

TEXAS LIBRARY JOURNAL

Volume 97, Number 3, Fall 2021

Library Programs Continue to Provide Relief to Communities in Need

**HCPL Partners to
Provide Free Broadband**

**Mobile Comunidad Van
Delivers Books and More
in Jeff Davis County**

**Recovering, Rebalancing,
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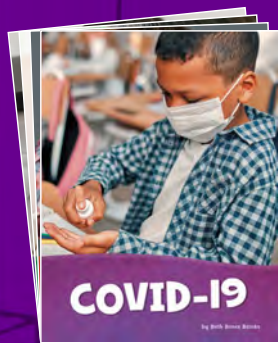
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Recover: Take a Moment for Self-Care

By Daniel Burgard

HELLO! I HOPE THIS COLUMN FINDS YOU WELL. I want to use this issue to check in and make sure everyone is taking care of themselves as we continue to work through “interesting” times. As a service professional, I know you are inclined to worry about others first: your students, your faculty, and your library users. You help people every day and they are better off because you add value to their education, experience, and lives. However, none of that goodness is possible if you don't stop every so often and help yourself. Yes, we all need to practice a little self-care.

Just to get us on the same page, I am defining self-care as working on certain aspects of your own health and wellness.

Remember, self-care should be part of your health care routine that also includes the assistance of medical professionals. You should always seek help from trained medical personnel when you need it.

So, self-care, self-help – the point is this is by you and for you. There are thousands if not millions of readily available examples of self-care practices and you need to find what works for you. Of course, do your librarian due diligence and evaluate any information to make sure it is credible, accurate, and not harmful.

Below are just some of the categories of self-care that you will find in health and psychology literature. If you spend a handful of minutes doing any of these activities every day, then you have a good chance of lowering your stress and increasing your happiness.

- **Emotional:** Practicing reflection and engaging with those you love every day is an awesome way to bring calm and focus to your bustling life. Personally, I try to talk to my dog and my spouse (not necessarily in that order) a good amount each day. That certainly does good things for my emotional health.
- **Intellectual:** Do I even need to encourage you to read a book? How about writing one? You could also stimulate your mind by taking a class or even teaching one!
- **Spiritual:** From religion to yoga, we all have our preferred ways of nurturing our inner being. I think this area is especially important as we all seek to find our purpose in an increasingly hectic and chaotic world.
- **Physical:** Oh boy, this one has been hard to keep going during the past year. If you are like me, you are a different shape now than when the pandemic started. No excuses ...

go for a walk, run if you are so inclined, take a swim in your local pool or pull out that VHS tape of exercising to the oldies. I guarantee that you will feel better. Just do it!

- **Career/financial:** Start working on that extra skill that you have always wanted to pursue and maybe try to save that extra money you are no longer spending on eating out every day.
- **Sociocultural:** Humans are social beings, and we can all benefit from being part of a group with a shared purpose. Seek out “your people” and maybe solve some societal problems while you are at it. Remember, TLA is here to provide you with a strong network of other Texas librarians. The more involved you are with TLA, the more you'll benefit from it. I promise.

Again, you can find all kinds of definitions and examples of self-help. The important point is that keeping yourself healthy is a prerequisite for everything else you do. Whether you take a few minutes on your own to practice some of the simple things above or seek professional help, remember that it is ok to talk about your health and it is especially ok – always – to ask for help.

While we are on the topic, there is some evidence that engaging in a daily affirmation can have a positive impact on an individual's self-worth. In short, positivity begets positivity. Even if you are like me and feel weird repeating things like “I am well qualified to write

the narrative for this NIH award application,” stick with it for a week or two and I am confident that you will find yourself with a more positive attitude in short order. Heck, you don't even have to come up with your own affirmations. You can find countless examples on any modern social media platform. Go ahead and make them your own.

Only you know what works for your own self-care. Whatever is most restful and helpful is what you should be doing. Do it now ... don't put it off! You will be happier, and your family, coworkers, and patrons will thank you for it.



Daniel Burgard
2021-2022 TLA President





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Goodbye, Thank You and Best Wishes!

By Mark Smith

AUGUST 31 WAS MY LAST DAY AS STATE LIBRARIAN AND DIRECTOR OF THE TEXAS STATE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES COMMISSION (TSLAC). I am grateful to have this opportunity to write a guest editorial in the *Texas Library Journal*, a magazine I edited for several years as TLA Director of Communications in the 1990s.

I thank Chair Martha Wong and the members of our commission for allowing me the honor of serving as the Texas State Librarian. I extend heartfelt appreciation to the TSLAC staff for their hard work, dedication, and perseverance in delivering information services to people of all ages in all parts of the state. Working together we have made progress in several strategic areas.

We were able to increase our funding from a biennial appropriation of \$45 million in 2014-2015 to \$74 million in the 2022-2023 biennium which started September 1. Those funds have allowed TSLAC to advance services to our various client groups in a variety of strategic ways.

TSLAC staff have worked hard to help position local libraries as hubs for education, workforce development, and technology access for their communities and campuses. Programs such as Family Place, EDGE, Technology Academy, and Grantsmanship Academy offer library workers tools they need to meet community and student needs.

TSLAC has redoubled efforts to advance digital inclusion through greater online content and improved library broadband access. To expand content, TSLAC has grown the e-resources available via our TexShare and TexQuest projects while also launching E-Read Texas, our statewide e-book project.

Meanwhile, via our Libraries Connecting Texas project, we have brought affordable high-speed internet to more than 180 Texas libraries, mostly in small and rural communities.

To preserve and make available Texas archival records, TSLAC launched the Texas Digital Archive in 2015, a national best-practice example of a repository of state government documents that has grown to over 80 terabytes of information. Meanwhile, our archivists have worked diligently to reduce the backlog and make thousands of archival records available to the public.

TSLAC's Talking Book Program meets the needs of Texans with visual impairments and other disabilities through a variety of strategies. That program has evolved from analog to digital to streaming content to ensure the service remains a lifeline for Texans with disabilities.



To help guarantee transparency of public records, TSLAC experts provided thousands of hours of consultation and guidance to state and local governments, updated several major records retention schedules, and opened our fourth TSLAC facility, the Promontory Point State Records Center Annex.

We also adopted the Texas Center for the Book from the Dallas Public Library to serve as a statewide vehicle to encourage literacy and a lifelong love of books, reading, and library use.

The last 17 months have been a challenge. Like other libraries, we managed through the pandemic, continuing to provide full services to the public while keeping our staff healthy. But there is a silver lining. Libraries across Texas and the nation demonstrated that in times of crisis, they are more important than ever. Libraries offer their communities an array of transformative resources that are both heavily used

and highly valued. Public, academic, and K-12 libraries are at the center of the community and the campus, providing safe access to authoritative information supporting personal and professional growth, student achievement, and economic sustainability.

