

Almost thirty years ago, 56.9% of American adults surveyed read literature during their leisure time (including novels, short stories, plays, and poetry found in books, magazines, journals, etc.). By 1992, that rate had dropped to 54%, fell even more sharply to 46.7% by 2002, but rose again to 50.2% in 2008 (National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), 2004; NEA, 2009). In 2008, the rate of 18-24 year olds who read for pleasure had increased by almost 9 points, or 3.4 million additional readers (NEA, 2009).

In 2002, the average American adult reader read six books during one year, or approximately 21 billion books read throughout the country (NEA, 2004). The highest percentage of those readers lived in the Western region of the United States (51.2%), followed by the Northeast (49.7%), the Midwest (46.7%), and ending with the Southern part of the country (42.1%). The West South Central sub-region, which included Texas, reported the lowest reading rates (40.9%) in the entire country (NEA, 2004).

People who reported being readers were more involved in all other types of arts, sports, and community activities than those who did not read. “Literary readers are nearly three times as likely to attend a performing arts event, almost four times as likely to visit an art museum, over two-and-a-half times as likely to do volunteer or charity work, over one-and-a-half times as likely to attend sporting events, and over one-and-a-half times as likely to participate in sports activities. In fact, people who read larger numbers of books tend to have the highest levels

of participation in other activities, especially arts activities” (NEA, 2004, p.5). Other detailed demographic characteristics of American adult readers over time appear in the table below.

Demographic Characteristics of U.S. Adults who engaged in leisure reading		
	2002 (%)	2008 (%)
Total Adult Population	46.7	50.2
Gender		
Female	56.1	58.0
Male	37.6	41.9
Ethnicity		
Hispanic	26.5	31.9
African American	37.1	42.6
White	51.4	55.7
Age		
18-24	42.8	51.7
25-34	47.7	50.1
35-44	46.6	50.8
45-54	51.6	50.3
55-64	48.9	53.1
65-74	45.3	49.1
75+	36.7	42.3
Highest Level of Education		
Grade school	14.0	18.5
High school graduate	37.7	39.1
College Graduate	66.7	68.1
Yearly income		
Below \$9,999	32.1	n/a
\$10,000-19,999	37.5	n/a
\$20,000-29,999	37.5	n/a
\$30,000-39,999	44.1	n/a
\$40,000-49,999	47.9	n/a
\$50,000-74,999	52.3	n/a
\$75,000+	60.8	n/a
(NEA, 2004; NEA, 2009)		

Literary Arts Programs

With only approximately half of the American population reading for leisure, literary arts programs provide an important service. In addition to the wide variety of reading programs offered at public schools and libraries, there are non-profit and for-profit agencies throughout the United States geared towards encouraging reading, writing, and promoting the literary arts. The majority of the programs work with amateur adult writers, but some provide reading and writing programs designed for all levels of expertise, including youth. Several of the more extensive American programs are described below.

The Loft Literary Center

One of the most comprehensive non-profit literary arts programs in the country is housed at the Loft Literary Center, based in Minneapolis. Begun in 1975, the Loft offers classes, workshops, and intensive weekend seminars for all levels of writers as well as a two year apprenticeship master track for advanced writers. The Loft also offers visits with authors, mentoring programs, grants, a bi-monthly publication, a resource library, a book club room, and writers' studios (The Loft Literary Center, 2009).

Another focus at the Loft is the youth-oriented programs for children from birth to 18 years old. In addition to classes and workshops, other programs include New Stories, Old Stories (a school based writing program), Basic Needs (a writing program for teenage parents), and Ink Tank (a program designed to help high school students use the literary arts to express themselves) (The Loft Literary Center, 2009b).

Intermedia Arts

Another Minneapolis based literary arts center is Intermedia Arts. The mission of this organization is the accessibility of literary arts to culturally and socio-economically diverse groups. Intermedia offers several youth mentorship programs along with classes and workshops focused on literary arts (SASE Wings, Young Writers, G.A.M.E., and Project Girl). The Wings creative writing program for children from 9-19 years old includes summer

courses along with a mentoring program for young writers (Intermedia Arts, 2009).

