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The American Library Association proclaims that a public library is “the only institution in American society whose purpose is to guard against the tyrannies of ignorance and conformity, and its existence indicates the extent to which a democratic society values knowledge, truth, justice, books, and culture” (KC Consensus, 2004, p.1). 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 (2009), 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 described below:

### *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, 2009)

### **Public Library Use**

In fiscal year 2007, 9,214 public library administrative units, 1,544 branches, and 683 bookmobiles were serving people in the United States. Texans utilized 562 of those public library administrative units, 302 branches, and 12 bookmobiles (Henderson et al., 2009). While Texas boasts many library buildings, household usage of public libraries in Texas was significantly lower than the national average (Glander & Dam, 2007). The table below provides data comparing public library use statistics in both Texas and the United States.

<b>Public Library Use Statistics (October 2002 data)</b>		
	Texas	United States
	%	%
Used Public Library	23.7	47.6
<b>Family Structure</b>		
Lived with Children under 18	55.3	65.6
2-parent household	59.4	69.0
1-parent household	48.7	60.4
Disabled	33.7	42.2
Retired	30.2	35.6
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White	42.4	48.5
Other Races	38.3	45.3
<b>Socio-Economic Status (SES)</b>		
Highest 20% SES	51.8	60.6
Below poverty level	32.5	38.0
<b>Education Level</b>		
Less than high school diploma	16.0	20.8
High School/GED	30.6	35.4
Bachelor's degree	54.0	59.3
<b>Distance from Library</b>		
1 to 2 miles	45	50
3 to 5 miles	39.6	47.4
10+ miles	25.7	33.8
<b>Purpose of Visit</b>		
Borrow material	19.5	26.5
Use computer	7.7	8.9
Attend meeting	1.1	2.1

(Glander & Dam, 2007)

### Technology and Public Libraries

Within a few decades, technological advances have expanded the public library's role within communities. Public libraries not only offer books, magazines and other written materials, but most now include computers, Internet access, and digital journals among their services. By 2009, 73.5% of Texas libraries were connected to the Internet (a decrease of 24.5% since 2006), and offered public Internet access, though only 33.7% of the stations were wireless (Bertot, McClure, Wright, Jensen, & Thomas, 2009). The same study found that the average Texas library offered 15 computer workstations that were available for a mean of 45 hours per week for patrons.

While a growing number of individuals invest in computer technology at their homes, the public library remains another popular place to access information for people from all types of

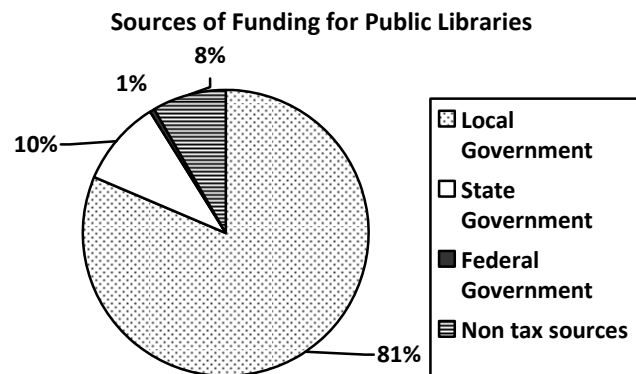
communities. Pastore and Henderson (2009) reported the following library statistics:

- 91% of urban libraries provide Internet access
- 70% of suburban libraries provide Internet access
- 52% of rural libraries provide Internet access

However, providing computer technology to the public is expensive, and libraries face the burden of keeping the equipment up to date. As of 2009, 29% of Texas libraries were interested in increasing their branches bandwidth, but could not currently afford, though 9% planned to increase their branch's bandwidth within the next year (Bertot, McClure, Jaeger, & Ryan, 2009).

### Funding and Support for Public Libraries

In 2004, United States taxpayers provided more than \$9 billion to their local public libraries. The majority of funding for public libraries in the United States, approximately 80%, came from money provided by local taxes. By 2005, national and state tax funds only accounted for approximately 10% of public libraries operating budgets (Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), 2008). The rest of a library's operating budget comes from non tax sources, such as fees, fines, donations, and grants. The chart below provides a recent breakdown of how public libraries in the United States received their funding.



(OCLC, 2008)

Cities throughout the United States now see libraries as an integral part of their revitalization efforts (KC Consensus, 2004). Policy makers and politicians are increasingly acknowledging the importance of libraries. In 2001, the 77<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature funded a statewide grant program for public libraries called Loan Star Libraries. During

fiscal year 2010, Loan Star Libraries allocated nearly \$7 million to develop and improve services in 538 Texas public libraries (Texas State Library and Archives Commission, n.d.)

The American public also appreciates the value of public libraries. In 2006, a survey of approximately 1,200 Americans revealed that 45% of the surveyed would give their library a grade of A, and 71% of those surveyed state that their local public library uses public money well. Public libraries came out ahead when the public assessed the performance of local institutions ranging from public schools, public parks, the police department, and cultural activities (Public Agenda, 2006).