I am happy to report that TSLAC's future looks very bright. On August 27, the Commission named Gloria Meraz as the next Director and State Librarian. Gloria brings to her position a deep understanding of the needs and challenges of libraries and archives as well as a long and successful history of library advocacy in the Texas Legislature. Gloria is a brilliant communicator who demonstrates resolute strength tempered with humility and compassion for people in all walks of life. She will be

a dynamic, strategic, and charismatic leader for the TSLAC and Texas libraries for years to come.

I thank TLA—Executive Director Shirley Robinson and Director of Advocacy and Communications Wendy Woodland, President Dan Burgard, and the TLA Executive Board—for your constant support and leadership.

Most of all, thank you to the librarians and archivists of Texas for everything you do to ensure that Texans have the very best library and information services. For over 40 years, I have watched libraries do amazing things in society and I see nothing but progress in the future.

I hope I see you somewhere down the road. Meanwhile, I will keep cheering for you every step of the way.

Mark Smith is the former director and state librarian at the Texas State Library and Archives Commission.



MAKING THE CONNECTION

Harris County Library, School and County Officials Partner to Provide Free Broadband

By Michele Chan Santos

Thousands of households in Harris County, Texas now have free broadband, thanks to an innovative partnership between the Harris County Public Library (HCPL) and Harris County IT services to provide internet connectivity to traditionally underserved areas.

HCPL Connect is helping bridge the digital divide in the county at a time when the need for digital access has become more crucial than ever. HCPL Connect, first established in the summer of 2020, is a free service that provides internet access to students in Harris County who are within range of the program's service towers.

According to data sourced by Broadband USA, 13.6 percent of households in Harris County are without Internet access, and 8.4 percent are without a computer, smartphone, or tablet. The latest U.S. Census data estimates that 4,713,325 people live in Harris County, which translates into roughly 640,000 people without Internet access and 396,000 without connected devices.

"The digital divide has existed for decades now. The library is the place where we can equalize the playing field with broadband. We saw the opportunity to be able to expand our reach," said Edward Melton, HCPL Director.

"We were able to establish proof of concept providing broadband to community centers. There were some funding opportunities available through the CARES Act (federal funds made available during the COVID-19 pandemic). I was able to contact a consultant and help the library contact the county IT department in order to offer broadband. It really makes sense for libraries to be involved in this project. The partnership allows us to expand this concept and offer broadband to the entire county," Melton said.

Jim McMillan, Harris County Assistant Chief Technology Officer said, "We have a lot of team members on our staff that are very familiar with

LTE and how to get it in the air pretty quickly. We were already talking about the possibilities there. This is a very rewarding project; it's been fun for me to take our technology and partner with the library, it has been fantastic."

Broadband for HCPL Connect is provided through an inventive combination of private LTE/5G, "MiFi" hotspots, a "mesh" WiFi network of parks, libraries and community centers, and mobile/bus hotspots.

"MiFi" stands for mobile WiFi, and in this case specifically means small, portable routers. More than 16,000 MiFi devices have been distributed so far. These were T-Mobile devices shared with K-12 students so students and their families can connect to the Internet for homework and other uses.

HCPL Connect is also distributing private LTE devices. They have distributed 95 of those devices and plan to distribute 900 more by the end of 2021. Motorola provides tech support for the MiFi devices via a 24/7 phone number.



HOW IT WORKS

First, antennas were installed throughout the county. Next, the library system partnered with local school districts to qualify students in that area; students who receive reduced or free lunch at their schools qualify. Those students are given a voucher to take to the nearest library to pick up their device. The device comes with instructions to set up and is checked out to the user indefinitely.

A key part of the project involves broadcasting private LTE service on the Citizens Broadband Radio Service (CBRS) to the Harris County area.

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8.4%
are without a computer,
smartphone, or tablet



“The goal of this initiative is providing broadband to citizens in traditionally underserved portions of the county,” said Chris Martinez, HCPL Division Director of Information Technology. “The library’s role in this initiative is to provide a robust internet gateway for the traffic, ensure traffic is secure and CIPA compliant, coordinate with local school districts to qualify students and distribute the devices with SIM cards that connect to the private LTE network.”

The E-Rate program is an important part of HCPL Connect. The federal E-rate program was created to provide schools and libraries with affordable access to telecommunications services and provides significant discounts for internet access and telecommunications services to eligible schools and libraries.

RESPONSE FROM FAMILIES

Martinez said families have been grateful for the help. “A dad of two daughters called asking if we still had devices. When the staff member said yes, he got audibly more emotional and said: ‘Thank you so much for this. You don’t know how much of a blessing this is for me and my two daughters.’ When he arrived to pick up the devices, he

again told staff, ‘Thank you so much for this. Such a blessing!’”

Another woman told a library staffer, “We don’t have internet at home, so this is really great for us!” Many other families had similar reactions and have been very pleased with the new service.

The MiFi devices are checked out indefinitely and have a lifespan of two to three years. The devices provide not just internet access for homework, but have enough bandwidth for other services too, like paying bills, streaming a movie or any of the myriad other uses a family has for internet.

EXPANDING THE PROGRAM

The next phase of the program involves a planned purchase of more than 15,000 Chromebooks that can be distributed to needy families. Martinez said HCPL hopes to secure additional funding so they can expand the program beyond K-12 students to local community college students and their families. “We’re planning on expanding the T-Mobile hotspot program up to 40,000 MiFis. If we are funded (they have applied for additional federal funding), it would be the largest 5G hotspot deployment in the country,” Martinez said.





ADVICE FOR OTHER LIBRARIES

Melton recommends that public librarians begin by getting buy-in from elected officials in their communities. “I’ve had to talk to many departments really telling people about the value the library can bring to people,” Melton said. “They think we are just about books, but it’s really about the technology we can provide.”

“Start with the people you know, who would be open to having this conversation,” Melton advised. “I’ve had many conversations to build this partnership over the past year.”

He also encourages libraries to take advantage of the **Emergency Connectivity Fund** (a federal program providing money for computers, hotspots, routers, broadband connectivity and more.) While the first

EMERGENCY CONNECTIVITY FUND

The **American Rescue Plan Act** (ARPA) of 2021 includes \$7.17 billion for the Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) program. The ECF will provide funding for public and tribal libraries and K12 schools to purchase connected devices and broadband internet connections for use off of library and school grounds by library patrons, students, and teachers and staff who otherwise don’t have internet access.

