

TEXAS LIBRARY JOURNAL

Volume 101, Number 4, Fall 2025



**From Shelves to Sound:
Amplifying Library
Programs in Texas**

**Intentional Inclusion: A
Ten-Week Book Club at
Austin Community College**

**Texas Bluebonnet Award
Voting Just Got Easier**



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President's Perspective

By Valerie Prilop

I SUSPECT THAT LIKE ME, MANY OF YOU GET TO THIS POINT OF THE YEAR AND WONDER, SIMULTANEOUSLY, WHERE ALL THE TIME WENT AND IF THIS YEAR WILL EVER END.

And who could blame you? It has been a challenging year for librarians across the state and this is a time of transition, not only in seasons but also for our libraries: from summer reading programs to after school activities, from limited summer hours to 24-hour access, and — I hope soon! — from hot, humid days to cool, crisp evenings.

September 1 marked the effective date for a number of state laws that directly and indirectly impact Texas libraries. The interpretation and implementation of these laws can be confusing and challenging, and the Legislative Committee, TLA staff, and many of our members have been working to support you and your libraries as you navigate this transition. Be sure to check out the [SB 13 information and FAQ](#) and the [SB 412 summary and fact sheet](#) on the TLA website and watch Engage for information about upcoming webinars and other learning opportunities.

The fall [District Meetings](#) provide excellent opportunities for conversations about these new laws, as you meet fellow members and engage in professional development. I'll be traveling to a number of these meetings and I look forward to seeing you there. These local meetings are an excellent opportunity for learning and networking with TLA members from your area, so be sure to mark your calendars to attend. They are also an ideal way to introduce librarians who may not be current TLA members to the benefits the association offers.

Fall also means that it will soon be time to renew your TLA membership, and for 2026 you'll be doing so under the new dues structure. This structure aims to simplify becoming a member and remove barriers for new and returning members. Among the options are a fee waiver for unemployed members and reduced fees for those who work in smaller organizations. If you have questions about dues or membership renewal, be sure to reach out to the [TLA staff](#) for help.

Throughout the summer I have had the opportunity to speak to many of you, and one thing that has been clear is that no matter the type of library or size of the community represented, we are all concerned about attacks on intellectual and academic



freedoms. It's important to keep in mind that despite the differences in our libraries and communities, we are one Texas library community. We thrive and grow together, and we must reach beyond our walls to support each other. After the summer special sessions the Texas Legislature will not convene again until 2027, but our work supporting and promoting libraries must continue in the interim.

No matter your library type or your professional position, your voice is important. I'm a special librarian, but I keep an eye on school board activities and do what I can to support

my local school libraries. A college librarian can support the public library by advocating for policies that provide access for all community members. We must speak and advocate for all libraries. The challenges faced by one library may soon be challenges for all of us.

Between our professional and personal responsibilities, it is nearly impossible for us to know and understand all the issues and challenges facing our fellow members. This is where the power of our association — one that represents all types of libraries — comes in. Your membership benefits you individually, through networking, volunteering, and educational opportunities, but it also helps TLA do the important work of supporting libraries and library staff across the state through advocacy, funding, and outreach.

We can all do our part to support the association and each other through our membership and volunteering, through our advocacy activities, by sharing our knowledge and experiences, and by educating our friends and neighbors about the importance of all libraries. Thank you to each and every one of you for being a part of the TLA community and showing up for Texas libraries.

Valerie Prilop

Valerie Prilop
2025–26 TLA President

Texas Libraries Under Pressure

By Wendy Woodland

Texas librarians know better than most how quickly a law passed in Austin can reshape their daily work. This past legislative session delivered sweeping changes that affect every type of library, and the ripple effects are being felt across the state.

Public Education Laws

From funding, vouchers, and the Ten Commandments, to school safety, DEI restrictions, and parental rights, public schools face more than 100 new laws as the 2025–2026 school year begins.

SB 13 is just one of those laws, and school librarians worked diligently over the summer to help their districts comply. Districts had to adopt board policies and procedures related to library materials, create ways for parents to access their child's library records, decide whether to establish a School Library Advisory Council, and implement new purchasing processes—including posting titles for a 30-day public comment period and obtaining board approval before acquiring materials.

Librarians from districts of all sizes invested hundreds of hours this summer preparing to operate under the new law, and the workload continues as its impact unfolds.

To support members, the Texas Library Association (TLA) convened a group of school librarians in July to develop a detailed [FAQ](#). Members shared examples of timelines, tools, and documentation that districts created to comply with the law. These resources are available on the TLA website and in the Engage All Members community library. TLA also hosted a July webinar with 500 attendees and guest speakers—including a representative from the Texas Association of School Boards—who provided compliance guidance. Work on FAQs, additional webinars, and new resources continues as librarians navigate these changes.

Penal Code Changes

The Texas Penal Code is the state's primary source of criminal law. Subchapter B, Section 43.24 defines “harmful material” and makes it an offense to provide such materials to minors. For decades, the law included an affirmative defense to



prosecution if the material was provided for educational purposes. That safeguard encouraged law enforcement and courts to reserve prosecution for cases involving actual harm.

SB 412 repeals this defense, removing the protection previously given to educators, librarians, and others acting with legitimate purpose. The definition of harmful material remains unchanged, and the law does not require libraries to review or remove materials, impose age verification, or restrict access.

However, the chilling effect is real. Pressure to avoid any risk of investigation—or worse, arrest—can lead to removing materials that represent marginalized voices or address sensitive topics such as race,

gender, and sexuality.

To help members, TLA created a [fact sheet](#) on SB 412 and is developing a training module to address issues related to this change in the Penal Code.

Where Do We Go from Here?

The core mission of libraries—ensuring access to information, supporting learning, fostering critical thinking, and serving their communities—remains unchanged. What has changed is the climate in which we carry it out. The laws passed this session make library work harder, riskier, and more politicized. Yet they also underscore why libraries matter. When access to ideas is threatened, the role of the library becomes more vital than ever.

This moment calls for collective advocacy. Policymakers must hear directly from librarians about the unintended consequences of these laws: lost instructional time, restricted access to information, diminished academic freedom, and increased risks for staff simply doing their jobs.

No single librarian, school, or institution can carry this burden alone. That is why the role of the Texas Library Association is so critical. On September 20–21, members of the TLA Legislative Committee will meet for a workshop to develop strategies for advocacy during the interim and into the 2027 Legislative Session. We look forward to sharing our ideas and working with members statewide to educate elected officials on the importance of libraries.

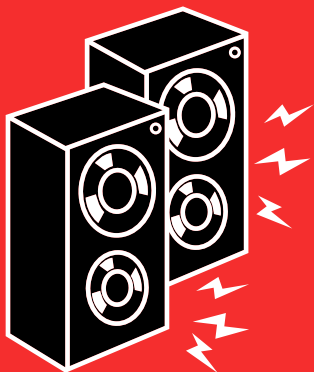


From Shelves to Sound

Amplifying Library Programs in Texas

By Erick Ibarra

As access to music education continues to decline across Texas due to budget cuts, educator shortages, and shifting policy priorities, public libraries are uniquely positioned to help fill this cultural and educational gap.



THE MUSIC EDUCATION GAP IN TEXAS

While music and the arts are recognized as essential components of a well-rounded education, many students simply do not have meaningful opportunities to participate. In May 2025, more than \$345,000 in National Endowment for the Arts grants were canceled for North Texas organizations. The result was the disruption of local programs in music, dance, theater, and even library-based initiatives. These cancellations are part of a broader rollback of public arts support.

According to the Arts Education Data Project, over 3.6 million public school students nationwide lack access to music education. In Texas, this problem is especially acute in low-income, rural, and majority Black, Hispanic, or Indigenous communities. Only about 49 percent of eligible students currently participate in school-based music programs. And with more than 30 states (including Texas) reporting severe music teacher shortages, and federal funding for teacher workforce development slashed by over \$600 million, the path forward through traditional education channels remains uncertain.

WHY LIBRARIES?

Texas libraries have long served as trusted institutions in their communities. Whether offering literacy services, workforce support, access to health information, or free digital tools, libraries meet people where they are. Adding music to that mix is not just a creative idea, it's a practical and timely next step.

