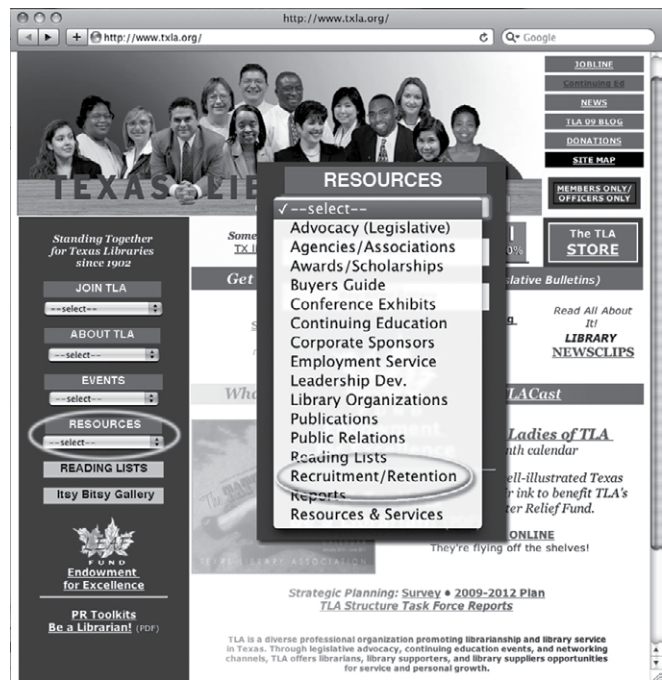
The most successful thing that we have done so far in dealing with the kids is to have “ALL HANDS ON DECK” during the immediate after-school hours. Starting at 3:30 p.m., all staff are expected to go to the public floor and establish themselves in different areas of the library. During this time, we shelve, straighten, shelf-read, and surreptitiously supervise the youth. Not only does this help keep the library looking great, but it also provides a consistent presence of staff around the youth. All levels of staff are empowered to deal with behavior situations as they occur. Certain procedures, however, such as contacting parents or police, are to be handed off to the librarian-in-charge.

These are the tactics that we have tried over the course of the past two years. We have just started our third year of after-school issues and are much happier for it. Fewer staff are pulling their hair out, and fewer patrons are issuing complaints. ✪

Sian Brannon is technical services manager  
at Denton Public Library.

# Tools for Recruiting and Keeping Librarians

BY LORI HUGHES, STEVEN RING, LEROY ROBINSON, AND BETH RYKER STEINER



The Texas Library Association’s Professional Recruitment and Retention Committee is excited to introduce the following resources for recruiting and retaining librarians: *Recruitment Toolkit for Texas Librarians*; *Mentoring Program for Future Librarians*; and *Ideas for Librarian Recognition*. We have provided a link titled Recruitment/Retention on the Resources drop down menu of the TLA home page (see screen shot at right).

You can also go directly to the Professional Recruitment and Retention Committee webpage at [www.txla.org/groups/committees/PRR/index.html](http://www.txla.org/groups/committees/PRR/index.html) and choose “Ideas for Librarian Retention and Recognition” under the resources section.

## *Recruitment Toolkit for Texas Librarians*

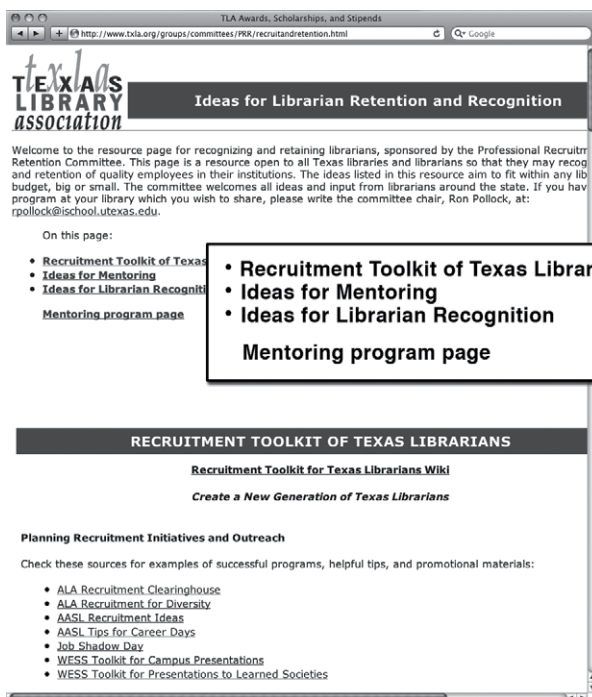
We all have opportunities to coach someone who expresses an interest in pursuing a library career. That person may be a patron or a student that we meet in the library, a library employee, or someone that we meet outside our workplace. There are many valuable resources out there to help and perhaps you have developed your own strategies to bring them together. If you have, you know the value of packaging them so you can share them easily. The *Recruitment Toolkit for Texas Librarians* is intended to help each of us make the most of these opportunities by bringing together in one place a variety of time-saving recruitment resources that are already available from national and state library associations.

The toolkit is organized to take you and prospective librarians through the learning process. The first section includes resources to help librarians plan formal recruitment initiatives and outreach, while the second focuses on career information that can be used in both formal and informal recruitment. The third provides resources for you to use to help prospective librarians make informed choices about their education and preparation for a library career.

We hope that what we have included in the toolkit lays the foundation and that you will help by offering feedback and suggesting additional items that have been helpful to you.

## *Mentoring Program for Future Librarians*

Our mentoring program matches Texas residents considering a career in librarianship with experienced librarians who can answer questions about information careers and suggest relevant opportunities for career development and education. It is based on the “school-to-career” model of mentoring<sup>1</sup>,



We invite you to use and share them with others as we go about the business of building the profession. Here is a sneak peak.

which is traditionally used to help middle school and high school students explore a career direction.

The “school-to-career” model typically includes activities such as:

**Job shadowing** – an opportunity to visit with a mentor in the workplace as he or she goes through a typical day on the job

**Career exploration** – a long-term mentoring relationship that offers a more in-depth introduction to a profession and its work

**Education mentoring** – an opportunity to share information about education, internships, and other steps to a new career

**Job skills mentoring** – an introduction to job skills, such as how to prepare a resumé, time management, or networking

The mentoring program website has a list of suggested activities that encourages participants to use the *Recruitment Toolkit* as a starting point for discussion about career exploration. We also encourage mentors to share their own stories, help prospective librarians develop appropriate goals and objectives, provide an opportunity for job shadowing, and encourage attendance at local conferences.

This program is distinct from many established mentoring programs, which are often designed to help current library school students learn from the experiences of practicing librarians or to help practicing librarians become active leaders in their professional organizations. An important aspect of this program is that, through the application process, it matches mentors and mentees based on experience and expertise, goals, and type of library to foster a mutually beneficial relationship. It includes information about how to participate, guidance for completing the mentor or mentee application, tips for mentors and mentees, and suggested activities.

