The American Library Association (ALA) proclaims that "libraries are essential to a democratic society. Every day, in countless communities across our nation and the world, millions of children, students and adults use libraries to learn, grow and achieve their dreams. In addition to a vast array of books, computers, and other resources, library users benefit from the expert teaching and guidance of librarians and library staff to help expand their minds and open new worlds" (ALA, n.d.).

Libraries provide individuals with numerous informational resources and act as gateways to knowledge and learning. In recent decades, new technology has expanded the ways in which libraries can provide resources and spend financial resources, posing unique challenges to the traditional library role. Nevertheless, the social and cultural relevance of libraries remains constant.

TYPES OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Libraries are considered public if they provide collections and basic services without charge to all residents within their given community, district, or region. Many public libraries also offer additional services, with or without charges. Public libraries receive most to all of their financial support from public funds. According to the National Information Standards Organization (2013), public libraries are classified into administrative units for statistical purposes. An administrative unit represents an independent or group of libraries maintained under a single director or administration. The administrative unit usually consists of a central (or main) library, various library branches, and managerial facilities. Three commonly accessed types of libraries within an administrative unit are:

Main Libraries
The main library is either the single library facility in an administrative unit or the primary operational center for multiple library branches. Typically, this library centralizes and maintains all processing and also houses the principal collections.

Branch Libraries
Branch libraries are considered auxiliary units of the administrative unit. To be considered a branch, the library must maintain a separate facility from the main library, retain an organized collection of materials, employ paid staff, and offer regularly scheduled hours.

Bookmobiles
Bookmobiles represent traveling libraries that maintain organized collection of materials, paid staff, and regularly scheduled hours and stops (National Information Standards Organization, 2013).

PUBLIC LIBRARY USE

In fiscal year 2018 there were 9,058 public libraries with 7,702 branches and 664 bookmobiles serving people in the United States. Texas had 543 of those public libraries with 326 branches and 11 bookmobiles. While Texas boasts many library buildings, by national average, the state is ranked one of the lowest in both revenue and expenditures per capita (Institute of Museum and Library Services [IMLS], 2021a).

The following table provides data comparing Texas and the United States.

U.S. PUBLIC LIBRARY STATISTICS 2018		
	TEXAS	UNITED STATES
Number of Public Libraries	543	9,058
Population of Legal Service Area (in millions)	26.1	323.2
Per Capita		
Library Visits	2.5	4.1
Total Circulation	4.5	6.9
Public Use of Internet PCs	0.5	0.8
Operating Revenue	$22.21	$43.65
Expenditures	$21.53	$40.75
(IMLS, 2021a)		

TECHNOLOGY AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Although a growing number of individuals invest in computer technology at their homes, approximately 10% of the population, or nearly 33 million Americans do not have internet access at home for a variety of reasons (Anderson, et al., 2019). The public library provides a valuable service in terms of public access to technology and information. Public libraries not only offer written, audio, and video materials but now include computers, Internet access, digital journals and databases, and e-books among their services. All public libraries now offer public access to the internet and 98% offer Wi-Fi access (American Library Association [ALA], 2019).

Public libraries offer a wide variety of computer-related services. 90% of libraries offer formal or informal technology training; 73% provide programs that assist individuals to apply for jobs, create resumes, and prepare for interviews; 97% provide assistance in completing online government forms; 77% provide online health resources; and 60% offer programs to help American identify health insurance resources and get better informed on health topics (ALA, 2019).

Ebooks are becoming more popular every year. In Fiscal Year 2018, 90% of libraries in the United States had electronic collections. The percentage was larger in cities (99%) than in rural libraries (83%) (IMLS, 2021b). "Between FY 2014 and FY 2018, median per person spending on physical materials decreased by 6 percent, while median per person spending on electronic materials increased by 31 percent" (IMLS, 2021b, p.1). The number of e-books in library collections per capita was 1.76 nationally and 0.55 in Texas in 2018 (IMLS, 2021a).

