TEXAS STATE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES COMMISSION

TEXAS PUBLIC LIBRARIES OVERVIEW

FISCAL YEARS 2002–2007
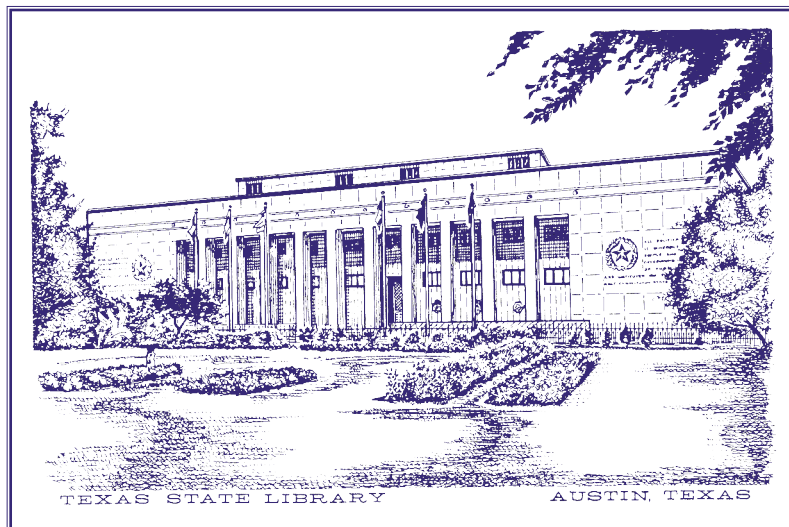
TEXAS STATE LIBRARY   AUSTIN, TEXAS

Texas Public Libraries:

Introduction

Many factors influence public library service in Texas, and the entities that support public library development play key roles.

Local communities shoulder the greatest responsibility for paying for public library service. The ten regional public library systems have supported library development and the education of public library staff for more than three decades. The Texas State Library and Archives Commission, through its leadership and grant programs, has sought to bring public library service to every Texan and to help build the capacity for achievement of every public library. The federal Institute of Museum and Library Services and private non-profit granting organizations have helped make resources available to Texas public libraries that are frequently well used but under funded. The Texas Library Association, through its advocacy efforts and professional activities, keeps librarians and library supporters engaged and promotes broader public awareness of libraries. All of these sources of support and encouragement are woven together in various ways and to varying degrees to support Texas public libraries.

The history of Texas libraries is the history of the expansion of civilization across the frontier of Texas. The libraries of today owe a great debt to the earliest private, subscription, and military post libraries and reading clubs that laid the foundation for reading and literacy.

The world in which our libraries operate now is much changed. Many of the challenges libraries face are those with which our profession has always grappled. Matching the right library materials to the right patron; reaching out onto networks to locate materials not owned; preserving and protecting intellectual freedom; shielding transaction information in the interest of patron privacy; providing a safe, welcoming environment for study and reflection; effectively matching collections and services to communities and curricula; securing adequate funding in a public political arena influenced heavily by a zero-sum game.

But there are many new challenges. What are the most important critical issues facing our state's libraries? In many ways, they are issues that are facing our society as a whole.

Education, Literacy, Workforce Development

The investment in human capital needed to prepare for work in the new global economy and information-rich environment as well as to upgrade current workforce skills is enormous. It is a fact of life that workers can never stop learning and growing in their abilities and expanding their capacities in order to stay current in fields of endeavor. Basic literacy skills of reading, writing, and arithmetical computing are not sufficient to support an economy that relies increasingly on higher-level critical thinking and information literacy skills.

According to population projections from the Texas State Data Center at the University of Texas at San Antonio, if current demographic patterns hold, the state's workforce will be less well educated, less skilled, and will earn less in the future. By 2040 the growth in enrollment in workforce training programs is projected to more than double. In addition, the workforce will become increasingly diverse and older.

The library's commitment to language enrichment for the very young, educational support for school students of all ages, and expansion of lifelong learning opportunities is fundamental to the new learning paradigm. Libraries can and should be part of the new learner-directed networks that rely on technology to deliver learning any time, any place; any path, any pace.

Community Building

Many Texas communities are in trouble. Large centers of urban development struggle with problems of affordable housing, transportation, crime, decaying infrastructure, etc. Suburban communities are faced with many of the same problems, frequently exacerbated by rapid population growth. Many rural areas are faced with declining populations, aging citizenry, loss of jobs, and other realities that influence the quality of rural life.

In their book entitled Building Communities from the Inside Out, John Kretzmann and John McKnight spell out the principles of asset-based community development. These principles are based on an examination of the capacities and assets that exist within the community and its people that can help support the building process. Rather than focus on community problems, deficiencies, and needs, Kretzmann and McKnight argue in favor of identifying assets that can be leveraged within the community itself.

Asset-based community development is internally focused on the agenda and problem-solving capacities of local residents and institutions. It is relationship-driven, meaning that it is founded on building, nurturing, and sustaining relationships between and among local residents, associations, and institutions.

One of the institutions that Kretzmann and McKnight identify as being essential to this asset-based community development is a library. "…libraries can play an essential role in the process of community-building and should be seen as vital assets that exist at the very heart of community life."

In his work "The Global City: Preparing the Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolis for the 21st Century," Antonio Di Mambro discussed his vision for a new central library for Dallas, which captures the essence of Kretzmann and McKnight's vision of community building:

> "One opportunity is to rethink the J. Erik Jonsson Central Library on Young Street. All over the world, libraries are being restructured to meet the needs of the 21st century information-oriented society. Dallas should tap into the resources of its own Telecom Corridor firms to devise not just a public library but a modern learning and information 'hub' for the entire D-FW region."

Libraries stand at the very core of communities all across our state. The resources they provide both within their walls and beyond are building blocks for community development.

Demographic Changes and Challenges

Former Texas State Demographer and current director of the U. S. Bureau of the Census Steve H. Murdock has summarized demographic challenges for the future for the state of Texas. In general, the population of Texas will become larger, older, and more diverse.

Murdock predicts a population of nearly 50 million people by 2040, more than doubling the current population. Of the top ten U. S. metro areas with the largest population growth, four of them are in Texas (Dallas/Ft. Worth/Arlington, Houston/Sugar Land/Baytown, Austin/Round Rock, and San Antonio).

In contrast, of the 540 accredited public libraries in Texas, 424 serve populations fewer than 25,000—primarily in rural, isolated areas. These smaller libraries serve 14% of the population, while urban and suburban libraries serve 86% of the population in Texas, often in areas that are growing very rapidly.

Texas will become increasingly a majority minority state. By 2040 Murdock projects the Texas population will be 24.2% Anglo, 7.9% African American, 59.1% Hispanic, and 8.8% other racial/ethnic groups, primarily Asians. By 2040, if current trends continue, just over 80% of public elementary and secondary school students will have minority status. Enrollment in public universities and community colleges will practically double, with community college enrollment far outstripping enrollment in public universities. Higher education enrollment will reflect the state's growing diversity, with community colleges and public school bilingual education programs feeling the greatest pressures.

Enrollment in public assistance programs is projected to skyrocket by 2040, with recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Food Stamps, and Medicaid more than doubling. This will place increasing pressures on the state's budget.

The median age of Texans continues to increase as the baby boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, age. Although the median age of the population of Texas is younger than the national average, the state's population is rapidly aging. Murdock points out an important link between the aging of the population and the race/ethnicity of the population. In 2040 the median age of the Anglo population is projected to be 46.3 years of age, whereas the median age of the Hispanic population is projected at 34.4 years of age.

Just over one-quarter of Texas households involve married couples with children. Three of every four households now involve married couples without children, single parent, single person, or some other household arrangement that does not include children. The fastest rate of growth is projected in nonfamily and single parent households.

These demographic changes are most important for their socio-economic implications. Median incomes for minority households are substantially less than median incomes for Anglo households. Household incomes tend to be higher for middle-aged people than for older and younger people. Poverty rates are higher for minority households and for households headed by a single parent. As the number of minority households, elderly, and single-parent households grows, economic differentials must be addressed.

