

A large, intricate stained glass illustration of a tree with a thick, gnarled trunk and many branches. The leaves are in various shades of green, and the background is a mosaic of blue, purple, and yellow geometric shapes. The title 'TEXAS LIBRARY JOURNAL' is written in a large, white, serif font across the top of the tree.

# TEXAS LIBRARY JOURNAL

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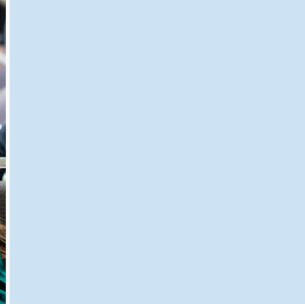
## TLA 2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

The Censorship Paradox

We Grow Together:  
A Peer-Led Approach to  
Library Staff Training

Libraries and Accessibility:  
Staying Ahead of the  
New Rules





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# TEXAS LIBRARY JOURNAL

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# Find Your Next Opportunity to Lead, Serve, and Grow



## TLA Volunteer Portal

The TLA Volunteer Portal is a member-only site designed to help you get more involved in the work and mission of the Texas Library Association.



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- Deadline to submit is January 31, 2026.



### How to access the TLA Volunteer Portal:

The portal is available exclusively to TLA members and uses the same login as your TLA Member Portal credentials.

[member.txla.org/volunteer/](https://member.txla.org/volunteer/)



I absolutely loved being a part of the CPC. The most impactful part for me was getting to collaborate with people from all types of libraries.  
- Lauren J., TLA member



# President's Perspective

By Valerie Prilop

## AS WE ENTER THE HOLIDAY SEASON AND REFLECT ON THE PAST YEAR,

I cannot say thank you enough to our members and library friends who continue to speak out and stand up for their local libraries.

As expected, for many of our members, the months since Sept. 1 have been a time of confusion and uncertainty, as libraries have tried to figure out how to implement the requirements of recently passed state legislation while continuing to provide access and services. Even if your library hasn't been directly affected by the new laws, it is important to understand their impact on the Texas library community. We all play a role in supporting libraries across the state through [advocacy](#), outreach, and education – being a member of TLA means being a part of a large, interconnected library community.

Speaking of membership, it is time to [renew yours](#)! The new membership dues structure is in place, making it easy to renew your membership or join the association. Membership offers many individual benefits, including access to education and resources, networking and volunteering opportunities, and advocacy tools and support.

Your membership also supports your fellow members and programs across the state. It helps TLA do important legislative and advocacy work, funds educational programming that helps grow our members' skills and knowledge, builds a professional community, and strengthens the profession. Organizations like TLA are only as strong as their membership base – each of you contributes to a collective good that protects and advances the profession for everyone.

Be sure to renew by January 31 so you can vote in the upcoming [Executive Board elections](#). The Executive Board is the central management board of TLA, and the election is your chance to select the members who will strategically guide the work of the organization as we continue to grow and thrive. Voting is an easy and quick way to support TLA and your units, many of whom will also be holding officer elections early next year. Just like in your local, state, and national elections, your vote matters!

I don't have to tell you how big and diverse Texas is, and that has been so clear as I've travelled from corner to corner



attending district meetings. By the time you read this, I will have attended seven district meetings! Doing so is one of the best things about being TLA President – not only do I get to visit libraries and cities across the state, I also get to meet members and hear about their successes and challenges. The power of local community and networking simply cannot be overstated, and if you missed your district meeting this year, I challenge you to remedy that next fall!

2026 is just around the corner, and that means the [Annual Conference](#) will be here before we know it. I

am especially excited that the conference will be returning to Houston for the first time in 10 years. If you haven't been to downtown Houston since the last conference, you might be surprised! The area around the convention center is vibrant and walkable, with a light rail station and a variety of restaurants nearby, and the beautiful Discovery Green park right out front.

This year's conference promises to be amazing, with the programming, networking, and social events offering something for everyone. I am absolutely enamored with the graphics that go along with the theme, *Cultivating Community, Thriving Together*. The colorful mosaics and tree imagery are a beautiful representation of our community, where we can branch out and find shelter, and where we all have a role to play.

This fall has been a whirlwind for me, as I've travelled all across the state for the district meetings and other TLA programs. I know the fall is also a whirlwind for many of you, especially our school and academic librarians who are nearing the end of the first semester. I'm ready for the colder weather to get here so I can curl up under a blanket with a good book, and I hope that as we approach the new year, you, your families, and your communities are able to find warmth, safety, and joy.

*Valerie Prilop*

Valerie Prilop  
2025–26 TLA President





## TLA Recognition and Awards

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**Thank you!**

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Your generosity makes our work possible.



# Advocacy Is a Journey and Every Texas Librarian Has a Role

By Wendy Woodland

**THE TEXAS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION IS THE VOICE OF THE LIBRARY PROFESSION IN TEXAS** – advocating for excellence in library services and promoting and protecting the right to read. But what does advocacy mean in action?

Advocacy is a journey — one that begins with awareness and grows into confident, meaningful action. Advocacy engagement happens along a continuum from “unaware” or even “resistant,” to “active, informed, and fully engaged.” And the truth is: every point along this continuum matters.

Not all librarians can testify at the Capitol. Not everyone can take a legislator on a tour of their library. And that’s okay. Advocacy isn’t defined by the biggest action—it’s defined by participation. A single email, a phone call, or a brief conversation with stakeholders makes a difference. Every voice matters.

## A SHIFT IN ENGAGEMENT

For years, TLA approached advocacy by providing resources—webinars, online guides, calls to action—and encouraging members to step forward. We leaned heavily on the Legislative Committee and the Executive Board as spokespeople, knowing the complexity of the issues could be intimidating.

But recent challenges have sparked something powerful: librarians across the state are more interested, more motivated, and more willing to get involved than ever before. This renewed energy is a bright spot in an otherwise difficult period—and it’s reshaping how we think about advocacy itself.

One of the most persistent barriers is the perception that advocacy is only for certain people: the seasoned leaders, the policy experts, the extroverts who thrive in public settings. In reality, advocacy is a shared responsibility and a collective strength. It succeeds when the entire community feels equipped and supported to participate.

## CHARTING A NEW PATH: THE ADVOCACY PLANNING WORKSHOP

In September, the TLA Legislative Committee met for a two-day Advocacy Planning Workshop with an ambitious goal: identify two or three concrete action items that could strengthen member engagement leading into the 2027 Legislative Session.

Our vision is to:

- Create pathways for every member to advocate.
- Build strong relationships with key legislators.
- Develop legislative strategies that minimize negative outcomes.
- Identify messaging that resonates and persuades.

After much discussion, two strategic priorities emerged—both designed to support librarians no matter where they fall on the advocacy continuum.

## ACTION ITEM 1: STRENGTHENING ADVOCACY TRAINING AND SUPPORT IN EVERY REGION

To move members from awareness to confident action, we must make advocacy accessible and local. This first initiative focuses on educating librarians about the legislative process, the issues that shape our work, and the simple steps each person can take to advocate effectively.

Key tactics include:

- **Training opportunities** both online and in person.
- **Relationship-building efforts**, including identifying key legislators and connecting them with TLA members in their districts.
- **Developing practical resources**, such as improved toolkits and updated templates that reflect today’s landscape.

When librarians understand the process—and when they feel supported—they’re far more likely to engage. This initiative is about building confidence.

## ACTION ITEM 2: LEGISLATIVE STRATEGIES

Advocacy is not only about responding—it’s also about proactively shaping the future. The second initiative focuses on implementing thoughtful strategies around legislation, data collection, and messaging to support policies that protect intellectual freedom and strengthen Texas libraries.

This work includes:

- **Collecting and analyzing data** to ground our advocacy in facts.
- **Conducting research** on complex issues such as AI in book review processes.
- **Developing clear messaging** for both internal audiences and external stakeholders.
- **Exploring legislative options**, including potential amendments and support for “Right to Read” legislation.

This strategic approach ensures we are prepared—not just to react, but to lead and speak out.

## EVERY VOICE STRENGTHENS US

The 90th Texas Legislature will open on January 12, 2027, just one year and 24 days from today (*December 19, 2025*). As we prepare, one thing is clear: advocacy is not reserved for a select few. It belongs to all of us. Your involvement strengthens TLA’s ability to protect the freedom to read, promote public access to information, and support libraries across the state.



# THE Censorship Paradox

By Kerol Harrod

Recent legislation and the current climate of book banning present real challenges to librarians in their professional and personal lives. There is a significant human toll, and our first concern must be for the individuals on the front line that are directly impacted. While we need to do our best to preserve intellectual freedom and democracy for future generations, we also need to take care of ourselves, our families, and our colleagues. Librarians didn't choose this moment, yet we are the ones who must meet it.

Librarians (which will hereafter refer to all library workers) are faced with a paradox: How to censor library materials while being against censorship. In other words, how do we abide by laws that can go against our professional ethics and standards (e.g. [The Freedom to Read Statement](#), [ALA's Core Competences of Librarianship](#)) while still providing the same level of access to information and services? Sometimes we can't, and tough choices must be made. It's one thing to talk about censorship as an abstract concept, and it's another thing to experience the weight of the laws that de-professionalize library work and ban access to materials.

With the recent passage in Texas of SB13, SB 412, and the specter of narrowly averted bills like HB 3225, the pressure has only increased. Below are a few people-first principles to consider as we navigate this brave new world.

## BE GOOD TO YOURSELF AND OTHERS

Many librarians are being called upon to implement censorial laws and practices that go against their personal and professional beliefs regarding access, equity, and community. This type of low-level cognitive dissonance, where your actions are contrary to your beliefs, can take a toll on a person's mental and physical health. We need to recognize that.

It's also helpful to remember that some librarians work in more restrictive spaces than others due to decisions by

# adox

local school boards, library boards, city councils, county commissioners' courts, or newly formed School Library Advisory Councils (SLACs). Recognizing that our actions may not align perfectly with our ideals is okay. We should never sugar-coat what's happening, but we also have to find a way to give our colleagues (and ourselves) grace.

A people-first view reminds us that librarians have mortgages, health insurance, and pensions to worry about. We can't afford to die on the hill of every intellectual freedom challenge. Self-care is essential in times like these, but we still have a job to do. We can affirm the real challenges librarians face while simultaneously seeking to uphold the highest possible standards of intellectual freedom as we comply with new laws.