### *Ideas for Librarian Recognition: Retaining Professional Staff with Little or No Money*

As budgets tighten, service demands increase, and hiring freezes affect a greater number of libraries, it becomes crucial to libraries of all types to retain valued staff members. The need to do this with little or no funding is challenging but quite possible with some creative thinking and collective brainstorming. Borrowing ideas from other librarians who have faced similar challenges and from managers in other professions can help broaden the tools library directors and supervisors can use in keeping valued staff when budgets are tight.

The literature on how to motivate continued high performance is extensive and crosses all career fields, but it can be summarized briefly in three overlapping areas.

#### **Building morale.**

Our site suggests several ideas, chosen to illustrate the wide variety of job aspects that can be involved and to stimulate a creative mindset for the manager in selecting and creating a low-cost idea for building morale.

#### **Providing recognition for good performance.**

Recognition doesn't need to be expensive, but can be as simple (and as cheap) as an email of congratulations and thanks from a supervisor which is then recognized or posted so others can see.

#### **Expanding or enriching the job of a good employee.**

Increase employee job satisfaction by providing opportunities to learn new skills. The key is to match the opportunity with an area of personal interest to the employee and then provide the support to make it successful experience.

It is important to realize when considering these ideas that the factor that motivates a particular employee may be very different from the factors that help retain another employee, even in the same department. Decisions should be made on an individual basis when deciding what might be the most effective way to entice a valued employee to remain on the job. However, managers must also recognize the effect of any particular action on the morale and job satisfaction of other employees in the unit or division.

### *Conclusion*

We hope these tools will help library directors and supervisors find and keep valuable staff members during these tough times, and we look forward to collaborating with you. We also welcome feedback. Please send comments to the Professional Recruitment and Retention Committee at [prer@txla.org](mailto:prer@txla.org).

Lori Hughes is director of administrative services at the Alkek Library - Texas State University. Steven Ring is electronic resources librarian at the University of Houston – Downtown. LeRoy Robinson is branch manager at Walter Branch Library - Houston Public Library. Beth Ryker Steiner is library director at Moore Memorial Public Library.

### *Notes*

1 MENTOR/National Mentoring Program, *How to build a successful mentoring program using the Elements of Effective Practice*™, [www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring\\_415.pdf](http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_415.pdf) (accessed July 22, 2009). ★

# A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN: Sometimes-Overlooked Considerations for a Special Collection in the Smaller Academic Library

BY RICHARD MCKAY

With skillful management, an academic library with a book collection of under 50 thousand volumes can develop a special collection that gets used by library clients and draws attention from administrators. In addition to the core work of planning for a strong special collection, such as determining a good area for emphasis, library staff can increase the potential for success by focusing also on some areas that many not seem all that essential at first.

## *Location, Location, Location*

The special collection's viability relies on the good will, and at times the active cooperation, of a variety of the school's upper administrators, including the administrator in charge of facilities use. Their expectations, and, in some cases, preconceptions, should figure in the library staff's planning for the special collection as much as should collection development and the collection's impact on students.

If possible, the collection should be housed in a room that is physically separate from the circulating and reference collections. Ideally, the room should be dedicated exclusively to the special collection. Few conditions, including the quality of the collection itself, define it as effectively in the minds of its users as the collection's physical presence. A useful small collection can fit into a space of even a few hundred square feet. While it may be tempting to place the special collection with non-collection items, like a photocopier, fax machine, computer infrastructure like routers or servers, or to let the room serve as long-term storage for office supplies or seasonal decorations, these conditions not only send a not-too-subtle message about the value of the collection, they also tend to discourage use.

On a campus where space allocation decisions affecting vital service centers are apt to be swayed by strong and persuasive personalities, consider that, in planning for building a new room for a special collection, it may be to the library's eventual advantage for the director to find out from the school's construction office the minimum space in square feet considered necessary for a classroom, and have the special collection room to be smaller than this minimum. This simple expedient may save the library staff the future disappointment of mainstreaming the special collection into the circulating collection to accommodate a classroom in what used to be the special collection room.

## *Access*

A locked special collection room tells patrons that the staff maintaining it is interested in keeping them out of it. If at all possible, the room should be open and accessible. The library staff may nevertheless choose to keep the room locked to maintain control of the collection's materials or to minimize unsupervised use. In this case, the room's use policy should be visibly posted and should encourage use by detailing how students can gain access. Even if kept locked, the room may still enjoy significant use as a private study area for small study groups or persons who might not be using the special collection's books at all. If part of the plan for the collection is to keep it secured this way, then clear provisions must be made for use. Why would administrators want to section off valuable space without a tradeoff? The special collection room might also serve as a site for non-library functions. Such a provision will certainly offer benefit to administrators and faculty.

The library's staff should make it their practice not to transfer subject-relevant books from the general collection into the special collection. Students will appreciate being able to check those books out if books in the special collection do not circulate. Also, this rule will make it difficult for a thrifty administrator to argue against the school's paying for extra book spending on the special collection by suggesting that the library staff simply reassign books to it from the circulating collection. This practice may also ensure that the special collection's books are the latest editions available, and that they are in good condition.

## *Subject Areas*

With so much content – both books and subscription journals – available online, use the special collection venue for resources and materials that are best gathered and used in physical format. Take advantage of the physical presence by consolidating materials that may be the most difficult to procure or use through other channels.

To help ensure its longevity, the collection should pertain to a key academic subject or one of great interest to the institution and one for which monographs or physically published resources retain their usefulness over the years. History or literature may sometimes be better choices than vocational and technical subjects for physical special collections. These areas of study are familiar parts of the core curriculum, and the scope of their

scholarship is wide and added to constantly. Permanent faculty members in those departments are plentiful and may welcome a chance to work with the library staff on a special collection.

This advice notwithstanding, library staff in a school with an unusually strong investment in a non-academic department like one of the allied health fields or maybe the culinary arts might consider choosing a special collection in, for instance, the history of a particular health care field, or some aspect of the preparation of food, such as ethnic or regional cuisine. A collection of cookbooks and books about food, for example, would make a fascinating special collection, perhaps all the more so because the field may be neglected by academics as ephemeral, or dismissed as inappropriate in a library serving undergraduates.

This collection might be a catalyst in bringing to the library a group of vocational students that otherwise might have little incentive to use it. This single benefit could also easily be the factor that wins the collection the support of a reluctant campus administration. With careful selection, material in a vocational collection could also be used by composition or history students researching the history or perhaps the folklore or sociology surrounding those topics.

### *Documenting Value*

A special collection should be developed not for its own sake but for the value it can bring to the institution. Keep track of the use of the special collection, as it will certainly be needed to validate the support given for the collection and to justify any needed funding increase. You might, for example, ask faculty to make assignments necessitating use of the special collection and document that value. As with any library program or service, the purpose of the endeavor is to support student learning and faculty work. Tracking its use and documenting the role it plays in coursework and student attainment are critical elements for any aspect of an academic library, including a new special collection.