### Public Libraries in Greater San Antonio

There are 13 public library systems in Bandera, Bexar, Comal, and Kendall counties (see table on page 4 of this research brief). The San Antonio Public Library is one of the largest libraries in the state of Texas, serving a population of more than 1,500,000 individuals (Texas State Library and Archives Commission, 2008). Despite the large service region, a report by the American Library Association cited by Gomez in 2006, entry-level librarians in San Antonio received less pay on average (\$28,752) than the national average (\$40,000). Moreover, the national average for library visits per capita in 2007 was 4.91 compared to 3.29 in Texas. Another example was the 2007 national circulation per capita rate of 7.42 compared to Texas' per capita rate of 4.84 (Henderson et al., 2009). Only three public libraries in the greater San Antonio region surpassed the national average for per capita library visits: Bandera, Boerne, and Leon Valley. A table provided after the reference list contains the latest available data (2007) for area libraries (Texas State Library and Archives Commission, 2008).

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## Texas Public Library Data for 2007

Public Library Name	County	Population Served	# of FTE Staff	Library visits per capita	Circulation	Total Circulation per capita	Op. Exp. Per capita	Friends Org. Yes/No	Hours Of operation	Website
Kronkosky Library of Bandera Co.	Bandera	8,591	2.50	6.05	39,623	4.61	\$12.23	Yes	M W Th F 10-6; Tu 10-8; Sa 9-1	<a href="http://www.banderalibrary.org">www.banderalibrary.org</a>
Lakehills Area Library	Bandera	6,681	1.50	2.63	18,071	2.70	\$13.30	Yes	M & Th 10-7; T & W 10-5; Sa 10-2	<a href="http://www.banderacounty.org/lakehills_library/lakehills_library.htm">http://www.banderacounty.org/lakehills_library/lakehills_library.htm</a>
Medina Community Library	Bandera	4,736	1.30	4.21	11,288	2.38	\$12.95	No*	M & Th 10-6; T W F 10-5 Sa 10-1	<a href="http://www.medina.lib.tx.us">www.medina.lib.tx.us</a>
Converse Area Public Library	Bexar	13,937	1.50	2.45	25,661	1.84	\$5.85	Yes	M-T-Th 9-6; W 10-7; F 11-5; S 10-4	<a href="http://www.conversetx.net/8_library.htm">http://www.conversetx.net/8_library.htm</a>
Leon Valley Public Library	Bexar	9,795	3.80	10.28	45,787	4.67	\$26.92	Yes	T-Th 10-8; W-F 10-6; S 10-2	<a href="http://www.leonvalley.lib.tx.us">www.leonvalley.lib.tx.us</a>
San Antonio Public Library	Bexar	1,511,581	430.50	2.70	5,935,818	3.93	\$16.36	Yes	Hours vary by branch	<a href="http://www.mysapl.org/">http://www.mysapl.org/</a>
Universal City Public Library	Bexar	17,773	2.63	2.32	32,912	1.85	\$8.46	Yes	M&W 12-8; T & Th 10-6; F & Sa 10-4	<a href="http://www.universalcitytexas.com/index.aspx?NID=396">http://www.universalcitytexas.com/index.aspx?NID=396</a>
Bulverde/Spring Branch Library	Comal	33,846	6.22	3.29	129,111	3.82	\$11.27	Yes	M-Th 10-8 F-S 10-6	<a href="http://www.bsb.lib.tx.us">www.bsb.lib.tx.us</a>
New Braunfels Public Library	Comal	49,969	22.28	4.72	426,614	8.54	\$28.48	Yes	M-Th 9-9; F 9-6; Sa 9-5; Su 1-5	<a href="http://www.nbpl.lib.tx.us">www.nbpl.lib.tx.us</a>
Tye Preston Memorial Library	Comal	21,009	5.35	3.66	97,289	4.63	\$11.08	Yes	M-Th 9-8; F-S 10-5	<a href="http://www.tpml.org/">http://www.tpml.org/</a>
Boerne Public Library	Kendall	18,426	9.85	7.48	165,591	8.99	\$31.90	Yes	M-T 9-8; W-TH 9-6; F 9-5; Sa 9-3	<a href="http://www.boerne.lib.tx.us">www.boerne.lib.tx.us</a>
Comfort Public Library	Kendall	9,562	1.66	2.07	23,944	2.50	\$9.07	Yes	T-Th-F 12-6; W 11-8; Sa 9-1	<a href="http://www.comfort-library.txed.net">www.comfort-library.txed.net</a>
Kendalia Public Library	Kendall	2,225	.5	0.97	6,806	3.06	\$8.56	No*	M 10-5; W 9-6; F 1-5	<a href="http://kendalialibrary.com/">http://kendalialibrary.com/</a>

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

(Data compiled from Texas State Library and Archives Commission, 2008)