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, 2017b).

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 2015 there were 9,068 public libraries with 17,107 branches and bookmobiles were serving people in the United States. Texas had 549 of those public libraries with 877 branches and 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], 2017b). The following table provides data comparing Texas and the United States.

U.S. PUBLIC LIBRARY STATISTICS 2015		
	TEXAS	UNITED STATES
Number of Public Libraries	549	9,068
Population of Legal Service Area (in millions)	24.8	316.5
Per Capita		
Library Visits	2.7	4.5
Total Circulation	4.2	7.3
Public Use of Internet PCs	0.6	1.0
Operating Revenue	$18.88	$39.94
Expenditures	$18.43	$37.38
(IMLS, 2017b)		

TECHNOLOGY AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Although a growing number of individuals invest in computer technology at their homes, approximately 30% of the population does not have internet access at home for a variety of reasons. The public library provides a valuable service in terms of public access to technology and information (Bertot, et al., 2015). 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 97.8% offer Wi-Fi access (as of 2015) (Information Policy & Access Center, n.d.).

Public libraries offer a wide variety of computer-related services: 89.9% of libraries offered formal or informal technology training; 62.3% provided access to jobs databases and other job opportunity resources; 73.1% provided assistance with completing online job applications; and 75.6% reported providing assistance in applying for or accessing e-government services (Bertot, et al., 2015).

Providing computer technology to the public is expensive. Cost factors in maintaining, sustaining and enhancing computer technology burdens 65.7% of public libraries. Inadequate connection speed is among the top issues that inhibit libraries, 31.2% reported a desire to increase broadband connectivity. This limits libraries' ability to help patrons with digital literacy skill building. While the average number of computer workstations available for patrons in Texas libraries was 26.5, 34.7% of

library patrons experienced wait times for computer availability (Bertot, et al., 2015).

Ebooks are becoming more popular every year. In 2015, the average circulation for ebooks has gone up 12% compared to 2014. There has been an 80% increase in the demand for adult ebooks with 61% preferring print or other formats. While 94% of libraries currently offer ebook lending services (Bertot, et al., 2015), they continue to face challenges in regards to limited ebooks availability. In May 2015 the American Library Association's Digital Content Working Group "announced that all the largest publishers now offer their full ebook catalogs to libraries" (ALA, 2017a) after three years of negotiations.

Having e-books in the library collection has a significant effect on use of the library. Rates for both visitation and circulation were significantly higher for libraries with e-books in 2014:

➢ Visitation per capita average 4.7 with e-books vs 3.4 without e-books
 (IMLS, 2017a)

SUPPORT AND FUNDING FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The American public appreciates the value of public libraries. A recent national survey conducted in 2016 shows that 69% of respondents feel their libraries contribute "a lot" to providing a safe place and 77% said that public libraries provide them with the resources they need (Horrigan, 2016). This same trend can be found in Texas and San Antonio. According to the Texas Voter Survey on Libraries, 95% of respondents believed that public libraries improve the quality of life in their community and 90% agreed that during economic hard times public libraries provide important resources to families and job seekers. 97% of Texas voters indicated that they believed public libraries create educational opportunities for all citizens (Texas Library Association, 2011).

In San Antonio, 91% of residents indicated they were satisfied with the services the San Antonio Public Library System provides. In fact, San Antonio library service satisfaction ratings were 10% higher than the national average and 11%

higher than the average rating for the 4 large Texas cities. Satisfaction ratings improved or stayed the same from the 2012 survey and indicated that residents were most satisfied with:

➢ Informational resources such as book, e-books, etc. (97%)
➢ Access to the internet (96%)
➢ Library programs (96%)
➢ Library services in neighborhood (96%)
➢ Cleanliness/appearance of facilities (98%)

(ETC Institute, 2014)

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 these four sources: local government, state government, federal government, and other sources (e.g. monetary gifts and donations)" (IMLS, 2017a, p.9). Out of the $12.4 billion total operating revenue in 2015: 85.5% came from local government; 7.1% from state government; 0.4% from federal sources; and 7% from other sources, such as monetary gifts and donations, interests, library fines, fees, and grants (IMLS, 2017b).

With cuts to education, outdoor recreation, history, the arts and libraries, Texas closed its projected deficit in the state budget for 2012-2013. The reductions were largely concentrated in the divisions that serve libraries within the state (The Library Development Division and Library Resource Sharing Division). Overall, the Texas budget cut 88% of funding for library programs (North Texas Library Partners, n.d.). Of the $508.8 million total revenue for Texas libraries in 2015, only $92,000 came from the state and $409,000 came from federal sources. Local government and other local sources fund the majority of Texas libraries and their programs (IMLS, 2017b).