The additional value a special collection can bring, beyond its academic support, is increased visibility for the library and as a demonstration of how the library continually evolves – sometimes using new tools such as technology services, and sometime using longstanding practices, such as developing special collections. While the informational content of such collections may be (and should be to the extent possible) made available electronically, the process of uniting physical resources in a shared physical space is still a powerful and useful draw for students and administrators. ☘

Richard McKay is director of San Jacinto College South Campus Library in Houston.

# Texas Book Festival



## The 2009 Texas Book Festival

– [www.texasbookfestival.org](http://www.texasbookfestival.org) –

takes place on OCTOBER 31 and NOVEMBER 1 on the State Capitol grounds in Austin. The free two-day event showcases more than 200 of the nation's most accomplished authors. Visitors can find something for every palate with interactive author panels, children's readings, cooking demonstrations, local foods, and music.

The 2009 Texas Book Festival (TBF) commemorates 14 years of celebrating authors and their contributions to the culture of literacy, ideas, and imagination. Founded in 1995 by Laura Bush and a group of interested volunteers, the Festival is held every year on the grounds of the Texas Capitol. It features readings and discussions from renowned Texas and national authors. With the help of the Austin community, a statewide advisory committee and hundreds of volunteers, the organization has grown each year. In addition to being one of the most prestigious literary festivals in the nation, TBF develops and manages year-round programs that foster literacy statewide.

### TBF FACTS:

- *has surpassed the \$2.3 million mark in total grant awards to Texas public libraries since its inception through its Library Grant Program*
- *has reached more than 30,000 children in economically disadvantaged Central and South Texas Schools, providing for many the first book they've ever owned through its Reading Rock Star Program*
- *with the University Interscholastic League sponsors a Middle and High School Fiction writing contest*
- *entertains and informs approximately 30,000 festival attendees, adults and children alike, free of cost, with author events, engaging discussions, local foods and music*

# Montserrat Retreat Center to Welcome TALL Texans again in 2010

BY TED WANNER

## *The beautiful setting of Montserrat*

awaits the next class of the TALL Texans. The online application forms for the next TALL Texans Leadership Development Institute will open on October 1, 2009. Applications must be completed by January 8, 2010.

The Institute will be returning to the Montserrat Jesuit Retreat House in Lake Dallas on June 13 through 17, 2010, for only the second year in a row. The program has been teaching enhanced leadership and management skills since 1994.

The Montserrat retreat center is primarily a faith-based institution, but it also welcomes secular programs such as TALL Texans. The facility features large, well-equipped meeting rooms, several areas for small break-out sessions, and a large dining hall. The extensive grounds on the shores of Lake Lewisville include many walking trails. Buildings are ADA-compliant, and accommodations are available for special dietary needs.

Participants of the 2010 Institute will stay in a newer dormitory adjacent to the meeting hall. They will have the option of getting a single room for an additional fee.

The Leadership Development Institute is intended for mid-career librarians with at least five years of experience in a library and for library supporters with at least three years of experience working with libraries. The five-day seminar grooms leaders for better service to their local libraries, their communities, and librarianship in general.

The intensive curriculum covers professional issues from the latest scholarly publications on leadership, taught in a practical and immediately applicable way by nationally-known consultant Maureen Sullivan, who also helped found the ACRL / Harvard Leadership Institute, and her husband, Jack Siggins, director of the Gelman Library System at George Washington University.

Six mentors, all veteran leaders from Texas libraries, provide additional instruction and support. The mentors for 2010 are tentatively scheduled to be 2010 TLA President Maribel Castro of Saint John's School in Houston; the 2010 president elect (to be determined early next year); Joyce Baumbach, currently director of libraries for Plano Public Library; Daniel Jones, library director at the Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research in San Antonio; Maria Elena Ovalle, coordinator of instructional resources at Education Service Center 1 in Edinburg; and Robert Watkins, associate executive director of Amigos Library Services in Dallas.

Topics include leadership and management competencies such as ethics, emotional intelligence, advanced communication skills, power, risk-taking, conflict resolution, strategic planning, appreciative inquiry, team development, coaching



All photos courtesy of Jennifer Smith and other members of the TALL Texans Class of 2009

At right: TALL Texans gather for dinner.



Inner courtyard of the campus



April Kessler and Lynne Craddock report on a project as instructor Jack Siggins looks on.

and empowerment, and two projects that continue after the event to help participants put their learning into practice.

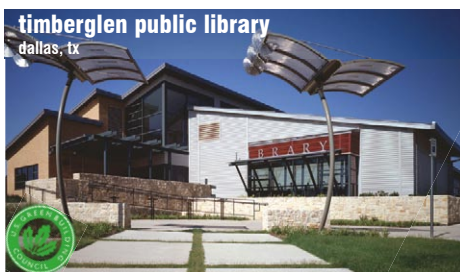
Applicants for the program are evaluated on leadership skills, organizational initiatives, and personal statements explained on the online form. Many alumni from the Institute are available to assist with the application process. Interested parties should contact the institute's coordinator for more information at [tedw@txla.org](mailto:tedw@txla.org) or 512-328-1518.

Librarians return to their institutions with deeper understanding of management, communication, and strategic planning. Graduates of the program have become directors of

major library systems, administrators within school districts and universities, and leaders in critical initiatives within their own communities.

Online application forms and more details about the Institute may be found at [www.txla.org/groups/talltex/tallldi.html](http://www.txla.org/groups/talltex/tallldi.html), or visit the home page at [www.txla.org](http://www.txla.org) and look under Events/Leadership Institute in the left side menu, after October 1. ★

View of the dining hall from the lake



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# Free People Read Freely:

## *The 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Report on Challenged & Banned Books in Texas Public Schools 2008-2009 School Year*

A PROJECT OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF TEXAS

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This text is adapted from the ACLU's annual Banned Books Report. The complete report is available online at the ACLU of Texas website for the Banned Books Project at: [www.aclutx.org/projects/bannedbooks.php](http://www.aclutx.org/projects/bannedbooks.php). The final report includes an ACLU of Texas interview with H.G. Bissinger, author of Friday Night Lights: A Town, a Team, a Dream, which has been banned in some places in Texas.*

**B**eginning in 1996, the ACLU of Texas has celebrated Banned Books Week by releasing an annual report cataloging the occurrence of censorship in Texas public schools. This is the 13<sup>th</sup> of these reports.

In order to compile the information necessary to present this report, over 1,200 open records requests were sent to every school district and charter school in the state. Each school district received a request asking specific questions about challenges to remove or restrict library books or curriculum based reading materials during the 2008-2009 academic year.