Libraries can and will continue to respond to societal changes. Through literacy and English as a Second Language classes, citizenship classes, forums and town hall meetings for discussion of community issues, storytimes and reading programs, parenting classes, and the like, libraries can support unity within each community and contribute to personal enrichment, civic responsibility, and cultural exchange.

Libraries "…are grounded in the idea that a culture requires places, forums, working laboratories for cognitive change, where

voices can be heard expressing hopes and aspirations in the contexts of the possible." (David W. Carr, "In the Contexts of the Possible: Libraries and Museums as Incendiary Cultural Institutions," RBM, v. 1, no. 2, 2000, p. 117-135.)

Resource Sharing

No library can have all of the resources that are required to meet local needs; however, interlibrary loan networks, reciprocal borrowing agreements, and physical and electronic delivery of library materials alleviate the pressure to purchase materials "just in case" they might be needed. As demands for service increase, customer expectations rise, and technology makes ever-increasing levels of access possible (if not always affordable), the community of libraries must rely on each library's individual commitment to sharing.

Through technology and telecommunications networks and applications, we can permeate the walls of physical facilities and bring library resources to people where they live, work, study, and play. In order to do this, there must be agreement in the library community and shared commitment to common goals and standards.

Accountability for Results

"In growing numbers, service providers, governments, other funders, and the public are calling for clearer evidence that the resources they expend actually produce benefits for people." (J. Gregory Dees, "Enterprising Nonprofits," *Harvard Business Review,* January-February 1998, p. 55-67.) Requirements for accountability rise as resources are squeezed between demands for reduced taxes and increased needs for services. It is more critical than ever that libraries be able to demonstrate the difference they make. Increasingly the call is for identifying and measuring outcomes.

The benefit to people who receive a service or participate in a program—new knowledge, increased skills, changed attitudes or values, modified behavior, improved condition, or altered status—must be measured. In addition to demonstrating accountability, outcomes can be used to justify funding needs.

Digital Divide/Technology

It continues to be true that financial have-nots are also information have-nots. Never before in the history of our country has lack of access to specific resources spelled certain entrapment in a cycle of poverty and failure that can extend through generations. If we are not committed to narrowing the gulf between those with access to computers, high-speed telecommunications, and networked information, we risk creating a "permanent underclass," (David Bolt and Ray Crawford, *The Digital Divide: Computers and Our Children's Future,* New York: TV Books, L.L.C., 2000, p. 124) thus ensuring the continuing division between financial haves and have-nots.
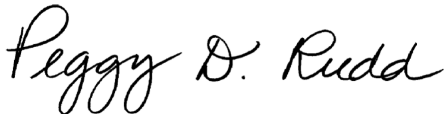
Making computing resources available simply expands the tools that libraries can offer to people to support their information seeking and discovery activities. Libraries are integral to community and economic development and are a crucial asset in community building, so it is only natural that they would take the lead in promoting access to networked information and computing resources for those who do not otherwise have access.

Libraries can also give technology a "human face." While the information available on the Web grows exponentially, untutored individuals can find searching for meaningful, reliable information very frustrating. There is an enormous role for librarians to play in building capacity in individuals for success in the networked information environment.

Libraries are struggling to keep pace with the demand for computer and Internet access. One hundred forty-seven libraries (out of the accredited 540) do not currently meet the standard of one public computer per 1,500 people. Although the number represents roughly only one-quarter of the state's libraries, that one-quarter serves 66% of the state's population. In addition, many of the state's libraries do not have broadband connectivity, but rather must rely on slow dial-up connections ill suited to supporting information access in the digital age.

Funding

Funding remains a challenge for almost all Texas public libraries. They rely heavily on local funds for support. Varying levels of local funding for public libraries in Texas result in variations in facilities, hours of operation, staffing, collections, formats of library materials, outreach, and programming. While public library service is primarily a local responsibility, we all have a stake in supporting strong public libraries that are the centers of literacy, learning, and leisure for their communities as well as statewide resources for all Texans.

Peggy D. Rudd

Peggy D. Rudd
Director and Librarian

Texas Public Libraries at a Glance:

Just the Facts:

- Texas has 560 public libraries (540 accredited), up from 500 just 10 years ago and 450 libraries 20 years ago. The first public library in Texas was established in the 1890s.

- The smallest library in Round Top serves 77 people, while the largest, Houston Public Library, serves 2.1 million.

- 81 percent of Texas public libraries do not charge a non-resident fee and will loan books and other library materials to anyone in the state.

- Total funding for Texas public libraries in 2007 was $422.6 million.

- 59 percent of the state's population is served by the 36 largest public libraries (those serving 100,000 or more people), while the 424 libraries that serve populations under 25,000 serve 14% of Texans.

Texans are increasingly making use of their local libraries:

- In 2007, Texans borrowed 106 million items from public libraries, an average of five items per person. At average book prices, that's a value of over $100!

- Texas public librarians helped people with nearly 16 million reference questions, or about 44,000 per day.

- Attendance at public library programs surpassed 4.3 million—equivalent to selling out Minute Maid Park in Houston 105 times.

Texas Libraries need more resources:

- Local communities in Texas spent $408.5 million on their public libraries in 2007.

- Texas public libraries spent $17.25 per capita in 2005, ranking 49th in the nation. The national average was $31.65 per capita.

- State funding for direct support of public libraries amounts to less than one percent of their total funding.

- State funding for public libraries is just over $.14 per capita—less than the cost of one phone call.

STATEWIDE COMPARISON STATISTICS:
EXPENDITURES
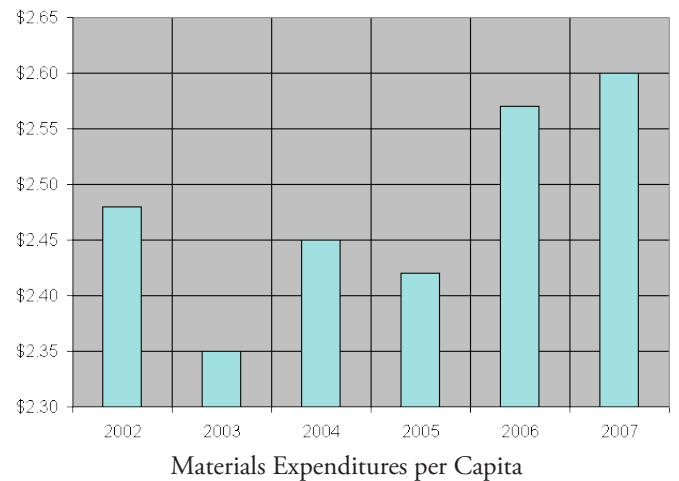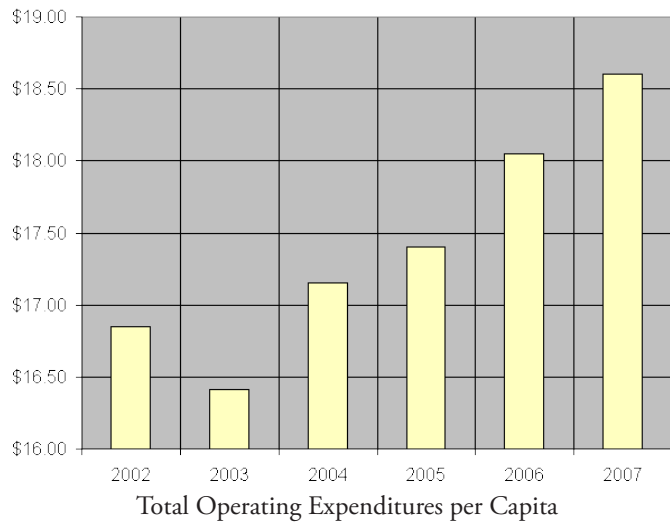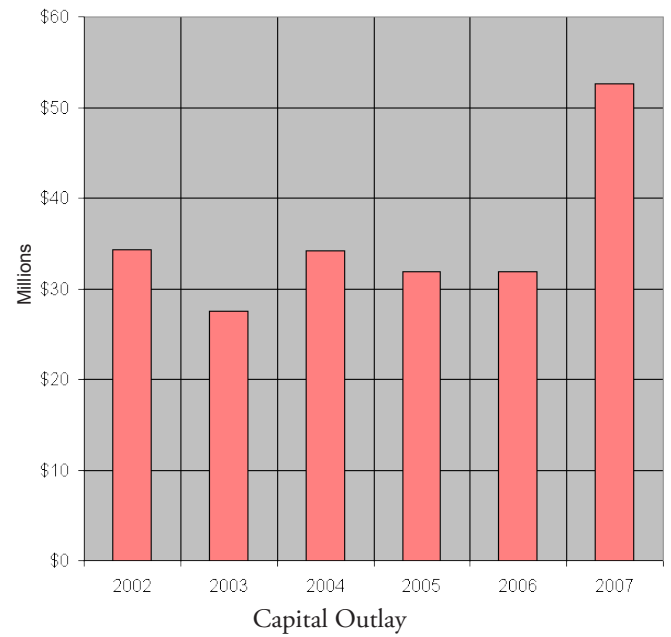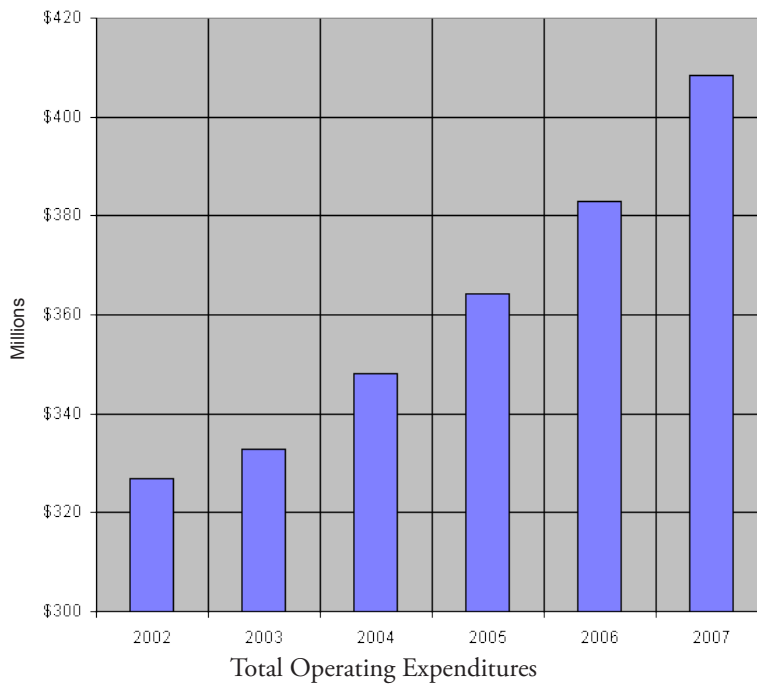
Total Operating Expenditures

