

Beyond the Stacks

Measuring the Economic
and Community Value
of Texas Public Libraries



SUBMITTED TO
TEXAS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

AUGUST 2026

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Acknowledgements

The report's lead authors, Dr. James Jarrett and Dr. Bruce Kellison, would like to thank our intrepid research analyst Jaxson Shealy for dogged and meticulous research assistance. We are grateful to Lara O'Toole, whose professionalism and keen editorial eye improved the report's every page. Brian Lewandowski, Executive Director of the Business Research Division at the University of Colorado, Boulder, provided the IMPLAN analysis with his usual alacrity, wisdom, and good humor. Valicia Greenwood, Library Data Coordinator with the Texas State Library and Archive Commission (TSLAC), responded quickly to numerous data queries. Jeremy Selvidge, Manager of Statewide Resource Sharing at TSLAC's Library Development and Networking Division, skillfully helped us navigate TSLAC's electronic databases. We are grateful to Jonathan Alba, who brought his substantial communications expertise to the work of how best to share economic and community benefits with local leaders. Finally, the leadership team at the Texas Library Association graciously advised and assisted us at every stage. Executive Director Shirley Robinson; Director of Advocacy and Communications Wendy Woodland; and Project Manager Tiffany Lee made introductions to key stakeholders, strategized with us at key stages of the research project, and made themselves available to answer our questions no matter how busy they were. We are grateful for these active collaborations to bring this report from concept to finished product; nevertheless, the report's content is the sole responsibility of the research team at JBK Economics Group.

About JBK Economics Group

JBK Economics Group is an independent economic consultancy providing impact studies, cost-benefit analyses, market assessments, and policy briefs to improve economic performance. Focused on nonprofits, small municipalities, state agencies, foundations, trade associations, and startups, the firm conducts data-based economic research to support grant writing, strategy, and policymaking. JBK Economics is led by Dr. Bruce Kellison, who directed the Bureau of Business Research at the IC² Institute (at The University of Texas at Austin) and led dozens of economic impact studies over his 30-year academic career.

About the Texas Library Association

The Texas Library Association, the nation's largest state library membership organization, embraces, unites, and amplifies voices of the library community through advocacy and education to ensure library excellence for all Texans. TLA's membership includes almost 5,000 librarians from academic, public, K-12 school, and special libraries. Throughout its 123-year history, TLA has served as an integral partner, innovative leader, and passionate advocate for Texas libraries and librarians. Visit www.txla.org for more information.

Introduction

The Texas Library Association (TLA) commissioned JBK Economics Group to conduct this Return on Investment (ROI) study to examine the economic impact of public library funding, public library services, and the broader contributions public libraries make to communities across Texas. The JBK Economics Group conducted research activities and analyses in the spring and early summer of 2026.

Public libraries are valuable community resources and often serve as hubs for public services that today go well beyond promoting literacy and circulating books. One of the study's main goals is to describe the economic value of the wide range of services offered by Texas public libraries. This analysis is timely as the COVID-19 pandemic forced libraries and their patrons to shift to new service delivery models, prompting the adoption of new digital and virtual technologies and forcing reductions in other traditional library services; many of these shifts have remained in place. Some of the report's analysis is quantitative: direct spending by libraries produces significant indirect and induced economic activity throughout the Texas economy, and the estimates of the value of library services presented here significantly increase the overall economic impact we describe. Other economic effects are more descriptive and qualitative in nature. For example, the community benefits of English Language Learner programs, lawn equipment borrowing initiatives, and meeting space for the vision impaired and those applying for community benefits are harder to quantify but absolutely demonstrate the community value of Texas public libraries today.

Throughout the report, we try to be conservative in our economic impact estimates. We analyze library expenditure and services data from the Texas State Library and Archive Commission for FY2024 because that is the most recent full year available. We use a widely adopted economic impact software (IMPLAN) to analyze the direct, indirect, and induced economic effects of spending by libraries, and understand that the economic estimates of library services are sometimes more art than science. The reader will notice that we describe in detail how we calculate the value of services to arrive at our conclusions, often discounting the value to account for the assumptions we make, or for missing or outdated data that may limit an analysis.

Our research as presented in the full report contains the following analyses and sections:

- Section 1: Return on Investment Calculation
- Section 2: IMPLAN - Economic, Employment, and Fiscal Impacts of Texas Public Libraries
- Section 3: Estimated Economic Value of Library Services
- Section 4: Texas Public Library Director Survey Findings
- Section 5: Library Profiles
- Section 6: Communicating the Value of Public Libraries -Storytelling, Community Engagement, and ROI

Texas Public Libraries **BY THE NUMBERS**

\$3.8
BILLION
in TOTAL
ECONOMIC
BENEFITS from
Texas Public Libraries ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

11,200 JOBS ★

EVERY DOLLAR INVESTED in Texas Libraries
GENERATES **\$4.74** in **COMMUNITY VALUE**



\$2.5 Billion in TOTAL
ECONOMIC
VALUE
OF LIBRARY
SERVICES



Glossary of Select Definitions

- **Economic Benefits:** The dollars generated and distributed throughout the economy due to the existence of an establishment. The sources of impacts that contribute to economic benefits include capital expenditures, operating expenditures, off-site employee effects, secondary effects, and visitor impacts.
- **Employment:** Also referred to as headcount. This includes full-time, part-time, and seasonal employment.
- **Gross Domestic Product (GDP):** A measure of economic activity, GDP is the total value added by resident producers of final goods and services.
- **Gross Output (Output):** The total value of production is gross output. Unlike GDP, gross output includes intermediate goods and services.
- **Labor Income:** This includes employee compensation (wages, salaries, and benefits) and proprietor income.
- **Value Added:** The contribution of an industry or region to total GDP, value added equals gross output, net of intermediate input costs.
- **Direct Impact:** Initial economic activity (e.g., sales, expenditures, employment, production, etc.) by a company or industry.
- **Indirect Impact:** The upstream (backward) economic activity impacted by purchases of goods and services from other companies.
- **Induced Impact:** Economic activity derived from workers spending their earnings on goods and services in the economy.

