

# ***TEXAS LIBRARY JOURNAL***

Volume 99, Number 2, Summer 2023

DIGITAL  
NAVIGATOR

AI

The  
ChatGPT

**Narrowing the  
Digital Divide**

**The Transformative Power of  
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# President's Perspective

By Gretchen Pruett

## AS I WRITE THIS, WE ARE JUST A FEW DAYS AWAY FROM THE CLOSE OF THE 88TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION.

This session was one of the more challenging sessions faced by libraries since the 2011 session when State Library funding was dramatically cut resulting in the demise of the State Library systems.

This time around, school libraries and librarians were the focus of the Legislature. Rather than cutting funding, they passed legislation that will severely slow down the process of acquiring books for students. [HB 900](#), which was passed by the Legislature requires vendors to rate books that the vendor decides meet the bill's definition of sexually explicit or sexually relevant. Books the vendor rates sexually explicit cannot be purchased and must be removed from a school library collection if they are in the current collection.

The bill places a tremendous burden on vendors, and some may not have the resources to comply with the requirements and may be forced to cease business in our state. There is no provision in the bill to ensure that ratings are consistent among vendors. This means the same book may be rated sexually explicit by one vendor, sexually relevant by another, and not rated at all by still another. This creates great uncertainty for school librarians as they seek to purchase books for their students.

When I discussed the challenges librarians were facing during the legislative session, and the difficulty of countering the prevailing narrative that school librarians cannot be trusted to make purchasing decisions, my friend and beloved local children's author Chris Barton wondered aloud whether we need to tell our own stories more loudly, more publicly and more often. He said, "Would it be reasonable to ...disseminate stories of how Texas libraries and the materials and services that they provide have improved and even saved the lives of the people they serve? Some of those stories might directly counter the narratives about particular books targeted by the banners, but the much broader message would be that Texas libraries — in schools and beyond — are a tremendous resource that don't need legislative meddling."

I could not agree more. Coming into the annual conference this year, I was running on fumes, like many others. Our



professionalism was under attack, and we personally were labeled as "groomers" or worse, insinuating that we were harming children simply by doing our jobs. This was a new and unexpected situation for most of us. For decades, our actions had spoken for themselves, and we saw the differences we made in so many lives all around us. Now, everything that we practiced and valued was being questioned, and we were ill-prepared to respond. And in that pause, some previously unimaginable legislation was being crafted.

Attending the conference this year served two very important

purposes for me: it reconnected me with my purpose for choosing this profession, and it refueled my passion for serving my community. My fellow librarians played a key role in this process. Listening to their stories and sharing our experiences reminded me of the support and empathy found in our community.

I had to reframe the current legislative session as a battle, but not the entire war. I had to look around and recognize the presence of others supporting this fight. The reinforcements are there, and they are real. But what is the best tool to counteract the current climate? Knowledge! Sharing knowledge through real, relevant, and powerful stories is our greatest advantage. We have always known the power of stories. Now is the time to share our stories at home, across the state, and the world.

Libraries are many things, but at their core, they are local, personal, empathetic, and egalitarian. When we remember our purpose — to remove barriers, level the playing field and empower everyone to live their best lives — we will ultimately prevail. There is a great deal of work ahead of us, but TLA is committed to supporting librarians as we navigate new challenges and opportunities.

*Gretchen Pruett*

Gretchen Pruett  
2023-24 TLA President





(l-r) Shirley Robinson, Mary Woodard and Lucy Podmore



# 88th Legislative Session Wrap-Up

By Wendy Woodland

**THE 88TH TEXAS LEGISLATIVE SESSION ENDED ON MONDAY, MAY 29 AROUND 6 P.M.** Governor Greg Abbott, citing the Legislature's inability to pass many key bills, called an [immediate special session](#) which officially began at 9 p.m. Monday to focus on property tax relief and border security. The governor also alluded to the need for multiple special sessions to address other priority issues that were not passed.

Lt. Governor Dan Patrick sent a letter to Gov. Abbott requesting that [additional Senate priority bills](#) be included in future special sessions. He includes SB 1601, prohibiting drag queen performances at public libraries in his list.

TLA tracked more than 30 bills which could have directly impacted Texas libraries. Only a fraction of those bills advanced through the process, and only three passed.

## Passed

[HB 900](#) by Rep. Jared Patterson requires TSLAC, with SBOE approval, to adopt mandatory school library collection development standards; defines sexually explicit and sexually relevant material; requires vendors to assign ratings to material they (the vendor) identify as sexually explicit or sexually relevant; gives TEA the authority to review ratings and require changes as they determine appropriate.

[HB 2177](#) by Rep. Lynn Stucky directs the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to establish a digital textbook and learning materials subscription pilot program.

[SB 18](#) by Sen. Brandon Creighton prohibits Texas public universities from awarding tenure. The bill passed the Senate and was sent to the House Higher Education Committee. Rep. Kuemple, chair of that committee, put forward a substitute version of SB 18 which codified tenure in state law and that version passed the House. Time was running out on the bill, and the House did not appoint conference committee members, so the Senate agreed to the House version of the bill.

## Advanced but did not pass

[SB 13](#) by Sen. Angela Paxton requires TSLAC to create mandatory collection development standards to submit to SBOE for approval; requires school districts to give parents the option to receive an email every time their child checks out

a book; establishes Local School Library Advisory Councils at school districts and requires school boards to approve all library materials before they are purchased.

The bill was passed by the Senate but was not heard in the House State Affairs Committee. Sen. Paxton worked with Rep. Patterson, the author of HB 900, to try to amend elements of SB 13 on to HB 900 when it was considered by the Senate, but they did not come to a final agreement.

[HB 540](#) by Rep. Oscar Longoria would give the Texas State Library & Archives Commission statutory authority to award competitive grants for library construction. The bill was passed by the House but was not heard by the Senate Business & Commerce Committee.

[HB 750](#) by Rep. Jay Dean would allow public junior colleges to donate library materials if the materials are removed from the collection due to age, condition, obsolete content, and have little or no monetary value. The bill was passed by the House but was not heard by the Senate Higher Education Subcommittee.

[SB 1601](#) by Sen. Bryan Hughes would deny state or other public funding to municipal libraries that host drag queen story hours or otherwise host events where persons presenting as the opposite sex read books to children for entertainment. The bill was passed by the Senate but was not heard by the House State Affairs Committee.

## Bills amending Texas Penal Code Section 43.24 relating to providing harmful materials to minors.

None of the 12 bills filed which would remove the affirmative defense to prosecution for providing harmful materials to minors if there was an educational, scientific, governmental, or similar justification were heard by the committees to which they were referred.

We will actively monitor the Special Sessions to determine if library-related legislation is added as a topic to be considered. And we are beginning to turn our focus to how HB 900 will impact school libraries in the 2023-2024 school year. Thank you for your support and advocacy during this challenging Legislative Session! You made a difference!

An isometric illustration of a classroom scene. On the left, three students (two girls and one boy) are walking towards the right. In the center, a teacher is sitting at a desk, looking at a laptop. The desk is yellow, and the teacher is wearing a white shirt and blue pants. The background is a solid blue color.

# The Transformative Power of ChatGPT in Middle and High School Learning

By Stephanie Galvan Russell

Artificial Intelligence (AI), specifically ChatGPT, is revolutionizing education by providing teachers and librarians with a powerful tool to enhance learning experiences. This article explores the integration of ChatGPT in middle and high school settings, emphasizing its ability to amplify learning and foster engagement, the crucial role of librarians in promoting AI adoption, and practical tips for effective AI usage.

---

ChatGPT is a valuable assistant in the classroom, providing instant feedback, answering questions, and fostering discussions. It helps create dynamic learning environments and improves students' writing skills. ChatGPT

assists in finding resources, answering research questions, and offering personalized book recommendations in school libraries. Librarians and educators play a crucial role in the successful integration of AI tools like ChatGPT by understanding its benefits and guiding teachers effectively. By embracing AI technologies like ChatGPT, we shape a future where education is informative, exciting, interactive, and tailored to the unique needs of each student.

## ENHANCING TEACHING AND LEARNING

ChatGPT revolutionizes teaching practices by enhancing learning experiences in the classroom. With its instant response capabilities, teachers can provide real-time guidance and feedback, promoting continuous improvement and understanding. ChatGPT encourages critical thinking,

active participation, and engagement through interactive discussions and human-like interactions. It also enables the creation of interactive activities, making learning enjoyable and memorable.

Integrating ChatGPT in middle and high school classrooms has immense potential. Students benefit from instant feedback on assignments and access to a valuable resource for questions and discussions, fostering critical thinking and collaboration. ChatGPT also enables the design of interactive activities that promote deeper understanding and problem-solving skills. It serves as a writing companion, offering prompts, suggestions, and corrections to improve writing proficiency.