Capital Outlay

Total Operating Expenditures per Capita

Materials Expenditures per Capita

|	Total Operating Expenditures	Capital Outlay	Total Operating Expenditures per Capita	Materials Expenditures per Capita
2002	$326,999,114	$34,321,597	$16.85	$2.48
2003	$332,865,694	$27,485,146	$16.41	$2.35
2004	$347,995,045	$34,140,405	$17.15	$2.45
2005	$364,378,262	$31,820,915	$17.40	$2.42
2006	$382,853,115	$31,834,374	$18.05	$2.57
2007	$408,501,549	$52,621,132	$18.60	$2.60

Statewide Comparison Statistics:
Income by source
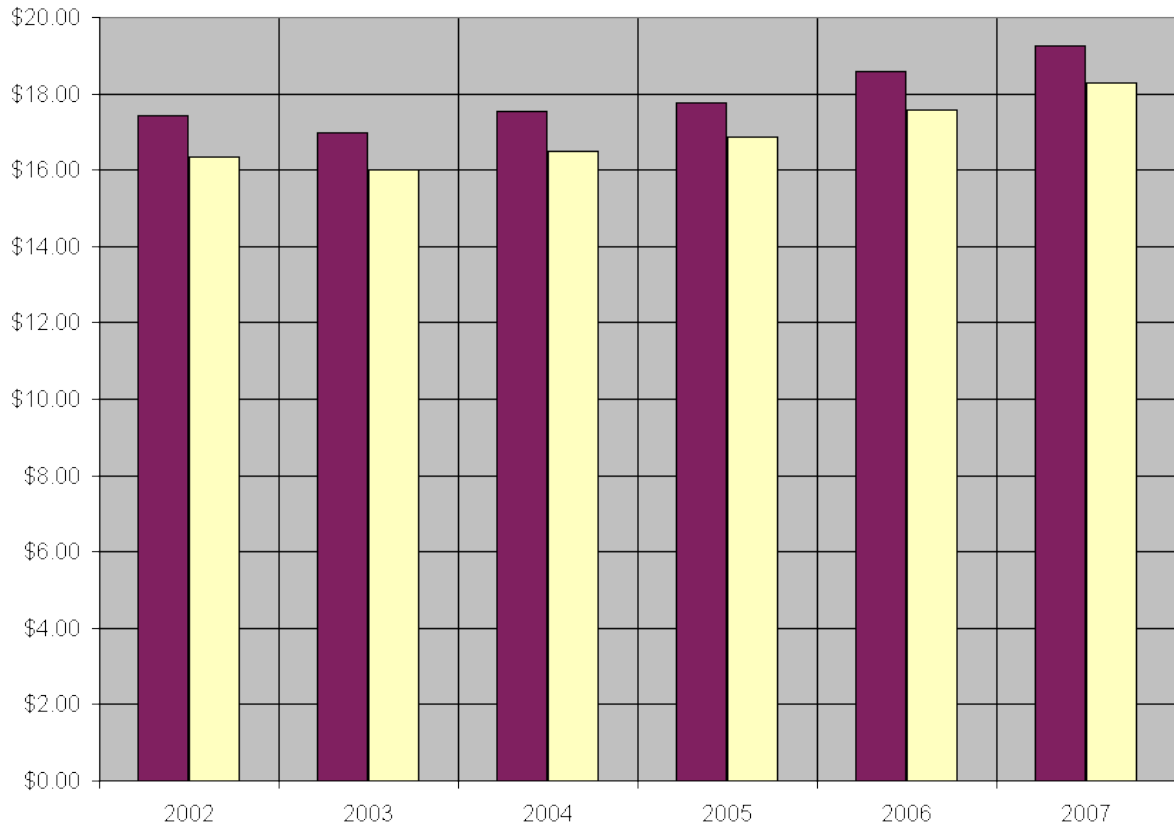
	Total Income per Capita	Local Government Income per Capita
2002	$17.43	$16.36
2003	$16.99	$16.02
2004	$17.55	$16.51
2005	$17.77	$16.85
2006	$18.59	$17.57
2007	$19.24	$18.30