While the first application window for ECF closed on August 13, a second window will open September 28. The **American Library Association** has more information and resources to help libraries apply for these funds.

application window closed mid-August, a second application opportunity will open September 28..

For more information about HCPL Connect, watch the recording of the **webinar** TLA hosted with Melton, Martinez and McMillan.

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

Photos at left, top to bottom: Jim McMillan, Harris County Assistant Chief Technology Officer; Edward Melton, HCPL Director; Chris Martinez, HCPL Division Director of Information Technology

What’s next?



Chromebooks

Proposed 15,000 connected devices



Hotspots

Proposed 40,000 MiFi's



Expansion

Continue to expand LTE & Mesh WiFi.



Awareness

Tell the public!



Data

What’s is the impact?



Sustain

Secure permanent funding

Facing Materials Challenges

THE IMPORTANCE OF POLICES IN PUBLIC AND SCHOOL LIBRARIES

By Jill Bellomy and Lisa Loranc

IN OUR PROFESSION, SCHOOL AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES BEAR THE BRUNT OF MATERIALS CHALLENGES, which can become contentious and potentially career-threatening. While processes and guidelines for dealing with those challenges may vary between institutions, the keys to successfully navigating these situations are a solid collection development policy and a well-trained staff.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

An unfortunate reality of working in a public library is the inevitability of a materials challenge. A well curated collection that meets the needs of an entire community will certainly include items that some will find objectionable. Those objections can come from either side of the political spectrum and are usually seated in an honest desire to protect the community. The sincerity of the challenger's belief is the very thing that makes the process so fraught. Most will not be swayed by the standard First Amendment argument or by the idea that parents are ultimately the best judge of what is good for their own children. Preparation is the key to successfully meeting a material challenge, and the foundation of the library's defense is a well-crafted collection development policy.

The policy itself does not need to be overly long or complicated. The Brazoria County Library System's policy, for example, is about three pages long. It should reflect your institution's core values and provide enough latitude for your collection development team to make the best possible choices and respond to a rapidly changing publishing world. It should certainly include a statement about how the library deals with challenges but should avoid too many details about the specific criteria used to evaluate the reconsideration request.


Once you have that policy in place, the real work begins. Educate your staff and stakeholders. Make sure your governing body approves the policy. Theoretically you have the trust of your board and supervisors. They should know you and trust your professional integrity and expertise so that if the challenge escalates, they will be more likely to have your back.

You should also continuously train your staff on the library's policy, procedures, and guidelines. Your frontline staff will be the library's first point of contact, and how they handle the situation will set the tone for the entire process. As the challenge progresses, emotions can run high; the better prepared you and your staff are, the more likely you will be to present the library's position dispassionately and coherently.

When a challenge is made your policy will be there to guide your decision. Most of the time in our profession our default reaction to any challenge is to assume that it is unreasonable. Always keep in mind that mistakes can be made. While removing an item from the collection is almost never the best answer, sometimes there is a reasonable basis for the challenge. If you can honestly acknowledge when a book should be moved to a new location in the few instances when it is appropriate, you will have more credibility when you need to draw a line in the sand.

SCHOOL LIBRARIES

According to the [ALA Selection and Reconsideration Policy Toolkit for Public, School, and Academic Libraries](#), school libraries, like all libraries, should have selection policies that include criteria to guide the selection process and enable librarians to make informed choices. These policies ensure that the library's mission is accomplished consistently. They also clearly lay out the process for stakeholders unaware of the



The more transparent we are in our work, and the more we educate stakeholders on the importance of access to information, intellectual freedom, and the right to read, the more easily we can work together to build readers and a future informed citizenry!

thought and consideration necessary to build and maintain a library collection.

In school libraries, material selection is first dependent upon the educational goals of the library's school, district, or educational institution. But there are general guidelines that all school libraries should follow. Materials included should:

- Support the curriculum
- Satisfy a wide range of interests
- Present varying levels of difficulty
- Represent varied points of view
- Provide a global perspective and promote diversity
- Meet high standards in literary, artistic, and aesthetic quality
- Be positively reviewed by professional review journals.

Electronic resources are an essential library offering and greatly expand reliable information available to students. Selection policies should include criteria for selecting these resources in addition to print materials. Librarians and their policies need to emphasize the students' need and right to access electronic resources that offer multiple points of view and encourage critical thinking.

Beyond the selection policy, school libraries need a clear reconsideration policy that outlines how requests to restrict or remove materials will be handled. Without a policy in place, requests can be made for a book to be banned by an administrator or parent without review, reconsideration, or input from librarians, other educators, students, or the community. A strong reconsideration policy should request a written submission and require that the material be read or viewed in its entirety.

These policies are vital in protecting our students' First Amendment rights and their freedom to read. They also protect librarians. The more transparent we are in our work, and the more we educate stakeholders on the importance of access to information, intellectual freedom, and the right to read, the more easily we can work together to build readers and a future informed citizenry!

BE PREPARED

In today's unsettled times, it is more important than ever that school libraries be prepared and vigilant in protecting students' rights. Here are some tips:

- Be familiar with your school or district's selection procedures and collection development policy. If you don't have one, work with your colleagues to create one.
- Post your selection policy on your library website where it can easily be accessed by stakeholders.
- Know your school or district's reconsideration policy and the steps required when a formal challenge is submitted. If you don't have a policy and steps in place, work with your colleagues to create a policy and process.
- Post the reconsideration policy and any material challenge forms on your library website.
- Talk to students about their rights as a reader and a user of information.
- Discuss with students the importance of learning the life skill of self-selection.
- Encourage students to read widely to find the books that are right for them and to return any books that are not.

RESOURCES

[ALA Selection and Reconsideration Policy Toolkit for Public, School, and Academic Libraries](#)

[ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom](#)

[The Freedom to Read Statement](#)

[The Library Bill of Rights](#)

[Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights](#)

[The Rights of a Reader](#)

Jill Bellomy is the lead librarian at Highland Park Middle School and chair of the Texas Association of School Librarians, a TLA division.

Lisa Loranc is the director of the Brazoria County Library System and chair of the Public Libraries Division, a TLA division.



Books Matter

A FREE ONLINE RESOURCE TO HELP DIVERSIFY LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

By Sherasa Thomas

It's an underlying ethos of librarianship that everything belongs on the shelf. Meaning, books in a library ideally should represent a wide range of experiences, opinions, values, and perspectives.

Author Jason Reynolds, speaking at the Texas Library Association annual conference in 2020, praised “the ethics of librarianship” and librarians’ open-mindedness: “Librarians are the rebels of the school. They realize that everything belongs on the shelf, even if they don’t agree with it,” Reynolds said. Librarians understand, he said,

“that everyone deserves a voice; deserves a platform. I would argue that librarians are working as anti-racists. It’s embedded into who you are as librarians.”