ChatGPT acts as a virtual tutor, providing personalized guidance and support through interactive conversations. Students can ask questions, seek explanations, and



receive tailored feedback, fostering autonomy and exploration. By leveraging ChatGPT, teachers can personalize instruction to accommodate diverse learning styles. Its ability to personalize quizzes and activities cultivates engagement and ownership in the learning process. The integration of AI in the classroom empowers teachers to create dynamic and personalized learning environments, equipping students with essential skills for the 21st century.

### SCHOOL LIBRARIES

School libraries play a crucial role in supporting students' education and fostering a love for reading. With the integration of ChatGPT, libraries can enhance their support and provide more efficient and personalized assistance to students. ChatGPT acts as a virtual librarian, offering instant responses to students' queries and streamlining the research process. It helps students navigate the library's resources more efficiently, saving valuable time.

ChatGPT generates personalized book recommendations based on student interests and reading levels, promoting literacy and nurturing a love for reading. By collaborating with ChatGPT, librarians can curate virtual bookshelves tailored to individual students, creating a personalized reading experience.

ChatGPT also assists in teaching information literacy skills, guiding students in evaluating sources, conducting research, and citing references. These skills are vital in the digital age. Integrating ChatGPT into school libraries promotes collaborative projects and research. Students can work with ChatGPT to explore complex topics, generate ideas, and receive guidance throughout their research process. This fosters curiosity, critical thinking, and teamwork among students. By embracing ChatGPT, librarians empower students to become active and informed learners. They

equip students with the skills needed to navigate the information landscape and foster a lifelong pursuit of knowledge.

### EMPOWERING LIBRARIANS AND EDUCATORS

Librarians play a crucial role in promoting the adoption of AI in education and providing support to teachers and students. They raise awareness and offer assistance by organizing training sessions and workshops for teachers, ensuring they have the knowledge and skills to integrate ChatGPT effectively.

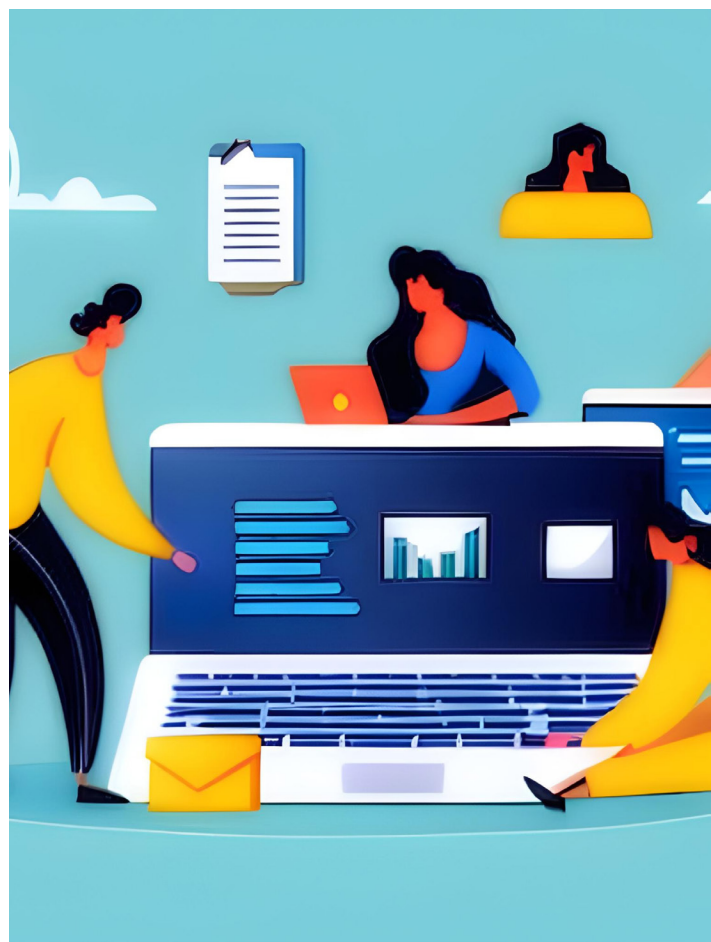
Librarians collaborate with educators to develop purposeful AI-based projects aligned with curriculum standards. They design interactive lessons and activities that incorporate ChatGPT, enhancing students' digital literacy skills and preparing them for the evolving technological landscape. Beyond the classroom, librarians empower students by utilizing AI in school libraries. They expand their roles as knowledge, information, and technology facilitators, providing valuable resources and support.

Librarians proactively organize workshops, presentations, and events to promote AI in education. These initiatives keep educators updated on AI advancements and provide a platform for sharing successful implementations. Displays and exhibits showcasing AI's practical applications foster curiosity and innovation among students and educators. Through interactive sessions and hands-on experiences, librarians educate participants about the benefits of AI in education. Their efforts empower educators to embrace innovative teaching methods and equip students

for the future workforce. By organizing workshops and events, librarians create an environment that encourages exploration and experimentation with AI. They contribute to the professional growth of educators and equip students with the skills needed to thrive in an AI-driven world.

In conclusion, the integration of ChatGPT in middle and high school learning environments has the potential to transform education as we know it. Its remarkable ability to generate human-like responses and personalize learning experiences makes it a powerful tool for teachers and librarians. Incorporating ChatGPT into classrooms and school libraries can enhance student learning experiences, promote reading and literacy, and prepare them for a future where AI plays an increasingly important role.

*Stephanie Galvan Russell is a school librarian, educational technology enthusiast, and Instructional Designer in Austin. She is an Instructional Design and Technology doctoral student at Sam Houston State University.*



*Images in this article were created by Canva's Text to Image AI generator.*

# Narrowing the Digital Divide One Person and One Device at a Time

## *Digital Navigators Offer Personalized Help in Public Libraries*

By Michele Chan Santos

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In public libraries across Texas, digital navigators help people connect.

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**THEY WORK TO NARROW THE DIGITAL DIVIDE – TO HELP PEOPLE GET DEVICES, FIND OR GAIN INTERNET ACCESS, AND LEARN HOW TO USE A SMARTPHONE, LAPTOP OR DESKTOP COMPUTER.** For the patrons they help, it means the difference between only talking to your grandchildren on the phone or seeing their faces in Facetime; between being able to shop and compare multiple products from your home, versus having to drive to several stores in person; in having the world at your fingertips, versus feeling left behind and isolated.

“Digital navigators help people with things that you need to feel included online and in life,” said Cindy Fisher, Senior Program Coordinator, Texas Broadband Development Office. “How to use a computer, how to get computer access, figuring out passwords, having someone that you trust helping you through the online world and everything that comes with it.” (The May #LibrariesTransformTX podcast episode features Cindy and Lakehills Area Library Director Dianna Landes talking about digital navigation; [listen to it here.](#))

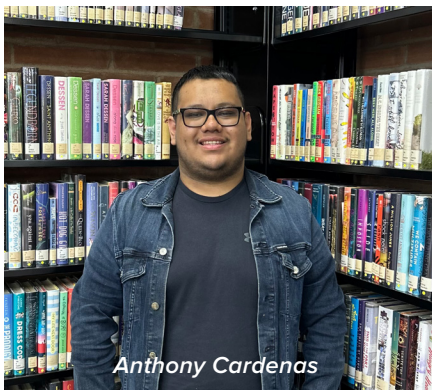
The three libraries featured in this article each received

a grant from [TSLAC’s Texas Digital Navigators Grant Program](#), which helped them develop and implement a unique digital navigator program to close the digital divide in their area in a measurable way. Digital navigators are individuals who address the whole digital inclusion process — home connectivity, devices, and digital skills — with community members. While the funding from those grants only extended to the end of 2022, many of the libraries that won grants have secured additional funding from other grant sources to continue their programs.

While it might sound dry on paper, the reality is that digital navigators help individuals every day with navigating modern life, in efforts that seem simple but that are truly transformative.

“The most rewarding part is seeing them put into action what they have learned in the class,” said Tristan Garza, a digital navigator at Hector P. Garcia Memorial Library in Mercedes. “That feels awesome. We are really here providing a service our community needs.”





Anthony Cardenas



Tristan Garza



Marisol Vidales

## Dr. Hector P. Garcia Memorial Library

**LOCATION:** Mercedes, TX, in the Rio Grande Valley; population 16,312.

### DIGITAL NAVIGATOR PROGRAM:

Tristan Garza and Anthony Cardenas are the library's digital navigators. They teach two classes, *Intro to Computers* (a 10-week course that teaches basic computer skills, safe internet exploration, and email creation, among other skills) and *Google Docs and Microsoft Office* (a specialty class with emphasis on Microsoft Office applications and Google Docs.) They're also available for walk-in help during library hours, assisting patrons one-on-one.

The TSLAC grant for \$70,000, enables the library to provide training, workshops, regular contact with community members, equipment set-up/installation, as well as other community-based services. An additional grant from the Ladd and Katherine Hancher Library Foundation has allowed the library to continue the digital navigator program in 2023.

"There's always more and more demand for the intro to computers class," Garza said. With grant funding the library was able to get 52 Chromebooks and 51 hotspots. Of these, 48 Chromebooks and hotspots were given to patrons who had

completed the 10-week Intro to Computers class. The patrons' hotspot connections are paid for through the end of December, 2023 through funding from Emergency Connectivity Funds, a federal program.