## RESIST OVERCOMPLIANCE

[Examples](#) in Texas and [elsewhere](#) show the pitfalls and perils of overcompliance to laws limiting the right to read. We've been in this current cycle of censorship for almost five years now, and there is a danger that the slow but steady increase in censorship can desensitize us to what's happening.

Some public libraries in Texas, for example, are introducing the idea of restricted youth access cards for minors (17 and under) so that parents can keep their children from accessing electronic resources and other "adult" materials. This type of card is not required by law in Texas. In the same vein, some

school districts now have opt-in parent restricted sections that are not required by state law. Both of these practices seem to be in direct conflict with the [ALA's interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights as it pertains to minors](#).

### [What exactly is a book ban?](#) I

think the best approach is once again to take a people-first view, meaning we should look at how the ban affects the user rather than the work itself. [PEN America](#) defines a book ban as "any action...that leads to a book being either completely removed from availability to students or where access to a book is restricted or diminished." The implication is that even if a book is in the library, it can be banned for those who don't have "permission" to exercise their First Amendment rights and access it. In other words, there are two ways to ban a book: keep the book from the person or the person from the book. By this definition, book bans are now happening as a matter of policy, but taking a people-first approach can give us a better handle on how the lack of access affects individual patrons.

## GET INVOLVED

Just going to work every day and trying to keep books on the shelves is huge, but there are other ways to get involved. Join professional organizations. [Volunteer with TLA](#). Get involved with groups like the [Texas Freedom to Read Project](#) and support their advocacy work. Run for office. Volunteer to serve on government boards, committees, and commissions. And when you can't do the work yourself, identify and cultivate advocates who can (retired folks are a great resource for library advocacy).

Nothing can substitute for leveraging the capacity of your community. Get

involved with community groups that do service work in your area. This is a great people-first way to learn about stakeholders and community gatekeepers who can be allies for advocacy, funding, and more. Keep in mind that libraries still enjoy broad support. [Surveys](#) show that book bans are not popular, so we have the majority on our side in that respect, and people still want to support libraries.

Though the stakes are high and you should get involved, realize that you can't do it all. It's okay to take a break and recharge so you can fight another day. We also should remember to support our fellow librarians when they must take a step back. The battle for democracy will be won over time, not in one day.


## PERSIST

Don't lose hope. We need good people in all libraries right now who understand the importance of intellectual freedom and how it goes hand-in-hand with democracy and freedom of expression. Let me be clear: you should never stay in a work environment that is unhealthy or abusive, but, if possible, please don't leave the library profession altogether. Sometimes working in a broken system to keep it from fracturing further is what we are called to do.

Librarians have so much exciting and consequential work ahead of us, and we should do what we can to resist overcompliance, to develop advocates, to take care of ourselves, and to keep fighting the good fight with a people-first mindset. The public is on our side, and we are on the right side of history.

*Kerol Harrod is Assistant Clinical Professor in the School of Library and Information Studies at Texas Woman's University.*





Plano Public Library makes training fun and engaging for staff.

# We Grow Together

## A Peer-Led Approach to Library Staff Training

By Eun Ah Lee | Photos by Beth Morgan, Plano Public Library

**IMAGINE THAT YOU ARE A BRAND-NEW STAFF MEMBER WHO HAS JUST JOINED THE LIBRARY.** You love reading, you love libraries, and you are excited to start your new job. Then reality sets in—there are endless things to learn: circulation, customer service, programming, technology, and more. The list goes on and on. It is overwhelming. Your coworkers reassure you that you'll be fine in time. That may be true, but is there a better way to approach this?

Staff training is essential to the success of public library services. Well-prepared staff not only deliver high-quality services but also contribute to the library's continuous improvement. However, developing and maintaining effective staff training programs can be challenging in terms of resources, cost, and time. Many libraries struggle to design a system that is both efficient and adaptable.

When Plano Public Library initiated a multi-year project to build a sustainable staff training system, we focused on three key elements: an innovative peer-led approach, a collaborative development process, and a self-sustaining model.

### PEER-LED APPROACH

The first key element is a peer-led approach to staff training. When we analyzed our existing staff training, we found that much of it was conducted by peers—experienced staff teaching those with less experience. Interestingly, our staff have diverse areas of expertise: a person highly skilled in one area may be less experienced in another area. A trainer in one subject may become a trainee in another. Peer teaching works particularly well in an environment with varying levels of skills and knowledge. Based on this finding, we designed future staff trainings around peer

teaching. In other words, every staff member at Plano Public Library is a potential trainer.

Our next step was to help staff become reliable and effective trainers. To achieve this, we developed a foundational program called “Train the Trainer: TRACK.” This program is designed to help staff be Thoughtful, Respectful, Adaptable, Constructive, and Knowledgeable (TRACK) when teaching others. All staff members are expected to complete this program before training others. The good news is that staff who participate in this program consistently provide positive feedback on the program's usefulness.

### COLLABORATIVE DEVELOPMENT

The second key element is collaborative development. Within our staff pool, we discovered talent, experience, and enthusiasm. Recognizing the wealth of skills and knowledge already present



in our organization, we used them not only to train staff but also to develop the training system itself. We made a bold decision to rely on a DIY (Do It Yourself) strategy rather than on external expertise. The challenge was to engage staff effectively in the development process. Here, the role of our instructor team was invaluable. Plano Public Library has a small group of library instructors, and this team became the driving force behind the multi-year project. With consistent support from the library leadership, the instructor team built the framework of the training system and established the instructional design.

Staff from various levels and positions then participated as subject matter experts (SMEs). Diverse talents and experiences among our staff make each staff an eligible SME. For example, some staff have exceptional experiences in circulating library collections. Other staff have excellence in creating educational programs. A staff who recently joined the library provides fresh perspective, while a seasoned supervisor provides leadership's viewpoint. They all become SMEs in areas which new employees need to learn. Staff's participation was voluntary, and it was encouraging to see so many staff members participate in the project with enthusiasm and willingness. Together, instructors and SMEs developed training modules—each module a unit of instructional content. Staff contributed not only to developing the content but also to testing and refining it. Each module underwent a mock training session

and was promptly updated based on feedback. As a result, our completed training modules represent the collaborative contributions of many staff members.

### SELF-SUSTAINING MODEL

The third key element is a self-sustaining model. When developing the staff training system, we asked three “who and how” questions:

1. Who will develop it, and how?
2. Who will use it, and how?
3. Who will maintain it, and how?

We found answers to the first two questions by recognizing and utilizing our staff's existing skills and knowledge. Staff collaboratively developed the training system and now use it through peer teaching. The answer to the third question followed naturally: our staff will maintain it. This means our training system is not static but flexible and open to updates. Staff use the training modules to train others, and whenever they identify a need for revision or correction, they communicate with the instructor team and library leadership. That is why we describe our staff training system as self-sustaining. It requires no external experts or additional budget. It is developed, facilitated, and managed by us, the staff.



*An outreach librarian provides staff training on setting up outreach tables to better engage the public at events.*

Change is constant in libraries. Public library staff must adapt to new technologies, policies, and community needs, and training must evolve accordingly. Our staff training system is built to grow and adapt along with us.

### CONCLUSION

The ultimate goal of staff training in the library is to help trainees become capable and confident library staff. Another benefit of a well-structured training system is that staff grow personally and professionally through training. Imagine again that you are a new staff member. You find a clear set of training modules that outline your learning journey, see familiar faces among your trainers, and even discover opportunities to contribute to improving the system yourself. It may still feel a bit overwhelming, but it is a safe and supportive first step toward becoming a skilled, confident staff member.

Plano Public Library approached staff training with three key elements: peer-led learning, collaborative development, and a self-sustaining model. Through this approach, we have gained valuable experience and learned that these elements empower staff, foster a culture of shared expertise, and ensure the long-term sustainability of the program.

We hope our experience inspires other libraries to discover their own talents, build their own training systems, and grow together.

*Eun Ah Lee is a Public Services Librarian at Plano Public Library.*







# FROM IDEA TO IMPACT

By Priscilla Takyi

When Jordan High School (Katy ISD) seniors Rishan Herrajani and Kyle Nguyen began their senior year, they noticed a pattern: they kept buying materials for class projects that were used only once. The excess of materials sparked a question—how could they help their community access tools and resources more sustainably?

They found inspiration in the Houston Public Library’s “Library of Things,” a program that allows patrons to check out tools, equipment, and other nontraditional items. Rishan and Kyle saw the potential for a similar initiative in their area, believing it could reduce waste, save families money, and give students meaningful hands-on learning opportunities.

Together, they decided to present their proposal to leaders in the Fort Bend County Public Library system. They gathered data, documented their research process, and outlined a clear

plan. Their efforts paid off—library officials were excited about the idea and quickly agreed to support it.

Community members were encouraged to donate items at locations across Fort Bend County, with suggested donations ranging from basic exercise equipment and gardening tools to travel gear, tech accessories, art kits, games, and kitchen gadgets.

To broaden community involvement, the pair engaged students across Katy ISD and the surrounding area by posting calls for materials online and gathering feedback—generating thousands of online engagements.

The project deepened Herrajani and Nguyen’s connection to the library, and they soon joined the library’s Young Adult Advisory Council. “The importance of the library is paramount,” Herrajani said. “When we were younger, we used the library all the time, but as we got older, we used it less. This project opened our eyes to how valuable it still is for younger kids and older teens. The library is a community hub. We want to make it known that there is a place for us here, too.”

Their efforts have continued to gain momentum. The project has secured city funding, and soon patrons will be able to check out items directly from the George Memorial Library in Richmond, Texas.

Fort Bend County Libraries Director Roosevelt Weeks said he was extremely impressed by the students’ initiative. “The library functions to meet the needs of our community. Rishan and Kyle took the initiative to fill a need they saw in their own community.”

Weeks added that the response from the public has been overwhelmingly positive: “It’s a powerful example of youth leadership and community building.”

As Rishan and Kyle prepare to graduate from Jordan High School this spring, they’re excited to stay involved as the project expands. Their work demonstrates the impact young people can have—and how libraries can serve as a foundation for that growth.

*Priscilla Takyi is the Communications Coordinator for the Texas Library Association.*





Rishan Herranjani and Kyle Nguyen pictured sorting donations for the library of things, being recognized for their work, and sharing their story on the news.