STATEWIDE COMPARISON STATISTICS: LIBRARY COLLECTION

	Books & Serials per Capita
2002	1.90
2003	1.82
2004	1.86
2005	1.82
2006	1.97
2007	1.90
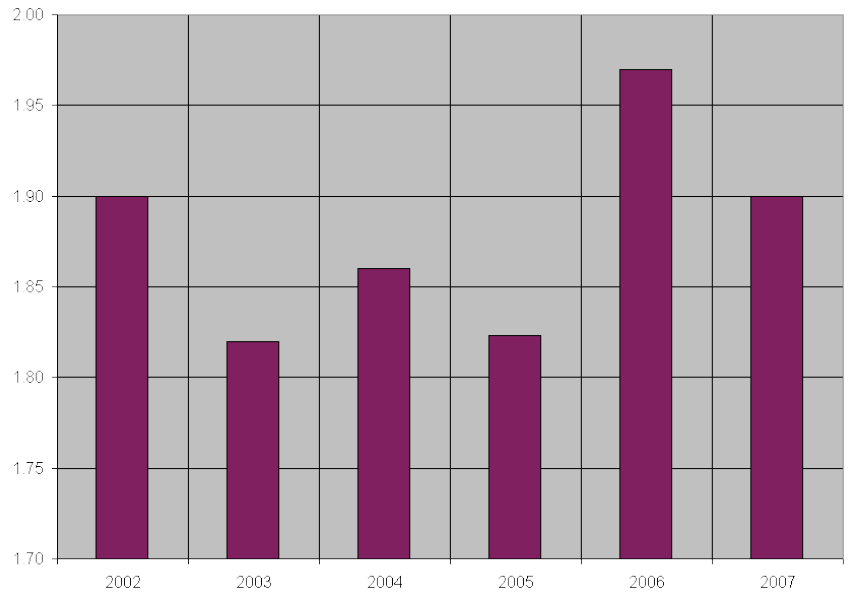
INTERNET ACCESS
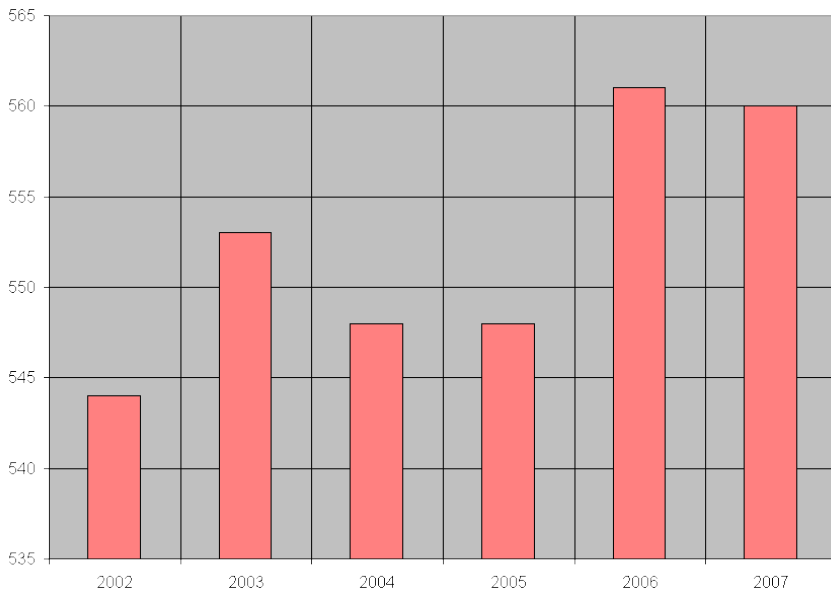
	Libraries with Internet Access
2002	544
2003	553
2004	548
2005	548
2006	561
2007	560

STATEWIDE COMPARISON STATISTICS: STAFFING (FTEs)
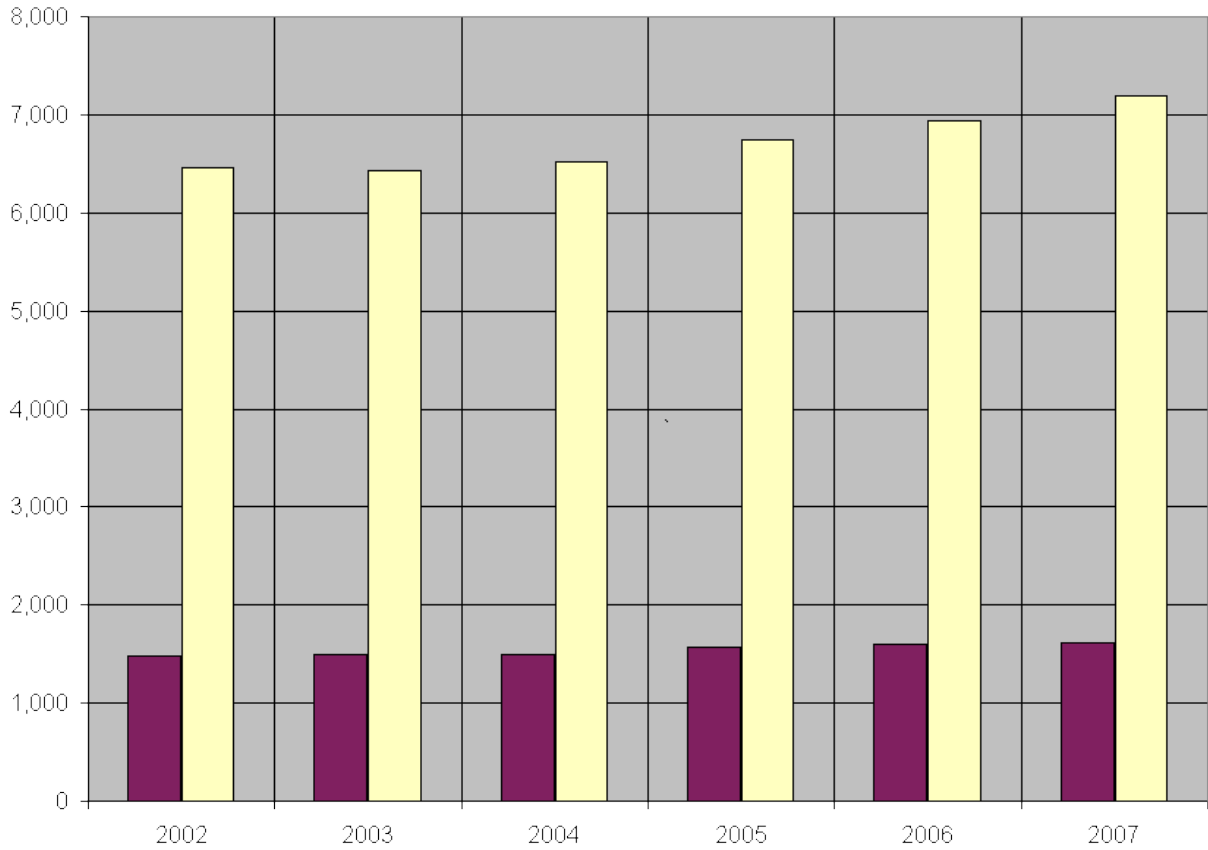
	Librarians with ALA-MLS	Total Paid Staff
2002	1,485	6,455
2003	1,493	6,432
2004	1,499	6,527
2005	1,573	6,743
2006	1,599	6,935
2007	1,613	7,186

STATEWIDE COMPARISON STATISTICS:
LOCAL LIBRARY SERVICES
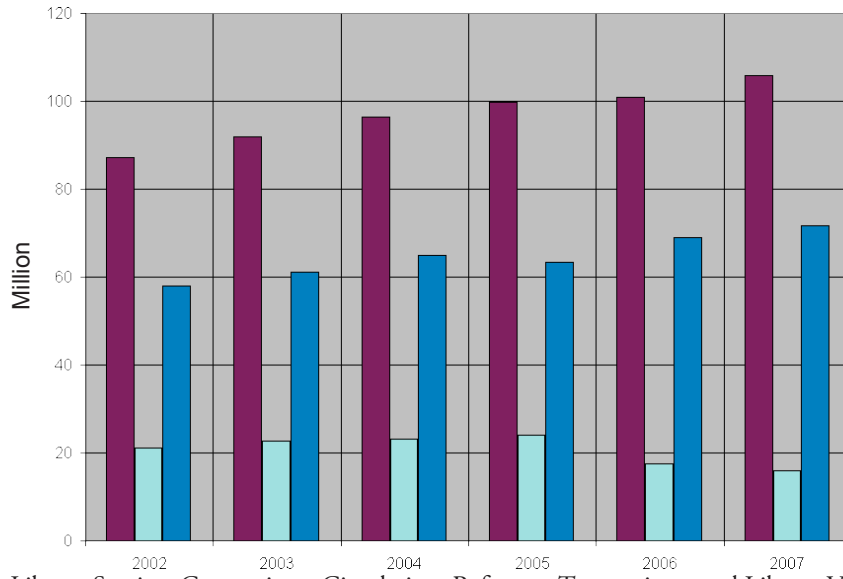
Library Services Comparison: Circulation, Reference Transactions, and Library Visits
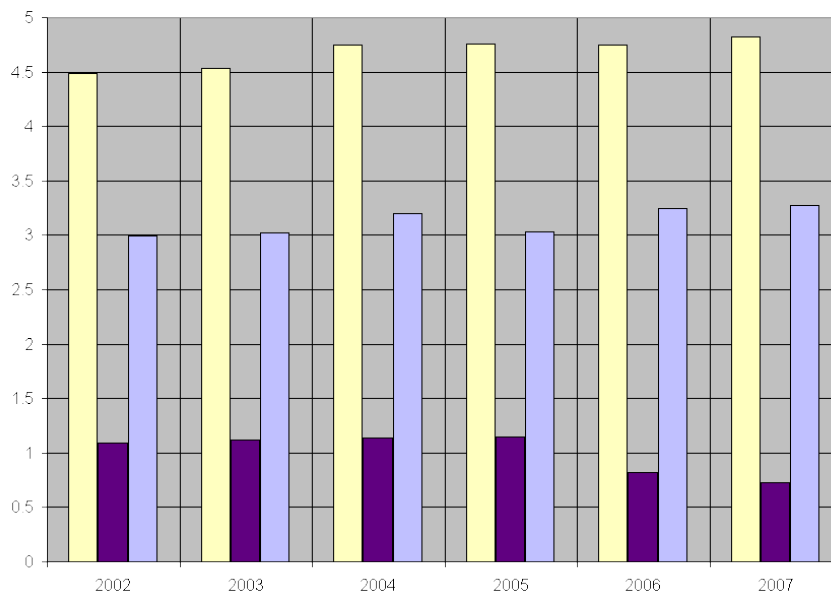
Library Services per Capita Comparison: Circulation, Reference Transactions, and Library Visits