This year's report is based on the information contained in the 889 responses to these open records requests. Once received, the data was organized in the following fields: challenging district, book challenged, author of challenged book, campus receiving the challenge, reason for challenge, result of challenge, whether the challenge was to a curricular usage or library usage. This year we also added questions for each district about their policies governing challenges to literature. In particular, we asked each district to name the individual(s) responsible for reviewing and deciding challenges, and whether the decision of the reviewer(s) is final or can be appealed.

School library censors were just about as active in the 2008-2009 academic year as they were in the previous year. Ninety-eight challenges were reported this year, while 102 were reported last year. Similarly, 26 books were banned this year, while 27 were banned last year. What is more promising, however, are our findings related to restrictions. Here, we noticed a 25% decrease in the rate of challenges resulting in restrictions. There is bad news also: we noticed a 17% decrease in the rate of challenges resulting in retention.

Stephenville ISD reported the most challenges this year with 11. All of these challenges addressed books housed in the Henderson Jr. High library and, unfortunately, every one of them was eventually banned. It is surprising that so many bans—and, therefore, challenges—would come out of district with an enrollment of only 3,500 students. Texas' largest

district, Houston ISD, reported only six challenges this year, down from last year's 20 challenges.

The most challenged and banned authors of the year were both writers of series about teen vampires. Every installment in P.C. Cast's *House of Night* series (six books) and Richelle Mead's *Vampire Academy* series (five books) was banned in Stephenville ISD.

When a controversial feature film, adapted from a book for children or adolescents, is released we often see a spike in the number of challenges of that book. This was the case for the J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, H.G. Bissinger's *Friday Night Lights*, and Phillip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* series, which features the *Golden Compass*. Surprisingly, none of these books was widely challenged this year. Especially conspicuous is the absence of any pieces from Stephanie Meyer's popular *Twilight* series, which is also about teenage vampires and is adapted for the silver screen.

### Statistical Summary and Breakdown

Fifty-five school districts reported 98 challenges in the 2008-2009 academic year, while 43 school districts reported a sum of 102 challenges in the previous year. That is a 28% increase in the number of school districts reporting challenges, but a 4% decrease in the number of total challenges. Put otherwise, 5.33% of the school districts in the state reported challenges this most recent school year, whereas 4.17% of all districts reported challenges last year. Accounting for only responding districts, rather than all districts, the figures become 6.2 % (55 out of 889 responding districts) and 5.4% (43 out of 786 responding districts), respectively.

The figures above illustrate an overall rise in the concentration of challenges. That is, the average number of titles challenged by a district reporting at least one challenge has decreased from 2.4 (102 challenges reported by 43 school districts) to 1.8 (98 challenges reported by 55 school districts). This decrease is likely due to the inordinate number of challenges reported last year in Houston ISD (20) and Round Rock ISD (9). All the while, Stephenville ISD revealed the most challenges this year with 11.

In terms of challenges resulting in an outright ban on a library or curricular book, this school year's results are nearly identical to those of last year. Only 26 of the 98 (27%) challenges resulted in a banning during the most recent school year, whereas 27 of the 102 reported challenges (26%) resulted in the challenged title being banned during the 2007-2008 academic year. While last year we reported a 42% decrease in the overall number of banned books and a 35% decrease in the "success" rate of challenges from the preceding year (2006-2007), the change in both figures was negligible this year. We regard this as something of a success, considering last year saw such a decline in bans and little has changed this year.

Oftentimes, school boards react to a book challenge with actions that stop short of removing books from a school's



library. These actions are known as restrictions and they fall into two categories: *restriction to access/special permission required*, and *allowance of an alternate book*--the latter refers only to curricular books. Access to a library book may be restricted in a number of ways, but most commonly an access-restricted book may only be borrowed (1) by students of a certain age/grade level or (2) by students with parental permission.

When a challenge is made to a curricular book, a school district may respond by assigning alternative readers to complaining students or, perhaps, to those students with parents who object to the content of the challenged text. That said, 22% (22 titles) of this year's challenges resulted in restrictions, while 32% (34 titles) of last year's challenged books were ultimately restricted. This represents a promising decrease of 31% in the restriction rate and 29% decrease in the number of restricted books.

Not all book challenges result in restrictive action by school districts. In fact, it is not rare for a school board to take matters of intellectual freedom seriously and elect to reshelve a challenged book, allowing free and unrestricted access. This year 27 challenges (28%) resulted in retention, while last year 36 challenged books (35%) were retained. This reflects a slight but unfortunate move away from retention and toward restricting.

It is important to note that 70.2% (889/1266) of districts responded to the ACLU of Texas' information requests this year, as opposed to last year's rate of 62.57%. Due to the larger sample size, this leads us to believe this year's results paint a more accurate portrait of censorship in public school libraries. It should also be noted that the result of 11 of the 98 challenges are still pending. These books could eventually be banned, restricted, or simply retained; it is simply too early to tell.

## Where were the Most Challenges?

Stephenville, Houston, and Irving ISD reported the most challenges for the 2008-2009 school year. Stephenville ISD led the charge this year with 11 challenges, all of which resulted in bans. Houston ISD and Irving ISD tied for the second most this year with six challenges each. This marks quite the improvement for HISD, as the district reported 20 challenges last year. Unfortunately, only one of HISD's six challenges resulted in the book being retained without restriction. While Irving ISD experienced just as many challenges, five of the six books challenged were retained without restriction: a sole book was restricted to the reference library. Tying for third were Seguin ISD and Klein ISD, each with four challenges.

## Challenges by Grade Level

For the last two years, we have found most challenges to be occurring at the elementary school level. However, last year the rate of challenges experienced at the middle school level surged from 10% in 2006-2007 to 41% in 2007-2008. This

year middle school challenges surpassed elementary school challenges. Also, 40% of challenges were to books housed in middle school libraries, down only 1% from last year. The rate of challenges to books at the elementary school level decreased to 36%, down 11% from last year.

Worth mentioning is the 10% decrease in challenges at the elementary school level; that is a 20% decrease over the last two years. Challenges to high schools were up this year, however. While only 13% of last year's challenges were to books found in high school libraries, 22% of this year's challenges were to the same books. Lastly, this year 2% of challenges took place at institutions that cannot be neatly classified as one of the three grade levels mentioned above.

## Reasons for Challenges

When we ask school districts about the challenges they have experienced, we are especially interested in the reasons why books have been challenged. For each challenge, we ask which qualities of the book the challenging party found objectionable. In past years, we have offered five choices, where choosing more than one is acceptable: *profanity*, *violence or horror*, *sexual content or nudity*, *mysticism or paganism*, and *other*.

Last year *other* topped the list as the most cited reason for challenging a book. We viewed this as a problem, as *other* is not informative. So, in an effort to be clearer, we have added two new categories to the list of choices above: *politically, racially, or socially offensive*, and *drug or alcohol use*. We also replaced *mysticism and paganism* with *offensive to religious sensitivities*.