One excellent resource for librarians looking to diversify their collections and make sure many different viewpoints are represented in each library is the Anti-Defamation League’s (ADL) **Books Matter, a free online resource**. The ADL is a leading anti-hate organization that was founded in 1913 in response to an escalating climate of antisemitism

and bigotry. Books Matter features a different book each month. The Books Matter booklist covers a wide range of subjects and includes lesson plans and other resources. Each month, the site identifies children’s and young adult

literature that focuses on the themes of identity, culture, diversity, bias, and social justice.

It’s crucial to have resources

like the Books Matter booklist, site, and lesson plans. Children and young adults account for roughly 40 percent of the U.S. population and over half of those identify as a person of color. Yet current



research shows only 22 percent of books published are about students of color. Black, LatinX, and Native authors **combined** wrote just seven percent of new children's books and children's books are eight times more likely to have an animal as a character than a person of color.

At a time when the literary need of the community is at its most diverse, the publishing industry has not kept pace with those needs. This glaring shortfall makes a sound case for change and an opportunity for libraries and educators to support that change. The Books Matter resource can help make those changes happen.

As librarians, you're familiar with the idea of books as windows, mirrors, sliding glass doors and even prisms. This concept was created by Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop, known as "the mother of multicultural children's literature," for her groundbreaking American children's literature research. Books are mirrors – so it's important for children of all races and ethnicities, all backgrounds, and genders – to see themselves reflected in books. Books are windows – ways in which students see and learn about other people, places, and cultures. Exposing children to other people's stories helps children begin to connect with others on an emotional level, which is the foundation for bridging differences between worlds, helping them understand identity and foster positive self-reflection. This is an important part of building empathy in children and critical in combatting bias and hate.

Books have the power to foster understanding of other people and cultures—their hopes and dreams, their joys and sorrows, their stories and reflections. They lay the groundwork for empathy, understanding people who are different from oneself while learning to recognize our similarities.

AUTHENTIC VOICES

The titles featured in the **ADL Books Matter library** are selected with insight and intentionality. The best effort is made to offer books on social justice topics with authentic voices from that community and diverse characters. Said another way, books matter -- but who writes the books matters just as much.

Hundreds of titles are organized into eleven categories and reviewed by ADL's anti-bias education experts. The categories include anti-bias, bullying awareness, anti-Semitism, racism, religious bigotry, gender and sexism, genocide and the Holocaust, LGBT people and issues and social justice. Custom lesson plans for educators are created for many titles and include vocabulary builders, extension activities and additional resources like blogs and podcasts. Another unique feature of the extensive library is the "table talk" section for parents. The objective of this section is to assist families with engaging in conversations about societal and world events. Parents (and librarians and teachers) can find talking points, conversation starters and links to other books and resources.

This resource is informed by the work and data tracking of groups like **We Need Diverse Books** and the **Cooperative Children's Book Center**. We Need Diverse Books advocates for changes in the publishing industry "to produce and promote literature that reflects and honors the lives of all young people." The Cooperative Children's Book Center (from the University of Wisconsin-Madison) compiles data to track diversity in the children's book publishing industry. Their **Diversity Resources data** indicates some progress. ADL utilizes this data to understand the diversity gap in children's literature, lack of authors of color and the need for distinct

characters. One of the ways we address this disparity is through the Books Matter resource.

ADL Education provides anti-bias education programs, trainings and resources for K-12 schools and universities across the country. The goal is to assist people of all ages to challenge bias in themselves, others, and society. Books Matter is another way to use literature to learn about people from all walks of life who have changed the world, empower students to believe they can be change makers and equip them with tools to make that change.

As Dr. Bishop explains, "When there are enough books available that can act as both mirrors and windows for all our children, they will see we can celebrate both our differences and our similarities." With your help, librarians, children everywhere can find both mirrors and windows – and prisms -- when they visit the library.

RESOURCES

"Why Stop at Windows and Mirrors: Children's Book Prisms" by Uma Krishnaswami

"Books Matter: The Power of Children's Literature" (ADL Blog post)

"Windows and Mirrors and Sliding Glass Doors: Ensuring Students See Themselves and Others in Literature." By Cathy Potter

Sherasa Thomas is the Education Director at the Anti-Defamation League.

"A prism can slow and bend the light that passes through it, splitting that light into its component colors. It can refract light in as many directions as the prism's shape and surface planes allow. Similarly, books can disrupt and challenge ideas about diversity through multifaceted and intersecting identities, settings, cultural contexts, and histories. They can place diverse characters at these crucial intersections and give them the power to reframe their stories. Through the fictional world, they can make us question the assumptions and practices of our own real world."

– Uma Krishnaswami, author and writing professor

Mobile Comunidad Van Delivers Food, Books and Services to Jeff Davis County

By Christy Reynolds

The shock of the pandemic struck everyone across the state of Texas in different ways and transformed the way we utilize our resources. In Jeff Davis County, which includes 60 miles of the towering Davis Mountain range, the county's most renowned asset – its beautiful, remote location – became a liability.

NORMALLY THIS GORGEOUS AREA DRAWS THOUSANDS OF TOURISTS TO DAVIS MOUNTAINS STATE PARK, FORT DAVIS, AND THE MCDONALD OBSERVATORY. When the pandemic struck, the lack of tourists coming to visit these West Texas mountains hit Jeff Davis County hard. Public spaces, including the library, closed to the public, though the library was grateful to be able to keep everyone employed.

Schools shut down to follow safety and state regulations; however, while other communities pivoted to fully online and virtual learning, Jeff Davis County could not. Fort Davis ISD received a grant to bring Wifi hotspots to students that needed them, but the mountainous terrain of Jeff Davis County prevented the hotspots from working properly. Without cell service, students could not access the internet through those hotspots. This prevented schools from being able to go fully remote.