	Total Library Circulation	Circulations per Capita	Reference Transactions	Reference Transactions per Capita	Number of Library Visits	Number of Library Visits per Capita
2002	87,118,948	4.49	21,131,791	1.09	58,003,666	2.99
2003	91,950,824	4.53	22,763,379	1.12	61,146,794	3.02
2004	96,355,180	4.75	23,208,409	1.14	64,881,654	3.20
2005	99,676,916	4.76	23,963,231	1.14	63,400,518	3.03
2006	100,826,420	4.75	17,476,331*	.82	68,944,320	3.25
2007	105,933,278	4.82	15,968,471	.73	71,769,837	3.27
	*Data adjustment made as a result of over-reporting by a large urban public library.					

STATEWIDE COMPARISON STATISTICS: FACILITIES
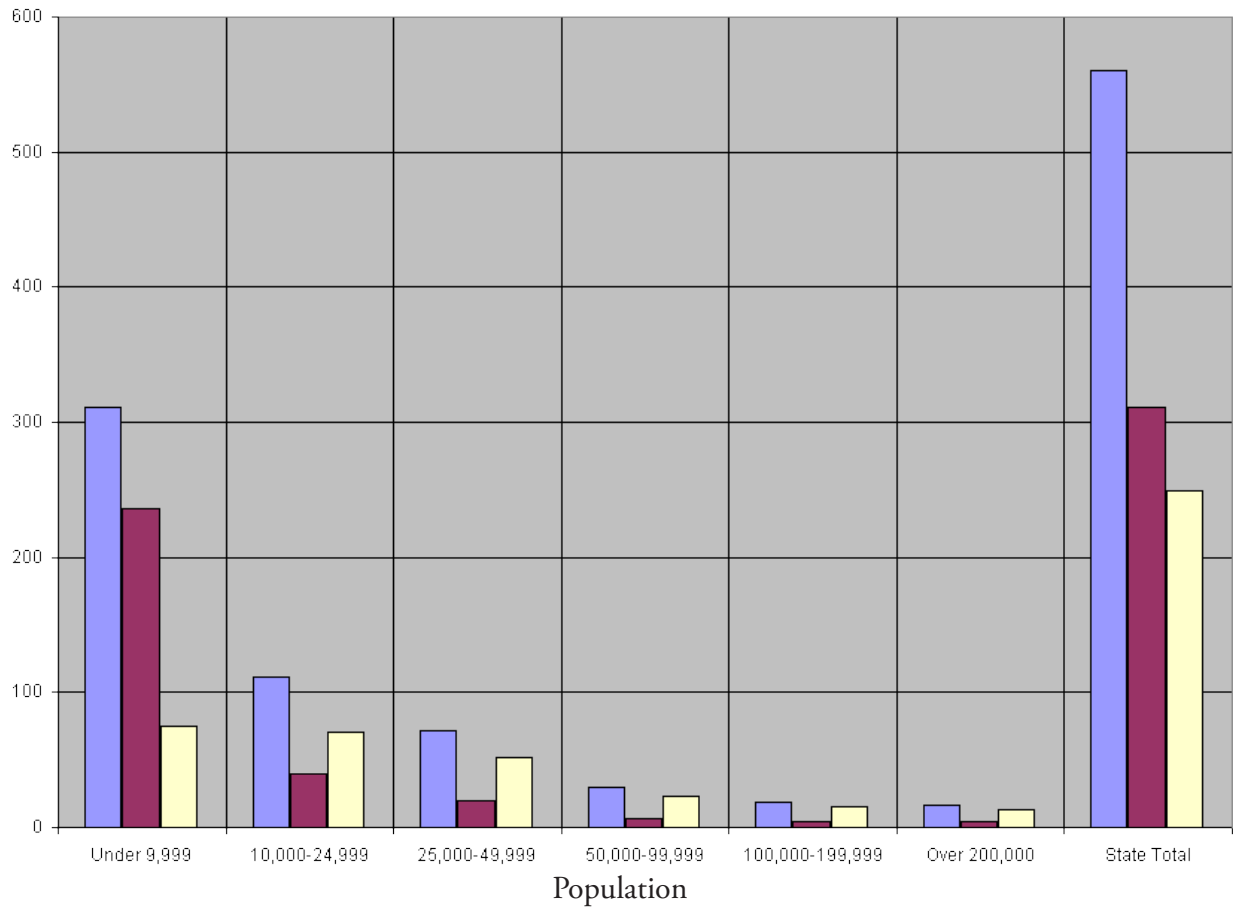
Square Feet per Capita – 2007

Standard: .6 square feet per capita

Population	Number of Libraries	Libraries Meeting the Standard	Libraries Not Meeting the Standard
Under 9,999	311	236	75
10,000–24,999	111	40	71
25,000–49,999	72	20	52
50,000–99,999	30	7	23
100,000–199,999	19	4	15
Over 200,000	17	4	13
State Total	560	311	249

How do Texas Public Libraries Stack up:

National Perspective

How do Texas public libraries stack up against those in other states?

According to *Public Libraries in the United States: Fiscal Year 2005[1],* they do not stack up very well.

Of the 9,198 public libraries in the United States, 560 are located in Texas. The bulk of Texas public libraries (76%) serve populations under 25,000. These smaller libraries serve 14% of the state's population.

There are 851 public library outlets in Texas, including 553 central libraries/administrative headquarters and 298 branches. There are 12 bookmobiles in operation in the state.

Total nationwide circulation of public library materials was 2.1 billion, or 7.2 materials circulated per capita. Among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, the highest circulation per capita was 15 (Ohio) and the lowest was 2.1 (District of Columbia). Texas public libraries fell towards the bottom of the pack, circulating 4.8 materials per capita, which ranked Texas 45th out of the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Nationwide visits to public libraries numbered 1.4 billion, or 4.7 library visits per capita. The highest number of visits per capita was reported for Ohio (7.2 visits per capita) and the lowest number was reported for Mississippi (2.9 visits per capita). Texas reported 3.3 visits per capita, which ranked Texas along with West Virginia as 46th.

Reference transactions in public libraries nationwide totaled 302.5 million, or 1.1 reference transactions per capita. Texas ranked 19th with 1.1 reference transactions per capita.

Nationwide public libraries had 815.6 million print materials in their collections, or 2.8 volumes per capita. By state the number of print materials per capita ranged from 1.6 (Nevada) to 5.4 (Maine). Texas ranked 44th with 2.1 print materials per capita.

Total operating expenditures for public libraries were $9.1 billion. The average per capita operating expenditure was $31.65. By state, the highest average per capita operating expenditure was $56.62 (District of Columbia) and the lowest was $13.50 (Mississippi). Texas ranked 49th with $17.25 per capita, just over half of the national average.