Libraries bring important advantages to this work. Many already have flexible spaces that can double as classrooms or practice studios. Their reputation for openness and accessibility makes them natural gathering places for learners of all ages. And because they are not bound by school curricula, library programs can be shaped in direct response to the needs and cultures of the people they serve.

LOCAL EXAMPLES AND MODELS

Several Texas libraries are already projecting a path forward. With my expertise in libraries and music training The Fort Worth Public Library was able to start a music initiative from a community music class evolving into a robust, multi-branch program across a large library system. Today, it includes multiple classes, jam sessions, seasonal concerts, and a growing instrument lending library with more than 40 music items available for checkout. Weekly lessons are led by



passionate staff musicians, and Music and Movement sessions for children are helping build early literacy and motor skills in 11 locations.

In Dallas, the Erik Jonsson Central Library offers multiple instrument lessons for all ages making music accessible for families who may not be able to afford private instruction. In Austin, patrons have access to the Central Library's Music Lab and Innovation Lab, where they can explore instruments, produce tracks, and experiment with digital music tools. Regular performances and an active instrument lending program round out the experience. In McAllen, the public library integrates regional music traditions into events like the World Languages Festival. Bilingual programs often feature live performances of conjunto and mariachi, celebrating culture while introducing new generations to the joy of shared music.

These examples demonstrate that music programming in libraries doesn't need to be expensive or complicated. What it needs is intentionality, community investment, and a commitment to the idea that libraries are more than repositories. They are platforms for expression.

MUSIC AS A TOOL FOR EQUITY AND WELL-BEING

Music's benefits go well beyond entertainment. Studies have consistently shown links between music education and academic success, better graduation rates, and improved mental health. A 2023 study in *Frontiers in Psychology* found that middle schoolers who participated in music scored higher in measures of resilience and hope, two qualities in short supply among youth today.

Texas libraries are well equipped to offer this kind of support. They can be spaces where young people build confidence, forge identity, and discover joy. For those who lack access to private lessons or structured school programs, the public library may be the one place where their creative voice can begin to take shape.

CALL TO ACTION

Music is already taking root in library systems across Texas. It is often introduced quietly and slowly, one class or collaboration at a time, but the effects can be profound. What's needed now is a broader embrace of music as a vital part of public library services. Like books, music belongs in the commons. Libraries are uniquely positioned to ensure that



access remains free, equitable, and inclusive.

CONCLUSION

As schools face continued pressure and arts programs become increasingly vulnerable, public libraries in Texas can serve as a new kind of safety net. Through music, they can nurture creative potential, promote belonging, and help communities heal and grow. It is not enough to preserve what libraries have always done. The future lies in expanding what libraries can be.

Around the world, leading public libraries have already begun that transformation. The Toronto Public Library, the Helsinki Central Library Oodi, and the New York Public Library all now include music programming as part of their core services. These institutions are redefining what it means to be a library, not just a place of information, but one of imagination and development.

Texas libraries have the chance to do the same. Music can serve as a bridge across generations, a magnet for youth, and an expression of civic identity. When we recognize it as part of the library's educational mission, we move closer to realizing the full potential of these beloved public spaces. For young people, a library music program might be their first chance to create a song, join a jam session, or find their voice in a supportive space. For adults, it can be a way to connect with neighbors, express identity, or pick up a skill they once set aside due to the multiple responsibilities we have to face as adults. And for older generations, music offers a path to memory and meaning, a chance to revisit melodies, reconnect with their youth and memories, now shared with grandchildren in a community space.

In the Lone Star State, where independence, storytelling, and cultural pride run deep, public libraries can reflect that spirit by making room for the full range of expression, spoken, written, sung, or strummed. Music is not just programming. It

is evolution, development, heritage, connection, and hope. And in every Texas town, from the quietest branch to the busiest urban location, it can be the thread that ties us together.

Erick Ibarra is a musician and senior librarian at the Fort Worth Public Library. He is also a books author and M.Ed. in Music Education.





INTENTIONAL INCLUSION

A Ten-week Book Club at Austin Community College

By Mary Havens

ACADEMIC LIBRARIES HAVE A UNIQUE CHALLENGE IN ENGAGING THEIR PATRONS BEYOND THE ONE-SHOT LIBRARY SESSION.

I have partnered with several faculty at Austin Community College since 2018 to offer a unique experience: a ten-week, asynchronous, extra credit, online book club.

Austin Community College (ACC) serves over 70,000 Central Texas students in a 7,000 square mile service area. My campus, ACC-Elgin, is a smaller campus that serves traditional students, Early College High School (ECHS) students from three area school districts, and two campus specific programs: Veterinary Technology and Agricultural Sciences.

The idea for a book club came from my desire to learn my students' names, the first step to fostering a sense of belonging and purpose in the classroom. Applying inclusive teaching practices in the library manifests the same result, but for the entire campus.

Creating this book club seemed like a way to reach this goal systematically.

The book club was formed during a professional development opportunity called Project ACC. This week-long event taught faculty how to identify, conceptualize, and then execute an idea/project to address an issue in the classroom.

The first semester was a little rocky. We started by offering students' service hours if they participated in the book club. We purchased copies of the book *Ready Player One* by Ernest Cline, hoping that a sci-fi/fantasy novel would be appealing to students, but we had little participation.

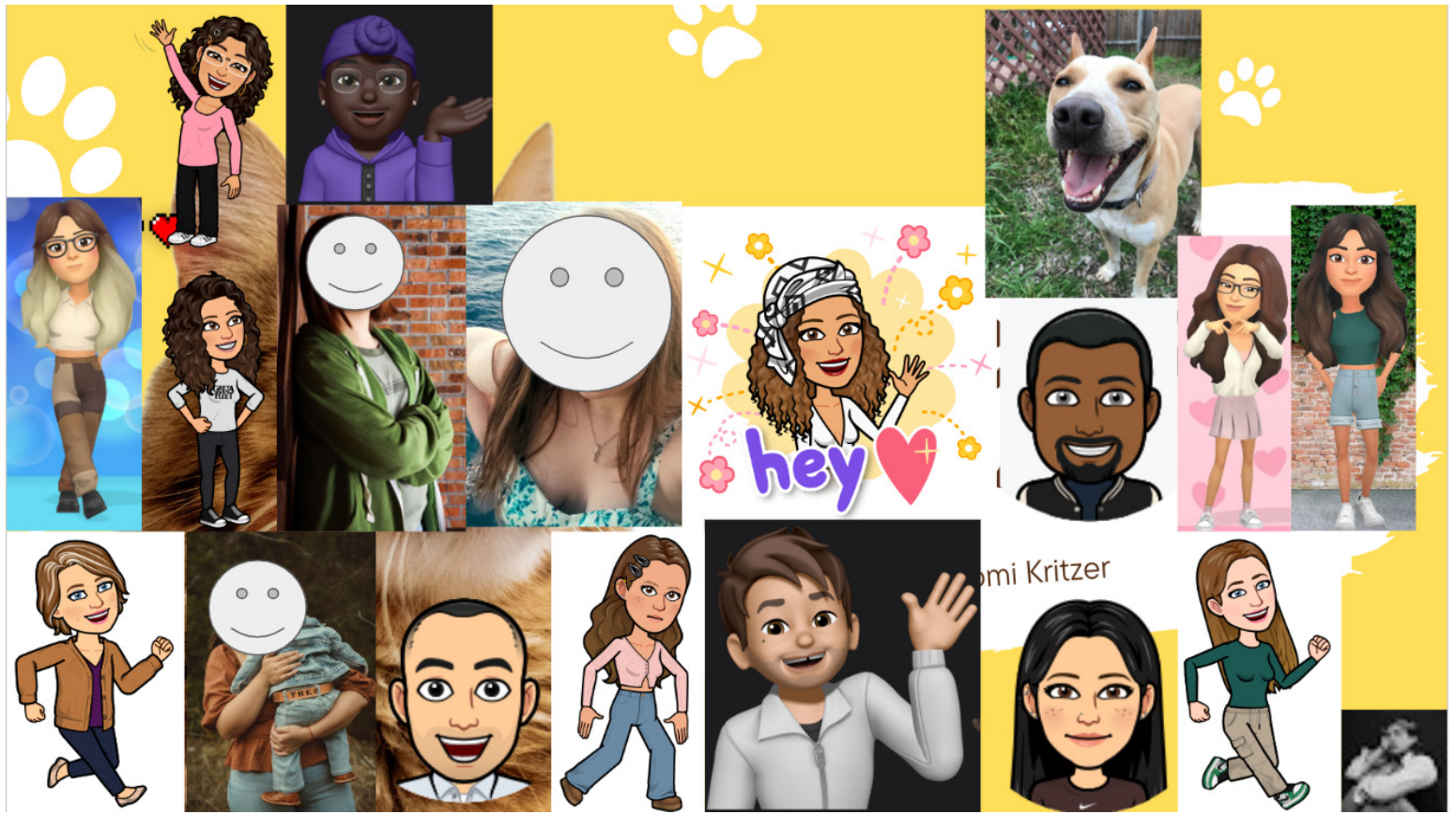
Due to multiple factors, we ended the *Ready Player One* book club and pivoted to the current model that better meets the needs of students, faculty, and library staff: an asynchronous book club where the content is delivered to the students each week.

