

# HAPPY 120<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY TEXAS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

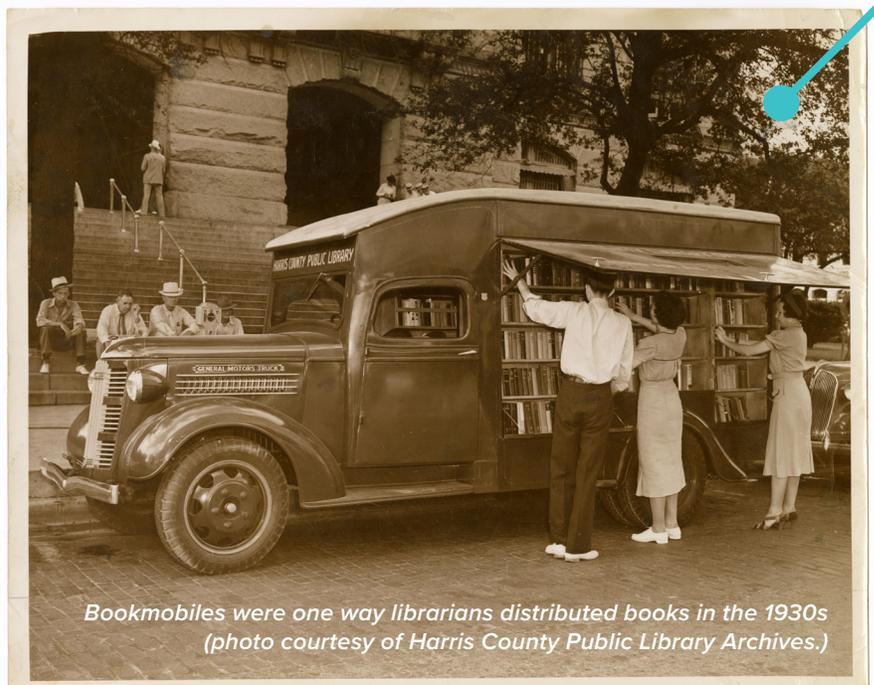
By Michele Chan Santos

The Texas Library Association was founded on June 9, 1902. From carrying books on horseback, to creating statewide systems for accessing electronic databases and eBooks, to championing broadband so that communities across Texas can have equitable access to information and resources, TLA has been there every step of the way to support Texas libraries and librarians.

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## 1902 -1920s

TLA is founded in 1902 and adopts a new constitution in 1922. During these first years, TLA developed a detailed study of library facilities in the state and pursued needed legislation to give libraries an independent standing in Texas. *News Notes* (which eventually becomes the *Texas Library Journal*) is first published in 1924.



*Bookmobiles were one way librarians distributed books in the 1930s  
(photo courtesy of Harris County Public Library Archives.)*

# 1930s -1940s

TLA weathers the Great Depression and libraries remain some of the few places that provided recreational material, at a time when families could afford very little. TLA worked hard to make sure libraries were able to stay open during the Depression years. The association invested heavily in the development of school libraries during this time. In 1947, TLA developed districts to connect libraries in geographic areas of the state.



*In the 1940s, public libraries or schools were two of the few places students could access books. (Photo courtesy Museum of the Gulf Coast.)*

# 1950s -1960s

In the 1950s, TLA contracted for three major surveys to give the association information to define state library needs. The 1960s was a significant period when it came to legislation. The Texas Library Systems Act was signed into law on March 20, 1969. TLA and the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) worked for many years on designing a statewide system of interconnected resources and networks.

# 1970s

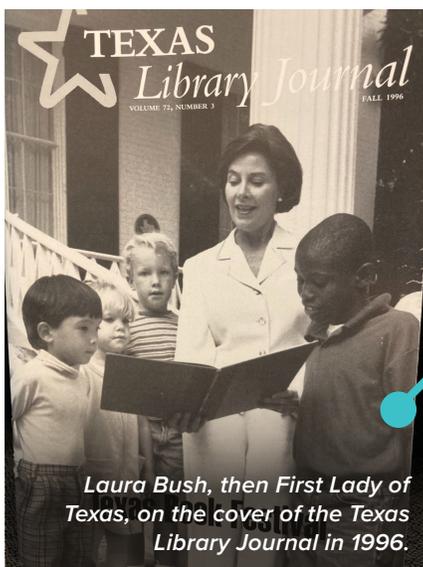
Progressive governors and federal support brought the growth of library services throughout the state as TLA continued to thrive. The expansion of higher education and the coming of major industries, including electronics, ensured the steady development of research and specialized libraries. The 1970s also saw the beginning of TLA's public relations campaigns.



*Students at the University of North Texas library in 1970. (Photo courtesy UNT Libraries Special Collections.)*

# 2000s -2022

In 2017, longtime TLA Executive Director Pat Smith retired after more than 30 years with TLA. Current Executive Director Shirley Robinson joined TLA in 2020. In spring 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, TLA canceled its in-person conference and premiered its first-ever virtual conference. The association is leading the battle against censorship and continues to grow and adapt to serve and support members across the state as the library landscape evolves to meet the needs of our communities.



*Laura Bush, then First Lady of Texas, on the cover of the Texas Library Journal in 1996.*

# 1980s -1990s

Resource-sharing programs and electronic networks initiatives continued to expand. In 1999, TLA successfully lobbied for the first-ever state funding for school library materials. TLA's reach encompassed a broad range of legislative initiatives and educational campaigns. The Texas Book Festival, which raises money to benefit public libraries in Texas, was founded in 1995 and has partnered with TLA since its inception.

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