# The Magic Behind *Enchanted Library* at Carrollton Public Library

By Brittnee Emerine

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Every November, for the past three years, the Carrollton Public Library has transformed itself into a whimsical, fairy tale and fantasy-inspired family destination for our Fall Signature Event, *Enchanted Library*. Complete with “floating” battery-operated candles, cardboard castles, die-cut stars, winding fake vines, string lights, and more, *Enchanted Library* welcomes more than 500 attendees for a three-hour event with programs, crafts, and activities for all ages. The real magic, however, is the effort, coordination, and hard work Carrollton Public Library staff of 50 (half of whom are part-time) put into *Enchanted Library*.

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## **STAFF BEGIN THE PLANNING**

**PROCESS** for the next *Enchanted Library* right after the event ends. Using internal program evaluation forms, we analyze attendance for each activity and review staff-submitted feedback. Planning kicks into high gear around May, when staff begin researching fairytale and fantasy-inspired crafts, looking into paid performers like magicians or improv groups, generating trivia questions, and deciding on an escape room theme.

*Enchanted Library* is a combined effort between multiple Library departments, including Adult Services, Youth Services, Access Services, Community Engagement, Technical Services, and the Library Management Team. One Adult Services Librarian

and one Youth Services Librarian serve as co-leads: they are the program planners — delegating tasks to the rest of the team, making supply purchases, planning event activities, and assigning staff to activities during the event. This large-scale event requires an all-hands approach. Staff buy-in is essential to help create and install the decor, prepare the crafts, work the service desk, facilitate event activities and lead crafts, host trivia and escape rooms.

Supervisors, full-time and part-time paraprofessional staff, librarians, and managers work together to staff the event. During the three-hour program, staff rotate between serving snacks to patrons, distributing tickets, managing the crowd during performances, hosting rounds of trivia, leading children in

crafts, and facilitating escape room fun. Most staff working the event dress up in fairy tale and fantasy-inspired costumes: you might see a manager dressed as Mary Poppins or a member of the Access Services team channeling Willy Wonka.

Although these types of large-scale programs might be a far-cry from their typical daily workload, staff who are not regular programmers have remarked that greeting costumed families and seeing the joy, delight and smiles on attendees' faces makes all the coordination, work, and after-hours schedule well worth it.

*Brittnee Emerine is the Youth Services Supervisor at Carrollton Public Library.*



(l-r) Erin Bartley, Librarian, North ES, Lara Labbe-Maginel, Principal, North ES, Abby Kennel, Principal, Mason ES, Stephanie Beasley, former Librarian, Mason ES, and Becky Calzada, District Library Coordinator, Leander ISD

# IN SYNC

## A Q&A ON BUILDING EFFECTIVE PRINCIPAL-LIBRARIAN TEAMS



By Becky Calzada

In June, Becky Calzada, district library coordinator for Leander ISD had the opportunity to moderate a panel discussion at the Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association (TEPSA) Conference to share the impact of collaboration between elementary principals and school librarians. Principals and librarians from two Leander ISD elementary schools participated and shared insights into their strong partnerships, how they plan together, and how this planning directly impacts students and teachers. Becky expanded on that experience with the following Q&A with Abby Kennell, principal of Mason Elementary and Lara Labbé-Maginel, principal of North Elementary, to share how they prioritize their campus library programs.

### WHAT ROLE HAVE LIBRARIES PLAYED IN YOUR PERSONAL LIVES?

**Abby:** I struggled as a reader growing up. Despite those struggles, I love to learn. Reading became the way for me to tap into new worlds and expand my knowledge and understanding of the world. With a father as a principal

and my aunt serving as a librarian at a university, I had a behind the scenes look at how impactful libraries can be for others. Whether it was access to information and a place to explore curiosities and the world around me, I always felt comfortable being in a library whether it was at a school, public

spaces or universities. I always say the library is the heart of the campus where kids should feel safe and connected to show up and explore the world around them through literature and other tools.

**Lara:** I believe the library is the heartbeat of a campus. It is a place where students can have choice and opportunity to explore different topics through reading. They can partner with the librarian to develop a skill or knowledge base. In addition, librarians bring a perspective to extending learning that they can share with or partner with classroom teachers. With a classroom teacher's content knowledge and a librarian's skillset, the possibilities are endless. I have seen teachers receive resources and learning that enhances the classroom instruction. I've seen kids develop not only knowledge and skills but also confidence and curiosity.

## PLEASE PROVIDE AN OVERVIEW OF YOUR LIBRARY PROGRAMS; DESCRIBE YOUR STUDENTS AND STAFF EXPERIENCE. HOW DID THIS ALL COME ABOUT?

**Abby:** Our campus recently had to transition to adding the library to a special rotation in a more fixed schedule. This has a significant impact on the culture of the campus and we have to be intentional about managing this change. With that being said, there is a balance between what we can expect of our librarians with the resources we have available. With the flex schedule, it allows more access and there is more freedom and flexibility to infuse student experiences beyond the traditional library. With a fixed schedule, it limits the amount of freedom students and staff have to explore those curiosities with technology tools and skills. We are currently navigating and managing this change as a campus with caution as we understand it must be a balance between honoring the access to books and connecting and enriching learning for students. It is important to place value on what librarians actually do in terms of being a budget manager and responsible for managing an extensive inventory and system. Our librarian is part of our Instructional Leadership Team as the perspective of the librarian is vital to reinforcing the vision and mission of the campus but also a voice of advocacy in terms of realistic expectations.

**Lara:** We operate on a flexible schedule. Our librarian schedules regular times for classes to visit. During these visits, not only is she focusing the learning on skills for the library and research, but she connects the learning to what students are doing in class. For our older grades, she has a Google Classroom where students can continue to practice or pursue the learning started in the library. In addition to the regular times, teachers are able to schedule “flexible time”. These times might be focused on a particular skill that the teacher wants the students to learn or it might be a co-teach opportunity. We’ve seen many grade levels use this time to launch research.

The classroom teacher sets the stage for the content and then the librarian provides different avenues for students to research as well as demonstrate what they learn through the process. An additional part of our school culture is a choice opportunity for students, which we call Empower Hour. Students select an area of interest from PE, Art, Performing Arts, STEAM or extensions, Coding/Technology and others. The librarian is an integral part of this choice time for students. As we were planning for a student experience, we really talked about getting outside of the “norm” and thinking of what we wanted for kids. Then we worked collaboratively to determine how it could happen in our reality.

## WHY IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR SCHOOL LIBRARIAN A PRIORITY?

**Abby:** The librarian serves a vital role keeping the love and passion for learning alive on a campus. Whether it is enriching classroom learning for students and teachers, connecting to traditions, events and other celebrations or making space to explore curiosities with no strings attached, the librarian sets the tone for the campus.

**Lara:** Every student in a school has access to the library. Therefore, it is essential for the librarian and myself to collaborate on the vision and mission of the school. If we align our efforts, then we can support both the teachers and the students in their learning path. I approach our partnership through a lens of curiosity about the possibilities. I believe that the librarian's perspective as a Media Resource specialist provides countless opportunities and pathways. Because we are both aligned on the vision of the school, I almost always find a way to say YES when she wants to try something new for our students.

## AS YOU PARTNER WITH YOUR LIBRARIANS, WHAT WERE SOME KEY IDEAS THAT WERE CONSIDERED AND COMMUNICATED IN MAKING YOUR VISION COME TO LIFE?

**Abby:** It is important to hire for the purpose of carrying out your vision and mission. It is equally important to

remain committed to understand the role of the librarian in 2026 and the many challenges they face. It is easy to devalue the space and/or position as an “easy” cut when facing budgetary crisis in public education. Staying in tune and aware of those challenges and actively seeking understanding of the impact of those changes is vital to ensuring the library remains the heart of the campus.

**Lara:** When hiring our librarian, I asked an open-ended question about the possibilities and opportunities that she would like to explore in the library. We also discussed what she would need (support, financials, etc) to make that happen. I was looking for something that I had never seen before in a school, but that would support the goal of providing choice and opportunities for all students.

## WHAT ADVICE CAN YOU OFFER LIBRARIANS WHO WANT TO STRENGTHEN THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR PRINCIPAL?

**Abby:** Be open and flexible but also aware and capable of advocating for what is important for the functioning of the space. Communication is key, so including the librarian in a leadership role on campus can help with building capacity for everyone related to the library.

**Lara:** As a principal, I remain curious and want my librarian to dream big and share her dreams with me. If she can come in with a plan and a purpose or reason, then I will always say yes. For librarians who are just starting to develop a relationship with the principal, I would recommend that you take time to understand what the principal is hoping to achieve for each student. What are the principal's visions/expectations for the library? If you find that you and the principal aren't aligned, I feel that is a great way to start. Start by educating or developing your principal's understanding of the possibilities. Once you see alignment, I believe the possibilities of how much you can develop a library program are endless.



**WE ARE LIVING IN A TIME WHERE BOOKS IN SCHOOL LIBRARIES ARE BEING CHALLENGED FOR ALL KINDS OF REASONS. HOW DO YOU PARTNER WITH YOUR LIBRARIAN TO PROACTIVELY PREPARE FOR COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS?**

**Abby:** I remain committed to knowing and understanding our policies and procedures related to book challenges. To ensure the librarian feels supported, it is crucial to gain perspective and not just assume all they are doing is checking books in and out. When changes are made, it can have a significant impact on the functioning of the space and the culture of the campus.

**Lara:** As a principal, I remain curious and want my librarian to dream big and share her dreams with me. If she can come in with a plan and a purpose or reason, then I will always say yes. For librarians who are just starting to develop a relationship with the principal, I would recommend that you take time to understand what the principal is hoping to achieve for each student. What are the principal's visions/expectations for the library? If you find that you and the principal aren't aligned, I feel that is a great way to start. Start by educating or developing your principal's understanding of the possibilities. Once you see alignment, I believe the possibilities of how much you can develop a library program are endless.

**WE ARE WELL INTO A NEW SCHOOL YEAR WITH NEW CHALLENGES WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SB13 AND MANY LIBRARIANS NOT RECEIVING RAISES. WHAT REMINDERS CAN YOU OFFER SCHOOL LIBRARIANS ABOUT THE WORK THEY DO EVERYDAY?**

**Abby:** There is a level of reasonableness to consider when managing this amount of change. Making it a safe space to not know and allow time to better understand before making huge changes or building systems that are not sustainable is important. Remaining curious, listening and being situationally aware are vital to ensuring they feel supported and as though their roles and learning environment are important.