Woodland Pattern Book Center

A unique offering at this non-profit organization based in Wisconsin is its urban youth literary arts program. "Woodland Pattern's Urban Youth Literary Arts Program is comprised of three main parts: after-school classes; in-class workshops; and summer poetry camps. This is in addition to family workshops, classes for teachers, and special events. The program focuses on inner-city low-income youth ages 9-18 especially children from Woodland Pattern's Riverwest neighborhood" (Woodland Pattern Book Center, 2009).

Texas Literary Arts Organizations

There are a wide variety of literary programs and events located throughout Texas. One non-profit literary arts group located in the North Texas area is called Wordspace. It presents workshops featuring writers and songwriters and organizes a summer literary festival in Dallas (Wordspace, 2009). The Writer's League of Texas (n.d.) is another non-profit, state-wide organization that primarily focuses on providing information, support, and sharing for writers, but also offers classes and workshops. An Austin based group, Badgerdog, teaches and publishes writing. It also has several educational programs for students in 3rd-12th grades, including a summer camp (Badgerdog, 2009). In addition to these year-round literary programs, Texas is home to several literary festivals, such as the summertime Texas Storytelling Festival and the Texas Book Festival, held annually each fall. In the San Antonio area, the San Antonio Writer's Guild and Gemini Ink are the two most prominent organizations focused on literary arts.

San Antonio Writer's Guild

This organization helps writers of all genres and abilities share information about writing. It holds monthly meetings, which includes writing workshops, weekly critique meetings, and occasional write-ins. It also offers an annual writing contest and provides information about other contests (San Antonio Writer's Guild, 2008).

Gemini Ink

Founded in 1992, Gemini Ink offers a variety of programs to encourage literacy in the San Antonio area. Its programs include Writers in Communities (professional writers working with youth in various communities in the San Antonio area), University without Walls (three semester programs for writers at all levels), a mentoring program, an autograph series (featuring internationally known writers), and a dramatic readers' theater (Gemini Ink, n.d.).

National Literary Arts Initiatives

Several national initiatives have been designed to support and expand the literary arts throughout the United States.

Reading Rockets

Funded by the Department of Education, and sponsored by the public television/radio station WETA, the Reading Rockets program is a national multimedia project designed to improve child literacy. This program includes television shows on PBS, multiple websites (ReadingRockets.org and ColorínColorado.org—a website geared toward improving literacy for Spanish-speakers), and professional development opportunities offered at no cost (Reading Rockets, 2008; Colorín Colorado, 2008).

International Literary Exchange

In 2006, the National Endowment for the Arts along with the Department of State implemented an initiative to increase the amount of translated and published literature between the United States and other countries. Prior to this initiative, more than 200 foreign works in 46 languages had been brought to the United States from 60 countries by the National Endowment for the Arts Literature Fellowships for Translation. The most recent partnership was with Mexico, resulting in two publications during 2006. Future projects expected to develop from the initiative include translating works of authors from Mexico, Spain, Greece, Pakistan, and Russia. All of the projects will translate works of living authors (National Endowment for the Arts, 2006).

Writers in the School (WITS)

A national alliance of non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations, WITS connects writers with students to enhance writing skills and provides support to teachers as they teach writing. The city of Houston maintains a WITS program and Badgerdog in Austin is also part of the alliance. The Houston WITS program focuses on working with at-risk students in the public schools, but also holds writing workshops at community venues such as hospitals, museums, juvenile detention centers, and community centers (Writers in the Schools, n.d.).

Literary Arts Sources of Funding

There are three main sources of arts funding for non-profit agencies in the United States: direct public arts appropriations (by the National Endowment for the Arts and its state and local agencies), public subsidies for the arts (federal, state, and local agencies and legislation), and private donations by individuals, companies, and foundations. Together, these sources provide approximately 56% of funding for arts organizations (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007a).