Each fall and spring, I reach out to my faculty partners to offer twenty points

of extra credit over the course of ten weeks during the semester through the book club. These faculty partners have classes on my campus, online, or at other ACC campuses. I asked for five minutes of class time from my colleagues to promote the book club and then begin the work. The book club starts the fourth week of the semester, so the students and faculty have a chance to get to know each other.

I select ten short stories, create ten questions to accompany the stories, and devise ten tasks to get to know the participants and nurture a sense of belonging. All the content is delivered through Google Classroom, and students have multiple ways to sign up and post/share their completed assignments.

The short stories are selected, around a common theme. Past themes have included Women Write the World (all women authors), Have Story Will Travel (place as a central theme), and Kinds of Kindness (an element of kindness



is displayed). This fall's theme is Something Wicked This Way Comes, with a central focus on mild to moderate horror.

The short stories fostered many discussions: from story formatting to general questions about characters' motivations, plot analysis, and others related to the text and author. For example, a short story by Neil Gaiman brought up the larger issue of support for an author and their work regardless of their behavior. Students had a variety of opinions on how or if authors/artists should be supported if they have been accused of wrongdoing. The tasks, designed to create a sense of belonging, are not necessarily connected to the stories. The first story always has a task of sharing one's name, pronouns, and an avatar or picture. I also participate in responding to each week's task with students. Popular tasks have included submitting a song for a playlist (sharing pictures of current/future/dream pets and designing a room using online tools

Students have one week to complete the story, questions, and tasks to earn two points of extra credit. At the end of the ten weeks, I compile the participants earned points into a spreadsheet to share with my faculty partners. The faculty partners determine how to distribute the extra credit.

In addition to the grade totals, students fill out a Google Form to assess the book club. Feedback from the assessment informs future book club content, tasks, and even deliverables. For example, students appreciate direct links to the short stories versus having to sign in to read a story from an ACC database.

While my main goal of learning individual students' names on my campus may not have been achieved with the book club, due to its asynchronous, online nature, I will say that the overall response to the club brings me great joy. Feedback from the assessment indicates that students

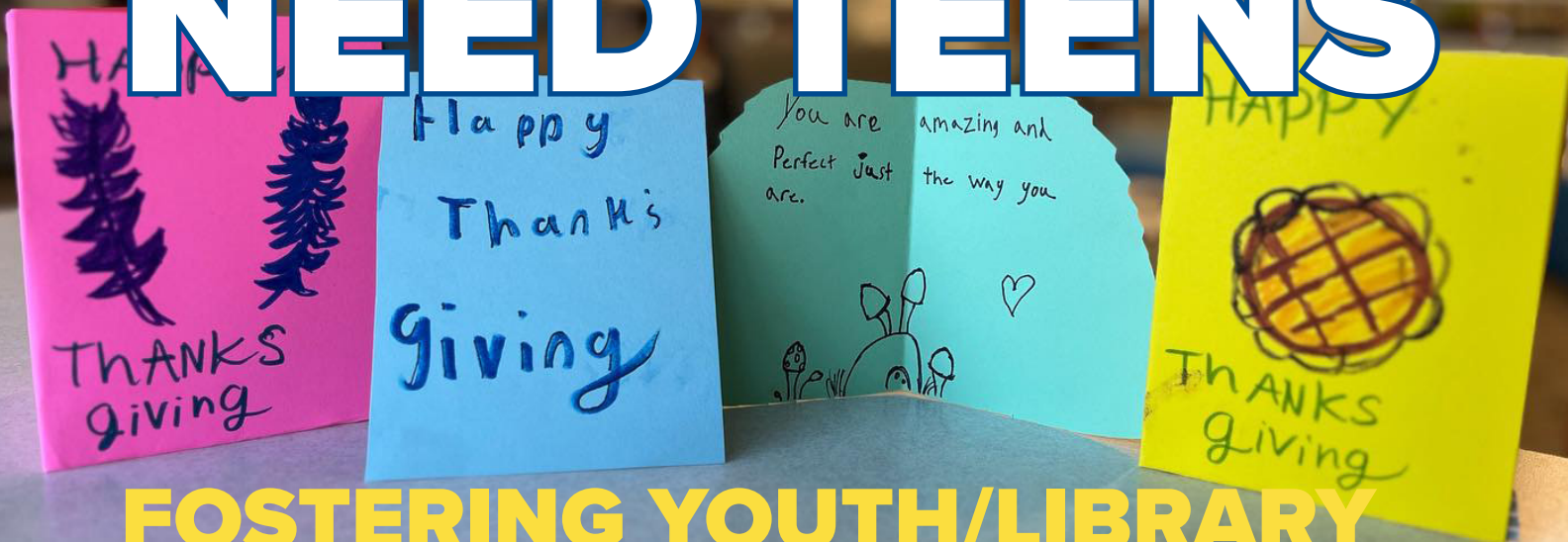
appreciate getting to express their opinions about the content as well as showing who they are during the tasks. They appreciate the ability to "dip in and dip out" of the book club each week, if needed. Many students report that they appreciate learning about new authors, genres, and just reading for fun. For me, grading the student submissions is the highlight of my week.

My hope is that you are inspired to create your own version of an online book club. While a bit labor intensive at the beginning, it is a joy to implement and appreciated by your students. It's easy to adapt the program, schedule, theme, material, and tasks.

To learn more about creating your own book club and view the Literature Review, please visit my [Library Guide](#).

Mary Havens is a Faculty Librarian/Associate Professor at Austin Community College – Elgin Campus.

LIBRARIES NEED TEENS



FOSTERING YOUTH/LIBRARY RELATIONSHIPS BEYOND THE TEEN SPACE

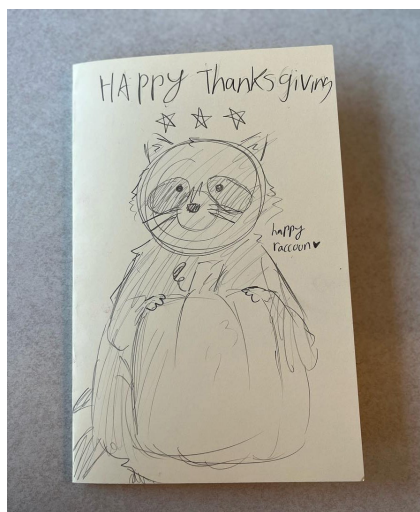
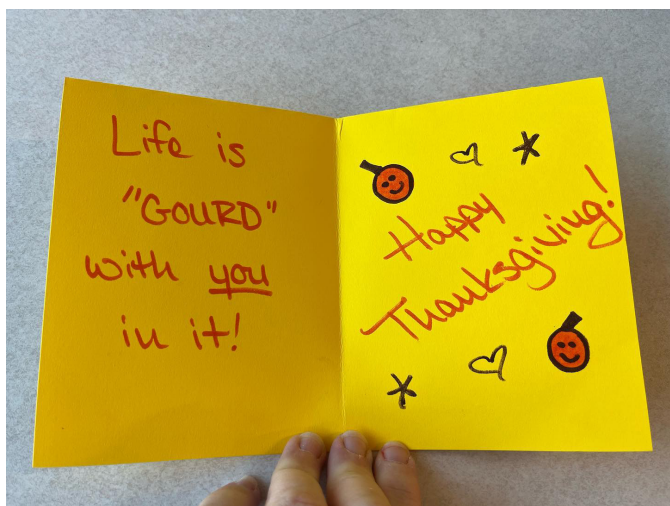
By Margaret Lange

I've been a library person almost my entire life and most of my experiences have been great, but the years of being a teen in the library were difficult. My hometown library was a "shushing" institution, and I got kicked out more than once for giggling too loudly within earshot of the front desk. There was no teen space, no teen librarian, and no activities for patrons my age. How wonderful, then, that so much has changed since the early-aughts and that I was able to become a teen librarian and advocate for young people in the library.