Photo courtesy of Jeff Davis County Library

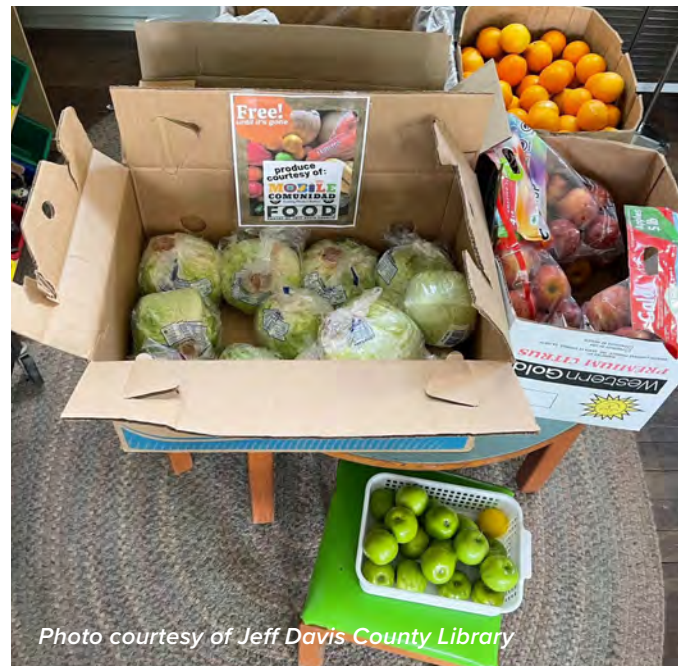
Because the Jeff Davis County Library operates the Kids Pantry, a food pantry which serves 70% of all children in the county the library was deemed an essential service and re-opened to the public. Schools in Fort Davis ISD are not part of the national lunch program due to the expense and small size of the school district nor is there a cafeteria. Therefore, many students rely on the Kids Pantry, operated by the Jeff Davis County Library, and stocked by the West Texas Food Bank, as an essential resource for regular meals.

RECOGNIZING A COMMUNITY NEED

The Kids Pantry was introduced to the library in 2020 by Director Gwin Grimes who developed the idea as a class project while getting her MLS at The Texas Woman's University. "I couldn't stand doing all of that work and not having somewhere to apply it," Grimes said. "I could double up and get school credit and help serve the community!"

Every Monday during the school year, Grimes, and several volunteers would load up their personal vehicles and make multiple trips to Fort Davis' only elementary school and set up on the lawn. Parents would pick-up and drop off homework assignments and pick up meals while the students were learning from home. Families did not have to register or provide proof of need; the service is available to anyone in the county who is a student or age 18 and under.

Once summer began, the food pantry moved back to the library, and families were allowed to come in one at a time to shop. They even have a Pack-A-Lunch Program, providing boxes of sandwich



If the library could combine all its social services, books and resources into one mobile vehicle that traveled around the county, they could reach individuals that otherwise would be unable to reach them.

material to families.

While the Kids Pantry is a great resource for many families, reaching people in a county of almost 2,300 square miles with a population of 2,300 represents a big challenge. During the summer parents returned to work, and students did not have the ability to drive themselves into town to access the food pantry.

The challenge led to an idea that would take the food pantry to its next phase—Mobile Comunidad.

If the library could combine all its social services, books and resources into one mobile vehicle that traveled around the county, they could reach individuals that otherwise would be unable to reach them. Smiling, Grimes said, "Naturally, it became a book mobile!"

The book mobile, later named Mobile Comunidad, would include books for adults and children, food provided by the pantry, and other social services. Grimes is a notary and a certified assister for healthcare.gov and can help people sign up for health insurance. The food pantry volunteers aid families in signing up for benefits like SNAP and WIC.

Prior to the pandemic, the library was already handling social services for their community because most of the social services available to the county are 200 miles away in El Paso. "I like to explain it as, we are 200 miles away from the closest Wal-Mart!" Grimes said. The next available grocery store is in the town of Valentine, located 50 miles away, making for a 100-mile round trip for groceries; thus, classifying Jeff Davis County as a food desert. During an already isolated time, the distance added to the urgency of bringing food to people where they live.

The first step in making this happen was picking a van. Initially, the idea was to get a used van and start hauling the books and food around. However, after realizing that internet



access was most needed by families, adding a satellite Wifi system became important. The van needed special tires for the many unpaved roads in Jeff Davis County and a heavy-duty suspension in order to haul the heavy boxes of produce and many books hundreds of miles through the desert terrain. And finally, the van needed to have electrical power to operate the lift, or what a van dealership called “the ambulance package”. The specially made van would cost \$55,000, which meant the group of determined community members needed to fundraise.

They determined that \$105,000 would be needed to fund the project. Grimes first approached the Tocker Foundation with a one-page proposal outlining the program and their goals. The Tocker Foundation granted them their largest allowed award to fund the project. Publicity about the grant and the program spurred additional donations. Soon they had anonymous donors big and small and were contacted by a trust officer in San Antonio who asked to see what was on their wish list to help purchase what they needed. A total of \$265,000 in donations was pledged over six months

Once the community started to see the project grow and the funding coming through, more partners with different services expressed interest in participating. Programs for women and children offered through UT El Paso, veteran services from the Veteran’s Organization, El Paso Chamber of Commerce small business training and entrepreneurship training- all would be

offered through Mobile Comunidad.

“We are not just the library- we are the community center, senior center, recreation center,” Grimes continues as she explains that the library is one of the only public spaces in their county. They offer desk bikes, senior fit classes, children’s programming, arts and crafts, speakers, music, and so much more at their library, but the problem was now the people couldn’t get to them – thus the mobile solution.

Grimes started this program with the intention of making it replicable for other communities. She and her team have documented every step of the planning process and operation in detail.

BOOKS FOR K-12 STUDENTS

A driving force behind this endeavor was to get books in young students’ hands. After examining the reading scores from Fort Davis ISD, Grimes realized that 50 percent of all K-12 students in the county had reading scores that were a full grade level below where they should be at their age. Having this data helped in securing the funding and volunteers for the Mobile Comunidad program. So far, most of the books being donated to families from Mobile Comunidad are gifts from friends of the library.

Grimes’ fondest memory from this experience thus far was the opportunity to see two young sisters’ faces light up when they saw her coming with the next book in a series which she gave to them the prior week. Even though the rest of the world shut down, Grimes said, “We were working around the clock.

Running to the terrace to drop books off.”

Mobile Comunidad has plans to expand and increase their visibility so that more members of the community can utilize all the program has to offer. The story of how the program came to be is a story of a community bonding together during one of the most traumatic times our world has seen.

The library proved itself more essential than ever — one librarian and a handful of community members joined together to show how transformative thinking can overcome adversity. As Mobile Comunidad has shown, libraries have much more to offer than just books!

Christy Reynolds is the membership coordinator at the Texas Library Association.

50% of all K-12 students in the county had reading scores that were a full grade level below where they should be at their age.



Photo by Carolyn Miller

From left, Vicki Gibson, executive director of the Food Pantry of Jeff Davis County; Gwin Grimes, director, Jeff Davis County Library; and Jeanine Bishop, president of the Friends of the Jeff Davis County Library.