The remaining Chromebooks are being used for class, and can be checked out for use in the library only, when class is not in session. The remaining hotspots are available for checkout (and are usually all checked out.) ECF is also covering funding for these, Cardenas said.

**WIDE RANGE OF STUDENTS:** "We had one student who was 18. We have had students who were in their late 80s. We've had people who could be our sisters and people who could be our grandparents," Cardenas said. "They are very curious. Some just want to know how it all works. They didn't get a chance to use computers in their jobs, and now you need it for everything ...You can't even go to a restaurant and order a burger without scanning a QR code. A lot of the older students, it's frustrating for them and they just want a menu. Even the self-checkout with the scanner at HEB can be an issue."

Said Garza, "A lot of our patrons do show a willingness to learn. They're always asking, 'how do you do this, can you show me how to do this?' Sometimes those who want to take the classes are not able to make it because of work, so we meet with them individually if they miss a class."

### TIP FOR OTHER LIBRARIES LOOKING TO START A SIMILAR

**PROGRAM:** "At first, we thought we were going to have to build our own curriculum," said Marisol Vidales, Library Director. "But then through the Digital Navigators grant we were connected with Literacy Minnesota. Their program is called [Northstar Digital](#) – we were able to use that curriculum." The library gets lesson plans through their Northstar Digital subscription, and the program also issues certificates to students after they complete the course. Any library can subscribe, Vidales explained, and she recommended their program for other libraries.





**WHAT THEY FIND INSPIRING:** Their older students in particular “have determination,” Cardenas said. “In our classes we do have exams. Our standard is automatically set high, an 85 or above. You really have to know your stuff. They have that old school grit; they are not going to give up. That old-school generation, they want to learn. I admire that.”



(l-r) Sarah Brennan (Dublin Chamber of Commerce), Adina Dunn (Dublin Public Library), Blanca Martineau (Dublin Chamber of Commerce), Front: Lyndi Hanna with Hank

## Dublin Public Library

**LOCATION:** Dublin, TX, in Erath County; about 90 miles from Waco; population 3,433.

### DIGITAL NAVIGATOR PROGRAM:

The library received \$70,000 to assess and help meet the community’s digital needs. “The digital navigators grant was fantastic. We used it as a platform to help people reach their goals.

One of the barriers here is access to equipment. So, the way we structured our program – we did not loan but we gave out devices,” said Adina Dunn, Library Director of the Dublin Public Library.

They were able to give out about 50 devices, a mix of iPads, Chromebooks and MacBooks. To determine who would receive the devices, “The first thing we did was go to our community partners, community outreach programs that already serve people that are in need. We asked please send your clients in need to the library. Our partners include women’s shelters, food pantries and places like that.”

Dunn did a short interview with each recipient to determine what device would be the best fit. “When I would do the intake questionnaire, they seemed pretty comfortable with using the devices. So really what was the barrier for them, was not having access to the equipment.”

Dunn and her staff (she has three part-time employees) introduced their patrons to the Northstar Digital Literacy curriculum. Because their community is very small, it worked better to have people work through the Northstar program at their own pace, instead of trying to form classes, she said.



**MORE GRANTS, MORE EQUIPMENT:** Dublin Public Library also received an ALA Community Connect “Digital Access at Home” grant, as well as funding from the federal Emergency Connectivity Fund. With these additional resources, the library purchased Chromebooks, hotspots and iPads, that are available for patrons to check out. Each item can be checked out for one month.

**MOST REWARDING PART OF HER JOB:** “Helping people – supporting people on their journey to achieving their goals, whatever their goals may be” is the best part of her job, Dunn said.

## Pottsboro Area Library

**LOCATION:** Pottsboro, TX, near the Texas-Oklahoma border, close to Lake Texoma; population 2,613.

### DIGITAL NAVIGATOR PROGRAM:

Mark Revolinski is Pottsboro’s solo digital navigator. He helps local citizens in a variety of ways: going multiple times per month to area senior living centers, where his tech help sessions, “One on One with Mark,” often draw lines of people; at the library, where he helps patrons who walk in or who have appointments; and at people’s homes, where he goes to help set up computer equipment for those who need assistance.

At first, despite flyers and Facebook ads, there was not much demand for his services. But then the library placed a [30-second TV ad](#) on a local station (“Hi, I’m Mark. Did you know the Pottsboro library offers free classes and one-on-one help with the Internet and your devices?”) and suddenly requests skyrocketed.

“The people who need me, they weren’t on the Internet, so they didn’t see our website or the Facebook ads,” Revolinski said. “Ever since the TV ad, we’ve had quite a bit of traffic, and a lot of word of mouth – people calling to say, ‘You helped my friend the other day, can you help me?’”

**HELPING FOLKS GET CONNECTED:** The TSLAC grant to the Pottsboro Library was \$70,000; additional funds from a Google grant mean the program will extend for another two years. With the grant money, the library has been able to buy tablets and Chromebooks to give out; those receiving the new devices must have at least one appointment with Revolinski so he can show them how it works.

The main challenge for Pottsboro citizens is the limited Wi-Fi in rural areas. “It’s a huge challenge,” he said. “If you don’t have good internet access there is not a lot you can do. I tell them, let’s set up your phone if we can and turn it into a hotspot.”

For qualifying residents, Revolinski has been able to help get them set up with the [Affordable Connectivity Program \(ACP\)](#), a federal program that provides \$30 per month toward internet service for eligible households. But for people who live in areas without internet service, “where the only option is satellite and that’s \$100 a month, that doesn’t help much,” he said.





**BONDING WITH PATRONS:** Before retiring and moving to Pottsville so he and his wife could be closer to their grandchildren, Revolinski worked for Nokia for 38 years, where he was Director of Operations for Installation and supervised teams across the country. Once they moved to Texas, “I was just kind of sitting around, was looking for a part-time job, wasn’t chasing money but was chasing something to do,” he said. He heard about the opening at the library and applied. Now, he’s busier than ever. “It doesn’t feel like work to me. I’m overqualified but that’s ok. I want to enjoy myself. I enjoy working with especially the senior community.” He makes a point of chatting with each person, just getting to know them, before they start the tech help part of the meeting.

**JOYFUL MOMENTS:** The sometimes challenging parts of his job are offset by the moments of joy, he said.

“One lady at the senior living center in Denison, her husband recently passed away. She had been living there for three months. She had one of those Google Nest devices, like an Alexa, and it had not worked that whole time. She asked me, can you get this to work? The account was in her husband’s name so she couldn’t get it to work, she didn’t have the password. I reset it and set up a brand-new account for her. I got it connected and told her, ‘It’s up.’ She said, ‘Hey Google, play Elvis Presley.’ So Elvis came on and she looked at me, she had a huge smile on her face and she said, ‘I have been waiting three months to say that.’”

*Michele Chan Santos is the marketing specialist at the Texas Library Association.*





Texas Music Educator's Association  
conference, 2019

# Forging an Alliance

## *Fine Arts and the Library*

By Joe C. Pendleton, Ph.D.

Imagine for a moment, working alone in a cavernous room where the tools of your craft are scattered among dusty shelves. In this dimly lit barn of a space, you are responsible for the care, upkeep, organization, and distribution of all these items that are key to teaching your students the lessons it took years to discover and experience. No one else understands the sacrifices made to keep these utensils of learning at the ready for student use, or the passion it takes to motivate students to use them correctly over and over. You are a lighthouse of learning, guiding the young minds within your influence toward a more enlightened and beautiful world.

**YOU MAY HAVE SEEN YOURSELF AS A LIBRARIAN** in the paragraph above. It might surprise you to discover that I also wrote the paragraph to describe the role of fine arts teachers, faculty, and community artists (dancers, actors, musicians, sculptors, etc.).

Librarians and fine artists have a great deal in common in a general sense, as the paragraph implies, though the actual medium of our work is quite different. The purpose of this article is to try to help demystify the needs of fine arts programs and educators, in all types of libraries, and list ways to build a reciprocal relationship with them. By no means is this article meant to add to your already full schedules and tasks, but simply to be a guide to the challenges these artists experience with functions where librarians can offer advice and help. It is also not the goal of this article to tell librarians how to “library,” but there are some special situations and circumstances this article aims to clear up on how best to help and advise artists in library crises.

### **MAKING YOUR COLLECTION ARTIST-FRIENDLY**

The teachers, students, volunteers, and directors of these fine arts programs (we'll call them “artists” for now) look to see representation and recognition in your collection of the type of art they use for expression. They will look in your 700s or 800s,

and the M's or N's, biographies, art books, sheet music, CDs, DVDs, and electronic collections trying to see what you have about their type of art or favorite artists.

Artists also like to find the “deep dive” type resource in a library collection, like musical scores, historical costume design books and magazines, performances from Broadway shows, musical instruments and art supplies that circulate, set design drawings, lighting plots, and PA systems. These items tell artists that the library staff wants to provide experiences for them to expand their artistic expression.