UNFORTUNATELY, DUE TO BUDGET CONSTRAINTS, some public libraries remain without space and staff dedicated to teen patrons. For those libraries that do have these resources, their spaces and collections may be small, staff may spend an inordinate amount of time reminding adults and children that the teen space *really* is for teens, and some adults may still complain about having to see or hear teens in the library.

Make no mistake: teens feel this. They are sensitive to any signal that they are not welcome or not wanted. It is vital that library staff recognize this and – no matter what one's budget or resources – work to ensure that teens are not relegated to one out-of-sight corner of the library. A strategy that is working in my library is to actively collaborate with our regular teen patrons across departments, inviting them into full participation in library life. Our Teen Advisory Committee (TAC) has undertaken projects and tasks over the past year that have worked to connect them with the local community and foster a more reciprocal relationship with library staff.

While TAC is an opportunity for teens to build relationships with peers and have a great time at the library, it also functions as a service organization. TAC members have taken part in a variety of service projects, but this past year, we made service to the library and the community TAC's central focus by working on a different helpful task at each meeting. For example, rather than just focusing on the Teen Space and teen programming, our TAC members also deep cleaned the Children's, Adult Reference, Circulation, and common areas of the library. By bringing service out of the designated teen area and working in other parts of the library, they were able to



give back while also creating positive relationships with other departments and staff members, being both seen and heard in the best possible way.

Our TAC members also used their creativity to give back to the community. They made cat toys for the local animal shelter to help incoming cats feel welcome and at home. They also made Thanksgiving and Valentine's cards that were distributed to the library's home delivery patrons, spreading kindness and friendship to homebound friends in the community, as well as inspiring a similar Art Share program for tweens and teens during summer reading. These collaborations between teens, the library, and the local community benefit everyone involved and make giving to others a habit that our teens can carry into adulthood.

Inviting teens to fully participate in the library requires buy-in from library staff. We are incredibly fortunate our staff sees and values teens as real patrons worthy of attention and effort. When TAC deep cleaned the Adult Reference area, that department's staff gave TAC "thank you" cookies at their next meeting. Our volunteer coordinator maintains excellent relationships with all our teen helpers, ensuring that they are not just well-trained, but also rewarded and appreciated. In August, at the invitation of our display coordinator, all of the cases in the main lobby will feature art and collections from our TAC members. Importantly, our circulation department has taken the lead in ensuring that the Teen Space remains accessible to teens by creating a checklist reminding all staff to regularly check on the space and attend to any issues that arise.

Growing this kind of reciprocal relationship between library staff and teen patrons is possible at any library, because it doesn't require more employees or a new line in the yearly budget. These relationships can start with staff taking the time to get to know your teen patrons, finding out what their interests and talents are, and looking for opportunities beyond the Teen Space where they can have a real impact. As much as we know that teens need their libraries, this past year has taught me that libraries really thrive when they recognize just how much they also need their teens.

Margaret Lange is the Teen Services Librarian at Georgetown Public Library.



Summer at the Library Grant

EMPOWERING TEXAS LIBRARIES THROUGH H-E-B CHECK STAND DONATIONS

By Priscilla Takyi

SUMMER PROGRAMS AT TEXAS LIBRARIES PROMOTE LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS, ENHANCE LITERACY EFFORTS, AND CREATE COMMUNITY FOR PATRONS OF ALL AGES. In 2024, the Texas Library Association partnered with H-E-B Helping Here to raise funds to support the advancement of summer library programming across the state.

In June of 2024, Texans generously contributed \$475,000 at H-E-B check stands. These contributions were used to fund grants awarded by the Texas Library Association to 73 public libraries. Applications were opened in early 2025, and more than 90 were received.

In May 2025, grant funds were awarded to support various initiatives, ranging from large-scale reading challenges to small, community-driven

projects. These funds gave libraries the flexibility to create innovative programs, improve access to resources, enhance their collections, strengthen community partnerships, and engage readers.

At the **Lucy Patterson Memorial Library** in Marshall, Texas, children explored their creativity by making colorful designs with art supplies during Perler Bead Day. Later in the summer, families came together for Wild Things Zoofari, an event that featured live animals and sparked curiosity about nature.

Crosby County Library in Crosbyton, Texas, paired story time with science by hosting the *Science Spectrum*, which introduced children to “colorful animals” as part of their *Color Our World* theme.



Lucy Patterson Memorial Library



Crosby County Library



Archer Public Library



Cooke Library



Lorenzo City Library



City of Rockdale Library

Archer Public Library located in Archer City, Texas hosted performances by *Wildlife on the Move*, *The Creature Teacher*, and magician Ron Wilson, teaching and entertaining the families of Archer County.

Cooke Library in Gainesville, Texas built excitement through a six-week summer reading program, where participants earned rewards by completing weekly activities and celebrated with a tie-dye event. The library also offered *Art in the Stacks*, where children painted rainbows and practiced color mixing, blending literacy with creativity.

The **Dickinson City Public Library** invited families outdoors with a *Story Walk*. Participants read a story page by page while moving through stretches and exercises inspired by the animals in the book. As part of the library's summer reading challenge, children received a prize for completing the walk.

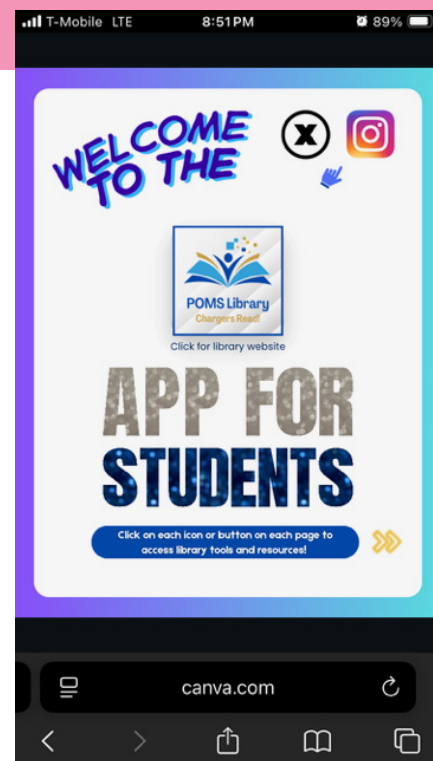
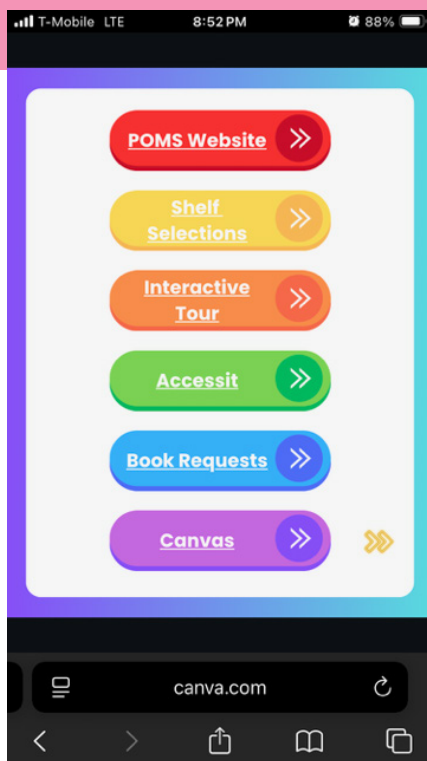
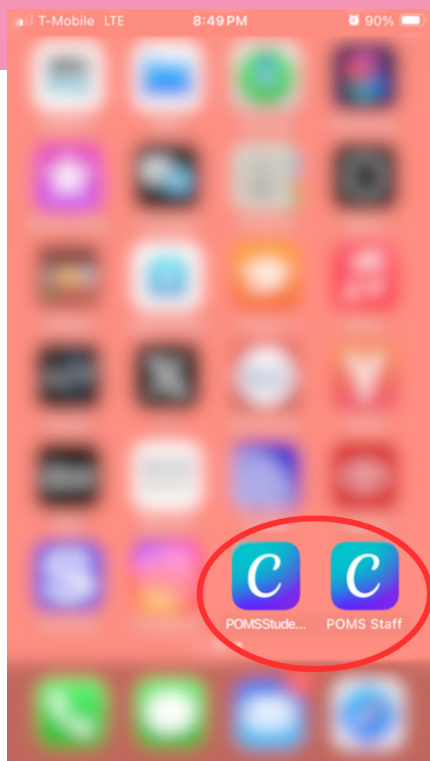
The **Lorenzo City Library** gave children an up-close encounter with wildlife with a visit from the South Plains Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. Kids learned about rescued animals and gained hands-on experience with animals.