These changes were made because we found many *other* complaints were often associated with one of the two new categories. We also found that many *others* were categorized as "anti-Christian" or atheist in nature, so we broadened *mysticism and paganism* to *offensive to religious sensitivities* to account for these closely related complaints.

This year 60 books were challenged for containing *sexual content or nudity*, making it the most often cited reason for challenging a book. Of these 60 books, 17 were banned and the use of 14 was restricted. Additionally, 17 of these books were retained. Discounting *other*, *sexual content and nudity* was also last year's most often cited reason for challenging a book. However, it was then only associated with 43 challenges, 27 of which resulted in a banning or restriction.

*Profanity* was the second most often cited reason for challenging a book this year. Thirty-seven books were challenged for this reason. Ultimately, 10 of these challenges resulted in a ban, and another 10 resulted in a restriction of access.

*Politically, racially or socially offensive* (PRS) and *violence or horror* are next on the list, respectively. PRS content was the reason 16 books were challenged. Of these 16, three were banned, the use to two was restricted, and six were retained.

With 15 challenges, *violence or horror* is only slightly lower on the list. Three of these 15 resulted in a ban, three in a restriction, and two in retention.

*Drugs or alcohol use* and *offensive to religious sensitivities* were the next lowest pair on the list. Eight books were challenged for references or depictions of *drug or alcohol use*. None of these books was banned; however, the use of five was restricted and two were retained without restriction. Six books were found to be *offensive to religious sensitivities* and were challenged as a result: one was banned, the use of three was restricted, and two were retained without restriction.

*Other* was at the bottom of the list this year, unlike last year when it was the most often cited reason for challenging a book. One must assume this was due mostly in part to the addition and broadening of the other categories. This year only four books were challenged for reasons not falling under the above six categories, but none of these was banned or restricted.

### Process, Policy and Appeals

Most school districts in Texas have formal reconsideration policies in place for use in the event that a book is challenged. Reconsideration policies are designed to ensure books are neither restricted nor banned behind closed doors or without clear guidelines. Furthermore, formal reconsideration policies exist to provide transparency, accountability, predictability, and the opportunity for the fate of each book to receive a fair trial of sorts. Sometimes members of the community may even voice their opinion on the book's place in the library.

This year we began to ask each school district about their reconsideration policies. Specifically, we asked them two questions. First, we asked each district to list the personnel responsible for reviewing (and deciding) challenges. The choices we gave were: administration only, librarian only, school board only, and review committee. Secondly, we asked each district if the decision to ban each book is final or not

Of the 889 district that responded to our open records requests, 786 responded—at least in part—to our questions about their reconsideration policies. Four hundred eighty-one (61%) of these reported a review committee is in charge of reviewing challenges. Usually, review committees are comprised of a combination of teachers familiar with the material, librarians, and administrative staff. Sometimes even parents and students are asked to join these committees.

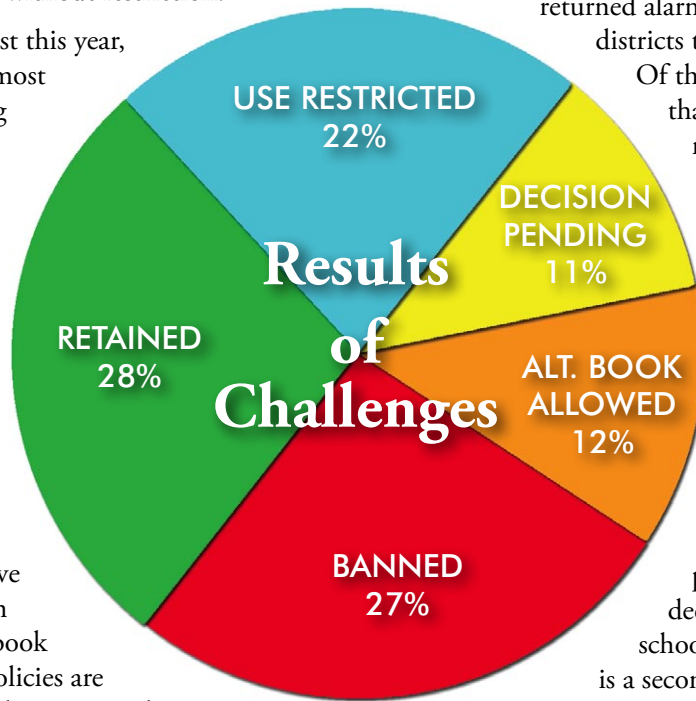
Usually, it is the principal who names the committee.

Schools with a policy giving the school board sole authority to decide the fate of challenged books were the next most common. We found 143 (18%) school districts to have this as their policy. Following closely behind were school districts that give this responsibility to members of the administration (e.g., principal or superintendent). There are 135 (17%) of these districts. Surprisingly, only 27 (3%) school districts give librarians sole discretion in reviewing challenges.

The second question, *are decisions to ban or restrict final*, returned alarming results. There were 753 districts that responded to this question.

Of these districts, 414 (55%) reported that all decisions are final. This means once a book is banned in these districts there is no formal appeals process by which a community member or student might hope to have a book reinstated into to the library.

On the question of finality, 339 districts reported having some sort of appeals process in place. Most often these were either two-tiered or three-tiered processes. With the former, the decision is appealed directly to the school board. With the latter, there is a second level before the school board, usually the superintendent.



While researching the various reconsideration policies districts employ, we came across a particularly interesting and discouraging finding in Houston ISD. HISD is the seventh largest school district in the United States and one that frequently experiences a relatively large number of challenges. In this key district, we discovered what is safe to call a complete failure in policy, record keeping, and government transparency. When asked to provide records of their review committees meetings and membership rolls, representatives of HISD were forced to admit that no such records are kept.

Though the deliberations of HISD's review committees affect a large number of students, the public has little hope of finding key information pertaining to their decisions. If a citizen wanted to request the names, votes, and arguments of the individuals who reviewed a challenge, she would be out of luck. We regard this information as essential public information that should be well documented and available to the public. Decisions directly affecting the constitutional rights of students should simply not be made by anonymous actors and behind closed doors.