Public support for the arts represented 13% of total arts funding during 2004 (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007a). Nine percent of that funding came from Federal sources, such as the National Endowment for the Arts (which gave less than 1% in direct public arts appropriations) and the Department of Education's *Reading is Fundamental-Inexpensive Book Distribution Program*. This program provides 75%-100% of the cost for books for children ranging from infancy to high school and promotes activities that motivate children to read. Funds are given to nonprofit and public agencies, priority being given to projects geared towards low income, migrant, disabled, homeless, and at-risk children. In fiscal year 2008, \$24,605,499 was set aside from the Department of Education for this program (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). State and local funding represented 4% of total public support for the arts during 2004 (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007a). The Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA) is the primary

state agency that helps develop and fund the arts in the state of Texas. The TCA deals with arts agencies involved in six artistic disciplines (visual arts, theatre, dance, music, media and literature). TCA provides grants, promotes the arts, and raises funds to assist arts organizations throughout the state of Texas (Texas Commission on the Arts, 2009). In San Antonio, the Office of Cultural Affairs is the agency that supervises any City of San Antonio arts funding.

In 2004, the majority of arts funding, 43%, was given by private sources. This included 31% from individuals, 9% from foundations, and 3% from corporations (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007a). Examples of potential private funding opportunities for Texas literary arts agencies could include non-profit foundations such as the Meadows Foundation and large company programs, such as the HEB Community Investment Program.

References

- Badgerdog. (2009). *About Badgerdog*. Retrieved October 2, 2009, from <http://www.badgerdog.org/about-badgerdog/>
- Colorín Colorado. (2008). *About Colorín Colorado*. Retrieved October 2, 2009, from <http://www.colorincolorado.org/about>
- Gemini Ink. (n.d.). *Programs*. Retrieved October 2, 2009, from <http://geminiink.org/about#ourprograms>
- Intermedia Arts. (2009). *Programs*. Retrieved October 2, 2009, from <http://www.intermediaarts.org/programs>
- The Loft Literary Center. (2009). *About the Loft*. Retrieved October 2, 2009, from http://www.loft.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=category.display&category_id=242
- The Loft Literary Center. (2009b). *Loft programs for children and teens*. Retrieved October 2, 2009, from http://www.loft.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=category.display&category_id=277
- National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). (2004). *Reading at risk: A survey of literary reading in America: Research division report #46*. Retrieved October 2, 2009, from <http://www.nea.gov/research/ReadingAtRisk.pdf>
- National Endowment for the Arts. (2006). *National Endowment for the Arts announces international literary exchange*. Retrieved October 2, 2009, from <http://www.nea.gov/news/news06/InternationalLit.html>
- National Endowment for the Arts. (2007a). *How the United States Funds the Arts*. Retrieved October 2, 2009, from <http://www.arts.gov/pub/how.pdf>
- National Endowment for the Arts. (2007b). *To read or not to read: A question of national consequence*. Retrieved October 2, 2009, from http://www.nea.gov/research/ToRead_ExecSum.pdf
- National Endowment for the Arts. (2009). *Reading on the rise: A new chapter in American literacy*. Retrieved October 6, 2009, from <http://arts.endow.gov/research/ReadingonRise.pdf>
- Reading Rockets. (2008). *About Reading Rockets*. Retrieved October 2, 2009, from <http://www.readingrockets.org/about/>
- San Antonio Writer's Guild. (2008). *Welcome to the San Antonio Writer's Guild*. Retrieved October 2, 2009, from <http://www.sawritersguild.org/index.html>
- Texas Commission on the Arts. (2009). *About us*. Retrieved October 6, 2009, from http://www.arts.state.tx.us/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=46:mission-and-goals&catid=34:what%20we%20do&Itemid=34
- U.S. Department of Education. (2008). *Reading is Fundamental; Inexpensive book distribution program*. Retrieved October 2, 2009, from <http://www.ed.gov/programs/rif/index.html>
- Woodland Pattern Book Center. (2009). *Urban youth literary arts program*. Retrieved October 2, 2009, from http://www.woodlandpattern.org/workshops/urban_youth_literary_arts.shtml
- Wordspace. (2009). *Wordspace*. Retrieved January 2, 2009, from <http://www.wordspacetexas.com/programs.asp>
- Writers in the Schools. (n.d.). *Writers in the schools*. Retrieved October 2, 2009, from <http://www.witshouston.org/>
- Writer's League of Texas. (n.d.). *About us*. Retrieved October 2, 2009, from <http://www.writersleague.org/about/index.html>