The **City of Rockdale Library** expanded its adult programming by offering watercolor pencil art classes. Patrons created scenic pieces while learning new art techniques.

The Texas Library Association extends its gratitude to H-E-B Helping Here and to all H-E-B customers for their generous support, which raised \$475,000 in 2025 to fund Summer at the Library grants for 2026. We would also like to recognize and thank the librarians and library staff across Texas, whose commitment and creativity make summer programming possible. Together, their collective efforts ensure that public libraries continue to serve as essential spaces for learning, community, and connection.



City of Rockdale Library



App in a Snap!

PATRON OUTREACH ON A VIRTUAL LEVEL

By Brooke Corso

I AM IN THE READING BUSINESS, and if I expect repeat “customers” who will refer my services to other customers, then my middle school library program had better be responsive, dynamic, engaging, fresh, accessible, and diverse. It isn’t a stretch to compare the efficiency and attractiveness of libraries to that of supermarket design: we both have aisles of strategically placed products, seasonal or evolving displays, opportunities for customers to taste or try out new items and conveniently located checkout areas. Modern shoppers enter a supermarket for a shopping “experience” that can be tailored to their needs, and in the post-pandemic years, many customers utilize brand apps for online groceries, list making, and couponing.

In curating the virtual side of my library program at Pin Oak Middle School (POMS), I always have three descriptors for every project: accessible, interactive, and easy to use. Just as my students enter my library with different levels of language fluency, previous library engagement, and technological abilities, so do their parents and caregivers. My patrons need to know how to find and reserve books, what events and activities are coming and how to sign up (if needed), new arrivals and monthly specials, and how to share feedback and suggestions. Library services need to be available around the clock, so a library app that is simple, colorful, and contains multimedia would be an ideal tool for any smart device. Here are simple steps to get started on an app for your library:

1. Consider a budget both now and in future years.

As with most digital tools, there are paid and free options for apps, the latter often laden with ads encroaching on the precious screen space and detracting from important resources like the card catalog or activity calendar. Not having a set campus budget for digital purchases increased the likelihood that I would have to pay for the app every year, and I did not want to have to start over with a new product if the fees increased as I had experienced with other subscriptions. One day, I read an article on my iPhone and pulled up the menu to share with a friend when I noticed the “Add to Home Screen” icon and remembered that any webpage can be displayed on a smartphone screen alongside traditional apps like Netflix or Instagram. Why couldn’t I create a webpage and have patrons display it on their smart devices?

2. Include administration on the design.

Most districts have subscriptions to Adobe, Canva, Google suite, and other platforms on which it would be easy to hyperlink icons on a page and display instructions for saving to a home screen for easy access. Canva is my go-to design tool, so I thought about which resources needed to be included. I sat down with my principal and asked what she would like our students to see. She suggested our school website and Canvas, the district learning-management system.

3. Map out the components to your app and prioritize what is most important for your users.

My own list quickly grew to a dozen different things I wanted my users to access - instructional videos, author spotlights, digital literacy tools, content-area resources, etc. - but I had to remember to keep it simple and functional. Not everyone has the same size of phone, and too many icons crowding a page can become both overwhelming and difficult for a finger to tap. I planned the [student app](#) in four parts with hyperlinked arrows linking them on a loop: a title slide, an announcements slide, a navigation slide, and two subsequent instruction slides for iPhone and Android.

Since Canva creates live files, I can alter the look or components of a slide any time I want, and the user only

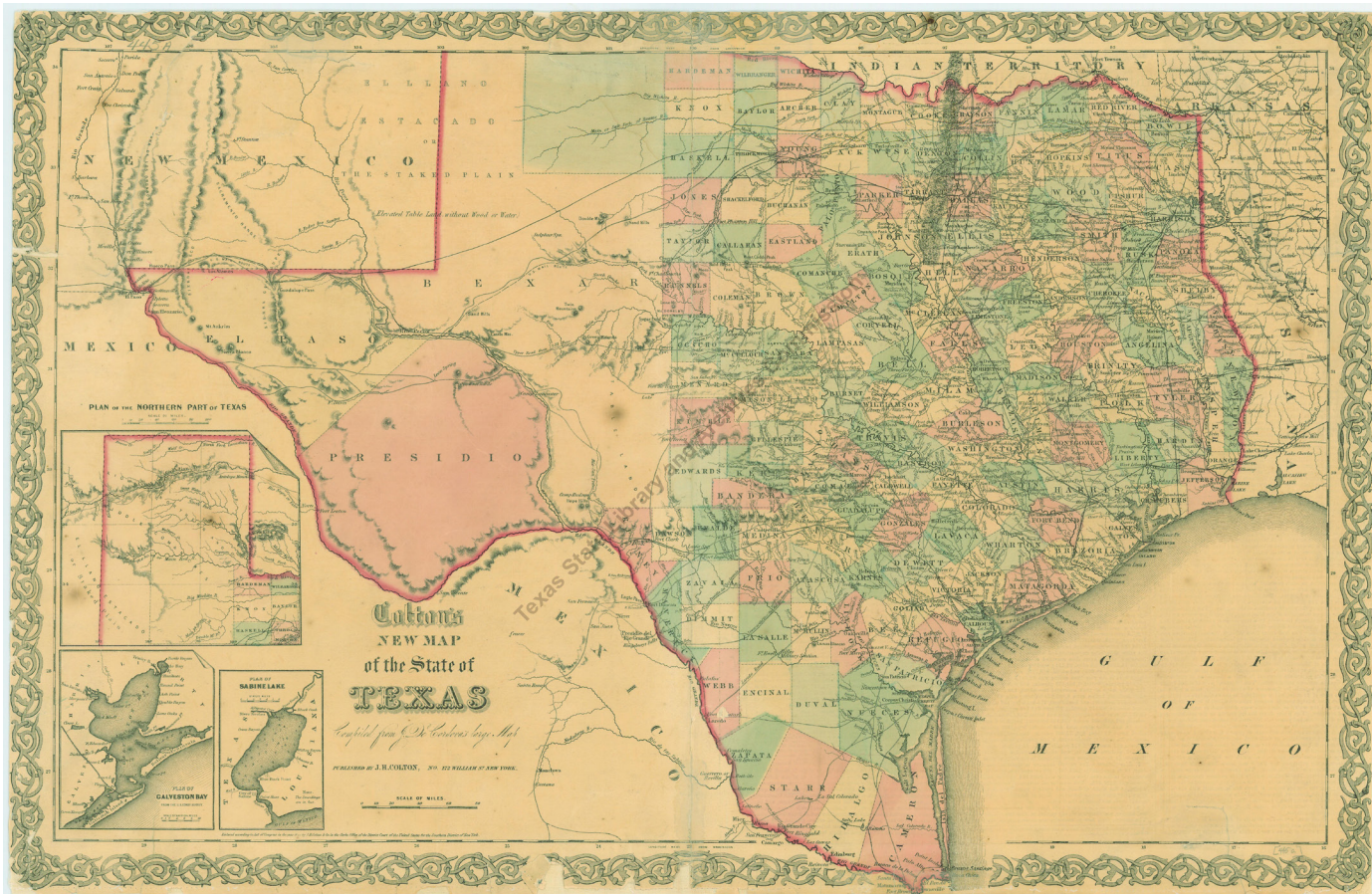
has to refresh their screen or reopen the app to see the changes. The navigation slide contains six buttons: our campus website; a Shelf Selections slide deck which shows new and/or popular titles every week; our 360° interactive library tour; the Accessit catalog; a Book Requests form link; and Canvas. My library website as well as the library social-media accounts can be accessed on the title page, and the announcements page is updated weekly.