**BANNED:** books removed from library shelves or class reading lists

Laurie Anderson: *Speak*  
Crosby Bonsall: *Mine's the Best*  
The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC): *Intimate Universe - The Human Body*  
Kevin Brooks: *Being*  
P.C. Cast: *Marked, Betrayed, Chosen, Untamed, Hunted, and Tempted*  
Gennifer Choldenko: *Al Capone Does My Shirts*  
Robert Cormier: *The Chocolate War*  
E.R. Frank: *Life is Funny: a novel*  
Honor Head: *My Pet Puppy*  
Annette Curtis Lance: *Blood and Chocolate*  
Richelle Mead: *Vampire Academy, Frostbite, Shadow Kiss, Blood Promise, and Spirit Bound*  
Gary Paulsen: *Lawn Boy*  
Mal Peet: *Tamar*  
Justin Richardson, Peter Parnell: *and Tango Makes Three*  
Maurice Sendak: *In the Night Kitchen (La Cocina de Noche, Spanish translation)*  
Sara Shepard: *Pretty Little Liars*  
James St James: *Freak Show*

**RESTRICTED:** based on age, reading level, parental permission, etc.

Rudolfo Anaya: *Bless Me, Ultima*  
Judy Blume: *Forever*  
Stephen Chbosky: *Perks of Being a Wallflower*  
Meg Cot: *Princess on the Brink*  
Sam Enthoven: *The Black Tattoo*  
Barbara Hughes: *Drug Related Diseases*  
Barbara Kingsolver: *The Bean Trees*  
Masashi Kishimoto: *Naruto vol. 1: The Tests of the Ninja*  
Ellen Klages: *Green Glass Sea*

Ron Koertge: *Shakespeare Bats Cleanup*  
Stephen Krensky: *The Bogeyman*  
Hope Larson: *Chiggers*  
Sheila P. Moss: *The Legend of Buddy Bush*  
Cormac McCarthy: *The Road*  
Lauren Myracle: *l8r g8r, ttfn, and tttl*  
Gary Paulsen: *The Fox Man*  
Johnny Rico: *Blood Makes the Grass Grow*  
Salman Rushdie: *The Satanic Verses*  
Ellen Ruskin: *The Westing Game*  
Sandra Lee Smith: *Marijuana*

**RETAINED:** challenges did not affect student access to books

**Barbers Hill ISD,** Barbers Hill Primary – Mary Hoffman: *Boundless Grace*  
**Brazosport ISD,** Clute Intermediate – Melody Carlson: *Pitch Black: Color Me Lost*  
**Corpus Christi ISD,** Cullen Middle School – Anonymous: *Go Ask Alice*  
... King High School – Denise Zimmerman: *The Idiot's Guide to Wicca and Witchcraft*  
**Cypress-Fairbanks ISD,** Andre Elementary – Nicole Rubel: *It's Hot and Cold in Miami*  
**Denton ISD,** Strickland Middle School – J. Michael Straczynski: *Spider-Man*  
**Eanes ISD,** West Ridge Middle School – Lauren Myracle: *ttyl*  
**Houston ISD,** Johnston Middle School – Alex Sanchez: *Getting It*  
**Irion County ISD,** Irion County Elementary – Maurice Sendak, *In the Night Kitchen*  
**Irving ISD,** Crockett Middle School – Allison Van Diepen, *The Street Pharm*  
... Farine Elementary – Christian Burch: *The Manny Files*

... MacArthur High School – Jake Coburn: *Prep*; Alan Watt: *Diamond Dogs*  
**Klein ISD,** Klein Oak High school – Chris Crutcher: *Whale Talk*  
**Leander ISD,** Charlotte Cox Elementary – Jack DeMolay: *Ghosts in Amityville: The Haunted House*  
**Lytle ISD,** Lytle Junior High – Daniel Ehrenhaft: *10 Things to Do Before I Die*  
**McKinney ISD,** Evans Middle School – Libba Bray: *A Great and Terrible Beauty*  
**Midlothian ISD,** Mt. Peak Elementary – Darren Shan: *Cirque du Freak: Tunnels of Blood*

**Northside ISD,** Elementary Schools – Dav Pilkey: *Captain Underpants*  
**Pottsboro ISD,** High School – Kaye Gibbons: *Ellen Foster*  
**Richardson ISD,** Pearce High School, Berkner High School – Michael Connelly: *The Poet*  
**Round Rock ISD,** All 9 middle schools – Lauren Myracle: *ttyl*  
... Caraway Elementary – Todd Parr: *The Family Book*  
**Sanger ISD,** Clear Creek Intermediate – Jack Gantos: *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key*  
**The School of Liberal Arts and Science** – Sandra Cisneros: *Woman Hollering Creek*

The 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Banned Books Report was written by Cody Safford, administrative assistant at the Houston Regional Office, and edited by Kathryn Brimacombe, public affairs coordinator. Both are with the ACLU of Texas.

The Texas Library Association wishes to convey its deep gratitude to the ACLU of Texas for its longstanding support of intellectual freedom and its commitment in preparing the *Banned Books Report* every year. This invaluable work reminds us of the ongoing need to protect our freedom of speech and inspires us to be ever vigilant and protective of the freedom to read.

The Texas Library Association also joins the ACLU of Texas in remembering **Judith Krugg**, who for over 40 years fought against censorship and to protect First Amendment rights. She led the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom and served as the executive director of the Freedom to Read Foundation. In 1982, Krug founded ALA's Banned Books Week. There are far too many accomplishments to list in her truly monumental career. Her legacy is one of freedom; this generation of Americans will be hard-pressed to find a more committed champion of free speech and individual rights. She was the lion of the library, guarding intellectual freedom. We will miss her greatly.

## SHIRLEY IGO Librarian/PTA

### Collaboration Award

The Texas Library Association and Texas PTA Shirley Igo Librarian/PTA Collaboration Award for 2009 was presented to *JoAnn Ford Elementary PTA* in Georgetown ISD and librarian, *Lynda Bishop*, for an outstanding collaboration project. Since the first year JoAnn Ford Elementary opened its doors in 2004, the PTA has done an amazing job working to increase students' interest in reading. Below are some of their projects.

- The PTA and librarian choose a reading theme each year and highlight that theme by building a "reading center" in the library. The first year a parent built a race track as the focal point in the library which fit their theme, "Revved up to read." In 2005, they built a large rocket (large enough for students to sit in) for the theme, "Launched to literacy." In 2006, they turned the rocket into a cave for "Cuddle up with a good book." In 2007, the cave became a tiki hut for "Wild about reading." In 2008, the tiki hut was turned into an igloo for "Chilling out with a good book." For 2009, the igloo became a castle.
- The PTA also has a "read at home" contest. Students log their minutes reading weekly, and PTA parent volunteers collect the logs and record results all year long. To recognize the students, the PTA gives prizes to those who reach their goal.
- Another project PTA has taken on is providing funds to hire teachers to tutor students in reading in the library during the summer.
- Last but not least, the PTA provides volunteers to help the librarian check books in and out, shelve, and assist students in selecting books.

The State PTA organization honored JoAnn Ford Elementary PTA in Georgetown and librarian, Lynda Bishop,



and presented the award to them at the annual conference in Austin this past summer.

The PTA of the following schools were also commended for their excellent projects.

- Ridgeview Middle School, Round Rock ISD
- Kiker Elementary, Austin ISD
- Shadow Ridge Middle School, Lewisville ISD

### TLA Voter Survey Information Sent Statewide

This summer, TLA mailed out information to all Texas principals, superintendents, mayors, city council members, city managers, county commissioners, and county judges about the recent Texas voter survey opinion poll on libraries. This mailing provided a quick snapshot of the broad support of Texas voters for school and public libraries. The survey demonstrates the extraordinary, broad-based support for library funding, and this mailing is one way TLA is making sure that this information is seen by decision makers.