Also, using genres for fine arts resources is a great way to build an instant connection with artists. At the Booker T. Washington Arts Magnet in Dallas, I genrefied the Nonfiction collection to represent the different areas of artistry being taught at the high school. Each conservatory had a color-coded spine label, which also featured a genre within that area. So, in Theatre there were genre groups for set design, lighting/sound, costume design, scripts, stage weapons, hair/makeup, acting, directing, and scriptwriting. The dance, visual art, and music collections were all arranged into genre groupings as well to allow student artists to locate specific resources on specific topics at a glance. Our circulation increased dramatically once these resources were grouped and labeled for rapid discovery.

Performances in libraries are also a great way to build



a rapport with your local or campus fine arts programs. Hosting a recital, play, or gallery showing allows artists to meet your stakeholders as audience members and extends the community/campus appeal of the library. Often, community and campus arts groups are looking for venues for small performances to give their programs an opportunity to gain performance experiences and publicity. Libraries are a treasured venue in the eyes of many artists, and live performances are a magnet to library patrons.

#### **A DIFFERENT WAY OF MANAGING INVENTORY**

I was a music educator before becoming a librarian. In my experience as a music teacher, I frequently saw where equipment was rarely put away correctly, instruments got damaged, students lost what they were given, and the music library is always a mess! When I presented this topic at the Texas Music Educators Association conference recently, many directors told me how bad the music library was in their music room. The same is true for theater directors, community artists, dance instructors, and other artists. Their focus was on teaching young artists and not on inventory, circulation, acquisitions, and asset tracking.

This is where librarians can be the voice of calm and hope to these artists. Using our expertise as managers of systems, we can advise on how to create a pathway of circulation for their inventory. And the need is great. Theater directors, music directors, visual art teachers, and dance instructors all have hundreds or thousands of pieces of inventory.

Not every artist feels comfortable requesting or accepting help, and from our experience in libraries we often feel the same way. However, should the opportunity arise, a collaboration with a colleague that has similar categories

and parameters as the library may be an opportunity to demonstrate how valuable you are to your administration.

#### **LET THE CREATORS CREATE**

Artists love to create, and love to experiment with creating new expressions of their ideas and dreams. Content creation is a key avenue for libraries to meet the needs of artists who want to stretch their abilities into new areas and create a “token” of their artistic work. By providing recording equipment, 3D printing, CAD software, greenscreens, musical composition technology, and digital canvases, libraries provide deep expression opportunities for artists that cannot afford these technologies in their own homes or studios. I had one student use an overhead projector to paint a giant mural. Artists can create podcasts of their own music, do video recordings of their plays, illustrate storylines, film their choreography, scan an art image and more to build their portfolios and to apply for scholarships or awards.

#### **AN ALLIANCE IS POSSIBLE!**

Artists of all types and mediums need to view the works and creativity styles of other artists through books and recordings, scores and sketches, and online arts repositories. Libraries provide the kind of peaceful aura that spurs the imagination and creative thoughts of the artistic community. By curating spaces for creative activity and review, and building relational connections with artists, arts educators, and student artists, their creative skills begin to blossom. The benefit to your library will soon be seen and heard by your stakeholders when artists believe that you enjoy and accept their creative expressions!

*Joe Pendleton is Director of the Library at Amberton University.*

### **Typical Music Library System**

- Items filed in randomized numerical order in large envelopes, file folders, and/or placed on shelves
- Collection may be indexed and searchable, but not always in a particular order or grouping
- A computerized system helps circulate items to students, but the materials must be in a logical, retrievable order in an organized location.
- Individual items/realia are issued to students but are not always system tracked

# WELCOMING NEW POPULATIONS TO THE LIBRARY

By Carolyn Booker and Erica Richardson

When the population a library serves suddenly grows — due to an expansion of the library’s service area, or an influx of new residents — libraries can face a dramatic and steep increase in demand for their services. In 2021 and 2022, the Lewisville Public Library and Benbrook Public Library faced challenges in welcoming brand-new patrons to their libraries. Learn how they approached these challenges as an opportunity to improve services.



*Clockwise from top left: Raven Hill, Kayla Minter, Julie Alvarez, Benbrook Public Library*

## Lewisville: A fast-growing community

### THE GROWING COMMUNITY

**OF LEWISVILLE** prepared for and completed annexation of the Castle Hills area in November of 2021, growing from a population under 110,000 to a population of 132,000 overnight. Castle Hills is on the far east edge of Lewisville and the library is in the central/northwest area, so many Castle Hills residents currently use a public library in a neighboring city that is closer to their neighborhood. Our library was

challenged with how to best welcome these residents, let them know what our library offers and encourage them to visit our library regularly.

To get started, Castle Hills residents were asked to complete a survey about how they used public libraries, which libraries they used, what library service they would like to use that was lacking, etc. The results of that survey were used to focus future marketing efforts to the items that would be of most interest and impact. At a meeting for a Castle Hills Annexation Education Committee (organized by the City of Lewisville,

to help with changes that took place as a result of annexation), the library presented details about services offered, funding information, implications, and plans for improvements. A two-sided flier about the library was included in a welcome packet mailed to all Castle Hills residents immediately prior to annexation.

To connect Castle Hills residents with Lewisville Library services and to maintain the quality of the library’s collection with such a population increase, the library prepared the following action steps for the budget



process and received funding for all in the FY 21-2022 budget. These were budget requests reflecting additional staff and collection and tech needs, due to the larger service population.

1. **Outreach and story stroll** — A part-time library technician to allow for increased outreach. A second story stroll location in East Lewisville.
2. **Maintain the library's materials per capita funding** — To maintain the quality of the collection, funding to extend the same budget per capita for the additional residents.
3. **Maintain digital resources** — Funding to maintain existing digital resources that were anticipated to go up in cost due to the population increase.
4. **Annexation welcome cards** — Library staff proactively mailed/delivered an active library card and information to each Castle Hills residence. These approximately 5,500 cards provided immediate access to eBooks, eAudiobooks, eMagazines, and online research and learning tools.

After these action steps were put into place, the library did see activity on the Annexation Welcome Cards, some were used exclusively online, and some were brought in and converted to full-privilege cards. The number of cardholders in the Castle Hills zip code went up by 12%. The Lewisville Public Library hopes to keep extending services to Castle Hills and other areas of the city that are not in close proximity to the library. For the upcoming FY 2023-2024 budget, the library has proposed an outreach vehicle, book lockers, an online library card process, and associated staffing.

## Benbrook: Expansion of the Service Population

**BENBROOK IS A LIBRARY SPECIAL PURPOSE DISTRICT**, one of 15 in the State of Texas. We are not associated with our city, and actually serve as a stand-alone entity that receives half a percent of the sales tax that is generated from the City of Benbrook.

In 2022, the Benbrook Library Board of Trustees voted to expand the boundaries of our resident cards. Previous to 2022, only people who lived within a 15-mile radius and did not have a home library, could get a non-resident card, and resident cards were only for people who lived in the city of Benbrook. This led to a time-consuming process of verifying eligibility using Google Maps or tax records. In the new system, everyone who lives in Benbrook or in the zip code 76126, automatically can receive resident cards; and everyone else receives a non-resident card, except for Fort Worth residents using TexShare. This expansion of service population not only helped ease the pain at the information desk for new patrons, but it also helped immediately with the first impressions of the library from a patron's point of view, since the process of qualifying for a resident card is so much simpler.

We sent an email to all users who were currently non-residents that now qualified as a residents and

updated their status in our ILS. We also communicated with the HOAs in the area, many in unincorporated Tarrant County, to spread the word. The library has an excellent social media team, and we used that to our advantage as well. We received 100% positive feedback from all of our conversations, which made us feel more confident in our decision to expand.

The library went from an average of 150 new library cards a month to more than 200 new cards a month, a number that still holds true through April 2023. Our door count has increased significantly as well - January and February tend to be slow months, and we are seeing an average of more than 8,000 a month (for context, our normal summer month is more than 9,000 people.)

Moving forward, we are focused on serving our patrons to the best of our ability and building a new library. Our library was founded by a group of volunteers who went door to door to gain signatures to hold an election for our library to become a special purpose district 25 years ago. It is my job now to help build a library that not only represents the community but is built by the community, for the community, in the same way the library was started.