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], 2017). With two primary and one satellite locations, BiblioTech provides "all Bexar County residents the opportunity to access technology

and its applications for the purposes of enhancing education and literacy, promoting reading as recreation and equipping residents of our community with necessary tools to thrive as citizens of the 21st century" (BiblioTech, n.d.). It has 30,000 ebook titles available for checkout as well as 7,000 digital comics and graphic novels, and a large collection of technology tutorials, magazines, language learning, movies, music, and e-audiobooks.

The San Antonio Public Library is the third largest library in the state of Texas, serving a population of more than 1.7 million individuals (TSLAC, 2017). Six public libraries in the greater San Antonio region surpassed the national average for per capita library visits: Bandera, Bulverde/Spring-Branch, Lakehills, Leon Valley, Medina, and Patrick Heath. A table provided after the reference list contains the latest available data for area libraries from the Texas Library and Archives Commission (2017).

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, 2017c). "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).

Libraries also contribute to the economic development and sustainability of their towns (Waizer and Gruidl, n.d.). Providing community members with access to a large collection of information adds to individual and public quality of life, which is particularly important in the scouting of new locations for business opportunities. Local libraries may offer valuable technology that members of the community may not otherwise have access to, such as computers and internet access. "Public access computer usage per capita was significantly higher in rural libraries when compared to

libraries in other locales" (IMLS, 2017a, p.44). "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" (IFLA, 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 2014 was $31.62. In comparison, revenue per capita for city libraries was $42.23. This limits the ability of rural libraries to maintain qualified staff. Where 67.9% of all libraries have an ALA-MLS accredited librarian, only 29.4% of public libraries in rural areas have an ALA-MLS accredited librarian on staff compared to over 86% of city libraries (IMLS, 2017a). 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.).

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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	1,718	2.35	26.9	30,799	17.9	$69.37	Yes*	M-F 10-6; Sa 9-1	www.banderalibrary.org
Lakehills Area Library	Bandera	9,983	2.20	3.47	36,729	3.68	$10.55	Yes*	M & Th 10-7; T,W & F 10-5; Sa 10-2	http://aals.tsl.state.tx.us/lakehills
Medina Community Library	Bandera	9,332	1.63	3.38	14,878	1.59	$13.09	Yes*	M & Th 10-6; T, W & F 10-5; Sa 10-1	http://www.medinacommunitylibrary.us/
BiblioTech	Bexar	81,233	31.48	1.06	176,431	2.17	$21.59	No	M-F 12-8; Sat/Sun 10-6	http://bexarbibliotech.org/
Converse Area Public Library	Bexar	21,987	3.28	2.27	25,437	1.16	$9.00	Yes	M,T, W & Th 9-6; F 9-5; Sa 10-2	http://www.conversetx.net/107/Library
Leon Valley Public Library	Bexar	11,174	4.18	3.80	30,121	2.70	$31.03	Yes	T-Th 10-8; W-F 10-6; Sa 10-2	www.leonvalley.lib.tx.us
San Antonio Public Library	Bexar	1,754,711	445.00	3.03	7,184,279	4.09	$6.47	Yes	Hours vary by branch	http://www.mysapl.org/
Universal City Public Library	Bexar	19,986	2.74	0.39	11,363	0.57	$10.34	Yes	T&W 11-8; Th&F 10-6; Sa 10-4	www.universalcitytexas.com/396/Library
Bulverde/ Spring Branch Library	Comal	28,832	12.75	4.97	292,107	10.13	$45.91	Yes	M-TH 9-8; F 10-6; Sat 10-5; Sun 1-5	http://bsblibrary.org/
City of Garden Ridge Library	Comal	3,850	0.68	2.26	10,739	2.79	$9.16	Yes	M-Th10-6; F 10-5; Sa 10-1	http://www.ci.garden-ridge.tx.us/index.aspx?NID=103
New Braunfels Public Library	Comal	70,543	25.03	3.76	741,707	10.51	$28.20	Yes	M-Th 9-9; F 9-6; Sa 9-5; Su 1-5	http://www.nbtexas.org/114/Library
Tye Preston Memorial Library	Comal	25,466	7.30	2.82	112,412	4.41	$25.37	Yes	M-Th 9-8:30; F&S 10-5	http://www.tpml.org/
Patrick Heath Public Library	Kendall	23,465	13.88	7.23	239,356	10.20	$46.96	Yes	M-TH 9-7 F 9-6; Sa 10-4	http://www.ci.boerne.tx.us/197/Library
Comfort Public Library	Kendall	13,360	2.51	1.36	16,226	1.21	$10.45	Yes*	T,Th,F 12-6; W 11-8; Sa 9-1	www.comfort-library.txed.net
Kendalia Public Library	Kendall	3,559	0.50	0.66	8,591	2.41	$9.58	Yes*	M 10-5; W 9-6; F 1-5	http://kendalialibrary.com/

*Library itself is set up as a nonprofit organization.

(Data compiled from Texas State Library and Archives Commission, 2017)

Texas Public Library Data for 2016