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Photo courtesy of Jack K. Williams Library, TAMUG

Recover, Rebalance, Reconnect

AS CAMPUSES REOPEN IT'S TIME FOR NEW GROWTH

By David Baca

AN IMPORTANT EFFORT AT JACK K. WILLIAMS LIBRARY AND ON THE CAMPUS OF TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY AT GALVESTON IS REBALANCING AND RECONNECTION. Like all academic institutions, we have our students foremost in our minds. Our campus, and our parent institution Texas A&M University, is focusing on getting students back to campus and into the classroom for face-to-face instruction in the fall of 2021. All of our efforts will be to get back to pre-COVID library and campus operations for staff and classroom teaching for faculty. Our buildings will be completely open, masks will be optional, and all personnel are expected to be back in their offices full-time. In the library we no longer quarantine physical materials; cleaning protocols are easing, and furniture and seating have been moved back to provide full occupancy. In every sense we will be back to “normal” operations this fall.

In the past year we have learned much about teaching, learning, and connecting in times of stress and separation. We have learned how to create different and better tools for teaching and embraced asynchronous learning, flipped assignments and active learning techniques. The library has created and adapted large amounts of resources that contribute to self-directed learning and have taken efforts to create new online content. It has been a steep learning curve in many cases, but we have acquired the knowledge and experience to be able to adapt these resources to a new environment. We now have a greater array of tools than ever before. We have also learned to work much closer with our faculty and students, even in a remote setting. We will use all of this experience to improve and grow in student and faculty academic support.

It is also critical to our success that we continue to collaborate and cooperate with our campus and professional

colleagues. Organizations such as TLA and the Texas Council of Academic Libraries have been important partners not only for guidance but also for sharing challenges and ideas.

After a year and a half of not believing that working and teaching remotely would be successful we are now facing the challenge of staff and faculty returning to their offices and connecting with people again. While many are looking forward to reconnecting with colleagues and fellow students it will be just as much of a challenge to reintegrate ourselves back into the new normal as it was to work and learn from home in the first place. Many are now used to greater and fuller interaction with family and pets and now must leave them again. The return might reimpose financial burdens, such as daycare, as well as add time to our day for commuting. For some there is going to be a level of separation anxiety that we will need to deal with in the workplace and classroom. It is a time for new growth, but we must also be cognizant of healing and readjustment for staff, faculty, and students. In all, the return is going to be an exciting time, with new pressures, but also with new energies and outlooks.

David Baca is the director of the Jack K. Williams Library at Texas A&M University at Galveston.



Photo courtesy of Jack K. Williams Library, TAMUG

INTRODUCING
Merriam-Webster
kids

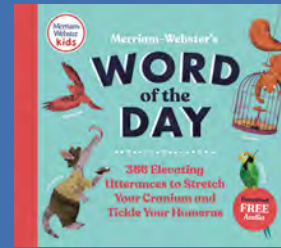
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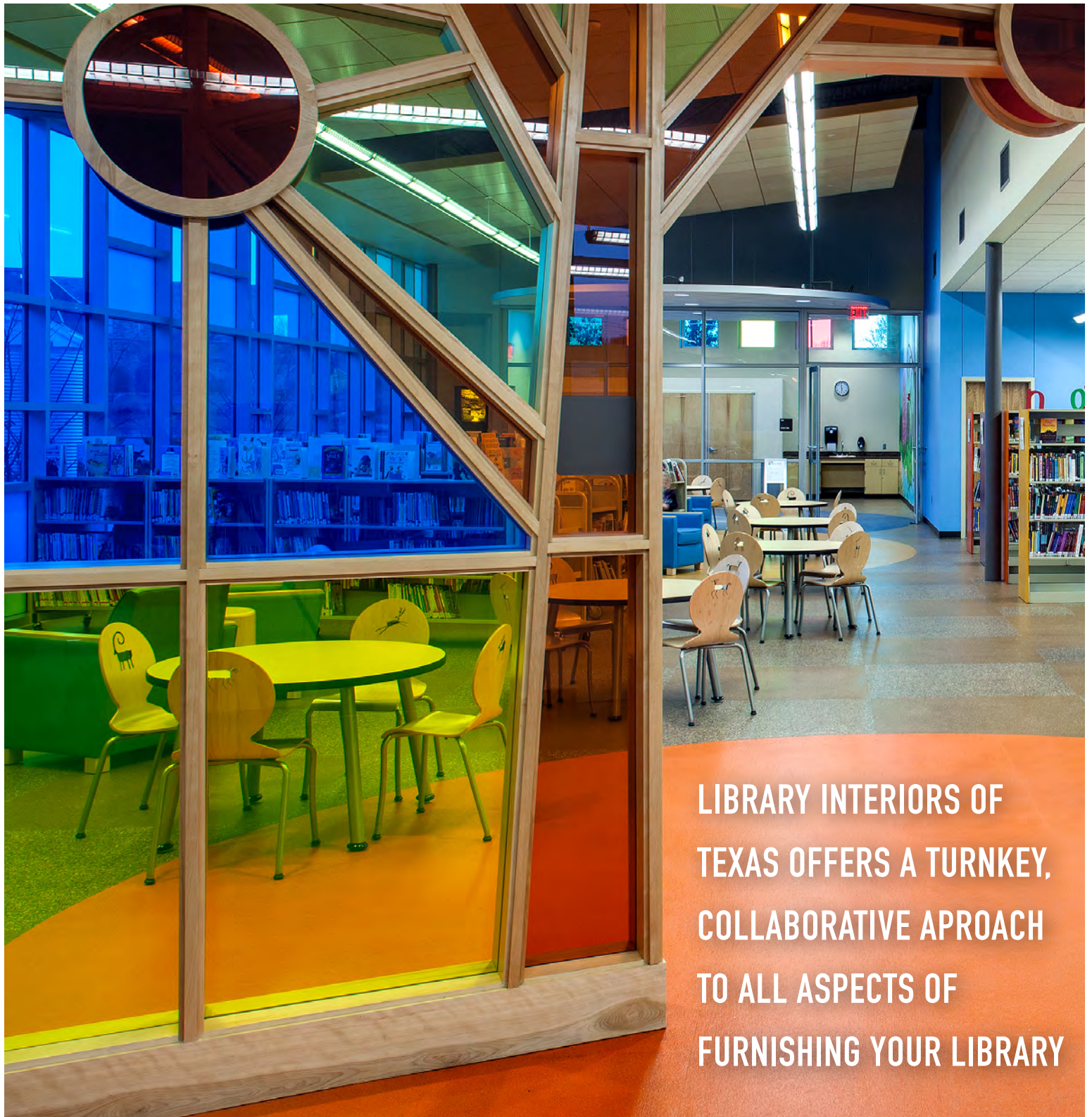
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Meet the 2022 TLA Executive Board Candidates

In 2022, members will elect a president-elect and a representative-at-large to serve on the Executive Board. Elections will open in February and close in March. You must be a current (2022) TLA member by January 31 to vote.