*Carolyn Booker is the Director of Library Services for the Lewisville Public Library.*

*Erica Richardson is the Library Director of the Benbrook Public Library.*



Carolyn Booker



Erica Richardson

# Non-Academic Programs for the Academic Librarian

By Elizabeth Nebeker and Tracy Williams

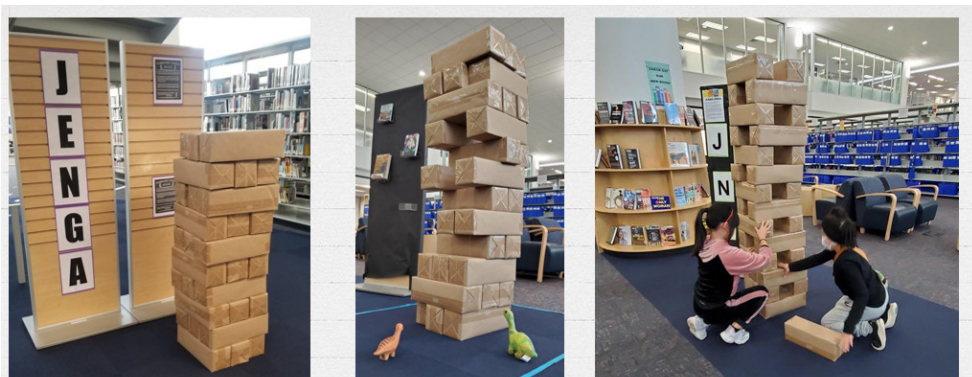
Academic libraries are known to be centers of academic research and study. However, academic libraries are not just for academic purposes. They also serve as a campus hub where people from diverse backgrounds come together to share ideas and learn from one another. Our library, Lone Star College-CyFair Library, is a joint-use community college/public library that serves faculty, staff, students, and the public. As such, we provide a variety of programs aimed at all ages and stages.

Non-academic programming in academic libraries is an essential tool that helps librarians connect with students and meet their diverse needs. In an era when students can conduct most of their research online, libraries increasingly struggle to bring students into the building. In *Library Journal's 2021 State of Academic Libraries Report*, 76% of participating libraries stated that student engagement was of high importance to the library's mission. By providing non-academic programs, libraries can engage students and faculty in informal activities outside of the classroom and create a welcoming environment that eases library anxiety.

As a joint-use library, our programs are open to all patrons; however, we often have activities/programs that are geared toward a specific population. Student and faculty-focused programs include Pre-Finals Week activities, collaborative programs with other departments, and Adulting 101. Our public-focused programs include International Games Month, LIFE Programs and book clubs.

Finals are a stressful time on any campus, and we want to let our students know we are there for them. Several years ago, we began offering programs during

finals week but found that attendance was low. Our students tended to show up for their finals and then leave campus, so we decided to pivot to providing activities the week before finals. During our Pre-Finals program, we conduct mostly passive programs that allow students to relax and take their mind off studying. Our passive programs require little staffing and have the advantage of being available any time the students want to participate, instead of us having to guess when students might show up for a program. We have stations throughout the first floor of our library with coloring pages, jigsaw puzzles, make-and-take arts and crafts, and snacks. Our most popular activity



Giant Jenga





is spending time with therapy dogs. Students (and staff) flock to the library for the opportunity to pet the dogs. We also offer other relaxation programs such as yoga and meditation.

We often draw upon the expertise of faculty and staff on campus to offer some of our programs. Collaboration with other departments allows faculty and staff to work with students without the pressure of grades. Our Adulting 101 series provides students with the opportunity to learn about a variety of life skills they may not have acquired at home. These sessions have covered topics such as finance and budgeting, household cleaning tips, sewing and mending, and gift wrapping. For our finance and budgeting session, we recruited a math professor to help the students understand how to create and use a budget. A collaboration with the art department and the on-campus art gallery has led to a series of art talks in the library, attended by students, faculty, staff, and the public. Artists are invited to discuss their work and answer questions in our large meeting space before the group walks over to the art gallery to view the artists' installation.

We offer a variety of programs for International Games Month (IGM), which occurs annually in November and is sponsored by the American Library Association (ALA) Games and Gaming Round Table. During the month, we schedule at least one night of board gaming, but our biggest draw is the variety of giant games we place throughout the first floor of the library. We have created a giant Scrabble game, giant Jenga, giant Connect Four, and giant Pac-Man. This passive activity allows students - as well as the community - an opportunity to take a break and play. We often find the games and activities are so popular that we leave them out a bit beyond the end of November

and into the week before finals.

Other year-round programs include our book clubs, LIFE programs, and various passive programs. Due to our nature as a joint-use library, these programs are attended by students and adults; however, they can be implemented in purely academic libraries. Our LIFE programs, a series of semimonthly programs on a variety of topics, are facilitated by librarians with faculty, staff, and community members presenting on topics such as history, outdoor activities, crafts, cooking, thrifting and more. Our Books Without Borders book club focuses on books with an international flair and most discussions are led by faculty on campus. Their subject expertise

provides an interesting take on the usual book discussions and facilitates the love of reading for fun and for learning about different countries and cultures.

Passive programs provide something new for the students to find in the library every week, creating a welcoming and interactive environment. This or That allows students to vote on a favorite item (example: ice cream or cake?), the Word of the Week provides students the opportunity to learn a new word (as well as use a print dictionary!), and the sticker mosaic gives them the chance to create a communal work of sticker art with the incentive of coming back regularly to try to guess what the finished product will be. These passive activities are usually near service desks so that librarians and staff can keep an eye on them and casually interact with the students to further alleviate their library anxiety.

Understanding the importance of engaging students in the library outside of academics allows academic librarians to build strong relationships with their students and foster a love of learning that extends beyond the academic realm.

*Elizabeth Nebeker is an Instruction Librarian and Adjunct Faculty and Tracy Williams is an Adult Reference Librarian and Professor at Lone Star College-CyFair, a joint-use community college/public library in Cypress.*



Tracy Williams



Elizabeth Nebeker

**TLA TECHNOLOGY UPDATE:  
MEMBERS ONLY & TLA ENGAGE  
OFFLINE JUNE 20-25**

TLA has invested in a new, robust, web-based Association Management System (AMS) called Nimble. This new AMS will be much more user-friendly and will streamline workflow for the TLA staff. Due to the transition, TLA Engage and the members only portal will be offline June 20 - 25. We will continue to share updates on this process.



**Calling all TLA Officers!**

**REGISTER FOR THE JULY 12–14 OFFICER GOVERNANCE  
TRAINING AND WORKSHOP**

TLA committee chairs and vice chairs and all unit officers should plan to attend the TLA Officer Governance Training and Workshop (formerly known as Annual Assembly) to prepare for their 2023-2024 roles. Whether you are brand new to serving in a TLA leadership role or you are a seasoned officer, you will learn something new at this workshop and be better prepared for the coming year. Topics will include governance, finance, membership growth and engagement, social media, website basics, using your Google drive and building your budget.

**When:** Wednesday, July 12 – Friday, July 14

**Where:** UT Commons Conference Center: free parking, conveniently located across from the Domain with many nearby shopping, dining and entertainment opportunities

**Hotel deadline:** June 21; reserve your hotel room at Lone Star Court at the Domain

**Registration deadline:** June 30

**Cost:** Member Registration (Wednesday-Friday) – \$79; Member Registration (Thursday-Friday) – \$49

**REGISTER**

**SUBMIT A TLA 2024  
CONFERENCE PROPOSAL  
BY JUNE 26**

Call for Proposals for TLA 2024 is open! We are seeking proposals for the TLA 2024 Annual Conference being held in San Antonio on April 16-19, 2024! Deadline to submit is June 26. [More info and link to submit here](#). Questions about submitting proposals or the review process? [Here is a detailed description of how to apply](#). Please contact the TLA Director of Education, [Julie Marshall](#), with any questions.



**DOWNLOAD YOUR TLA  
2023 PHOTOS**

View and download photos of the TLA 2023 conference [here](#).

Password: austin



**Nominate a  
Texas  
Library  
Champion**

**SUBMIT A NOMINATION FOR TEXAS  
LIBRARY CHAMPIONS!**

We're looking for champions of the Texas library community - individuals and organizations whose influence has changed the landscape of Texas libraries. The individuals and organizations selected will be added to the list of [Texas Library Champions](#) that was compiled in 2002 in commemoration of TLA's 100th anniversary celebration. [Learn more and make a nomination here](#). Deadline to submit is July 31.

The new Texas Library Champions will be recognized at TLA 2024.



## REGISTER FOR LAUNCH TODAY!

LAUNCH is [a TLA leadership program](#) designed for library professionals with less than five years of experience. This year, LAUNCH will be held in person in Austin. In this course, you will learn and expand leadership skills through group work, self-directed learning, and internal reflection. Each session will be taught by a dynamic leader in the field.

**When:** July 27–29, 2023

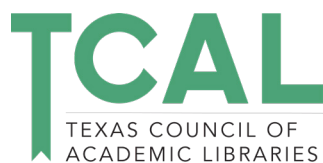
**Where:** Lone Star Court in the Domain.  
[Reserve your room here.](#)

**Cost:** \$249 for TLA members, \$279 for non-members. (Does not include hotel fee). Space is limited so register soon!

## Registration is open for the 2024 TCAL Conference!

**SEPTEMBER 18 – 19  
GALVESTON, TEXAS**

The TCAL 2023 Annual Conference will be held September 18-19, 2023, at the Texas A&M Hotel and Conference Center in College Station. Early registration rates (until Aug. 1) are \$159 for members, \$199 for non-members. Regular registration rates (Aug 1- Sept. 11) are \$179 for members, \$219 for non-members. More info and link to register [here](#).