SUPPORT AND FUNDING FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The American public appreciates the value of public libraries. A national survey conducted in 2016 showed that 69% of respondents felt their libraries contributed "a lot" to providing a safe place and 77% said that public libraries provided them with the resources they need (Horrigan, 2016).

In San Antonio, 82% of residents indicated they were satisfied with the services the San Antonio Public Library System provided in 2018. In fact, San Antonio library service satisfaction ratings were 8% higher than the national average and about 5% higher than the average rating for three other large Texas cities. Satisfaction ratings generally stayed the same between 2016-2018 and indicated that residents were most satisfied with:

➢ Informational resources such as book, e-books, etc. (97%)
➢ Access to the internet (95%)
➢ Library programs (94%)
➢ Library services in neighborhood (94%)
➢ Cleanliness/appearance of facilities (97%)
(ETC Institute, 2018)

Despite the popularity of libraries, Texas had one of the largest declines in state funding for libraries in the nation. Public library revenue primarily is generated from four sources: local government, state government, federal government, and other sources (e.g. monetary gifts and donations) (IMLS, 2019a). Local government and other local sources fund the majority of Texas libraries and their programs (IMLS, 2019b).

Of the $579 million total revenue for Texas libraries in 2018, only $116,000 came from the state and $1.9 million came from federal sources. Local government provided $555.4 million and other sources such as monetary gifts and donations, interests, library fines, fees,

provided $21.4 Million grants. Texas ranked 48th in the nation for total operating revenue per capita and 47th for total operating expenditures per capita (IMLS, 2021a).

PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN GREATER SAN ANTONIO

There are 15 public library systems in Bandera, Bexar, Comal, and Kendall counties, including *BiblioTech* – the country's first all-digital library (Texas State Library and Archives Commission [TSLAC], 2021). With three locations, BiblioTech provides "all Bexar County residents technology access to enhance education and literacy, promote reading as recreation, and equip all members of our community with necessary tools to thrive as citizens of the digital age" (BiblioTech, 2021). It has 411,704 ebook titles available for checkout as well as over 400,000 audio downloadable units and over 14,000 video downloadable units with a total circulation of 261,835 in 2019 (TSLAC, 2021).

The San Antonio Public Library is the second largest library in the state of Texas, serving a population of more than 1.8 million individuals (TSLAC, 2021). Six public libraries in the greater San Antonio region surpassed the national average for per capita library visits: Bandera, Boerne, Bulverde/Spring-Branch, Lakehills, Leon Valley, and Medina. A table provided after the reference list contains the latest available data for area libraries from the Texas Library and Archives Commission (2021).

RURAL LIBRARIES

Rural libraries are an important part of the area in which they are located and have the ability to strengthen and unite their community. Rural libraries offer services to ensure the community has access to broadband services, to prevent the population from being excluded from changing elements of society (ALA, 2017). "They are often the only governmental presence in rural communities and may be a point position for a variety of public services. They serve as community centers and the town gathering place" (Hildreth, 2007).

In 2018, "nearly 45 percent of all public libraries in the United States are in rural areas and more than a quarter of all public libraries served a population of fewer than 2,500 people" (IMLS, 2021b, p.6).

Providing community members with access to a large collection of information adds to individual and public quality of life. Local libraries may offer valuable technology that members of the community may not otherwise have access to, such as computers and internet access. "The number of public-access Internet computers per 5,000 people varied across locales in FY 2016, with higher availability of computers in public libraries in rural areas than in other locales" (IMLS, 2019, p.31). "The library is the only place in many communities where people can access information that will help improve their education, develop new skills, find jobs, build businesses, make informed agricultural and health decisions, or gain insights into environmental issues" (International Federation of Library Associations Institution, 2017). Librarians themselves also offer benefits to rural residents; they are generally educated and well trained "information specialists" that are valuable community resources (Waizer and Gruidl, n.d.).