School and public librarians received pre-notice of the mailing in early August and were encouraged to take the opportunity to send administrators and local elected officials additional information about their own library programs and statistics.

We thank Ebsco Information Services, Encyclopaedia Britannica, and ProQuest for their support of this effort.

During these very difficult economic times, it is critical that decision makers have access to information about what voters value. And, they clearly value public and school libraries. To see the full results of the survey and a link to the mailed text, go to:

[www.txla.org/html/pr/survey.html](http://www.txla.org/html/pr/survey.html).

## Library School Students, TLA, and YouTube: New Category in PR Competition

TLA is looking for library school students to take leadership in the social media revolution and its impact on the Texas library community. This fall, TLA will invite students from the information and library schools in Texas to create original YouTube content for TLA's YouTube channel. Students (individually) or in groups will be asked to prepare a two-to-10 minute video on any of the following areas:

- Recruitment into the Library Profession
- Marketing Library Services to Digital Natives
- Use of the TexShare Databases
- The Changing World of Information and the Role of the Library
- Open Theme related to the Information Landscape and Libraries

A panel of professional public relations specialists will review the entries. Selected entries will be publicized through TLA and featured on the TLA YouTube station. The video's producers will gain professional credit. Noted entries will be highlighted in the *Texas Library Journal* and other professional publications and forums.

This opportunity will allow students to use their creativity, skills, and unique perspectives to help craft marketing and learning tools that will be available to the entire library community. Additionally, students will gain attention and market their own skills to potential employers. Students are free to use current school projects for this purpose.

The winning entry will be recognized through the TLA Public Relations Branding Iron Awards. A new category has been created specifically to recognize Texas information and library school student output. This year, the category will focus on YouTube videos.

The winning entry will receive one free conference registration and a \$250 conference travel stipend. An entry with multiple creators can receive up to four complimentary conference registrations and a conference travel stipend of \$250 for person (up to four people).

Deadline is January 15, 2010.

Participants will retain ownership of the content; however, TLA retains the right to reproduce and publish the product without limit.

## Annual Assembly

Almost 500 TLA members gathered at the Hyatt Regency in Austin, July 27 – 30, for the association’s Annual Assembly. The meeting provided officers and interested members an opportunity to plan for the upcoming year.

Major assembly events this year included the annual luncheon. Rep. Jim Pitts of Waxahachie, chairman of the House

Committee on Appropriations, spoke about last session and the financial outlook for the state. David Bendekovic of Polaris and TLA member Tine Walczyk provided CE opportunities for attendees on marketing and improving presentation skills. Other programs included a legislative review of the 81st Session, a discussion of current federal broadband opportunities, and an overview, led by Joyce Baumbach, of TLA’s strategic plan and recommendations for restructuring the organization. Attendees were also able to attend an evening event at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

## Transforming TLA

During Assembly, the TLA Council accepted recommendations from the Transforming TLA Structure Task Force, who petitioned that several TLA committees be merged into existing committees and that certain action areas,

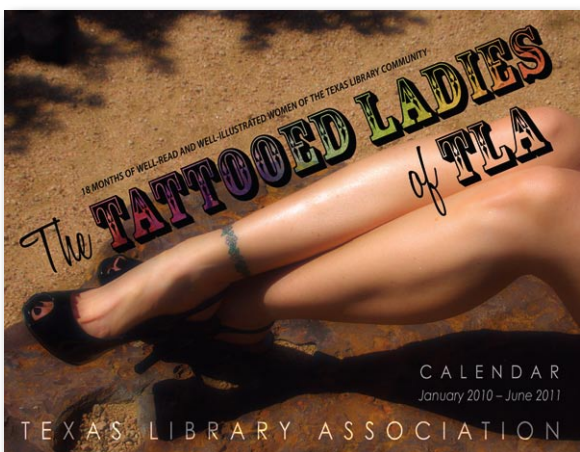
such as promoting cultural diversity, become embedded in all TLA activities. To view the full report, go to: [www.txla.org/temp/reports/index.html](http://www.txla.org/temp/reports/index.html) and click on “Final Report.” To see the newly-approved strategic plan, go to [www.txla.org/html/docs/plan.html](http://www.txla.org/html/docs/plan.html).

## Summary of Task Force Recommendation

The task force discussed every committee and their charges using the survey results from the April survey. Many committees will remain without change. However, Council did approve the changes for the following groups.

**Professional Issues and Ethics** will incorporate the former committees Professional Rights and Responsibilities, Professional Recruitment and Retention, Continuing Education and Development, Cultural Diversity, and Membership.

*Continued on next page.*



## The Tattooed Ladies of TLA Calendar Draws Attention to Libraries and Disaster Relief

From New Zealand to New York, *The Tattooed Ladies of TLA* calendar is a media sensation! Over 350 stories have been featured in Texas, nationally, and even internationally. Officially launched at Annual Assembly, this sublime exploration of lady librarians is a feast of images and pays tribute to the complexity and originality of the library community.

The calendar is a fundraiser for the TLA Disaster Relief Fund, which has provided over \$68,000 in grants to libraries affected by natural disasters. *The Tattooed Ladies of TLA* is a sequel to the *Men of Texas Libraries* calendar, which raised more than \$9,000 for the Disaster Relief Fund.

Both calendars share two important elements: they’re for a good cause and help break the stereotype of librarians. Headlines have run from “Painted Lady Librarians” to “Librarians Gone Wild.” The response from the public has been positive and supportive – Web orders, so far, exceed the orders sold at assembly!

According to the articles received by TLA, the public recognizes that doing something fun – and being willing to not take ourselves too seriously – is worth appreciating, especially when done in the service of a good cause. Librarians, defenders of freedom of speech, are now also “models” for it as well. To learn more about the calendar, visit [www.txla.org/temp/tattoo.html](http://www.txla.org/temp/tattoo.html). The calendars make great gifts for colleagues and friends and may be purchased online through the TLA Store.

Librarian Haley Holmes strikes a “We can do it” pose on her page, January 2010, at the beginning of the 18-month calendar.



**Public Communications** will incorporate Public Relations, Publications, Library Partnerships, Texas-Mexico Relations, Cultural Diversity, and Membership.

Council did stipulate that the TLA was to assign a current TLA staff member as a cultural diversity officer.

During the process of re-examining TLA's structure, several areas for additional study were determined. Accordingly, the Executive Board has established three groups: Task Force on TLA Districts (chaired by Sharon Amastae), Task Force on Unit Bylaws (chaired by Joe Dahlstrom), and the Task Force on Unit Assessment (chaired by Joyce Baumbach).

The Unit Self-Assessment Task Force is currently researching assessment forms from various entities. The next step will be to compile a draft self-assessment form and to begin discussion on procedures and timelines for unit self-assessment. The task force expects to have a draft report to Executive Board for their December meeting.