## Nominate Yourself or Others for TLA Executive Board Election

The TLA Nominating Committee and TLA staff have collaborated to create a new, transparent method for assembling our annual Board election candidate slate. This fresh approach aims to identify a diverse range of highly qualified candidates and provide more members with the opportunity to actively participate in shaping the governance of our esteemed professional association.

All members are invited to nominate outstanding individuals who possess the qualities and experience that make for exceptional Board members. Yes, you can even nominate yourself! By doing so, you contribute to the vitality and strength of our association, ensuring that TLA continues to represent the best interests of its members.

To submit your nominations, please access the form linked below. It will be open through **July 24, 2023**. The Nominating Committee, composed of professionals from all library types, will review the submissions. They will analyze the information provided and curate a slate of candidates who embody the vision and mission of TLA.

The positions open for election in 2024 are:

- President-Elect (Special Libraries)
- Representative at Large (Public Libraries)
- Representative at Large (Academic Libraries)
- ALA Councilor (open to any member)

**NOMINATION FORM**



LIBRARIES UNITE  
**TLA★2023**

★ AUSTIN ★

APRIL 19 – 22





# TLA 2023 Annual Conference Wrap-up



Proving that the library community is stronger together, the more than 5,000 attendees at the TLA 2023 Annual Conference, held in Austin from April 19–22, lived up to the conference theme of #LibrariesUnite as they gathered to learn, discuss and celebrate librarianship and intellectual freedom.

The packed sessions, bustling exhibit hall and boisterous after-hours gatherings came as a welcome boost after a taxing year.

TLA 2023 featured more than 350 education sessions over four days. In the Exhibit Hall, there were 220+ Author Area signings and more than 270 exhibitors representing 375 companies.

Chat GPT was a hot topic, as was the current legislative session. Hundreds of librarians lined up to have their photo taken with the Pigeon from Mo Willems' *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus* and its sequels. A screening of *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*, based on Judy Blume's iconic novel, sold out. Librarians recorded video testimonials for Texans for the Right to Read and enjoyed off-site gatherings at the Austin Public Library's downtown location and local restaurants.

At the 2023 Texas Bluebonnet Award luncheon, more than 600 guests enjoyed hearing from author Devin Scillian and illustrator Tim Bowers, there to celebrate their win for the

heartwarming picture book *Memoirs of a Tortoise*.

The Illustrator Sketch-Off made a triumphant return after a hiatus of four years, and was a highlight of TLA After Hours, which also featured Battledecks and a Nerf war.

*New York Times* bestselling author Kelly Yang, the 2023 National Library Week honorary chair, attended TLA 2023 as a presenter, speaking at two education sessions and meeting with librarians at the Texas Tea event.

She Tweeted afterwards, "Texas librarians, thank you for having me at #txla23! Thank you for all your strength. Your grace. Your bravery. Your compassion. I'm with you and we will win." #txla23 #FinallySeen #FReadom #UniteAgainstBookBans

Thank you to the TLA executive board, conference program planning committee, TLA staff and the many, many volunteers who helped make the conference a great success!



Gretchen Rubin and Jo Giudice at General Session I

## TLA 2023 Keynote Speakers Open Windows into Other Perspectives

By Michele Chan Santos

**SEEING AND BEING SEEN — VALUING OTHERS AND BEING VALUED** — were recurrent themes of the keynote speakers at the Texas Library Association 2023 Annual Conference, held April 19–22 in Austin.

General Session I speaker Gretchen Rubin discussed how using all five of her senses — and becoming more present and more aware of the world around her — changed her life. In her conversation with Jo Giudice, Director of the Dallas Public Library, Rubin talked about her new book, *Life in Five Senses: How Exploring the Senses Got Me Out of My Head and Into the World*.

If you walk somewhere every day — walking your dog, for example — and you focus on a different sense every day, it can allow you to notice things you might have been overlooking

for a long time, Rubin said. You might notice flowers blooming, or the smell of the air after a rainstorm. “I realized I was focusing on the negative in my life and not seeing the beautiful.”

Even the margarita she enjoyed while in Austin was a revelation — “It was sweet, sour, salty and bitter,” Rubin said.

She shared a tip for getting a crowded room instantly quiet — “Just blow a note on a harmonica.”

The reading world is full of sensory experiences, Rubin said: “People talk about a new car smell, but what about the smell of a new hardback book?”

At the Texas Bluebonnet Award Author Session, author Devin Scillian and illustrator



# TLA 2023 Annual Conference Wrap-up



Author Devin Scillian at the TBA Author Session

Tim Bowers discussed their book *Memoirs of a Tortoise*, which won the Texas Bluebonnet Award this year.

The beautifully illustrated picture book is about a tortoise, Oliver, and his human owner, Ike. They have a loving and wonderful friendship that lasts for decades. But when Ike passes away, Oliver must learn to go on without him.

Scillian said he found it surprising — but very heartwarming — that so many children voted for the book. He has heard from many fans who found the book comforting, after losing a grandparent or other loved one.

“When I first wrote it, I thought that this book might be important to a small group of people, who had experienced grief or loss,” Scillian said. “It took me a while to realize — that is all of us.”

At General Session II, author Cynthia Leitch Smith interviewed Angeline Boulley about her new book, *Warrior Girl Unearthed*. It’s the sequel to Boulley’s best-selling YA novel, *Firekeeper’s Daughter*.

Boulley, an enrolled member of the Sault Ste.



Angeline Boulley at General Session II

Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, is a storyteller who writes about her Ojibwe community in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. She is a former Director of the Office of Indian Education at the U.S. Department of Education. She lives in southwest Michigan, but she considers her home to be on Sugar Island, an island in the St. Marys River that is the setting of her two YA books.

Boulley said she wrote *Firekeeper’s Daughter* over a ten-year period, but the main character of *Warrior Girl Unearthed*, Perry Firekeeper-Birch (the niece of the protagonist, Daunis, from the earlier novel) came more fully formed to her.

“Perry just popped into my head,” she said. “I saw her as a warrior girl, an Indigenous Lara Croft. She raids museums to bring back ancestral bones to their proper homes.”

Asked why she chooses to have teenage girls as the main heroes of her novels, Boulley said, “I worked in Indian education my whole career. This is my favorite age. It’s such a powerful age, when you are finding your voice.”

She continued, “Stories are good medicine.

“Stories are good medicine. Being able to have teens read about a life different than their own and find that common thread of humanity is so important.”

# TLA 2023 Annual Conference Wrap-up



Being able to have teens read about a life different than their own and find that common thread of humanity is so important.”

Our General Session II keynote speaker, Deborah Roberts, senior national affairs correspondent for *20/20*, *Nightline*, *Good Morning America*, and *World News Tonight with David Muir*, closed the conference on a high note. She was interviewed by Emma McDonald, Director of Library Services at Mesquite ISD.

Roberts discussed her new book, *Lessons Learned and Cherished: The Teacher Who Changed My Life*. In this book, Roberts has curated a collection of essays, letters, and musings from celebrity friends and colleagues that share how teachers changed them and helped them get to where they are today.

Roberts talked about growing up in Perry, Georgia. “Just a few years before, my older siblings did not have access to the library” because of segregation, she said. “To have my life change so dramatically at age 9 was truly remarkable.” She has warm memories of her local

public library and school library and interviewed one of her childhood librarians for a TV piece that she showed to the audience.

“Librarians and teachers need to know how much we treasure you, especially now,” Roberts said. “Know that you are valued. This book serves as a reminder of the treasure that you all are. So many people remember a teacher pouring something into your soul. You poured your curiosity into me.”

Roberts talked about the wave of book bans and challenges to the freedom to read.

“It is heartbreaking what has happened just in the past year. But I’m encouraged that librarians are a tough group of people,” she said to laughter and applause. “You are not giving up. You are fighting the good fight.”

She continued, “I hope this book is a wake-up call to parents that they should value and treasure their teachers and librarians. Education and access — that is how kids learn to dream and excel.”

*Michele Chan Santos is the marketing specialist at TLA.*



# TLA 2023 Awards

## Lifetime Achievement Award:

Walter Betts



Walter is the Department Head of the Library Systems and Technology Department at the University of Texas at Arlington, and a former TLA President. He has been a devoted, conscientious, and courageous librarian who not only served his own institutions incredibly well; he also assumed key positions at the state and national level to support and advance the work of libraries. He has held positions with the American Library Association and served in multiple TLA officer roles and executive board positions.

"I am grateful to receive this honor, and I extend my thanks to both my family and my close circle of TLA friends for their unwavering support," Betts said. "I owe my success to their encouragement and assistance, and to the many opportunities that were provided to me when I was new to the profession. I encourage my Texas colleagues to remember my conference theme, 'Own Your Profession,' a clarion call for librarians to be proud of their contributions to our communities even in the face of attacks on our profession."