4. Market your product and get feedback.

I created flyers with the instructions for iPhone and Android and handed them out to students at our 6th grade camp in August and parents at Fall Open House. My campus PTO publishes a weekly parent email, and I advertise the app there, and I also alert parents at monthly PTO meetings which are held in the library. Once Chromebooks are distributed a few weeks into the school year, I can make regular announcements and reminders on Canva. I was so pleased with the results of the student/family app that I created one for [teachers and staff](#) with buttons featuring my monthly newsletter; instructional-video collection; my library scheduler for reserving class time; the class-set inventory in our Book Room; our 360° interactive library tour; and a section of digital resources divided by content area (created with feedback from the department heads). I distribute a [teacher flyer](#) during August in-service promoting the app and its components, and I bring a stack whenever I meet with departments during conference periods or new-teacher meetings.

Librarians are often an army of one on their campus, and it is up to us to advocate for our seat at the table and how important the library is to our students’ academic and emotional wellbeing. Having digital tools like a library app puts our library at their fingertips, increasing agency over their own learning and helping families access homework and research help as well. Ultimately, it improves engagement with the library program and our responsiveness to our patrons’ needs and suggestions, making our libraries more successful as a result.

Brooke Corso is a middle school librarian in Houston ISD.



Jumpstart Research on the TSLAC Website

By Susan Floyd

Looking for easily accessible research tools on Texas topics for patrons, students, researchers, or yourself? Check out the [Texas State Library and Archives Commission website!](https://www.tsl.texas.gov/archives)

ONLINE EXHIBITS

www.tsl.texas.gov/exhibits

Our online exhibits include both digital versions of our lobby exhibits (going back more than ten years) and specially curated online exhibits on a variety of popular Texas history topics, such as historic flags, presidents of the Republic, state parks, transportation,

Texas governors, and a Texas Treasures exhibit highlighting the key documents from the State Archives' collections, from the Texas Declaration of Independence and Travis' letter from the Alamo to wanted posters for Sam Bass and Clyde Barrow.

TEXAS DIGITAL ARCHIVE

www.tsl.texas.gov/texasdigitalarchive

The Texas Digital Archive provides access to our electronic records collections—currently at 12 million and counting! This includes electronic records transferred by state agencies or digitized by TSLAC. Collections include photographs, Civil War muster

rolls, signed laws, fire insurance maps, historical marker files, governors' records, and much more.

MAP DATABASE

www.tsl.texas.gov/apps/arc/maps

Our map collection contains general maps of Texas, the United States, and Mexico; city and county maps; world atlases; maps detailing state resources; and plans of forts and other sites. Maps in this and other collections date from the early 1600s to the present. Some have been digitized and are available to view and download through the database; other maps must be viewed on site at our headquarters in Austin.

TEXAS NEWSPAPERS

www.tsl.texas.gov/ref/newspapers

Our collection includes some, but not all, Texas newspapers. Most of our newspaper collection is available on microfilm and accessible through interlibrary loan. Print newspapers and newspaper databases are also available to use on site. The TSLAC Newspaper Collection in The Portal to Texas History includes newspaper images digitized from our original print and microfilm newspaper holdings, in partnership with the University of North Texas Libraries Texas Digital Newspaper Program. Browse or search newspapers by title, location, date, and language.

ARCHIVAL DESCRIPTIVE GUIDES/ FINDING AIDS

www.tsl.texas.gov/arc/

Descriptive guides, also known as finding aids, help researchers to understand, access, and use archival holdings. The guides include information on the creator of the records, purpose of the records series, material types, subjects and dates covered, and box and folder listings.

LIBRARY CATALOG

www.tsl.texas.gov/catalog

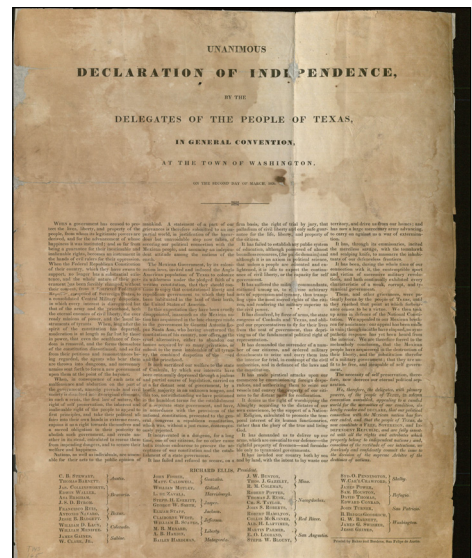
Books, periodicals, Texas and U.S. government publications, and some archival materials may be found by searching the catalog. While many of the items in our collections may be borrowed through our interlibrary loan program, please note that some items do not circulate.

TSLAC WEBSITE

Whether writing a school report or doing in-depth scholarly research, the TSLAC website should be bookmarked as a useful starting point for resources relating to Texas history and government.

For more information and assistance, contact TSLAC staff via [email](#), phone (512-463-5455), or [in person](#) at the Lorenzo de Zavala State Archives and Library Building in Austin. Our reading rooms are open 9:00 a.m. – 4:45 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, and 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 pm. on the second Saturday of each month.

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



Registration Open!

2025 Fall District Meetings

DISTRICT 1 **SEPTEMBER 11** Walker Memorial Library, Brownwood, TX

DISTRICT 2 **SEPTEMBER 23** Cornette Library, WTAMU, Canyon, TX

DISTRICT 3 **NOVEMBER 13** Temple Public Library, Temple, TX

DISTRICT 4 **OCTOBER 11** Heritage Campus Library, Del Mar College, Corpus Christi, TX

DISTRICT 5 **OCTOBER 18** W. Walworth Harrison Public Library, Greenville, TX

DISTRICT 6 **DECEMBER 13** El Paso Convention Center, El Paso, TX

DISTRICT 7 **OCTOBER 7** Lake Granbury Conference Center, Granbury, TX

DISTRICT 8 **NOVEMBER 1** San Jacinto Community College, Pasadena, TX

DISTRICT 9 **OCTOBER 4** Lubbock Christian University, Lubbock, TX

DISTRICT 10 **SEPTEMBER 18** Region 20 Conference Center, San Antonio, TX

bit.ly/districtmeetings25



Cultivating Excellence

The Power of Mentorship in School Libraries

By Terri Harkey

In the dynamic and ever-evolving world of school libraries, mentorship stands as one of the most meaningful tools we have - not only for empowering new professionals but also for invigorating seasoned ones. I had a wonderful opportunity this year to mentor over 30 new librarians in Dallas ISD and have seen firsthand how impactful the right guidance can be. Mentorship matters. In our profession, we are often the only librarian on a campus, an island with no one else doing exactly what we do. Mentorship helps bridge that isolation, offering connection, encouragement, and a sense of shared purpose.

MENTORSHIP ISN'T JUST HELPFUL - IT'S TRANSFORMATIVE

New school librarians often enter the profession brimming with passion but quickly find themselves juggling lesson planning, tech integration, collection development, and more while working to build relationships with staff and students. A mentor provides perspective, practical advice, and, most importantly, reassurance that you are not alone.

But mentorship isn't just for the mentee. Mentors gain just as much: new insights, fresh energy, and the rewarding experience of helping others succeed.

MENTEES BENEFIT THROUGH:

- Faster confidence-building in navigating library operations and instruction
- Accelerated growth through shared tools, strategies, and troubleshooting
- Support systems that reduce isolation and create professional connection
- Guidance on time management and prioritizing tasks during the busy first years
- Modeling of professional communication, including how to collaborate with teachers, administrators and your community
- Exposure to professional organizations and conferences to expand their network
- Encouragement to reflect, grow and try new things through regular check-ins and feedback
- Motivation to persevere, especially when faced with challenges or uncertainty
- A safe place to ask questions, process mistakes, and celebrate wins
- Help thinking through best practices; whether how to set up the library, how to deal with that unruly class, how to survive being on the specials rotation, or how to host an author visit

MENTORS BENEFIT THROUGH:

- Leadership development and the opportunity to model best practice
- Renewed purpose and energy by

A mentor provides perspective, practical advice, and, most importantly, reassurance that you are not alone.

seeing the profession through a fresh lens

- Connection to current trends, tools, and new ways of thinking
- Enhanced advocacy, as mentors help shape confident voices for the profession
- Inspiration, often drawn from mentees' enthusiasm and innovation
- A sense of legacy, knowing that you are contributing to the future of librarianship

BUILDING STRONGER LIBRARY COMMUNITIES

Mentorship strengthens not just individuals, but entire school communities. It ensures continuity in library programming, spreads best practices, and cultivates leadership within our profession. Whether it's a formal district program, a statewide initiative, or a casual peer relationship, mentorship fuels meaningful connections and collective growth.