Texas public libraries received .4% of their revenue from federal sources, .7% from state sources, 94.8% from local sources, and 4.1% from other sources. Nationwide public libraries received .5% of their revenue from federal sources, 9.6% from state sources, 81.4% from local sources, and 8.4% from other sources. Thus, public libraries in Texas are much more reliant on local sources of support than libraries in other states.

Ranking of Public Libraries on Key Measures: Us & Texas Comparison

Ranking of Texas Public Libraries on Key Measures: Texas Ranking

[1] National Center for Education Statistics, U. S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. November 2007.
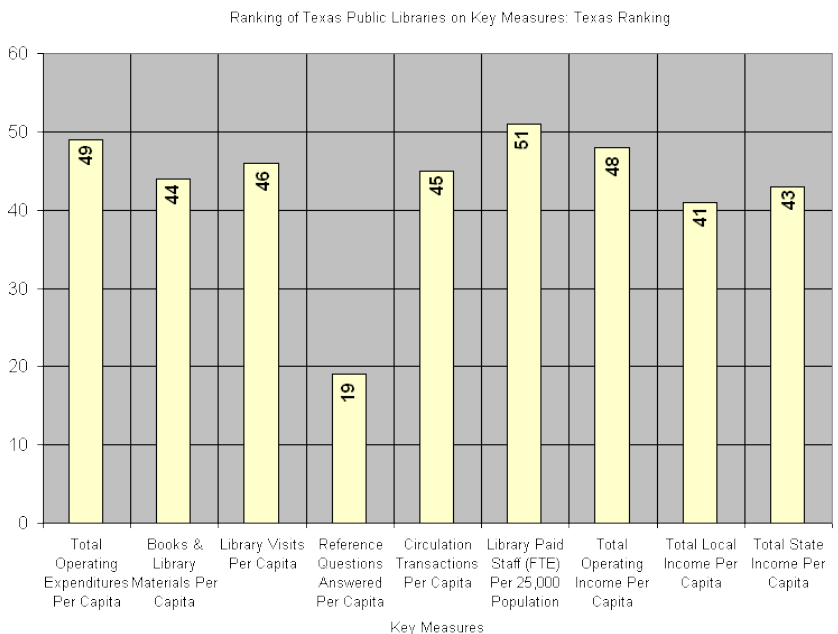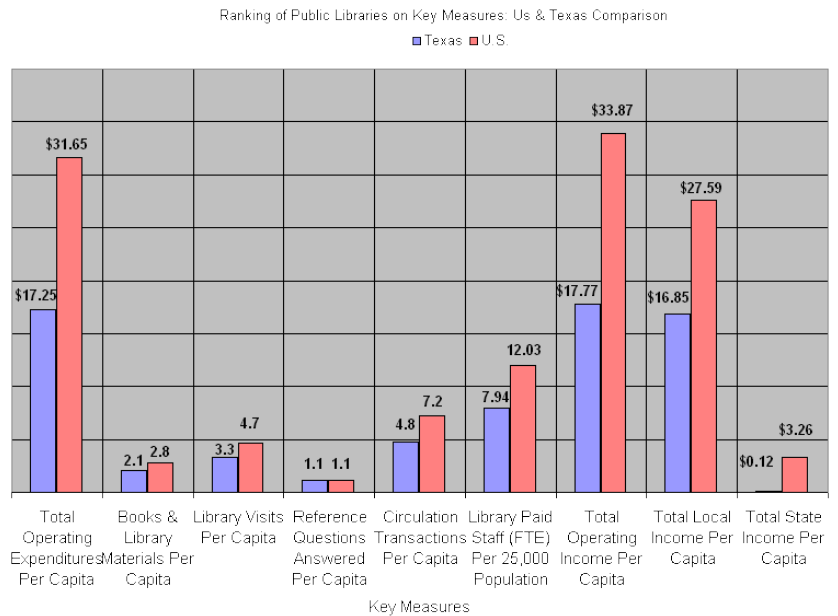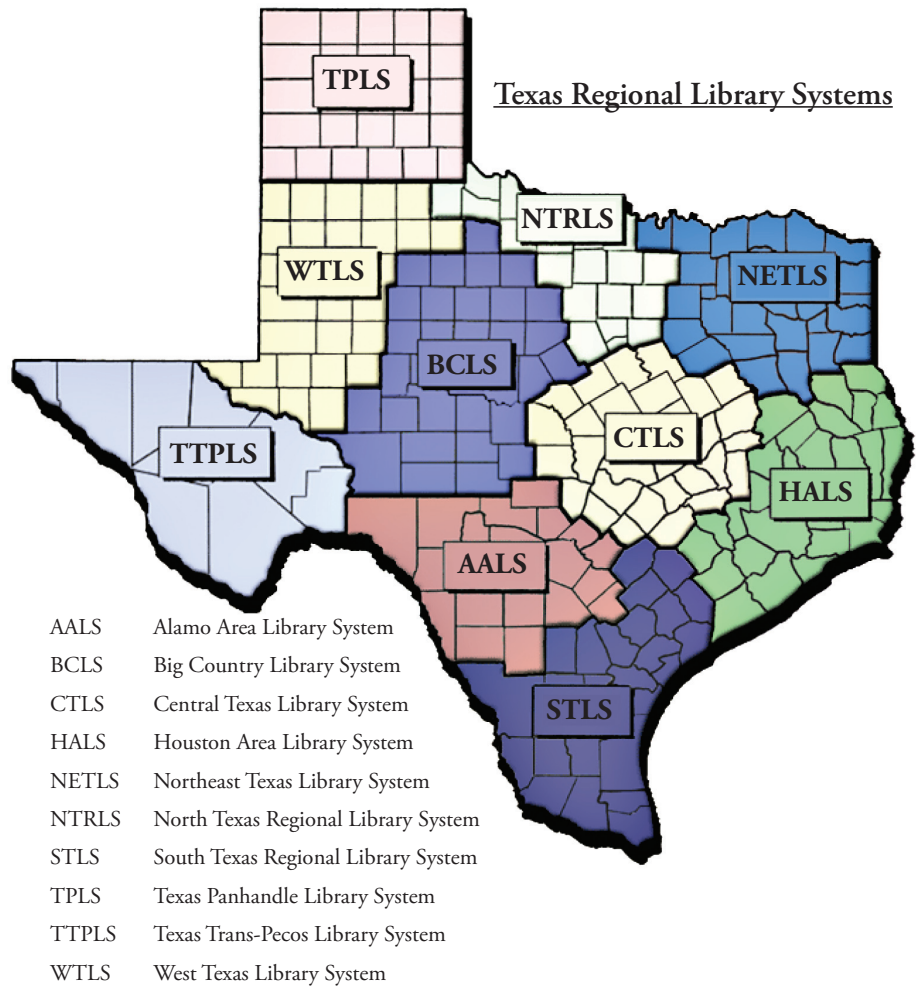
TEXAS STATE LIBRARY SUPPORT OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES:

LIBRARY SYSTEMS
How does the Library System Grant Program Work?

Each of the 10 public library systems submits a Plan of Service to the State Library. This plan details the activities that the System will provide to its member libraries along with a budget for each project within the plan.

By state law, each system must provide continuing education and consulting services to its member libraries and must present a project plan for the administration of the grant. Beyond these required activities, systems may propose additional activities based upon statewide goals set by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, needs in the region, and feedback gathered from member libraries. Examples of these regional initiatives include online homework tutoring, ESL and GED instruction, outreach services, and community programs.

In addition to the Library System grant, the Texas State Library and Archives Commission provides grant funds to each system to build capacity in areas of technology at local libraries through the Technical Assistance Negotiated Grants (TANG) program. TANG is used to cover personnel costs associated with providing a staff member serving as a technology resource for member libraries. This staff member provides hands-on training on various technology topics, assists libraries when they run into technology problems beyond their expertise, and helps prepare libraries and their staffs for future technologies.