Candidate bios and statements of concern for those running for all offices are found by logging into the [Members Only website](#) and clicking on View Candidate Biographies link at the bottom of the first column.

PRESIDENT-ELECT

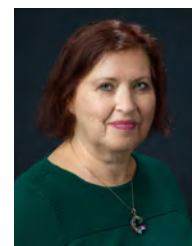
RHEA LAWSON, HOUSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

We have clearly demonstrated our worth, strength, innovativeness, agility, and tenacity by navigating recent challenges like fiscal instability, insufficient digital access, social justice and anti-racism, and the pandemic crisis. We now face a pivotal moment with still much work to do to advance our core values and re-envision our future. Working together we can combine our talents and strengths to move forward an exciting future for TLA which includes increasing financial vitality, embracing diversity and inclusion, attracting new members, strengthening advocacy, reinvigorating member engagement, and rebranding our image. As TLA president-elect, I will engage members on all levels of the association to accomplish the work needed at this important juncture. Working together we can transform TLA's landscape to ensure inclusivity, transparency, sustainability, and resiliency.



GRETCHEN PRUETT, NEW BRAUNFELS PUBLIC LIBRARY

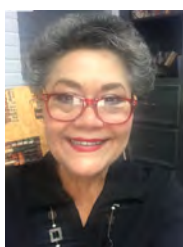
The library's role in our communities as the source of credible and relevant information is being eroded by the continuing onslaught of misinformation. When the information-seeking public needed us the most, the unprecedented pandemic closed our doors. We are still recovering, and we must speak with a unified voice to be heard above the noise. The Texas Library Association is that voice for all our state libraries — it is local, it is relevant, and it amplifies members' concerns to the stakeholders of Texas libraries and the people they serve. I have advocated for libraries and TLA throughout my career — and I will be honored to continue this work as president-elect. Libraries are more relevant than ever before to build strong communities and citizens.



REPRESENTATIVE-AT-LARGE (SCHOOL)

NORA GALVAN, PHARR-SAN JUAN-ALAMO ISD

The pandemic has helped demonstrate the importance of school librarians and the essential role they play as educators in our schools. However, Texas does not mandate that school districts hire certified librarians, and school librarians are paid at the same level as classroom teachers despite the very different roles they play. School librarians must continually advocate on their own behalf to raise awareness among their fellow educators and administrators of how they support student learning and success. TLA and TASL have many resources to assist school librarians in these efforts. However, with increasing efforts to restrict education related to racism, and organized challenges to books and other resources, it is critical that TLA do even more to support school librarians as they face these complex issues.



MELISSA RIPPY, PASADENA ISD

School Librarians continue to struggle with imbalances in access, budgets and staffing in schools across Texas during a pandemic, reduced budgets, and virtual learning. Now more than ever before, we need a supportive community for those facing similar obstacles. TLA and TASL have the ability to help make connections among librarians so that they are able to work together to find solutions to these common obstacles while still meeting the various needs of students and teachers. The pandemic has changed the way that we interact with each other in our world; as a "living" organization, TLA has the opportunity to adapt and evolve so that it may serve as a source of community and guidance meeting the needs of all Librarians.



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Reby Cary Youth Library Opens in Fort Worth

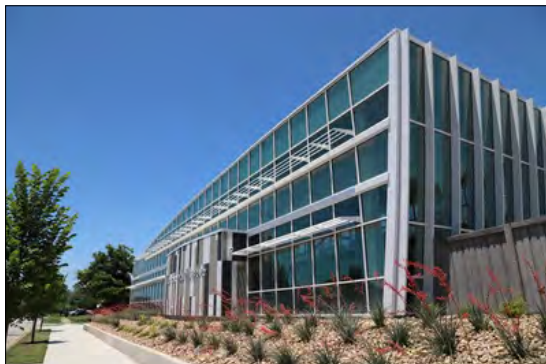
The first Fort Worth Public Library purposefully designed to serve children, teens and their caregivers opened Saturday, Aug. 14 at 3851 E. Lancaster Ave.

The Reby Cary Youth Library is an expansive 8,122 square feet, with 15,944 books and 4,254 videos ready for children to enjoy. The library is designed to be a

fun gathering place for families, featuring a creative lab, sensory garden and open spaces to explore, socialize and learn.

"We are so excited to open the doors on this new library, and we know Fort Worth families are going to love it," Library Director Manya Shorr said. "The laser-focus on children and youth will allow the Reby Cary Youth Library to go above and beyond the excellent work all our libraries provide to the community. It is fitting that Reby Cary's name is on the building, as not only was he a barrier-breaking pioneer in so many aspects, but his priority was children and preparing them for bright futures."

Fort Worth native Reby Cary (1920-2018) was a local educational leader and a civil rights pioneer. He was the first African American elected to the Fort Worth ISD Board of Education, and the first African American professor at UT-Arlington. He was a civic leader, civil rights activist, historian and state legislator.



IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR TLA MEMBERSHIP

At TLA, our member benefits range from liability insurance coverage and advocacy, to professional development and discounts. But we hear over and over that the number-one benefit is a strong network of thousands of librarians across Texas that can share your professional journey.

One wonderful new member benefit we have is **TLA Engage**, a robust online community for all TLA members. This powerful, easy-to-use online forum is a great place to exchange ideas and ask questions.

Your 2021 membership expires December 31, 2021. Renew today to keep enjoying all of the great benefits TLA has to offer.

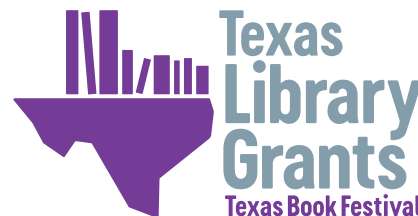


RENEW TODAY

CONGRATULATIONS 2021-22 TEXAS LIBRARY GRANTS RECIPIENTS

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The association's awards celebrate the creating and inspiring work of individuals, libraries, and supporters. The awards are for real people and real projects like yours. TLA's awards and scholarships applications open on September 15. Many TLA units also offer awards, scholarships and conference stipends (application schedules and deadlines vary). Learn more and nominate yourself, or another deserving librarian today! [Learn more.](#)

TLA District Meetings

District meetings provide regional settings for presenting continuing education, carrying on legislative activities, and recruiting members. The annual fall meetings are an opportunity for local librarians, paraprofessionals, and trustees from all types of libraries to meet, network, and set a foundation for collaborative efforts.

| | |
|--|--|
| DISTRICT 1 October 2 | DISTRICT 2 September 28 |
| DISTRICT 3 November 5 | DISTRICT 4 November 4 |
| DISTRICT 5 TBD | DISTRICT 6 October 16 |
| DISTRICT 7 October 28 | DISTRICT 8 November 6 |
| DISTRICT 9 TBD | DISTRICT 10 October 29 |

For more information and to register, visit the [TLA District Meeting webpage](#).