WANT TO GET STARTED?

If you're new, seek out a mentor.

If you're experienced, reach out to someone starting out. Share your wins, your mistakes, and your wisdom. Librarianship can be overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be lonely.

WHERE TO FIND A LIBRARIAN MENTOR

District or Regional Mentor Programs

- Many school districts (like Dallas ISD) have formal mentor programs for all new teachers.
- Regional Education Service Centers (ESCs) in Texas may also offer mentoring or professional learning networks.

Texas Library Association (TLA)

- Connect with experienced

librarians through TASL (Texas Association of School Librarians, a TLA division) and through the American Association of School Librarians.

- Reach out to experienced librarians in your TLA District.
- Attend a TLA event or reach out through a TLA Round Table like the Children's Round Table or Texas Bluebonnet Award committees.

Library Listservs and Online Communities

- Join professional listservs like LM_NET to connect with veteran librarians open to mentoring.
- Facebook groups like *Future Ready Librarians*, or *TASL Community* often have informal mentor/mentee pairings.
- Connect via TLA Engage, an online community for TLA members.

University Alumni Networks

- If you're a recent MLS/MLIS graduate, reach out to your program coordinator or professors - they often have alumni eager to support new professionals.

National Organizations

- ALA (American Library Association), AASL (American Association of School Librarians) and ISTE Librarians Network offer mentorship opportunities, discussion boards, and networking events.

Don't hesitate to reach out to a librarian you admire and ask for guidance. Most experienced librarians are eager to share and support. Let's build each other up. One conversation at a time.

Terri Harkey is a retired school librarian, Texas Bluebonnet Award Coordinator and Dallas ISD Mentor Librarian.

Texas Bluebonnet Award Voting Just Got Easier

By Kelly Mantay

The Texas Bluebonnet Award celebrates the power of young readers' voices, and this year the voting process has been redesigned to make participation easier than ever. The Texas Library Association (TLA) has created a faster, smoother, and more user-friendly experience based on feedback received from librarians

There are three simple steps to participate in the Texas Bluebonnet Award program: [register](#), [pay](#), and [vote](#).



1

STEP ONE: REGISTRATION

Registration opens on Monday, September 15. All schools or public libraries wishing to participate in voting for the 2026 Texas Bluebonnet Award winner must register. The new system uses the same online platform as TLA membership and TLA conference registration. Librarians may register individually, or a staff member may register multiple librarians from a district or library system. Each online form can include up to 20 schools or libraries. To register, you'll need each librarian's name, school or library name, and email address. Once the list is complete, you'll move on to payment.

2

STEP TWO: PAYMENT

You can either pay by credit card or request an invoice. Invoices will be sent to the registrant's email, and TLA accepts checks and credit cards. Please note that librarians will not gain access to the voting system until the balance is paid in full. If paying by check, please allow time for processing.

3

STEP THREE: VOTING

After payment is received, each registered librarian will get an individualized email with a unique voting ID and a link to the official voting form.

GET STARTED

VOTING WILL BE OPEN FROM MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, THROUGH WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28.

To submit student votes, librarians will log in with the name and email used at registration, enter their voting ID, and complete the online ballot. Votes can be edited or updated at any time during the voting window.

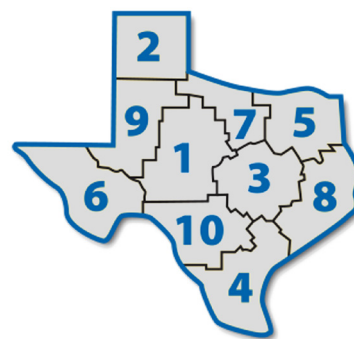
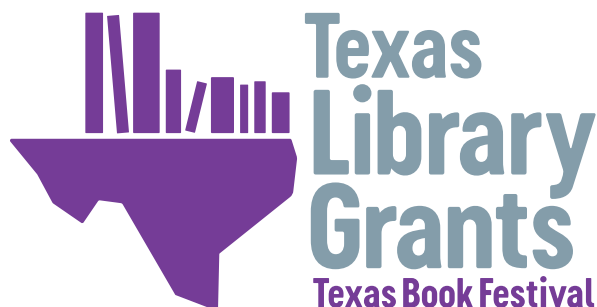
These updates reflect feedback from librarians across the state and are designed to make the Texas Bluebonnet Award voting process both efficient and accessible. We look forward to having students participate in this year's program and continuing the tradition of celebrating their love of reading!

Kelly Mantay is the Education & Programs Manager at the Texas Library Association.

TEXAS BOOK FESTIVAL 2025 GRANT RECIPIENTS

Congratulations to the public libraries that received collection development grants from the Texas Book Festival. This year grants were awarded to 50 libraries.

Arlington Public Library	Stephenville Public Library
Dublin Public Library	Cooke County Library
Judy B. McDonald Public Library	Helen Hall Library
Martindale Community Library	Lake Dallas Public Library
San Antonio Public Library	Nesbitt Memorial Library
Austin Public Library	Sutton County Public Library
Eastland Centennial Memorial Library	Copperas Cove Public Library
Keller Public Library	Hewitt Public Library
Maud Public Library	Lake Travis Community Library
Seguin Public Library	Pearsall Public Library
Balch Springs Library-Learning Center	Tyler Public Library
Fairmount Community Library	Decatur Public Library
Kilgore Public Library	Hondo Public Library
Moody Community Library	Madison County Library
Sgt. Fernando de la Rosa Memorial Library	Quemado Public Library
Bellaire City Library	Victoria Public Library
Fannie Brown Booth Memorial Library	Delta County Public Library
La Marque Public Library	Hutchins-Atwell Public Library
Mount Pleasant Public Library	Mansfield Public Library
Southlake Public Library	Quitman Public Library
Comfort Public Library	Virgil and Josephine Gordon Memorial Library
Haltom City Public Library	Depot Public Library
Laguna Vista Public Library	Jones Public Library
Navasota Public Library	Marathon Public Library
	Real County Public Library
	Waco-McLennan County Library



Register for Your District Meeting

Registration for the District Fall Meetings opened on September 1st. District meetings offer regional opportunities for continuing education, legislative activities, and member networking. The annual fall meetings provide a platform for local librarians, paraprofessionals, and trustees from all types of libraries to connect, network, and set a foundation for collaborative efforts. Full details and links to register are [here](#).

District 1 Fall Meeting | September 11
Walker Memorial Library, Brownwood

District 2 Fall Meeting | September 23
Cornette Library at West Texas A&M, Canyon

District 3 Fall Meeting | November 13
Temple Public Library, Temple

District 4 Fall Meeting | October 11
Del Mar College, Corpus Christi

District 5 Fall Meeting | October 18
W. Walworth Harrison Public Library, Greenville

District 6 Fall Meeting | December 13
Agave Room – El Paso Convention Center, El Paso

District 7 Fall Meeting | October 7
Lake Granbury Conference Center, Granbury

District 8 Fall Meeting | November 1
San Jacinto Community College, Pasadena

District 9 Fall Meeting | October 4
Lubbock Christian University, Lubbock

District 10 Fall Meeting | September 18
Region 20 Conference Center, San Antonio

Apply for a 2026 Family Place Libraries™ Project Grant

The Texas State Library and Archives Commission is pleased to announce that applications for fiscal year 2026 Family Place Libraries™ Project grants are now being accepted. TSLAC is looking for qualified libraries to attend a Family Place Libraries™ Training Institute to be hosted at a Texas public library and then implement the program in their own libraries.

For more information, visit the TSLAC [Family Place Libraries webpage](#). The deadline to apply for the grant is Wednesday, October 15.



MINDA ANDERSON HONORED BY CITY OF AUSTIN

The City of Austin proclaimed September 8 as “Ms. Minda Anderson Day” in honor of TLA member and Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders librarian Minda Anderson. The proclamation is a testament to her commitment to her work and her students. Minda is the 2025 recipient of the TLA Librarian of the Year Award and was named Austin ISD librarian of the year in 2018.