Funding is generally the largest issue that challenges the sustainability of local rural libraries. Across all rural libraries, revenue per capita in 2016 was $32.90. In comparison, revenue per capita for city libraries was $43.51. This limits the ability of rural libraries to maintain qualified staff. Where 68.4% of all libraries have an ALA-MLS accredited librarian, only 28.4% of public libraries in rural areas have an ALA-MLS accredited librarian on staff compared to about 86% of city libraries (IMLS, 2019). Additional challenges unique to rural areas and their libraries include:

➢ Isolation
➢ Low population density
➢ Mobility disadvantages
➢ Lack of expertise and human resources
➢ Resistance to change and innovation
➢ Traditionally conservative nature of rural and small towns
➢ Perception that rural library typically is a place of books
➢ Technology
(Hildreth, 2007)

Two models used in combating problems unique to rural areas are asset mapping and the deficiency model. First, asset mapping looks at the positive aspects of the community and ways to build off of those strengths. Defining positive community-based assets allows for the identification of mutually beneficial connections between those assets. The connections may illuminate ways for broadening scarce resources and benefiting the community. Second, the deficiency model focuses on the inadequacies of the area and looks to outside sources for help (Hildreth, 2007).

One of the best ways to overcome some of the obstacles associated with rural library operation comes from the asset model. It involves expanding the community circle connected to rural libraries by partnering with rural-affiliated groups with stake in the same issues. The collaboration allows the groups to pool their assets and demonstrate the importance of rural libraries to their area's populations (Hildreth, 2007). Libraries can continue to increase their value to the community by hosting committee and group meetings, attending economic development conferences, and stocking reference information that is useful to local organizations and businesses (Waizer and Gruidl, n.d.).

REFERENCES

American Library Association (ALA). (n.d.). *Libraries change lives: Declaration for the right to libraries.* Retrieved from http://www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org.advocacy/files/content/DECLARATION%20-%20TEXT%20ONLY.pdf

American Library Association (ALA). (2017) *Rural libraries in the United States,* Retrieved from http://www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org.advocacy/files/content/pdfs/Rural%20paper%2007-31-2017.pdf

American Library Association (ALA). (2019). *The State of America's libraries: 2019.* Retrieved from http://www.ala.org/news/sites/ala.org.news/files/content/2019-soal-report-final-accessible.pdf

Anderson, M., Perrin, A., Kiang, J., Kumar, M. (2019). *10% of Americans don't use the internet. Who are they?* Retrieved from https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/22/some-americans-dont-use-the-internet-who-are-they/

BiblioTech. (2020). *About Us*. Retrieved from https://bexarbibliotech.org/about-us

ETC Institute. (2018). *2018 City of San Antonio community survey: Final report.* Retrieved from https://www.sanantonio.gov/Portals/0/Files/CommPA/CommSurvey/2018-community-survey-results-english.pdf?ver=2018-12-05-192922-317

Hildreth, S. (2007). *Rural libraries: The heart of our community*. Retrieved from http://arsl.pbworks.com/f/Article+-+Rural+Libraries+by+Hildreth+Public+Libraries+MarApr+07.pdf

Horrigan, J. (2016). *Libraries 2016*. Retrieved from http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2016/09/PI_2016.09.09_Libraries-2016_FINAL.pdf

Information Policy & Access Center. (n.d.). *Public libraries & access*. Retrieved April 20, 2020, from http://digitalinclusion.umd.edu/sites/default/files/CommunityAccess2015.pdf

Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). (2019). *Public libraries in the United States survey: Fiscal year 2016.* Retrieved from https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files//publications/documents/public-libraries-united-states-survey-fiscal-year-2016.pdf

Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). (2021a). *Public libraries survey: Fiscal year 2018 supplementary tables.* Retrieved from https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2021-02/fy2018_pls_tables.pdf

Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). (2021b). *The Use and cost of public library materials: Trends before the COVID-19 pandemic.* Retrieved from https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2021-02/pls_fy18_research_brief.pdf

International Federation of Library Associations and Institution (IFLA). (2017 Update). *IFLA statement on libraries and development (August 2013).* Retrieved from https://www.ifla.org/publications/ifla-statement-on-libraries-and-development