NEW TSLAC COMMISSIONER APPOINTED

Governor Greg Abbott appointed David Iglesias, an attorney from Tyler, Texas to the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC).



"My legal background emphasizes the importance of maintaining and archiving important documents," said Iglesias. "I also come from a family of public educators, so I have a deep commitment to libraries, to supporting librarians and to assisting the public in having ready access to books and information."

Commissioner Iglesias is a trial lawyer specializing in constitutional law. A native East Texan, he is a graduate of Austin College and earned his Juris Doctor from the Texas Tech University School of Law. Previously, he served as a law clerk to United States District Judge Sam R. Cummings, who presided over the Lubbock, Abilene and San Angelo Divisions of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas. His firm, Iglesias Law, represents counties, law enforcement officers, elected officials, school districts and businesses in state and federal courts across Texas. In addition to working with the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Commissioner Iglesias serves on the boards of directors of the Hispanic Leadership Alliance, the Tyler ISD Foundation and UT Health Tyler.



GLORIA MERAZ APPOINTED TSLAC DIRECTOR AND STATE LIBRARIAN

The Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) named Gloria Meraz Director and Librarian, effective September 1, 2021. In this position, Meraz will serve as the State Librarian of Texas. The commission took formal action to appoint Meraz to this position following a national search and presentations and interviews with three prospective candidates.

Meraz has served since August 2016 as the Assistant State Librarian at TSLAC. Previously, she served for 17 years as the Director of Communications for the Texas Library Association. Meraz, a native of El Paso, holds a bachelor's degree in Museum Studies from Baylor University and a Master of Library and Information Science from the University of Texas at Austin.

We are thrilled that this creative, visionary, and proactive leader who understands and listens to the agency's constituents will be leading the agency into the future. TLA values our strong relationship with the Texas State Library and Archives Commission and we look forward to working with Director Meraz!

In Memoriam



Dr. Barbara Immroth was a longtime professor at The University of Texas at Austin School of Information and a beloved member of the Texas Library Association. In 2009, TLA awarded her our Lifetime Achievement Award. Immroth was known for mentoring many

librarians, both while they were her students and then for years after, as their careers developed. Immroth, who retired in 2016, was also renowned for her research of children's libraries and literature. She was the author or co-author of more than half a dozen books. In 2007 she received the American Library Association's highest honor, the Beta Phi Mu Award for distinguished service to education for librarianship.



Dr. Teri Lesesne was a distinguished professor at Sam Houston State University who inspired countless students for more than thirty years as faculty in the Library Science program. She was a trailblazer and tireless advocate for literacy and a champion for readers of all ages. She was a long-time,

active TLA member and recipient of TLA's 2020 Outstanding Services to Libraries Award.

Known as "Professor Nana" to her students (and to her many followers on Twitter and Instagram), Lesesne was known for her profound love of children's and young adult literature. Her sessions at TLA annual conferences were packed and she was known for her skill at "book talking."

Linda Sue Thiebaud was a dedicated kindergarten teacher and school librarian for Lewisville Independent School District who was well-respected and loved by her students and peers. She was known to frequently dress up as book characters to engage her young students and instill a love of reading in them. In retirement, Thiebaud spent countless hours volunteering at the George W. Bush Presidential Center as a docent. She was a devoted member of the Texas Bluebonnet Award Committee from 2013-2016 and a longtime member of TLA's Storytelling and Children's Round Tables.



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GREAT IDEAS LIGHTNING TALKS

Have you been doing something unique and innovative in your library? Share your great ideas in the fast format of a lightning talk. **Proposals are due November 1, 2021.** Great Ideas Lightning Talks are five-minute sessions presented at TLA 2022 that engage the audience and feature new or innovative ideas. More information and link to application [here](#).

TLA 2022 registration will open in October!

LIBRARIES TRANSFORM[®] TEXAS WEEK

October 4 – 8, 2021

#LibrariesTransformTX

Visit the [TLA Event calendar](#) for more information about these professional development opportunities.

REGISTER FOR ALL EVENTS

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>September 28 DISTRICT 2 FALL MEETING (IN-PERSON) TLA TALKS: LIBRARIES AND THE VOTE (WEBINAR)</p> | <p>October 28 DISTRICT 7 FALL MEETING (VIRTUAL)</p> |
| <p>October 2 DISTRICT 1 FALL MEETING (VIRTUAL)</p> | <p>October 29 DISTRICT 10 FALL MEETING (VIRTUAL)</p> |
| <p>October 15 LIBRARY INSTRUCTION ROUND TABLE SUMMIT (VIRTUAL)</p> | <p>November 4 DISTRICT 4 FALL MEETING (VIRTUAL)</p> |
| <p>October 14 TLA TALKS: NOT JUST THAT BOOK — THE NEW WORLD OF INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM (WEBINAR)</p> | <p>November 5 DISTRICT 3 FALL MEETING (VIRTUAL)</p> |
| <p>October 16 DISTRICT 6 FALL MEETING (VIRTUAL)</p> | <p>November 6 DISTRICT 8 FALL MEETING (VIRTUAL)</p> |



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Contact your local Educational Sales Representative for additional information:

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A photograph of several large aloe vera plants in a greenhouse. The plants have thick, green, pointed leaves with serrated edges. The background shows the metal structure of the greenhouse and other plants.

RECOVER, REBALANCE,
RECONNECT

TLA  **2022**

★ FORT WORTH ★

APRIL 25 – 28

Registration opens
in October

Teach students to separate

Fact from Fake.



Choose Wisely

Use sources that thoroughly review information before publishing, like scholarly journals or government databases.



Trust Expertise

Doubt a source? Check the author's credentials and qualifications to see if they know the subject.



Expand your Search

Cast a wide net when you search so you can verify your information with multiple sources.



Understand Context

Read around the facts to see how they fit into the bigger picture.



Proceed with Caution

Question anything that's generalized, too good to be true, or seems like it has an agenda.

Help your students develop the skills to become better digital citizens with all the resources in our limited-run newsletter.

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