**Lara:** I know this is a hard thing for many librarians. Although they don't meet the definition of "teacher" outlined in the legislation, the role they are playing in learning is huge. They teach students. They teach other educators. They teach parents. I want to find ways to support and partner with my librarian, so she continues to know that I believe in the amazing work she is doing and that she is valued as a teacher for all on our campus.

**THERE ARE SOME GREAT THINGS HAPPENING IN YOUR LIBRARIES. PLEASE PROVIDE SOME SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF STUDENT EXPERIENCES THAT YOU ARE ESPECIALLY PROUD OF ALONG WITH THE IMPACTS THEY HAVE HAD ON STUDENTS ON YOUR CAMPUS.**

**Abby:** We love to connect the library with current events and celebrations. Our most recent event was the celebration of our campus's 30th Anniversary. The librarian curated historical memorabilia including old yearbooks, photos, articles, and artifacts that helped students gain perspective to what school was like 30 years ago. A lot of our students and families connected to previous family members that attended. This was a great example of how the space connects all students to the world around them.

**Lara:** I mentioned earlier student choice through Empower Hour. Another one is our Student Library Advisory Committee. These students meet regularly with our librarian to plan for different aspects of the library such as book fair themes and contests, guest authors, new books, and more. I love how both the librarian and myself continue to stay curious and find ways to grow our library program and impact on our community.

Thank you both for being champions for access, school libraries and school librarians. We are grateful for your insights.

*Abby Kennel is the Principal at Mason Elementary, Cedar Park, TX in Leander ISD. Lara Labbé-Maginel is the Principal at North Elementary, Leander, TX in Leander ISD. Becky Calzada is the District Library Coordinator in Leander ISD.*

# Unlocking Family History

## TSLAC'S UPDATED ONLINE GENEALOGY RESOURCES

By Susan Floyd



The Texas State Library and Archives Commission's [Genealogy Resources website](#) was recently updated and provides a useful summary of available library and archives materials from its extensive collections that may be of interest to patrons doing family history research.

### LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

Library resources include publications, indexes, databases, and other types of information that genealogists find useful when tracing their family trees. Search the TSLAC [library catalog](#) online for published family and county histories, state and federal government reports, microfilm, and other cataloged titles. City directories, county records, county tax rolls, newspaper collections, vital statistics indexes, and more may provide key information for family history research. In addition to being available in TSLAC's Reference Reading Room in Austin without an appointment, many materials are also available through Interlibrary Loan.

### ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS

Looking for an ancestor who did business or interacted with the governments of the Republic of Texas or the State of Texas in any way? TSLAC's archival collections may be of

use. Collections of interest to family historians include Republic of Texas passports, Republic claims, Adjutant General service records, Confederate pension applications and indigent families lists, fire insurance maps, clemency records, convict record ledgers and indexes, election registers, voter registration lists, and more. Digitized records may also be available online through [Ancestry.com Texas](#); free access to TSLAC records that have been digitized by Ancestry is available to Texas residents with the creation of a free Ancestry account. Many of these records are also available in the [Texas Digital Archive](#) without a subscription or login.

### RESEARCH GUIDES BY TOPIC

TSLAC has compiled multiple online guides for researchers interested in specific topics, including:

[African American Genealogy](#)

[American Indian Genealogy](#)

[Business and Company Research](#)

[Education Records and Research Resources](#)

[Historical Elections Research](#)

[Mexican American Genealogy Research](#)

[Land and Property History Research](#)

[Military Records Research](#)

[Nacogdoches Archives](#)

[Resources of the Republic of Texas](#)

[and Pre-Republic Era \(1820-1845\)](#)

### ONLINE SERVICES

[TexShare Databases](#) provide resources for genealogy and history, including:

- Fold3 Library Edition
- HeritageQuest Online
- Newspapers.com (Texas Edition)
- ProQuest Historical Newspapers
- Texas Digital Sanborn Maps

TSLAC and other [Family Search affiliate libraries in Texas](#) also provide on-site access to restricted images in FamilySearch affiliate collections.

Learn more about these and other research resources available from TSLAC at [www.tsl.texas.gov/familyhistory](http://www.tsl.texas.gov/familyhistory).

*Susan Floyd is the Communications Officer at the Texas State Library and Archives Commission.*



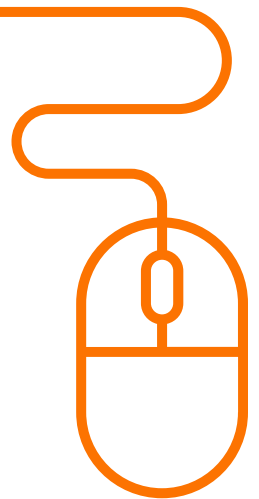


# Libraries and Accessibility

## STAYING AHEAD OF THE NEW RULES

By Laurie Bruns

Librarians assist patrons in finding information and provide multiple modalities for users to access materials equitably, especially in their physical collection. Beginning in 2026, requirements from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandate that all web and app content meet certain accessibility requirements to prevent discrimination against individuals with disabilities. Compliance is an intimidating word, so let's break down the requirements and how libraries can adjust their digital spaces to comply with the mandate.



### STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

are required to comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, which requires the following of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Version 2.1, level AA. Funded by state and local governments, public schools, public universities/colleges, and public libraries must follow this rule. Entities with greater than 50,000 people must comply by April 24, 2026, while those with fewer than 49,999 people have until April 26, 2027. The mandate has left public entities scrambling for compliance by the due date.

### ADA REQUIREMENTS

Providing accessible materials not only assists those with disabilities but also provides support for every user. Screen readers provide access to visually impaired individuals or those who have cognitive difficulties, such as learning disabilities or dyslexia, while captions and transcripts allow hearing-impaired users to experience video and audio. Providing consistent navigation not only helps screen readers find information quickly, but content is also easily readable by all individuals.

Understanding a few requirements of the law allows creators to update existing websites and begin to apply accessibility rules as they create new content. The following six elements will help you begin updating and creating your digital content.

### ALTERNATIVE TEXT

Alternative Text, or alt text, is added to images, figures, and graphs, allowing screen readers to read a description of an image. Alt text is not automatically applied to images; therefore, it is added manually by the creator. Descriptive text includes important information focusing on what is displayed and the significance of the image but avoid overly detailed descriptions about unnecessary information.

### HEADINGS

Headings break large pieces of text into smaller chunks, allowing easier navigation for both visual readers and screen readers. Screen readers use keyboard shortcuts to navigate a website, and headings allow them to locate content by skipping text. Bolded, italicized, or larger text does not constitute a heading. Instead, apply it as a “style”, which is a pre-formatted text element found in desktop and web tools, such as Microsoft Word, Google Docs, and text boxes in websites.

### DESCRIPTIVE HYPERLINKS

Hyperlinks connect patrons with important content in the library, but links should have descriptive names rather than “Click Here” or “Visit this Link”, followed by a long URL. Instead, the accessible format provides a descriptive title, such as: “Visit the Texas Library Journal for the latest issue.”

### PDFS

PDFs compress documents into a consistent form, and we are well-versed in converting documents; however, these PDFs are generally viewed by screen readers as an image, and patrons with disabilities are met with a description of “image” rather than

the content painstakingly created by the library. When uploading PDFs, also include the document in its original form, such as docx, .ppt, etc., to ensure readability.

### COLOR CONTRAST

Using color to designate important information creates a problem for screen readers and those with visual impairments. Color blind individuals cannot see certain colors; therefore, color contrast becomes very important. Light colors should always be placed on dark backgrounds, and dark backgrounds should be paired with light backgrounds. This is also imperative for in-person signage or presentations using slide decks. The cutest content might not be the most accessible.

### CAPTIONS AND TRANSCRIPTS

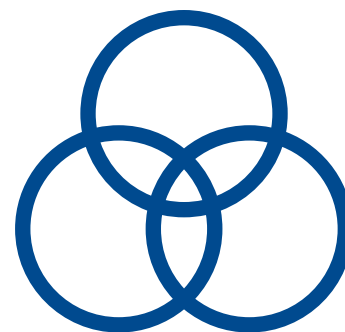
Patrons with hearing disabilities rely on captions for video and audio recordings. Automatically created captions should be checked for accuracy of spelling and timing with the video or audio. Transcribing is an alternative to captions but should be uploaded in a manner that can be read by a screen reader, i.e., .docx, .ppt, etc.

### ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL

Accessibility is essential to provide equitable library services to users with disabilities, but it helps all patrons. Each patron deserves to receive the same information regardless of the modality in which they access it, and they deserve to feel a sense of belonging in the library.

In essence, patrons with both visible and invisible disabilities deserve access to the materials created by the library. Rather than waiting for a mandate or a request for disability services, equitable services begin with accessibility. As content is created, consider accessibility by adding alternative text, headings, descriptive links, avoiding PDFs, and checking for color contrast, creating a welcoming digital environment for all patrons.

*Laurie Bruns is an Assistant Librarian at Texas Tech University Libraries.*





# Meet the Executive Board Candidates



The TLA 2026 elections will open on January 15 and close on February 17 at 11:45 pm CST. You must be a current 2026 member by January 31 to vote in the election. The positions available for the 2026 election are **President-Elect**, **Treasurer**, **Representative-at-Large (School)**, and **Representative-at-Large (Special)**.

[Learn more about the candidates](#)

## PRESIDENT-ELECT

### Kate Horan

"In the face of current challenges, including legislative threats to intellectual freedom and funding uncertainties, I will lead advocacy initiatives that uphold our core values and provide our diverse membership with robust data and policy information to navigate these issues effectively. Together, we will strengthen our libraries and ensure they remain vital resources for all Texans."



### Manya Shorr

"In these polarized times, we need a new approach: one rooted in listening, impartiality, and shared purpose. As TLA President, this would be my guiding principle. We are stewards of public funds and have a duty to oppose censorship and support a diversity of thought."



## TREASURER

### Cheryl Loewen

"From censorship, unfavorable legislation, budget cuts and job loss, and the potential loss of federal funding, librarians are dealing with stressful situations, and they are overwhelmed and struggling. The most important role TLA can play is to continue to provide a support system, advocacy and advice, and a safe space for librarians to seek the help and information they need."