National Information Standards Organization. (2013). *Information services and use: metrics & statistics for libraries and information provider – data dictionary.* Retrieved from https://groups.niso.org/apps/group_public/download.php/11283/Z39-7-2013_metrics.pdf

Texas State Library and Archives commission (TSLAC). (2021). *2019 individual library statistics and comparison charts.* Retrieved from https://www.tsl.texas.gov/ldn/statistics

Waizer, N., and Gruidl, J. (n.d.). *Rural public libraries and community economic development*. Retrieved April 15, 2020, from http://www.lib.niu.edu/1997/il9704178.html

Public Library Name	County	Population Served	# of FTE Staff	Library visits per capita	Circulation	Total Circulation per capita	Op. Exp. Per capita	Friends Org.	Operating Hours*	Website
Kronkosky Library of Bandera County	Bandera	7,556	2.60	7.31	32,757	4.34	$19.57	Yes*	M-F 10-6; Sa 9-1	https://banderacountylibrary.org/
Lakehills Area Library	Bandera	7,556	2.33	5.76	39,206	5.19	$20.55	Yes*	M & Th 10-7; T,W & F 10-5; Sa 10-2	http://lakehillslibrary.org/
Medina Community Library	Bandera	7,556	2.00	6.10	16,351	2.16	$17.73	Yes*	M & Th 10-6; T, W & F 10-5; Sa 10-1	http://www.medinacommunitylibrary.us/
BiblioTech	Bexar	86,017	48.10	3.01	261,835	3.04	$32.42	No	M-F 10-6	https://bexarbibliotech.org/
Converse Area Public Library	Bexar	27,742	4.48	1.64	34,196	1.23	$10.41	Yes	M-F 9-5	https://www.conversetx.net/107/Library
Leon Valley Public Library	Bexar	11,485	5.18	4.25	42,247	3.68	$36.83	Yes	By appointment only	www.leonvalley.lib.tx.us
San Antonio Public Library	Bexar	1,829,577	445.00	2.89	8,001,230	4.37	$23.04	Yes	Hours vary by branch	http://www.mysapl.org/
Universal City Public Library	Bexar	20,773	3.63	1.64	37,314	1.80	$16.23	Yes	T&W 9-6; Th 11-8; F 10-5; Sa 9-2	http://www.uctx.gov/library
Mammen Family Public Library	Comal	33,156	15.47	4.17	281,206	8.48	$46.70	Yes	M-F 11-5; Sat 10-5	https://mfplibrary.org/
City of Garden Ridge Library	Comal	4,022	1.73	3.39	27,808	6.91	$23.19	Yes	M-F 10-5; Sat 10-1	https://www.ci.garden-ridge.tx.us/103/Library
New Braunfels Public Library	Comal	84,612	21.39	3.28	885,290	10.46	$28.11	Yes	M-F 11-6; Sat 11-25	http://www.nbtexas.org/114/Library
Tye Preston Memorial Library	Comal	29,285	7.85	2.40	136,704	4.67	$28.77	Yes	M & T 10-6; W & Th 10-7; Sa 10-5	https://tpml.org/
Patrick Heath Public Library	Kendall	26,170	14.38	5.51	271,754	10.38	$53.61	Yes	M-TH 9-7 F 9-6; Sa 10-4	https://www.ci.boerne.tx.us/197/Library
Comfort Public Library	Kendall	14,954	2.96	1.15	17,397	1.16	$11.70	Yes*	T,Th,F 12-6; W 11-8; Sa 9-1	http://comfortpubliclibrary.or
Kendalia Public Library	Kendall	4,217	0.50	0.42	8,453	2.00	$10.02	Yes*	M 10-5; W 9-6; F 1-5	http://kendalialibrary.com/

*while many libraries hours were posted, adjustments due to covid-19 are still being made

**Library itself is set up as a nonprofit organization.

(Texas Library and Archives Commission, 2021)