The TLA Task Force on Unit Bylaws is charged with developing a governance model for units that essentially will replace unit "bylaws" with unit "operating procedures." Operating procedures will be easier to amend and will allow units to respond more quickly to the needs and wishes of their members. This process will include a proposed revision to the Article XI of the TLA Bylaws (the section on Units) and a process for units to develop their operating procedures. The task force anticipates a report to the Executive Board in December and action by Council at the 2010 annual conference in San Antonio.

The Task Force on Districts met at Annual Assembly to begin work and is currently examining and evaluating the data from previous surveys conducted by the TLA Structuring Task Force. The group is seeking comments and ideas about the TLA districts from TLA members at each of the 10 fall meetings.

The report is due to the Executive Board on March 1, 2010.

## **Gates and State Library Partner for Broadband Deployment**

The Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) has been invited by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to participate in the Opportunity Online broadband grant program designed to improve and sustain free, quality Internet connectivity in the state's public libraries.

Today, millions of Americans use computers and the Internet at public libraries to find jobs, earn long-distance learning degrees, start and grow small businesses, learn English, get e-government information and more. Seventy percent of people who use computers and the Internet at libraries say it is their primary source of access to these technology tools. Unfortunately, 217 Texas public libraries do not currently offer high-speed Internet connections that meet the needs of their communities. Moreover, almost every Texas public library would like to improve its connectivity speeds.

In today's digital world, connectivity speed is important. It is the difference between taking an interactive, online educational course with streaming video or audio and reading a basic website for instructive content or downloading lengthy government applications in seconds versus struggling with freezing or intermittent connections to access a basic government website.

The Opportunity Online broadband grant program is designed to support improved and sustained connectivity so every Texas public library can meet the needs of their communities, specifically high-bandwidth applications like online education, e-government services, and economic development applications. In order to better prepare for the participation in the grant program, the Texas State Library and

Archives Commission has convened a sustainability advisory group including state leaders from both public and private sectors to determine how best to improve high-speed Internet sustainability for the state public libraries.

The Opportunity Online broadband grant program comes at an opportune time as local organizations explore federal broadband stimulus funding and the Texas Department of Agriculture is developing a detailed broadband inventory map to understand where broadband technology is currently available to better position Texas for competitive funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) to build out technology to unserved areas.

The grant program will allow the Texas State Library and Archives Commission to host a summit for library leaders, community partners, and statewide stakeholders to examine the current state of connectivity in Texas libraries and raise awareness about the need for increased connectivity in libraries. The summit will create a foundation for a state broadband sustainability strategy for all public libraries to ensure that all communities can support adequate Internet connections at their public library.

The Texas State Library and Archives Commission will host two summits this fall in San Antonio (October 7-8 and November 18-19). Connected Nation, a national non-profit technology advocacy organization, will produce the summits with the Texas State Library and Archives Commission. The American Library Association's Office for Information Technology Policy will support TSLAC's development of a broadband sustainability strategy. For more information about the Texas Opportunity Online Summit, please contact [txsummit@opportunityonline.org](mailto:txsummit@opportunityonline.org) or 1-866-882-3081.

# AWARDS

*Award season is upon us. The Texas Library Association promotes librarianship by presenting:*

- **AWARDS** TO RECOGNIZE CONTRIBUTIONS AND EXCELLENCE IN THE PROFESSION,
- **GRANTS** TO SUPPORT LIBRARY-ENHANCING PROJECTS AND RESEARCH,
- **SCHOLARSHIPS** TO FACILITATE LIBRARY SCHOOL EDUCATION, AND
- **STIPENDS** TO ENCOURAGE CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE.

*TLA depends on the library community to identify individuals and projects that merit recognition and support. Through the award process, we can turn the spotlight on outstanding colleagues, encourage professional growth, and broadcast best practices. Be sure to check out the TLA Awards webpage for information on nominating someone – or applying yourself – for the various awards, grants, stipends, and honors.*

## TLA Awards

Librarian of the Year  
Wayne Williams Library Project of the Year  
Lifetime Achievement  
Outstanding Services to Libraries Benefactor  
Distinguished Service  
Libraries Change Communities  
TLA Branding Iron PR Awards  
Shirley Igo PTA/School Library Collaboration Award  
*(co-sponsored by the Texas PTA)*

## UNIT-SPONSORED AWARDS

Distinguished Service for School Administrators (TASL)  
Outstanding New Librarian (NMRT)  
Outstanding Service in Library Instruction (LIRT)  
Siddie Joe Johnson Award (CRT)  
Small Community Librarian (SCLRT)  
Texas Media Awards  
Texas Reference Award (RRT)  
Young Adult Reading Incentive (YARI) Award (YART)

## Unit & Corporate Sponsor Awards

### Highsmith®

The **HIGHSMITH** Library Award (TLA Highsmith Award Committee) recognizes two libraries - one school and one for all other library types – that have implemented creative marketing projects and/or promotions to enhance their visibility within their service community.

[www.txla.org/html/awards.html](http://www.txla.org/html/awards.html)

**PROQUEST** Intellectual Freedom Award (TLA Intellectual Freedom Committee) recognizes the contribution of an individual or group who has actively promoted intellectual freedom in Texas.



The **GODORT/MARCIVE** “Knowledge Is Power” Award recognizes an outstanding government documents librarian and/or an active supporter and advocate for the use of government information in education, research, and/or commerce.

## GRANTS



Research Grant

J. Frank Dobie Library Trust  
James T. Love Awards  
Texas Book Festival  
Texas Library Disaster Relief  
Tocker Foundation  
Woll Memorial Fund

## SCHOLARSHIPS *post-baccalaureate*

Century Scholars  
*for ALA Century Scholars*  
Diverse-ability Recruitment Program  
CULD – *academic librarianship*  
Walter H. Escue Memorial Scholarship  
*technical services, systems*  
*administration, or library automation*

Garrett Scholarship  
*children's, young adult, or school librarianship*  
Vivian Greenfield Educational Award  
*provides funding for an educational endeavor reinforcing work with youth*  
Janeway  
Jeannette Marquis Memorial MLS Scholarship – *bilingual; school or public*  
Spectrum Scholars  
*for ALA Spectrum Scholars*  
Minority Recruitment Program  
TASL – *school librarianship*  
TLA Summer School  
Van Dusen-Tobin-Kaiser (*even years*)  
*elementary or children's librarian*

## CONFERENCE STIPENDS

Automation & Technology RT  
Escue Annual Conference Stipend  
*for library paraprofessionals*  
District 8  
Genealogy RT  
Laura Edwards Memorial (CRT/TASL)  
Library Instruction RT- Devon Zimmerman  
New Members RT/Quality Books  
Public Libraries Division  
Tocker Foundation  
YART-Linworth Publishing/LMC