### Daniel Schwartz

"TLA needs to position itself to weather financial hardships to fulfill its role of supporting libraries and their staff. I hope to explore sustainable options for membership, sponsorship, and other financial revenue streams to ensure that all aspects of the profession (school, public, academic, special) have the tools, education, and resources needed to face any challenges."



## REPRESENTATIVE-AT-LARGE (SCHOOL)

### Nicole Cruz

"I will actively advocate for robust funding for libraries, ensuring our vital services reach all demographics, including underserved urban, rural, and border communities. Expanding professional development and networking opportunities both in person and virtually will be my focus. Together we will strengthen our libraries and reaffirm their essential role in our society."



### Wendy Pray

"Strengthening advocacy with key community stakeholders and legislators is crucial to championing librarians' vital roles and ensuring their contributions are recognized and supported. We must ensure members feel deeply supported, empowered, and connected within a thriving, collaborative community, cultivating a robust and dynamic environment."



## REPRESENTATIVE-AT-LARGE (SPECIAL)

### Megan Firestone

"The Texas library community faces critical challenges: escalating attacks on libraries and books, declining funding that limits fair salaries and professional development, and growing mental health strain and burnout among library staff. TLA should continue to be a strong voice in legislative matters, providing up-to-date information and developing resources that address mental health and burnout, while supporting those who sustain our libraries and communities."



### Andrea Schorr

"As a candidate for the TLA Executive Board, I am committed to ensuring that all library professionals, regardless of role, library type, or resources, have equitable access to professional development and engagement opportunities. By investing in future leaders and expanding access to mentorship and leadership development, TLA can strengthen its ability to evolve and thrive statewide."



# Open Now: Letters About Literature Texas

On Nov. 3, the Texas Center for the Book announced the opening of the [Letters About Literature Texas](#) writing contest for 2025-2026. Texas 4th through 12th graders are invited to participate, selecting a book, book series, essay, play, poem, short story, or speech and writing a letter to an author—living or dead—explaining how his or her work changed their view of themselves or the world. The theme of Letters About Literature is “Read. Be Inspired. Write Back.”

Students may have a strong connection to the theme of the work or with a particular character. They may write about challenging events in their lives that relate to a book they have read. The possibilities are limitless, and the Center looks forward to reading this year’s entries. There are three categories of competition: grades 4-6, grades 7-8, and grades 9-12. The contest is open to all Texas students, including public, private, and homeschool.

First-place winners receive \$300. Second-place winners receive \$200, and third-place winners receive \$100. Additionally, the Center will give \$300 grants to the school libraries of each first-place winner (or for homeschoolers, their public library.)

First-place winners will also receive a \$400 stipend to travel to the Texas Library Association Annual Conference in Houston in March, where they will be recognized in a special awards ceremony sponsored by TSLAC, the Texas Center for the Book, and the Texas Association of School Librarians—all are invited to attend! This year’s featured speaker is Jasmine Warga, the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Unlikely Tale of Chase and Finnegan*, *A Rover’s Story*, *The Shape of Thunder*, and *A Strange Thing Happened in Cherry Hall*. Her book *Other Words for Home* received a Newbery Honor and Walter Honor, among numerous other awards.

Students may apply to Letters About Literature Texas through 6:00 p.m. Central on Monday, Jan. 26. Visit [www.tsl.texas.gov/lettersaboutliterature](http://www.tsl.texas.gov/lettersaboutliterature) for full contest rules and instructions.

**2024-2025 Level 3 (grades 9-12)  
winner Kayla Padilla (Mission, TX)  
with author Andrea Davis Pinkney**



## PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN SHOWCASES INNOVATIVE COLLABORATION

Long-time TLA member Kimberly Gay, Head of Reference and Information Services and Academic Reference & Instruction Librarian II at the John B. Coleman Library was invited to present at the Hawai'i Library Association Annual Conference (HLA) in Honolulu in November - becoming the first HBCU librarian to present at the HLA Conference.

Her presentation, *Woven Together: Academic, School, Public and Specialty Libraries and Librarians Cultivating Community, Culture, and Collaboration through Experiential Learning from STEM to STEAgM—Infusing Agriculture and Foodscaping to Foster Interdisciplinary Partnership*, showcases PVAMU's national impact through an innovative collaboration between

- The University Library and Agriculture Research Librarian
- College of Education
- College of Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources (CAFNR)
- Society for Science – Regeneron ISEF
- NASA Space Center Houston – Space Exploration Educators Conference (SEEC)

The project strengthens experiential learning in STEM and STEAgM, especially for students preparing to become future STEM educators.

Kimberly wrote about this unique program in the *Texas Library Journal* [Summer 2025 issue](#).



## TLA Awards

TLA Awards recognize and honor excellence and contributions in and to the library profession. Nominations must be received by January 15. [Nominate someone today!](#)

- **Librarian of the Year:** Honoring extraordinary leadership and service within the library community.
- **Distinguished Service:** Honoring superlative leadership and service to the library field.
- **Lifetime Achievement:** Honoring a long standing TLA member who has had an exemplary career in librarianship.
- **Outstanding Services to Libraries:** Honoring an individual or organization for outstanding lay advocacy.
- **Wayne Willians Library Project of the Year:** Honoring a project that exemplifies the highest level of achievement and professional standards.
- **Libraries Change Communities Award:** Honoring a collaborative effort to promote innovative library-based initiatives involving the community.
- **Benefactor Award:** Honoring substantial donations to libraries.

## TLA Scholarships

TLA offers several scholarships and stipends to support library professionals and students in Texas:

- **Ray C. Janeway Scholarship** for graduate students pursuing library education,
- **Vivian Greenfield Award** for TLA members advancing youth-focused library work,
- **Walter H. Escue Memorial Scholarship** for graduate students specializing in technical services,
- **TLA Summer School Scholarship** for MLS students enrolled in summer courses.

Additionally, the Escue Conference Stipend supports Texas library paraprofessionals attending conference.

The deadline to apply for a TLA scholarship or stipend is January 15. Learn more and apply [here](#).

### BRANDING IRON AWARD DEADLINE JANUARY 15

Whether they have substantial marketing funds and staff, or a shoe-string budget and marketing is among 'other duties as assigned,' librarians are creating amazing work to promote their services, programs, and events. TLA's Branding Iron Awards honor this inspiring and creative work with awards presented in several categories, and one overall Best of Show winner. [Enter today!](#)

### SAM G. WHITTEN INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM AWARD

This award is presented annually to an individual or organization in the library community who actively promotes intellectual freedom in Texas. Individuals or organizations can be recognized for their work over an extended period of time, or for work done in response to a particular situation or circumstance within their community. [Nominations are open through January 15.](#)

## TLA GRANTS

Applications for the [Jeannette and Jim Larson Grant](#) (mystery genre) and the [Woll Memorial Fund](#) (collection development grant, children's literature) are open.

[Apply today!](#)

## UNIT AWARDS, SCHOLARSHIPS AND STIPENDS

Many of TLA's units offer [awards and scholarships](#) to support your work and library education. They also provide [stipends](#) to help defray the costs of the conference. Apply today!

## TEXAS BLUEBONNET AWARD 2026-2027 NEW LIST

The Texas Bluebonnet Award (TBA) 2026-2027 List was announced at the Texas Book Festival in Austin on Saturday, November 8, 2025. [The Texas Bluebonnet Award List](#) is one of the most distinguished children's literature lists in the country. Each year, more than 63,000 third-through-sixth graders from across Texas vote for their favorite title from the list. "Read 5, then decide" is a slogan known by school librarians, public librarians, and homeschooling parents across the state.

The TBA 2025-2026 [voting deadline](#) is January 28, 2026. The Award winner will be announced in the spring and will be honored at the TLA 2026 Annual Conference in Houston in March.



# TSLAC Texas America250 Traveling Exhibits Hit the Road

The Texas State Library and Archives Commission has made a traveling version of its upcoming 2026 exhibit, Texas America250, available to every central/main public library location in the state—that's more than 500 libraries across all 261,258 square miles of Texas!



These pop-up traveling exhibits highlight historically significant Texas Treasures from the State Archives. Texas America250 is already on display in many libraries—when your location puts its exhibit on view, TSLAC requests that you email them photos and media mentions, as well as tag them on social media (@TSLAC) and use the hashtag #TexasAmerica250.

The goal of the traveling exhibits program is to empower local institutions, especially public libraries, to become sites for community exploration of the story of the Lone Star State over the past 250 years—together. From Spanish missions to the space race, the landscape, culture, economy, and people of Texas have all played essential roles in the development of the United States. Host institutions may display their exhibits any time from receipt through the America250 celebrations in 2026. There is no cost, including shipping/delivery, and exhibits do not need to be returned.

TSLAC's remaining sets of traveling exhibits are now being distributed to local institutions statewide, including schools, courthouses and local governments, and museums, on a first-come, first-served basis.

For more information, and to access additional resources like digital and self-print graphics, videos, a media kit, and more, visit [www.tsl.texas.gov/america250](http://www.tsl.texas.gov/america250).



*TSLAC Texas America250  
traveling exhibits on view  
at the Bandera Kronkosky  
Library and Palacios Library*

## Upcoming Events

### **HANDLE WITH CARE: INTERACTING WITH DIFFICULT PATRONS**

**January 13 | 3:00 – 4:00 p.m.**

We interact with people from all backgrounds, dealing with unknown trauma and mental health concerns. This session will focus on techniques to improve how we interact with people daily to prevent escalation and discuss where to draw the line when the behaviors we see are more than what is allowed. Real-life examples will be used, and strategies for de-escalation will be given. Free for members, \$40 for non-members. Register [here](#).

### **A CALL TO ORDER: BETTER BOARD MANAGEMENT IN 1 HOUR**

**February 24 | 3:00 – 4:00 p.m.**

Board members can be your greatest advocates! Learn new ways to manage your board and keep them engaged in you and your library. Whether your board is advisory or governing, elected or appointed, we can help! Please note this is not legal advice, and we most likely don't have answers for that one board member. Free for members, \$40 for non-members. Register [here](#).