Texas Regional Library Systems

AALS	Alamo Area Library System
BCLS	Big Country Library System
CTLS	Central Texas Library System
HALS	Houston Area Library System
NETLS	Northeast Texas Library System
NTRLS	North Texas Regional Library System
STLS	South Texas Regional Library System
TPLS	Texas Panhandle Library System
TTPLS	Texas Trans-Pecos Library System
WTLS	West Texas Library System

FY2008 Library System Funding

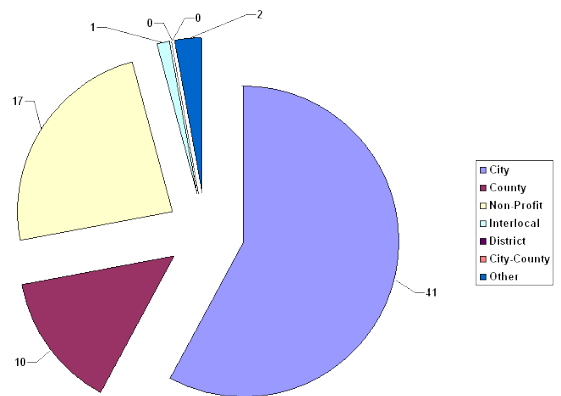| Library System (LS) (Headquarters)	'06 Population Est	System Grant	TANG Grant	Accredited Public Libraries Served
Alamo Area LS (San Antonio)	2,208,825	$486,264	$57,600	46
Big Country LS (Abilene)	465,705	$332,953	$72,917	38
Central Texas LS (Austin)	2,637,632	$616,626	$76,136	77
Houston Area LS (Houston)	6,426,814	$865,675	$47,000	68
Northeast Texas LS (Garland)	4,747,541	$863,841	$42,000	106
North Texas Regional LS (Fort Worth)	2,905,743	$626,707	$68,700	74
South Texas LS (Corpus Christi)	2,168,999	$508,873	$78,250	54
Texas Panhandle LS (Amarillo)	413,411	$297,208	$79,200	28
Texas-Trans Pecos LS (El Paso)	789,819	$283,315	$78,243	15
West Texas LS (Lubbock)	743,294	$340,538	$80,000	34
Totals	**23,507,783**	**$5,222,000**	**$680,046**	**540**

Texas Library Systems Comparison:

Rural vs. Urban
(Figures include unaccredited public libraries.)

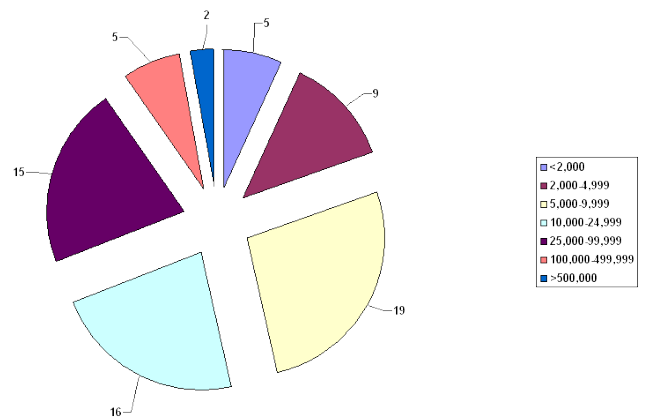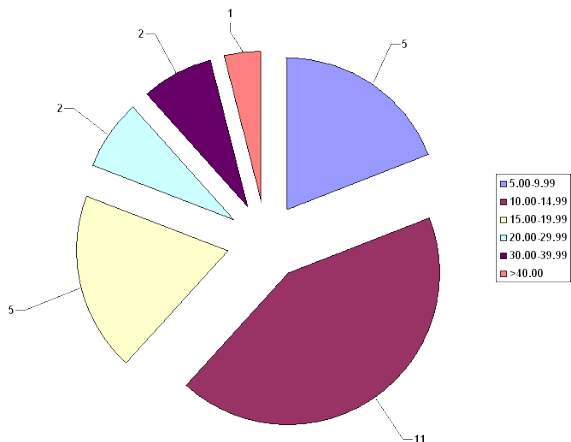Big Country Library System (Abilene Area) Governance Type

Legend:
- City
- County
- Non-Profit
- Interlocal
- District
- City-County
- Other
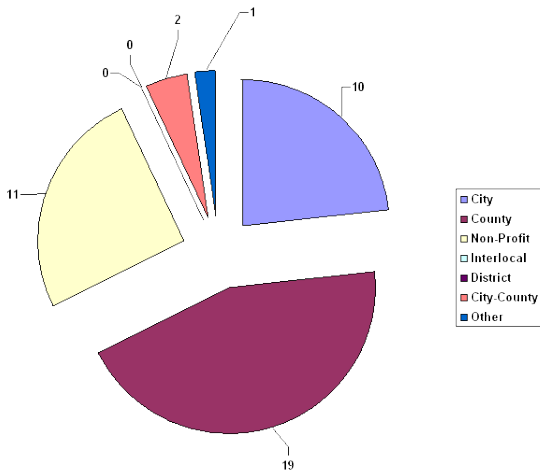
Houston Area Library System Governance Type

Legend:
- City
- County
- Non-Profit
- Interlocal
- District
- City-County
- Other

Big Country Library System (Abilene Area) Service Population

Legend:
- <2,000
- 2,000-4,999
- 5,000-9,999
- 10,000-24,999
- 25,000-99,999
- 100,000-499,999
- >500,000
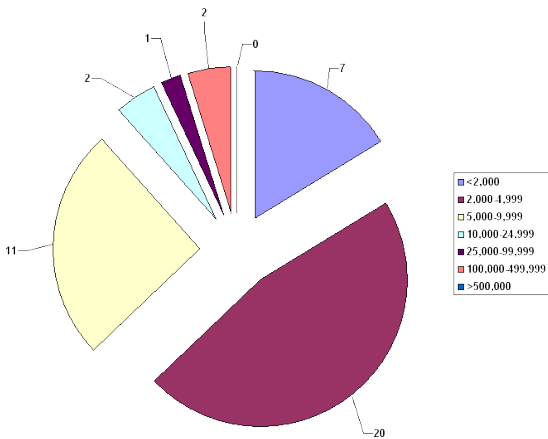
Houston Area Library System Service Population

Legend:
- <2,000
- 2,000-4,999
- 5,000-9,999
- 10,000-24,999
- 25,000-99,999
- 100,000-499,999
- >500,000

Big Country Library System (Abilene Area) per Capita Income

Legend:
- 5.00-9.99
- 10.00-14.99
- 15.00-19.99
- 20.00-29.99
- 30.00-39.99
- >40.00

Houston Area Library System per Capita Income

Legend:
- <5.00
- 5.00-9.99
- 10.00-14.99
- 15.00-19.99
- 20.00-29.99
- 30.00-39.99
- >40.00
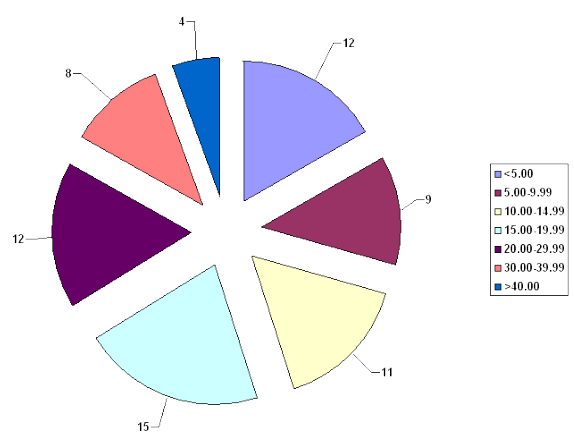
Texas State Library Support of Public Libraries: TexShare

TexShare is a consortium of 701 college, university, public, and medical libraries in Texas that works to reduce costs and expand services by sharing resources among all members. TexShare member libraries are able to offer a broader range of materials and services than any single library can provide for its constituents. Services include interlibrary loan, a courier service that efficiently delivers library materials between libraries, statewide electronic database subscriptions, and the TexShare card, which allows users to borrow books from other participating libraries.

TexShare Electronic Databases

TexShare provides Texans with 24/7 access to a collection of online research databases. TexShare member libraries work as partners with the Texas State Library to bring the databases to their communities. Statewide purchasing agreements save millions of dollars while bringing a wealth of accurate, verified, information-rich research tools to the desktops of people throughout the state. Maps, business information, local land records, poetry, genealogy, health information, popular periodicals, informational videos, and much more are available through Texas libraries. Patrons also have access to the databases from their home or office computers once they receive a remote access login and password from a participating library.