## Librarian of the Year Award:

Roosevelt Weeks



Roosevelt, the Director of Libraries for Austin Public Library, serves as a Representative-at-Large (public libraries) on the TLA Executive Board and is the Vice Chair/Chair-elect of the Urban Library Council. He also serves on the Waterloo Greenway Board of Directors, the University of Texas Library System Advisory Council, the University of North Texas College of Information Board of Advisors, the Texas Book Festival Board of Advisors and other library and literacy boards and committees.

He was integral in leading the movement to pass an Austin City Council ordinance to eliminate overdue fines for Austin Public Library materials returned or renewed past their due date. This change removed an economic barrier for accessing library materials.

"I am deeply honored and humbled to have been named Librarian of the Year. It is truly a privilege to serve my community through the power of books and information, and I am grateful for the opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of those around me," said Weeks. "I share this award with my colleagues and library team members, who have been instrumental in helping me achieve this recognition."

# TLA 2023 Awards

## Distinguished Service Award: Virginia Bigler



Virginia is the librarian at Harlan High School in Northside ISD. She has been a leader among the more than 100 Northside ISD librarians for many years. Virginia serves as a mentor to new librarians in the district, working with them to make sure they are supported and have what they need. She has also mentored two university students as they worked to graduate from library school. One of her former assistants became a librarian and attributes much of her success to Virginia's leadership and example. In addition, four of her former students are currently working on their MLS degrees as a direct result of their positive experiences in her high school library, and she is currently a mentor for two of her high school seniors who are doing a year-long independent study on librarianship.

## Wayne Williams Project of the Year: North Shore Middle School, Galena ISD



Chari Kauffman and Trinidad Contreras, librarians at North Shore Middle School in Houston, part of Galena Park ISD, accepted the award on behalf of their program,

*Noche de Cuentos* (Story Night).

*Noche de Cuentos* was designed to promote literacy through culturally significant storytelling, fun activities and immersive displays. Students and community members were invited to hear volunteer storytellers share traditional Hispanic oral stories and to participate in other literacy-related activities. The event attracted approximately 600 - 700 people over two hours. The main attraction was live storytellers in tents sharing stories such as: *La Lechuza*, *El Cucuy*, *La Llorona*, *El Silbón*, *El Sombrero*, *Maria Angula*, *La Pascualita*, etc. Some of the storytellers provided elaborate decorations in their tents to highlight their stories and dressed in costume/face paint. In addition, three large immersive walk-through displays were popular with the crowd.

## Libraries Change Communities Award: SPARK Program



SPARK (Sharing, Partnering, and Reaching for Knowledge) is a resource-sharing initiative and partnership between Harris County Public Library (LSC-Tomball Community Library), Tomball ISD, and LSC-Tomball. The SPARK collaborative initiative plays a crucial role in the education and development of youth in Tomball and encourages them to become lifelong readers and learners by providing access to an abundance of library resources. The initiative has four main elements: SPARK library cards and access to resources; resource sharing and delivery; library learning corners; and expanded collaboration between the librarians of TISD and LSC-Tomball Community Library.



# TLA 2023 Awards

## Outstanding Services Award:

Bea Saba



Bea, the Library Director of the Bryan + College Station Public Library System, proved herself an exceptional leader to her library system during the pandemic. She was instrumental in creating COVID-19 protocols and processes that provided stellar service to the community. She created service offerings through grants to meet community needs for school districts through services such as Tutor.com, Kanopy streaming, and more. She planned and organized unique employee development training days for her staff and partnered with the Harris County Public Library to launch Texas' first reciprocal Lending Agreement. Bea ensured that every facet of her community received the services they needed during this difficult time.

Bea has taken on leadership roles in TLA, serving as chair-elect of the Black Caucus Round Table and spearheading the newly created Ashley Bryan Award.

## Sam G. Whitten Intellectual Freedom Award:

Llano County Library Advocates



Leila Green Little, Jeanne Puryear, Cynthia Waring, Rebecca Jones, Rick Day, Kathy Kennedy and Diane Moster, the seven plaintiffs in the Little vs. Llano County first amendment lawsuit, received the Whitten Intellectual Freedom Award in recognition of their support for the freedom to read. "In Llano County, these seven citizens exemplified courage under fire," said Jeffry Archer, Dean of Baylor University Libraries and chair of the Intellectual Freedom Committee, who presented the award.

"These individuals became close friends and strong allies in the fight to protect their community's public library when elected officials, prompted by a small group of residents, began removing books from library shelves. The group organized meetings, filed and funded public information requests, sifted through thousands of pages of public records, wrote elected officials, and spoke out at public meetings. These individuals have never wavered in their commitment to fighting for what is right. They have been champions of intellectual freedom and we cannot thank them enough."

## Benefactor Award:

HEB



HEB was recognized because of their support of Northside ISD's **LibraryPalooza: That Author Thing**. This is a book festival featuring several guest authors which takes place each February in San Antonio. In total over the last decade, HEB has generously donated \$55,000 in support of this wonderful program. The generous donation allows Northside ISD to pay for author fees, travel, food, decorations, signage, programs, T-shirts, and even books to give away to attendees. With this support, the annual LibraryPalooza event regularly draws nearly 1,000 middle and high school students.

# TLA 2023 Awards

## TLA Membership Grand Prize Winner!

Congratulations to **Alan Carlos** of Corpus Christi Public Libraries, who won the Membership Grand Prize, GeoMetrix Arc Shelving by Brodart. Here are staff of Corpus Christ PL enjoying their new bookcase.



## TLA Disaster Relief Fund Art Raffle

Winner of the Jerry Craft signed illustration: **Lucy Barnes**, Goodman ACE Demonstration School, Aldine ISD



## Intellectual Freedom Quilt raffle

**Leila Green Little** of Llano County won the quilt.





# TLA 2023 Awards

## OTHER ASSOCIATION AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

### Christina B. Woll Memorial Fund Grant

Martindale Community Library

### Demco Upstart Innovative Programming Award

Northside ISD high school librarians  
SPARK program - Harris County Public Library; LSC-  
Tomball Community Library

### Jeanette and Jim Larson Mystery Grant

Longview Public Library

### Junior Library Guild Diversity and Inclusion Conference Stipends

Stephanie Leslie  
Guadalupe Herrera

### Ray C. Janeway Scholarship

Valerie Vizcara

### Siddie Joe Johnson Award

Cheryl Hensley

### Texas Youth Creators Award Bob Bennet Best in Show Winner

Jacqueline Gonzalez, for her graphic design submission "Chaotic Beauty." Jacqueline is from Jimmy Carter Early College High School in La Joya ISD.

### TLA Summer School Scholarship

Valerie Vizcara

### Vivien Greenfield Award

Jessica Silva

### Walter H. Escue Memorial Scholarship

Ginger Hollis

## DIVISIONS

### College and University Libraries Division (CULD)

#### Melody Kelly Award

Michael Contreras

### Public Libraries Division Biblionix Stipend

Samantha Streeter

### TASL MVP Awards

Amanda Chacon  
Amanda Hunt  
Deborah Zeman

### TASL Scholarships

Zachary Diamond  
Dawn Ellis

Ginger Hollis

Mary Lagleder-Silva

### TASL Distinguished Library Service Award – School Administrator

Shawn McKenzie - Northside ISD

### TASL Texas PTA Shirley Igo Award

Francie Ingram

## ROUND TABLES

### Children's Round Table Stipends

Leslie Whitaker, Amelia McBeth, Nicki Ittner, Cristal Isaacks, Susanne Fleenor, Rebecca Calderon

### Library Instruction Round Table Project of the Year

Tompkins High School: Michelle Tuttle, Daniel Sefcik and Bryan Johnson

### Library Instruction Round Table Devin Zimmerman Stipend

Gabriel Lopez

### TALL Texans Round Table Jack Alton Strawn Standing TALL Award

Nicole H. Cruz

### Small Community Libraries Round Table Biblionix Stipend

Callie Pittman, Hillsboro City Library

### Small Community Libraries Round Table Librarian of the Year

Carol Deviney, Martindale Community Library

### Small Community Libraries Round Table Advocate of the Year

Susan Freeman, Hondo Public Library

### Young Adult Round Table Reading Incentive Award

Emily Hersh

## AFFILIATED AWARDS

### J. Frank Dobie Awards

City of Peñitas Public Library  
Chandler Public Library  
Laguna Vista Public Library  
The Maud Public Library  
Martindale Community Library  
Robertson County Carnegie Library (Franklin, TX)

# 2023 Branding Iron Awards

Across Texas, librarians plan and execute inventive and inspired marketing plans to promote their services, programs, and events. The Texas Library Association's Branding Iron Awards honor their creative and memorable work with awards presented in several categories, and one overall Best of Show winner.



## BEST IN SHOW

### Flower Mound Public Library, Oceans of Possibilities Music Video

This year's Best in Show winner was a [delightful video](#) in which librarians and library staff sang and danced in costume—as sea animals - to promote the summer reading program Oceans of Possibilities. Hundreds of people in their community watched the video and it helped propel their summer reading program to success. For creativity, originality and fun, the Best in Show Branding Iron Award for 2023 was awarded to Flower Mound Public Library.