### **LUNCH BUNCH MAGIC: BUILDING COMMUNITY ONE BITE AT A TIME**

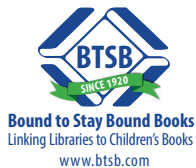
**March 24 | 3:00 – 4:00 p.m.**

Make the most of midday! Learn how innovative lunch bunch programming fosters meaningful student engagement through podcasting, mystery-solving, community service, and more—no special tools needed. This session spotlights easy-to-implement ideas that turn your library into a dynamic community hub. Walk away with ready-to-go resources and inspiration to cultivate connection and creativity across all grade levels during one of the most overlooked times of day. Free for members, \$40 for non-members. Register [here](#).



# Thank You TLA 2025 Sponsors

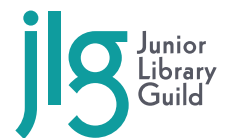
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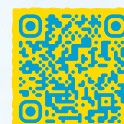
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**TLA**★





CULTIVATING COMMUNITY  
THRIVING TOGETHER

TLA★2026

TEXAS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

HOUSTON ★ MARCH 29-31



# CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

# Conference Welcome

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## Join us at TLA 2026!

I am so excited to invite each of you to the TLA 2026 Annual Conference. We are back in Houston for the first time in a decade and this vibrant city is a great place for an exciting conference!

This annual gathering is a time for library workers from across the state to gather for professional development, networking, and connection, but those words can't possibly encompass the magic of the TLA conference.

The 2026 theme, "Cultivating Community, Thriving Together," speaks to that magic and what the conference offers to each of you. It was inspired by TLA members and their libraries across the state and all that they bring to the organization and profession: the wide range of ideas, backgrounds, and experiences.

Each of these is valuable and important individually, and when you put them together you see that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. That is our incredible library community.

My hope is that when you join us in Houston, no matter the stage of your career or professional development, you will find what you need to help you thrive – whether it be in the education and ideas, the networking and connection, or the support and strength.

I can't wait to welcome you to Houston and the 2026 Annual Conference March 29 – 31!

*Valerie Prilop*

Valerie Prilop  
TLA President 2025–2026

## **TLA 2026 ONLINE CONFERENCE PROGRAM NOW AVAILABLE**

Check out the full [TLA 2026 online conference program](#). You can search by audience type and topic to find the education sessions and events of interest to you. With more than 200 education sessions, a vibrant exhibit hall, hundreds of authors signing their latest books, and fun social and networking opportunities, there is something for everyone.



# TLA 2026 Schedule-at-a-Glance

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## SCHEDULE AT-A-GLANCE

TLA 2026 will be at the George R. Brown Convention Center in downtown Houston. Visit the TLA 2026 [online program](#) for more information.

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### SUNDAY, MARCH 29

7:00am – 5:30pm	Registration open
9:00am – 10:00am	TLA Bylaws Committee Meeting I
9:30am – 10:30am	Education Programs
10:30am – 12:00pm	Speed Dating the Texas Bluebonnet Award List (ticketed)
10:30am – 11:30am	TLA Council I
11:00am – 12:00pm	Education Programs
11:30am – 12:00pm	TLA Membership Meeting
12:30pm – 1:30pm	Education Programs
2:00pm – 5:00pm	Exhibit Hall Opening & Welcome
6:00pm – 8:00pm	Evening with the Authors (ticketed)

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### MONDAY, MARCH 30

7:00am – 5:30pm	Registration Open
8:15am – 9:45am	General Session I
10:00am – 11:00am	Education Programs
10:00am – 11:30am	Black Caucus Round Table Author Session (ticketed)
10:00am – 12:00pm	Texas Tea Meet & Greet (ticketed)
10:00am – 5:00pm	Exhibit Hall and Authors Area Open
11:00am – 1:00pm	Poster Sessions
11:30am – 12:30pm	Education Programs
12:15pm – 1:45am	Opening Award & Author Session (ticketed)
1:00pm – 2:00pm	Education Programs
2:00pm – 3:30pm	A Toast to Library Pioneers (ticketed)
2:00pm – 3:00pm	TLA Unit Business Meetings
2:30pm – 3:30pm	Education Programs

# TLA 2026 Schedule-at-a-Glance

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2:30pm – 3:30pm	Battledecks presented by the Library Leaders Round Table
2:30pm – 4:30pm	TLA Reading Lists Poster Sessions
3:00pm – 4:00pm	Letters About Literature
3:00pm – 4:00pm	TLA Unit Business Meetings
3:00pm – 4:00pm	Storytelling Round Table Concert
4:00pm – 5:00pm	General Session II
5:00pm – 6:00pm	Illustrator's Sketch Off

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## TUESDAY, MARCH 31

7:30am – 3:30pm	Registration Open
8:00am – 9:00am	TLA Unit Business Meetings
8:00am – 9:00am	Education Programs
8:00am – 10:00am	Teacher Day @ TLA (ticketed)
9:00am – 10:00am	TLA Unit Business Meetings
9:00am – 2:00pm	Exhibit Hall and Authors Area Open
9:30am – 10:30am	Education Programs
11:00am – 12:00pm	Education Programs
11:45am – 1:00pm	Texas Bluebonnet Award Session (ticketed)
12:30pm – 1:30pm	Education Programs
1:00pm – 2:00pm	TLA Bylaws Committee Meeting II
2:15pm – 3:15pm	General Session III
3:30pm – 4:30pm	TLA Council II



# Ticketed Author Sessions & Celebrations

## TICKETED AUTHOR SESSIONS & CELEBRATIONS

Tickets for these events must be purchased online by March 12.

Author information as of December 2, 2025. Additional authors may be added to these events. Visit the TLA 2026 [online program](#) for the most up-to-date information.



May Cobb



Sarah Beth Durst



Karyn Parsons



Keenan Jones

### Speed Dating the Texas Bluebonnet Award List

Sunday, March 29 | 10:30am – 12:00pm

**\$60 members, \$70 nonmembers**

Meet the authors and illustrators whose works are included on the 2026-2027 Texas Bluebonnet Award List. They will share their experiences and inspirations, while committee members will present best practices and book-specific resources to promote a lifelong love of reading. Limited quantities of books will be available from publishers. Full sets of the TBA books **will not** be provided.

### Evening with the Authors

Sunday, March 29 | 6:00 – 8:00pm

**\$79 members, \$89 nonmembers**

Join us for a delightful night of dining, conversation, and laughter as we welcome an incredible lineup of authors for an unforgettable panel discussion. *New York Times* bestselling author **SARAH BETH DURST** and award-winning author **MAY COBB** will be joined by other authors to be confirmed in the coming weeks; this engaging evening promises humor, insight, and a chance to connect with literary brilliance. Don't miss out on this must-attend ticketed event that's sure to spark both laughter and inspiration!

### Black Caucus Round Table Author and Award Session

Monday, March 30 | 10:00 – 11:30am

**\$60 members, \$70 nonmembers**

**KARYN PARSONS**, best known for her role as Will Smith's cousin Hilary Banks on NBC's *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, will be the keynote speaker at this event. After leaving acting behind, Karyn has gone on to found and produce *Sweet Blackberry*, an award-winning series of children's animated films, to share stories about unsung Black heroes in history, featuring narration from stars such as Alfre Woodard, Queen Latifah, and Chris Rock. The videos have been screened on HBO and Netflix and enjoyed by schools and libraries across the country. Karyn is also the author of *Clouds Over California*, *How High the Moon*, and the upcoming summer 2026 release, *Blue Beach*. The Ashley Bryan Award, recognizing a debut author, will be presented to **KEENAN JONES** for his book, *Saturday Morning at the 'Shop*.

# Ticketed Author Sessions & Celebrations



Christian Robinson



Maria Semple



Joe Dahlstrom



Gordon Korman

CREDIT: BEOWULF SHEEHAN

CREDIT: SONYA SONES

## Texas Tea with the Authors

**Monday, March 30 | 10:00am – 12:00pm**

**\$43 members, \$53 nonmembers**

Gather together to meet an impressive array of YA authors, hear all about their latest releases, and connect with other YA librarians. Similar to a speed-dating event, authors move between tables to book talk and chat about their book(s).

## Opening Authors and Award Session

**Monday, March 30 | 12:15 – 1:45pm**

**\$65 members, \$75 nonmembers**

Kick off the conference with an unforgettable celebration of literary brilliance! Join bestselling authors **CHRISTIAN ROBINSON** and **MARIA SEMPLE**—along with other voices, as they share powerful insights, captivating stories, and behind-the-scenes experiences that will inspire and delight. This dynamic opening event is your chance to connect with the minds shaping today's literary world. Don't miss this must-attend gathering for book lovers and creative thinkers alike! The TLA Benefactor Award will also be presented.

## A Toast to Library Pioneer Joe Dahlstrom

**Monday, March 30 | 2:00 – 3:30pm**

**Ticket cost TBD, check TLA 2026 online program for updates**

Join us to honor **DR. JOE F. DAHLSTROM** for his distinguished leadership in Texas librarianship and service to communities. A past TLA President, Interim Executive Director, and *Texas Library Journal* contributor, he also held leadership roles in ALA and TCAL. Beyond libraries, Joe contributed to Rotary, historical preservation, and the arts. This program celebrates his lasting impact on libraries, higher education, and cultural life across Texas.

## Teacher Day@TLA

**Tuesday, March 31 | 8:00 – 10:00am**

**\$35 for librarians registered for conference; \$155 for teachers (includes access to exhibit hall and conference sessions that day)**

This inspiring day is dedicated to classroom teachers who want to unlock the full potential of collaboration with librarians! Participants will return to their districts as library advocates and collaborators—and maybe even future librarians themselves. This year's event features **GORDON KORMAN**, the beloved author of over 100 novels for young readers, including classics like *Macdonald Hall*, *I Want to Go Home*, and *Slacker*. Gordon's stories have sparked imagination for decades, and now you'll have the chance to hear from him in person! Don't miss this chance to connect, learn, and lead the way in creating vibrant, library-powered classrooms.

## Texas Bluebonnet Award Author Session

**Tuesday, March 31 | 11:45am – 1:00pm**

**\$65 members, \$75 nonmembers**

Experience one of the most prestigious children's choice literary awards in the nation - the Texas Bluebonnet Award (TBA). This premier event showcases the winning TBA author, celebrating creativity and the power of young readers' voices. Attend this inspiring session to be center stage at the heart of a beloved literary tradition witnessing students demonstrate their love of reading.