TLA AWARDS, SCHOLARSHIPS AND STIPENDS

Applications for TLA awards and scholarships are now open. Find more scholarship information [here](#) and learn about the TLA Awards [here](#). There are [stipends](#) to help defray the costs of conference and membership, and many [TLA units](#) also offer awards and scholarships. There is a lot of fantastic work being done in Texas libraries; please apply to help your work get recognized!

Congratulations to the TALL Texans Class of 2025!

The TALL Texans Leadership Development Institute (TALL Texans) program is designed for library leaders to study and embrace leadership principles and practices. The program aims to help participants realize their potential to initiate positive changes within their institutions, professions, and for their stakeholders.



Brook Amen, The University of North Texas Health Science Center

Treva Anderson, Houston Community College

Chris Arrowood, Bellaire City Library

Kayla Bartley, Lewisville ISD

Lindsey Brewer-Munoz, Stafford Municipal School District

Jermaine Bryant, The University of North Texas

Andrea Cabrera, Plano Public Library System

Kaitlyn Carpenter, Houston ISD

Amanda Chacon, Sheldon ISD

Jaclyn Chirinos, Harlingen CISD

Erica Esqueda, Mission CISD

Liz Fambrough, Brazosport ISD

Megan Fischer, Bee Cave Public Library

Rebeca Fox, Northside ISD

Amanda Galliton, Burkburnett ISD

Matthew Glaser, Hewitt Public Library

Erick Ibarra, Fort Worth Public Library

Erin Jewell, Lewisville ISD

Margaret Lange, Georgetown Public Library

Laura Larregui, Fort Bend County Libraries

Celeste Lopez, McAllen ISD

Buffie Massey, Mesquite ISD

Katelyn Patterson, Texas State Library and Archives Commission

Rayanne Polm, Killeen ISD

Kalena Powell, Georgetown Public Library

Elsie Purcell, Hondo Public Library

Jessica Rico, Plano Public Library System

Linda Sanchez, Community ISD

William Schaller, Aldine ISD

Elizabeth Speer, The University of

North Texas Health Science Center

Christalyn Stansell, Cleveland ISD

Heather Swanner, Alvin ISD

Laura Thomas, Garland ISD

Jaime Tijerina, Palmview Municipal Library

Heather Torres, Plano Public Library System

Charlotte Vandervoort, The University of North Texas Health Science Center

Maricela Verastiqui, Dallas ISD

Anna Waugh, Mesquite ISD

Sharla Wilkinson, Hutto ISD

Zoe Williams, University Park Public Library

Morgen Wilson, Eanes ISD

Pamela Wright, Irving ISD

The TALL Texans program will be held in person from November 20 to 22 in Georgetown, Texas.

Thank you to the Virginia & Charles Bowden Professor, School of Information, The University of Texas at Austin for your support.



CHRISTINA H. GOLA NAMED UH LIBRARIES DEAN

[Christina Gola](#), a TLA Past President, and longtime TLA member has accepted the role of University of Houston Libraries Dean beginning September 1.

DANIEL MONTGOMERY CHOSEN AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

The American Library Association (ALA) has selected [Daniel J. Montgomery](#) as its next executive director. He will start at ALA on Nov. 10.

TLA 2026 MEMBERSHIP OPENS EARLY OCTOBER

Whether you're a seasoned librarian or just starting your journey, TLA membership connects you to a community of fellow professionals who share your passion and face similar challenges. Membership renewal for 2026 begins the first week of October. Join the TLA community at txla.org/join.



REGISTRATION FOR TLA 2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE OPENS EARLY OCTOBER

The [TLA 2026 Annual Conference](#) theme is "Cultivating Community, Thriving Together." The conference's goal is to foster collaboration and meaningful connections among library professionals, empowering them to build strong, thriving communities through shared knowledge, resources, and support. It also champions libraries as essential community hubs by embracing innovative services, partnerships, and programming that strengthen social bonds and enhance collective well-being. Conference registration opens on October 1. Visit txla.org/annual-conference for the latest information.

CULTIVATING COMMUNITY
THRIVING TOGETHER
TLA★2026
TEXAS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
HOUSTON ★ MARCH 29–31

Upcoming Events

COACHING VS. MANAGING: COLLABORATIVE STAFF DEVELOPMENT

September 23 | 3:00 - 4:00 p.m.

In this session, public librarians will share examples from their Librarian Talking Circles and Library Support Supervisor coaching toolkit and gather ideas for creating a template for peer-led professional and paraprofessional development. **Free for members. \$40 for non-members.** [Register here](#)

TCAL ANNUAL CONFERENCE

September 29 - 30 | Fort Worth, Texas

This year's TCAL Annual Conference is where knowledge, innovation, and collaboration come together. Join deans and directors from public and private universities and community and junior colleges across Texas for two days of education and networking. [Learn more and register today!](#)

LIBRARY SAFETY SERIES: COMPASSIONATE DE-ESCALATION WITH RICK JENKINS

October 20, 27, 30 | 3:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Join us this fall for a powerful three-part webinar series with nationally recognized library safety expert Rick Jenkins. Building on his highly acclaimed session at the 2025 Texas Library Association Annual Conference, Rick returns to deliver an expanded and in-depth version of his signature safety and de-escalation training, designed specifically for the library environment. **\$110 members/\$150 non-members.**

[Register here.](#)

VOLUNTEER WITH TLA

Discover new roles on TLA standing committees, unit leadership positions, conference assignments, micro-volunteer projects, and more in the [TLA Volunteer Portal](#).

- Browse open roles using filters by type and duration
- Select opportunities that align with your interests and availability
- Submit your interest directly through the portal
- Hear back from the committee or unit chair about next steps to serving

The portal uses the same login credentials as your TLA Member Portal. For any questions, email tla@txla.org.

Safeguard Your Career with Professional Liability Insurance

TLA★

TLA Member Benefit

Librarians are vital to our Texas communities, but today's challenges may require extra protection for your career.

Ensure your peace of mind with professional liability insurance.

Add the policy to your TLA membership when you join or renew.

Eligibility

- Be a TLA member
- Work in Texas
- Employed by a public, school, academic, or special library

Insurance policy year is January 1 - December 31.



Why Choose This Insurance



Financial Security

Safeguard your career against the costs of legal actions and financial devastation.



Legal Assistance

Discuss your legal exposure with experts.



Discounted Rate

TLA members can purchase professional liability insurance at reduced premium rates of \$44.

Learn more at: txla.org/membership/individual/

TLA★Engage
TEXAS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

TLA Engage, the online member community, is a member benefit that provides access to a vibrant and dynamic space.

It's a hub for TLA members to connect with and learn from library professionals from all library types.



CONNECT

Develop meaningful connections



LEARN

Engage in discussions around current topics



SHARE

Collaborate on projects or share best practices



TLA Engage

**Your Hub for
Networking,
Collaboration,
and Sharing**

Access Engage:
engage.txla.org/

Questions? Email:
tl@txla.org

LIBRARY RENAISSANCE
OUR QUEST FOR RENEWAL

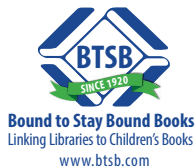
TLA★**2025**

TEXAS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

DALLAS ★ APRIL 1 – 4

Thank You TLA 2025 Sponsors

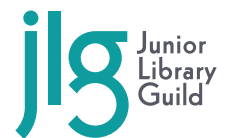
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We appreciate their support!



LIBRARIES TRANSFORM[®] TEXAS PODCAST

TLA's Libraries Transform Texas Podcast is your go-to destination for all things Texas libraries!

Hear from librarians and authors about their work, trends shaping libraries, and inspiring insights.

You'll laugh, learn, and you might just discover your next big idea.

Find the podcast on your favorite platform.

txla.org/tools-resources/libraries-transform-texas/

TLA★



New this fall! ➔ Library Safety Series

Compassionate De-escalation with Rick Jenkins

Explore signature safety and de-escalation training, designed specifically for the library environment.

- October 20 | 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- October 27 | 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- October 30 | 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

bit.ly/librarysafetyseries



Cultivating Community Thriving Together

TLA★2026

TEXAS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

HOUSTON ★ MARCH 29-31



Save the Date!

Registration will
open in October

txla.org