“In doing this project, we wanted to draw more attention to and interest in our summer reading challenge. Given that this was the first year we were getting back to pre-COVID protocols, we hoped that an entertaining, engaging video would excite our patrons about coming back into the library and, while they were here, sign up for the challenge and/or attend some of our programs. We hoped to show that the library is a fun place to visit, especially during the summer,” said Jennie Evans, Assistant Director of Library Services at Flower Mound Public Library.



## CATEGORY WINNERS

### Reading Programs — School Library

#### Dessau Middle School, Pflugerville ISD, “Zen Den”

Librarian Jean Darnell created the Zen Den to provide students with a calm, safe space in what used to be a tech equipment room in the library. Students meditate, do yoga, read, play the singing bowl, use the sand garden, turn on a miniature water fountain or use the iPad to select readings from a list of topics such as anger, self-esteem, managing anxiety and more. It's very popular with students and helps them regroup during the day, making the library a destination for students when they need solace and calm.



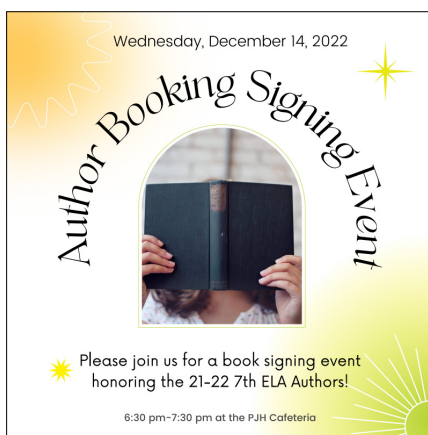
# 2023 Branding Iron Awards



## Reading Programs — Public Library

### Dustin Michael Sekula Memorial Library, “Tea Time and Stories”

This monthly program at the public library in Edinburg draws families together and encourages a love of reading. Each month is focused on a specific literacy theme or holiday and every session includes a story time and a hands-on activity. The library staff also spend time decorating the space, setting up disposable tea sets, and dressing up according to the theme to make sure children and their parents are given the true “tea party” experience.



## Special Events/Exhibits — School Library

### Pleasanton Junior High School, Student Creative Writing Book Signing

Over several months, the seventh-grade students at Pleasanton Junior High School (in Pleasanton, south of San Antonio) each contributed an original work of creative writing or art to a book, “The 7th Grade Chronicles: A Glimpse into the Teenage Mind.” The book was published, and students and teachers celebrated at an on-campus book signing. The goal was to allow all students to submit an original work of creative writing or art, and all contributing to the project would receive a copy of the book free of charge. Student writing confidence increased, and many students reported that they were inspired to continue writing on their own. The published book was donated to the campus library and to the local public library.



## Special Events/Exhibits — Public Library

### Plano Public Library, “Thinking Money for Kids.”

Plano Public Library hosted “Thinking Money for Kids” – a financial literacy exhibit sponsored by the American Library Association and FINRA – between July 13, 2022, and August 24, 2022. This nationally touring exhibit was designed to teach elementary-age children and their parents, caregivers, and educators about financial literacy topics – like saving, spending, and budgeting – in a way that is both understandable and fun. Plano Public Library was one of 50 U.S. public libraries, and the only library in Texas, to host Thinking Money for Kids. For this project, the library employed a multi-faceted approach to promote the exhibit and related programming, with the goal of reaching a wide spectrum of potential visitors. Local media promotion occurred in *Plano Magazine*’s “Top 5 Things to Do with Your Library” articles, as a stand-alone press release in *Plano Magazine*, and as articles on the *Dallas Morning News*, *Plano Star Courier*, and NBC DFW websites.

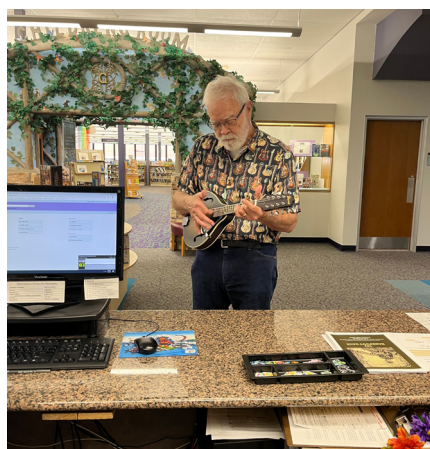
# 2023 Branding Iron Awards



## External Communications — School Library

### Pin Oak Middle School, “Your Library, Your Dream.”

According to Pin Oak Middle School Librarian Brooke Corso, “My project is called ‘Your Library, Your Dream’ because it is founded on the tenets of possibility and choice, and communicating to students that their voices are important and respected. Every school year, two of my top concerns are whether struggling or reluctant readers can take ownership of their own reading as adeptly and regularly as avid or advanced readers, and whether every child can see themselves on the book covers on display in the shelves. I want to ease anxiety, lower embarrassment, and raise confidence, so promoting all the wonderful aspects of the library to 1250 students and their families had to keep those goals in mind.” A 360-degree virtual tour of the library, materials in English and Spanish, and QR codes of videos next to each fiction and nonfiction section help make the library a welcoming and inclusive space.

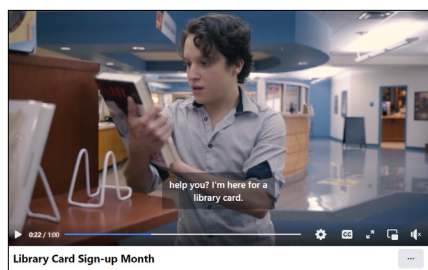


## External Communications — Public Library

### Grapevine Public Library, “Musical Lending Library”

Whether you’ve always wanted to learn to play the electric guitar, banjo, mandolin or even the harp, if you’re a Grapevine resident who is 18 or over and in good standing at the library, you can now check out an instrument for free from the Grapevine Public Library. Launched at the beginning of February, the [Musical Instrument Lending Library](#) offers patrons a three-week borrowing period for each of 17 musical instruments (the checkout time can be renewed once if no one else is waiting for that instrument.)

The primary objective of the marketing campaign was to create public awareness of the new instrument lending library and related library resources and to generate excitement about these offerings within the community. The response to social media posts promoting the new Musical Instrument Lending Library was phenomenal. The initial Facebook post promoting the collection has seen the most engagement of any post in library history, with 22,940 total impressions, a total reach of 21,635, and 1,599 total user engagements, including 590 positive reactions (likes/loves/wows) and 1,156 total clicks.



## Digital Only Communications — Public Library

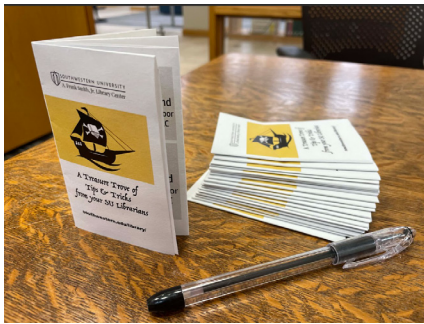
### Dustin Michael Sekula Memorial Library, “Library Card Sign Up Month Video.”

This [energetic and funny library card sign-up video](#), featuring a teen sprinting into the library, has had more than 1K views since it was posted.

“The goal for creating this promotional video was to make citizens aware of the benefits of having a library card,” said Jose Tamez, Assistant Library Director of Dustin Michael Sekula Memorial Library in Edinburg. “In the month of August 2022, we had a total of 168 library cards issued, in the month of September 2022 and after the release of the promotional video we issued a total of 172 new library cards, and the number of checkouts of library materials increased from 10,058 in August 2022 to 12,269 in September 2022.”



# 2023 Branding Iron Awards



## External Communications — Academic Library

### Smith Library, Southwestern University, “Tiny Library Zines”

Every incoming student at Southwestern University in Georgetown received one of these “tiny library zines” (miniature pamphlet/magazine) upon arrival at campus. The “zines” are packed with useful information about Smith Library.

“Students and faculty have verbally and enthusiastically expressed that the pocket-sized zines are ‘cute’ and easily kept in a backpack and thus useful,” said Katherine Hooker, Senior Research and Instruction Librarian at Smith Library. “Users have stated that they appreciate having a tangible paper copy since the library tour/module they receive orally and during their first week on campus is often forgotten in the whirlwind of a student’s initiation into life on Southwestern’s campus. Many library users are intrigued by the tiny zines and often unfold them to learn how they are engineered.”



## Fundraising/Strategic Plan — Public Library

### McAllen Public Library, “South Texas Book Festival Strategic Plan”

South Texas Book Festival (STBF) is a celebration of culture and imagination that links readers of all ages with authors, performers, and publishers. After nine years of planning the annual book festival, MPL implemented a Strategic Plan in 2022 to better prepare for upcoming festivals. The goal for preparing a Strategic Plan was to be consistent with the vision and mission of STBF, providing a consistent statement of direction that allows the festival committee to achieve clear goals when planning future events.



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Save the Date