# Featured Events

## FEATURED EVENTS

### Sunday, March 29

#### Swoons & Screams Author Panel

12:30 – 1:30 pm

Fall in love? Or, run for your life! Readers can decide by hearing from today's talented writers of popular genre fiction. From romance to mystery and horror, authors talk about their favorite heart-racing stories. Featured authors include May Cobb, Katherine Center, ReShonda Tate, Julie Murphy, and Linda Castillo.



Katherine Center



Sonia De Los Santos



John Leguizamo



Jennifer Mathieu



Bethany Morrow



Jyoti Mukharji

CREDIT: NATASHA GOREL

### Monday, March 30

#### General Session 1: Opening Our Story Together

8:15 – 9:45am

Join us as we open the Texas Library Association Annual Conference with a heartfelt celebration of what brings together — community, creativity, and the enduring spirit of librarianship. We're honored to welcome award-winning actor and author John Leguizamo, whose passion for storytelling and advocacy for diverse voices will inspire and energize us all. This is more than a kickoff — it's a moment to connect, reflect, and celebrate the art of building inclusive spaces where ideas thrive.

#### Cooking Up Stories: A Conversation with Lauren Thomas, Jyoti Mukharji and Auyon

10:00 – 11:00am

This flavorful author session features Lauren Thomas—author of *The Modern Hippie* and Jyoti Mukharji and Auyon Mukharji, co-authors of *Heartland Masala*. They will share their journey from kitchen creativity to published success, offering insights into food writing, storytelling, and the art of connecting with readers through recipes. Bringing their own unique perspectives on culinary culture, this will be an inspiring discussion for food lovers, those hoping to share cooking suggestions and insights with their patrons, and anyone curious about the intersection of cooking and storytelling.

#### Latino Caucus Round Table Author

10:00 – 10:45 am

Join the Latino Caucus Round Table for its inaugural author session celebrating creativity, culture, and community. Acclaimed author Laekan Zea Kemp and award-winning musician and author Sonia De Los Santos will share insights into their creative journeys, their upcoming books, and the vibrant cultural roots that inspire their work. Discover how their stories — told through words and music — honor heritage, identity, and the essential role libraries play in connecting communities.

# Featured Events



Auyon Mukharji



Veronica Roth



Mychal Threats



Jasmine Warga

## Mychal Threats: A Celebration of Library Joy

**11:30am – 12:30pm**

Discover the power of library joy with the award-winning author and host of Reading Rainbow, Mychal Threats. Join Mychal for a conversation about his new book, *I'm So Happy You're Here: A Celebration of Library Joy*, mental health, and finding joy in your work. Open to all conference attendees.

## Love, Laughter, and Line Dancing with Katherine Center

**1:00 – 2:00 pm**

Kick up your heels with *New York Times* bestselling author Katherine Center for a one-of-a-kind session that blends rhythm, joy, and storytelling. As she teaches a lively line dancing class, Katherine will share insights into her writing process, her newest novel *The Shippers*, and why love stories and happy endings matter more than ever. Come ready to dance, laugh, and celebrate the stories that lift us up.

## Celebrate Books with Letters About Literature Texas Winners

**2:30 – 3:30pm**

Letters About Literature Texas is a reading and writing contest for 4th-12th graders. Join us to hear students in grades 4-12 read their winning letters, written to authors who helped them see the world in a new way. Our featured speaker will be renowned author Jasmine Warga, the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Unlikely Tale of Chase and Finnegan*, *A Rover's Story*, *The Shape of Thunder*, and *A Strange Thing Happened in Cherry Hall*. The winning students will receive their certificates and prize money at the ceremony.

## Your Public Library Presents Jennifer Mathieu

**2:30 – 3:30pm**

Join acclaimed author Jennifer Mathieu for an engaging look at her new adult novel, *The Faculty Lounge*. Blending humor and heart, the book offers a bighearted portrait of life inside

a Texas high school. Mathieu will discuss the inspirations behind the story in conversation with Rachel Reeves, Technical Services Manager of the Denton Public Library.

*Presented by TLA Public Libraries Division.*

## Tuesday, March 31

### The Stories We Share: Authors on Writing for Book Clubs

**8:30 – 9:30am**

Join an engaging panel of bestselling authors—including Veronica Roth, Bethany C. Morrow, and more—to explore what makes a novel resonate with readers and book clubs alike. Hear how their stories ignite conversation, connection, and community through complex characters and compelling themes. You'll leave with new insights—and plenty of inspiration to share with your patrons for their next book club pick.





# TLA 2026 Annual Conference

## REGISTER FOR TLA 2026

Early bird registration ends January 31. [Register](#) before rates increase on February 1.



	Early Bird October 1 – January 31	Standard February 1 – March 1	Late and Onsite Rates March 2 – March 31
Members – Full conference	\$399	\$480	\$585
Nonmembers – Full conference	\$769	\$842	\$905
Student, retired, associate (lay) members – Full conference	\$175	\$199	\$225
Members – Single Day	\$282	\$315	\$366
Nonmembers – Single Day	\$450	\$465	\$480
Youth (age 10–17) – Full conference	\$150	\$150	\$150
Exhibits Only – Multiday	\$100	\$125	\$150
Exhibits Only – Youth (age 10–17)	\$50	\$50	\$50
Exhibits Only – Single Day	\$55	\$55	\$55

# TLA 2026 Annual Conference

## CODE OF CONDUCT

The Texas Library Association (TLA) is dedicated to providing a harassment-free environment for everyone engaged with the association at events and on social media channels, regardless of gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, age, ethnicity, military status, race, or religion. We do not tolerate harassment in any form at any TLA events or activities, or on any TLA social media channels, including those managed by TLA units.

We encourage productive and constructive discussion and participation. Be kind to others. Do not insult or put down others. Behave professionally. Remember that harassment, and sexist, racist, or exclusionary jokes are not appropriate.

Harassment includes offensive comments or actions related to gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, age, ethnicity, military status, race, or religion. Sexual images in public spaces, deliberate intimidation, stalking, following, harassing photography or recording, sustained disruption of talks or other events, inappropriate physical contact, unwelcome sexual attention, online bullying, cyberstalking, name calling or humiliating or disparaging language is not tolerated. Individuals asked to stop any harassing behavior at events or online are expected to comply immediately.

If an individual engages in harassing behavior, TLA may take any action deemed appropriate, including warning the offender, expelling them from the event, banning them from future events, hiding or deleting comments, and/or blocking the offender from any TLA social media channels.

## BOOK YOUR HOTEL TODAY!

TLA has negotiated room rates for several hotels in downtown Houston for the 2026 conference. A limited number of discounted rooms are available at each hotel, and some are filling up quickly. Book your hotel through onPeak, TLA's only official housing provider, to ensure you receive the best rates and the ability to cancel or change that reservation if needed. [Reserve your room today](#) to get the best price at your preferred hotel!

## TRANSPORTATION AT TLA 2026

Back by popular demand! [Lyft pass credits](#) will be available for conference attendees staying at select hotels more than ½ mile from the Houston convention center. Be sure to book your room through onPeak and register for conference before March 6th to be eligible.

## TLA 2026 VOLUNTEER SIGN UP OPENS IN JANUARY

Volunteers are the backbone of TLA's annual conference, making everything from arrival to departure a seamless and enjoyable experience for all attendees. Anyone who is registered for the conference can sign up to volunteer for as little as two – four hours during the TLA 2026 conference.





# President's Programs

## PRESIDENT'S PROGRAMS

Hidden gems of interest  
selected by TLA  
President Valerie Prilop



### Sunday, March 29

#### **Nature Smart Public Libraries: Community, Wellness, and the Outdoors**

**12:30 – 1:30pm**

Public libraries are reimagining their roles as connectors to nature, health, and place. Hear from librarians, parks leaders, and their community partners from across Texas who are working together to make outdoor spaces, nature programs, and climate-conscious design part of daily library life. Leave with practical ways to start - whether you have a community garden, a tiny patio, or no green space at all.

#### **Using AI Ethically and Safely: What Libraries and Communities Need to Know**

**12:30 - 1:30pm**

Artificial intelligence is rapidly becoming part of daily life, and libraries are often at the center of helping communities navigate new technologies. This session will highlight the ethical considerations and responsibilities that come with AI use for both patrons and library staff including issues of privacy, accuracy, and fairness. Attendees will gain a clearer understanding of the risks, obligations, and best practices involved in supporting informed and responsible AI use.

### Monday, March 30

#### **Cultivating Comunidad: Thriving Library Spaces for Latiné Students**

**10:00 – 11:00am**

As more institutions receive Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) designation, librarians are seeking innovative, equity-driven approaches to meet the evolving needs of Latiné students. Discover how academic libraries can foster belonging and success for Latiné students through inclusive programming, cross-campus collaboration, and culturally responsive services. Learn practical strategies to position your library as a thriving community hub.

#### **Library Vibes Only: Gen Alpha Edition**

**10:00 – 11:00am**

Get in sync with Gen Alpha and create library spaces and programs that reflect their digital, curious, and creative world. Explore how to connect with today's youngest learners through tech integration, social-emotional learning, and playful design. Leave with ready-to-use ideas and strategies that spark joy, build engagement, and strengthen connections with the newest generation of library users.

#### **Reality? BRB, I'm Turning the Pages and Tuning Out**

**10:00 – 11:00am**

Celebrate the creativity and authenticity neurodiverse authors bring to young adult literature. This panel highlights stories shaped by ADHD, autism, dyslexia, and other perspectives that reflect the many ways minds work. Authors will discuss writing processes, representation, and the importance of creating characters who resonate with neurodiverse teens.



# President's Programs



## Content With Character! Educational Manga for Your Library

**2:30 – 3:30pm**

In collaboration with school and public librarians, this panel of manga enthusiasts will explore and recommend manga titles curated across multiple age ranges that can directly support educational content such as Texas state learning standards, research and information literacy, and social emotional skills.

and professional responses. Through in-depth interviews with school librarians, the research examines changing perceptions of librarians and the importance of forming collaborative relationships within the school community to work towards advocacy, with a specific focus on the support of school counselors during these events.

## Impact of Book Challenges on Flourishing in the Academic Library: Fostering Student Belonging, Confidence, and Connection

**9:30 – 10:30am**

Editors of a forthcoming book, *Flourishing in the Academic Library*, will introduce the Framework for Flourishing with Information, created to help academic librarians identify and measure the work they do to support student flourishing. Learn how authors applied the framework to foster student belonging, confidence, and connectedness through wellness programming, collection development, and community building in academic libraries.

