

Kronkosky Charitable Foundation

Roundtable Discussions

Topic: Library Discussion
Date: Thursday, March 23, 1998
Prepared by: Michael Bacon

Participants

Invited Representatives

Kaye Lenox	Executive Director	San Antonio Public Library Foundation
Nancy Gandara	Assistant Director	San Antonio Public Library

Foundation Staff

Palmer Moe	Executive Director
Michael Bacon	Grants Manager

Overview

- The Public Library Foundation is a fifteen year old nonprofit that was started by Henry Cisneros. Its primary purpose is to raise money for books and materials. When San Antonio is compared with other cities of populations of 1,000,00 people, it comes out at the very bottom of the list in terms of money spent on books. Yet this city is high on the list in terms of book usage by citizens.
- There are 18 branch libraries, the 1 central library, the Hertzberger Museum and 3 bookmobiles. Each year the library spends \$1,500,000 on materials (included in this figure are \$130,000 for subscriptions and \$100,00 for database subscriptions). Total spending for the library system is \$14.5 million a year. Bexar County pays \$1.7 million each year as part of its contract with the library.
- Since 1989, a bond issue has provided \$12.7 million to renovate the branch libraries.
- Literacy is under the Community Initiatives department of the city. Libraries do, however, target youth literacy and provide a video to young parents.

- Residents in San Antonio borrowed more than 3,000,000 items last year. That works out to 8,000 items borrowed a day.
- Zip code data on borrowing is available to the library, but they do not use it in any manner.
- Eleven Board members who are appointed by the Mayor and City Council serve as the library's governing body.
- Strengths of the San Antonio Public Library system:
 1. Momentum and progress from the new Central library continues to affect the public and the staff
 2. The realization that technology will not replace books. The right degree of technology is what is needed.
 3. A real focus on children but not an attempt to take the place of school libraries.
 4. A significant amount of traffic on the web page.
- The main weakness of the public library systems, according to Nancy, is how to get the library's message out to the public. Of San Antonio's 1.3 million residents, there are 450,000 registered borrowers. The staff believes that more items available for use would attract more borrowers.
- The year 2003 is the 100th anniversary of the San Antonio Public Library System. The Friends of the Library is a grassroots organization geared to particular libraries.

Funding

- The Texas State Library provides funding when it borrows books. The Gates Foundation provides grants to fund technology. Recently the SA Public Library System won a grant to install 32 computers in four libraries (eight each). Currently, most libraries only have one computer with web access for every 100,000 people.
- A grant from the city provides for the book mobile.

Brazan Library

- The district where Brazan Library is, District 5, has an 84% illiteracy rate, the highest in the city. With a population breakdown of 94% Hispanic, 5% Anglo and 1% African American, the district has a 55% poverty rate.

- The library is a focal point in that community. A very large senior population exists that makes full use of the library. Many foreign aliens use the library as they seek citizenship.
- Last year 123,500 visits to the library occurred. With almost 400 people daily and 10,000 monthly. A full 55% of the circulation occurs in children's books. Adults tend to check out how-to books, small business books, ESL materials and Spanish materials.
- The real issues for this library are the replacement of books and the need for Internet access. There are two professional librarians and five full-time staff, one part-time staff member.
- Costs for a branch library – to build a branch library of 12,000 square feet, it takes approximately \$2,000,000 to build and outfit and another \$400,000 to operate it each year.

Book Mobiles

- Three bookmobiles make 230 stops yearly. They focus on the outlying areas of the county. She noted that some areas on the south side have experience real growth.
- Bookmobiles provide a regular service to those people who do not live close to a public library. A book mobile visit becomes a social event for many residents. Bookmobiles do not visit areas as often as those residents would like.