TexShare offers 50 full-text databases to its members, leveling the playing field for even the smallest Texas public library.

Library of Texas Service (www.libraryoftexas.org)

The Library of Texas search engine allows users to discover and retrieve desired information easily from the TexShare databases as well as multiple library catalogs and other knowledge collections—all in one search session

TexShare Card Program

TexShare members can participate in the TexShare Card Program, which is a reciprocal borrowing card for member libraries. Texans can receive a TexShare Card at their local libraries, and then they are free to check out books from any participating library. The Card Program has significantly increased access to information across the state. Currently 398 public libraries participate in the program. In fiscal year 2007, 366,626 library items were circulated by public libraries to TexShare Card holders.

TExpress Courier Service

The TExpress Courier Service promotes universal borrowing among libraries by providing an inexpensive, reliable delivery service of library materials between members. Materials are generally delivered within 48 hours. Currently 78 public libraries participate.

Texas State Library Support of Public Libraries: Loan Star Libraries Program

The Loan Star Libraries Program is a non-competitive grant program that provides state funding for Texas public libraries. Loan Star Libraries is a partnership between the state of Texas and local political jurisdictions intended to:

- Improve public library services statewide

- Ensure access to adequate public library resources and services for all Texans

- Provide an incentive to local communities to extend public library services without charge to those residing outside each public library's legal service area

- Build the capacity of each public library to serve as the information resource and lifelong learning center for their community

- Enhance the public library's ability to serve Texans in the "Digital Divide"

- Improve each public library's ability to provide access points to e-government

Any legally established public library in Texas that meets a minimum set of criteria is eligible to receive a Loan Star Libraries grant. From FY2002 through 2008, libraries have received a total of $22.05 million to enhance local library services.

Since the primary purpose of the Loan Star Libraries Program is to extend public library resources to all Texans, program participants receive incentives to encourage them to eliminate non-resident fees and other barriers to service. Thirty percent of the funds is distributed as a base grant to all eligible libraries. The remaining 70 percent is distributed as a match on local expenditures for the operation and maintenance of the library.

Loan Star has been very effective in removing barriers to service. Today, 81 percent of the state's libraries will serve any Texas resident free of charge.

Texas libraries have extended hours, are offering additional training and literacy programs, and are expanding their collections with Loan Star Libraries grants. Local communities decide how best to use the grant to improve library services for their residents.

LSL Program Impact on Public Libraries Participating in Resource Sharing
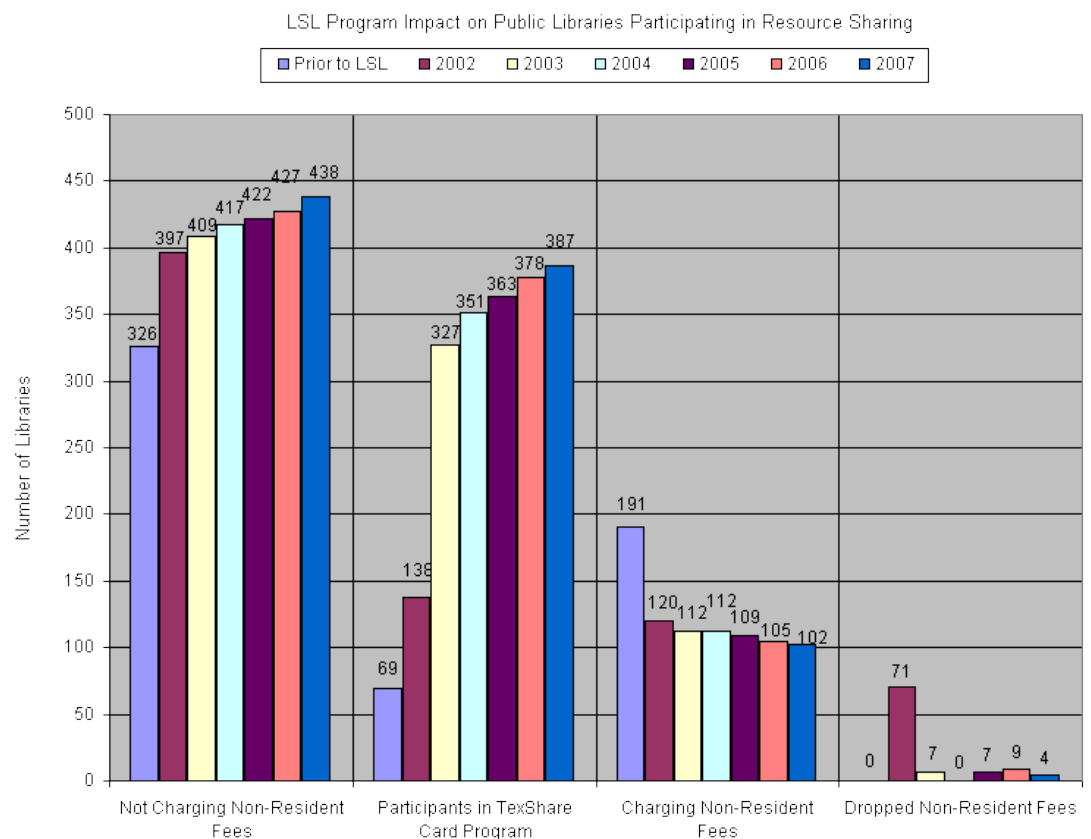
TEXAS STATE LIBRARY SUPPORT OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES: ADDITIONAL INITIATIVES

- The Talking Book Program (TBP), a program of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission and the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped in the Library of Congress, assists public libraries in providing services to their patrons with disabilities. TBP serves about 20,000 Texans each year – people who have disabilities that prevent them from reading standard print. Thousands of books are shipped every day in audiocassette, large print, and Braille formats, delivered directly to patrons' homes, free of charge. TBP is transitioning to the digital talking book over the next three years. The program also provides free referral and reference assistance regarding any disability-related issue. For TBP services, call toll-free in Texas, 1-800-252-9605.

- The Texas State Library and Archives Commission awards Texas Reads grants each year to support reading and literacy programs in public libraries. Funds come from the sale of the Texas Reads specialty license plate. Projects funded have included community "one book" reading initiatives, early childhood literacy programs, teen reading programs, and bilingual literacy programs. You can support literacy, too—order your Texas Reads plate today! Visit www.tsl.state.tx.us/agency/txreads.html to learn more.

- Since 1999 the Texas State Library and Archives Commission has cooperated with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to help expand and sustain public access computing in Texas. Recent efforts include the Staying Connected grant program, which supported computer replacements and training to help public librarians engage their communities and enlist community support for sustaining technology in the library. Demand for Internet access and technology-based library services (and the related needs for staff and user training, equipment, and connectivity) continue to grow. Staff turnover, insufficient budgets, and a lack of technical skills contribute to the inability of libraries to provide sufficient services to their communities. Through the Staying Connected grant, we awarded a total of $761,991 to 175 libraries to replace 541 computers. An additional $142,436 provided training on basic PC repair, network issues, database reference services, and more. Additionally, our partnership with the Gates Foundation included the Public Access Computer/Hardware Upgrade Grant (PAC/HUG). This grant provided $2,385,000 to replace or upgrade more than 1,900 computers in 544 library buildings over the past three years. We are currently in the planning stage for a connectivity upgrade grant to Texas rural public libraries.

- In 2005 the Texas State Library and Archives Commission took the role of host institution for the Texas Heritage Digitization Initiative and obtained a $240,249 National Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The Texas Heritage Digitization Initiative is a cooperative project to identify, describe, digitize, preserve, and make broadly accessible special collections of history and culture held by libraries, archives, museums, historical societies, and other institutions in Texas. Public libraries are important partners in this program. An outgrowth of the grant-funded project was the development of Texas Heritage Online, which provides unified online access to Texas's historical documents and images for use by teachers, students, historians, genealogists, and other researchers. Texas Heritage Online may be accessed at www.thdi.org.

NOTES

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