## Building Resilience in Challenging Times

**12:30 – 1:30 pm**

Librarians often face difficult situations that test their commitment, adaptability, and well-being. Presenters who serve varied populations and underrepresented groups will share personal experiences and practical strategies for staying motivated and effective when circumstances are tough. A mental health professional will also provide guidance on maintaining balance and supporting your emotional health while working in stressful or unsupportive environments.

## Tuesday, March 31

### The Library Without Walls: Cultivating Community Connections

**8:00 – 9:00am**

Explore creative ways elementary school libraries can build strong connections beyond their walls. Learn how to engage families through reading programs, host community-based events, and bring in outside guests to enrich student experiences. Discover practical strategies for making the library a hub of community and collaboration.

### Impact of Book Challenges on Librarian and Student Well-being

**8:00 – 9:00am**

Presenters will share the results of a qualitative study exploring the well-being of school librarians and students in the aftermath of book challenges, focusing on their emotional



# TLA 2026 Annual Conference Highlights

## AND MORE PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The TLA annual conference features content that is relevant to librarians of all types – academic, public and school.

### Academic

**Creating Belonging: Using Non-Academic Programming to Reduce Library Anxiety**

Sunday, 12:30 – 1:30pm

**Digital Literacy Gets Smarter: Teaching with AI in Mind**

Monday, 2:30 – 3:30pm

**Less is More: Information Literacy Microlearning**

Tuesday, 9:30 – 10:30am

**Let's Own Our Data: Building an Assessment Tool for Librarians**

Tuesday, 12:30 – 1:30pm

### Public

**The Grant Whisperer's Guide: Expert Tips for Smooth Administration**

Sunday, 11:00am – 12:00pm

**Camp Curiosity: Bringing STEM + Stories to Life in Your Library**

Monday, 11:30am – 12:30pm

**Access for All: Redefining Inclusive Public Libraries**

Tuesday, 11:00am – 12:00pm

**Building an Internship Program at Your Library**

Tuesday, 12:30 – 1:30pm

### School

**The Magic of Nonfiction: Cultivating Creativity, Collaboration and Community**

Sunday, 12:30 – 1:30pm

**Beyond the Book Fair: Strategies to Stretch Your Library Budget**

Monday, 2:30 – 3:30pm

**Ink and Impact: College Prep Camp in High School Libraries**

Monday, 1:00 – 2:00pm

**Library Without Limits: Tailoring Library Spaces & Services for Neurodivergent Success**

Tuesday, 8:00 – 9:00am

**Successfully Leading Multiple School Libraries**

Tuesday, 11:00am – 12:00pm

**Design and Dine: Budget Friendly Crafting Ideas in the Library During Lunchtime**

Tuesday, 12:30 – 1:30pm

### Special

**Cultivating Community Health: Building Bridges with Your Local Academic Medical Library**

Sunday, March 29, 11:00 am – 12:00 pm  
(still tentative)

### Cool Jobs

Monday, 10:00 – 11:00am

**Birds of a Feather: Conversations about Special Libraries**

Tuesday, 8:00 – 9:00am

**LAWPods: Providing Access to Justice and Bridging the Digital Divide**

Tuesday, 9:30 – 10:30am

**Let's Own Our Data: Building an Analysis Tool for Librarians**

Tuesday, 12:30 – 1:30pm

### All

**Community Collaboration: Academic, Public, and School Libraries Unite**

Sunday, 9:30 – 10:30am

**The Richmond Way in Libraries: What Would Ted Lasso Do?**

Monday, 10:00 – 11:00am

**Bookmarking Joy: Practice "Savoring" in the Library**

Monday, 2:30 – 3:30pm

**Off With the Stress! A Tea Party of Wellness Tools**

Tuesday, 8:00 – 9:00am

# 2026 Networking Opportunities

With our theme of Cultivating Community and Thriving Together, the 2026 TLA Annual Conference is filled with opportunities to connect, network, and support each other. This includes a new, dedicated networking area, the **TLA Commons**. Located in the foyer on the 2nd level of the George R Brown Convention center, you'll find many TLA groups meeting there as well as our TLA Conference Kick Off on Sunday at 9:30 to open the conference.

## TLA CONFERENCE KICK OFF

**Sunday, March 29 | 9:30–10:30 am**

Ready to boost your career and make meaningful connections? Join us for Start your conference experience with intention and connection at **TLA's 2026 Conference Kick Off!** Meet fellow TLA members, build your professional network, and make a plan for the days ahead. This upbeat gathering is the perfect place to connect with your community, make new friends, and get ready for a few fun surprises as we cultivate community and thrive together. Open to all conference attendees.

## NETWORKING FOR FIRST TIME ATTENDEES

Are you attending the TLA Annual Conference for the first time? We can't wait to welcome you! This year's theme, "Cultivating Connections, Thriving Together," is all about growing relationships that enrich your professional journey—and there's no better place to start than with your fellow first-timers.

Join us for **Caffeinated Connections: Brewing Community from the First Cup** on Sunday, March 29, 8:00–9:00 am, a relaxed morning meet-up where you can enjoy coffee, conversation, and guidance from experienced TLA members.

Then, keep the momentum going at **Picnic Perspectives: A Lunch Gathering for First-Timers** on Monday, March 30, 12:30–1:30 pm, where you'll connect with new colleagues, share insights, and swap tips to make the most of your conference experience. Together, we'll kick off a week of learning, laughter, and lasting connections.

## BUILD YOUR NETWORK AT THE LATINO CAUCUS CAFECITO!

**Tuesday, March 31 | 9:00–10:00 am**

Join the Latino Caucus for an informal "cafecito" networking social in the TLA Community Corner in the Exhibit Hall. Bring your own coffee and enjoy friendly conversation while building connections, exchanging ideas, and sharing insights with others dedicated to serving the Latino population across the U.S. Come early—giveaways available while supplies last!

## STAY CONNECTED AT TLA 2026!

Navigate the TLA conference with ease using the official TLA 2026 Mobile App! Access everything you need in one place—session schedules, speaker details, exhibit hall information, interactive maps, event updates, and more. Plan your experience, build your personal agenda, and receive real-time notifications so you never miss a moment. The app will be available for download about a week before the conference, and you'll receive an email with simple instructions on how to get started.

## BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND: THE TLA SCAVENGER HUNT!

Ready to turn your conference experience into an adventure? The TLA Scavenger Hunt is back—and it's bigger, bolder, and more fun than ever! Grab your phone and dive into a mobile quest packed with challenges, surprises, and friendly competition. Complete missions, rack up points, and climb the leaderboard for ultimate bragging rights—and yes, prizes are on the line! Stay tuned for details on how to download the app, log in, and unlock a whole new way to explore TLA. Are you ready to play, connect, and challenge yourself?

## TLA UNIT SOCIALS

(information current as of December 2; check TLA 2026 [online conference program](#) for the most current schedule and information, tickets must be purchased by March 12.)

### College and University Libraries Division Social

**Sunday, March 29 | 4:30 – 5:30pm**

**\$10 members, \$20 nonmembers**

### Library Leadership Round Table Social

**Sunday, March 29 | 4:30 – 5:30pm**

**\$5 for members and nonmembers**

### Texas Association of School Librarians Awards & Social

**Sunday, March 29 | 5:00 – 6:00pm**

**Ticketed event, no cost to attend**

### Public Libraries Division Social

**Sunday, March 29 | 5:30 – 6:30pm**

**\$5 members, \$15 nonmembers**

### Black Caucus Round Table Reception and Award Presentation

**Monday, March 30 | 6:00 – 7:30pm**

**No cost to attend**

### Small Community Libraries Round Table Morning Social

**Tuesday, March 31 | 9:00 – 10:30am**

**Ticketed event, no cost to attend**



## Exhibit Hall Information

# 2026 EXHIBITS GRAND OPENING

**SUNDAY, MARCH 29 | 2:00 – 5:00PM**

Exhibitors will gather in the bustling Exhibit Hall to bring you the best products, services, and support for your library. Take advantage of entrances at both Hall D and Hall E that offer easy access to the Exhibit Hall and enjoy refreshments and activities during the Exhibits Grand Opening. Explore over 250 exhibitors—featuring your favorites as well as exciting new vendors you won't want to miss. The exhibit hall is packed with fantastic exhibitors, activations, educational sessions, delicious lunch options, and so much more.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 29**  
2:00 – 5:00 PM  
Exhibit Hall Grand Opening

**MONDAY, MARCH 30**  
10:00 AM – 5:00 PM  
Exhibits and Authors Area

**TUESDAY, MARCH 31**  
9:00 AM – 2:00 PM  
Exhibits and Authors Area

### **AUTHOR PROMOTIONAL SIGNINGS – IN BOOTH, BOOKMOBILE, AND AUTHORS AREA**

Author signings will take place throughout the Exhibit Hall in the Authors Area, at the TechOps Specialty Vehicles Bookmobile, and at exhibitor booths during exhibit hall hours. The Authors Area schedule will be live in the TLA 2026 [online program](#) in February. Check back to see when your favorites will be signing!

### **EXHIBITOR SHOWCASES**

These educational sessions in Exhibit Hall E will introduce you to new products, services, solutions, and concepts that you can take back to your library. Look for more information in the TLA 2026 [online program](#) in January and be sure to add them to your personal schedule.

### **THE LAWN AND H-E-B RECHARGE LOUNGE**

Relax, chat with friends, catch up on your emails, and charge your devices in one of our comfortable lounges. Thanks to support from H-E-B Read 3 and library furnishings generously provided by Library Interiors of Texas, The Lawn in the main lobby and the H-E-B Read 3 Lounge in Exhibit Hall E offer a break from the hubbub of conference.

### **THE ORANGEBOY KITTEN LOUNGE**

A fan favorite returns! Thanks to the generous support of Orangeboy, Inc., the Kitten Lounge is back with cuddly, adoptable cats from local rescues. Stop by Booth 1725 anytime the Exhibit Hall is open for an instant endorphin boost, courtesy of soft purrs, warm paws, and your daily dose of kitty love.



# Exhibiting Companies

As of December 1, 2025

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The TLA Exhibit Hall features the latest library-  
 related products and services. Be sure to allow  
 plenty of time to visit and connect with the  
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