Summary of Key Findings

Return on Investment and Other Quantifiable Economic Impacts

- Every \$1 invested in Texas public libraries generates \$4.74 in community value. This is slightly higher and compares favorably with two prior ROI estimates in 2011 (\$4.42)¹ and 2015 (\$4.60).²
- Public library expenditures directly and indirectly support 11,200 jobs in Texas.
- \$808.6 million spent by public libraries in FY2024, including \$717.0 million in operating expenditures and \$91.6 million in capital expenditures.
- \$1.35 billion in statewide economic activity produced by public library spending.
- \$2.478 billion in total economic value of library services statewide.
- \$3.829 billion in the total economic benefits from Texas' public libraries in FY2024.
- \$164 million in total fiscal (tax) impacts in FY2024 at the federal, state, and local level from the economic activity generated by library spending.

Estimates of the Economic Value of Library Services

The research team developed particular methodologies to examine the economic value of many of the traditional services provided by Texas public libraries. The findings are presented in Table 1 next.

Table 1. Statewide Values of Public Library Services, FY2024

Service	Value
Programs	\$58,165,069
Circulation of Physical Materials	\$1,011,796,295
In-Library Use of Materials	\$189,663,338
E-Materials	\$515,350,463
Interlibrary Loans	\$2,027,794
Reference Services	\$23,417,463
Volunteers	\$16,610,679
Computer Terminals	\$163,327,160
Wireless Internet Access	\$204,161,132
Library Website Usage	\$172,207,150
Electronic Databases	\$122,151,648
Total All Services	\$2,478,878,191

¹ Jarrett, J., & Kuipers, R. (2012). *Texas public libraries: Economic benefits and return on investment*. Bureau of Business Research, The University of Texas at Austin. <http://hdl.handle.net/2152/19093>

² Jarrett, J. (2017). *Texas public libraries: Return on investment*. Bureau of Business Research, The University of Texas at Austin. <http://hdl.handle.net/2152/45600>

When the value of services is combined with the economic impact of library capital and operational expenditures, we estimate that the total impact on the Texas economy to have been \$3.8 billion in 2024. By rough comparison, public libraries had about the same economic footprint as the Texas motion picture and sound recording industry (\$2.9 billion in Gross Domestic Product in 2024) or the Texas paper manufacturing industry (\$4.0 billion in Gross Domestic Product in 2024).³ In addition, direct employment by public libraries—at about 8,000 employees with an average annual salary of \$44,595 (excluding benefits) in FY2024—is comparable to the number of people employed as mental health and substance abuse social workers (8,220; average annual salary excluding benefits \$53,450) and paramedics (8,410; average annual salary excluding benefits \$57,590) in Texas.⁴

Survey of Public Library Directors

In the spring of 2026, the research team surveyed directors of 513 Texas public libraries to gather information on services that support local businesses, community-oriented programs and initiatives, and unique library partnerships and activities.⁵

Survey Findings Highlights

Overall:

- 298 responses received for a survey participation rate of 58%.
- Survey responses were representative of the entire universe of public libraries in Texas, based on population sizes served by the libraries.
- Over three-quarters of the respondents lead libraries that serve populations of fewer than 50,000 residents.

Business-Oriented Services:

- 82% of the respondents' libraries provide job application assistance.
- 65% provide business periodicals.
- 60% provide publicly available economic and/or demographic data.

Community-Oriented Services and Resources:

- 93% of respondents' libraries provide voter registration and/or serve as voting locations.
- 84% provide partnerships with local social services agencies
- 68% facilitate applications for government benefits
- 38% provide onsite social services
- 30% provide telehealth rooms and/or resources

³ Bureau of Economic Analysis. (2024). *SAGDP2 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by state, 2024*, retrieved July 17, 2026. While not a straight “apples to apples” comparison because the Bureau’s GDP estimates lack the economic multipliers we have used to analyze the economic impact made by library operations, these industry comparisons are a conservative and useful yardstick.

⁴ Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2025, May). *Occupational employment and wage statistics (OEWS)*, retrieved July 17, 2026.

⁵ There are 517 public libraries in Texas, but director email addresses were available only for 513 of the 517 at time of survey.

In addition, a very high percentage of responding librarians report that their libraries offer what might be termed “traditional” library community services, such as special events, recreation and leisure space, and hosting regular meetings of local nonprofit groups. More than half of survey respondents said that their libraries now offer “new” items to check out such as tools, art supplies, and audio and production equipment. Nearly half (42%) offer various adaptive technologies.

Library Profiles on Innovative Programs

One of our open-ended questions in the survey asked library directors to provide information about unique community-oriented activities being offered at their libraries, and to provide us with contact information so that our research team could arrange short Zoom interviews with the program managers. Of the 298 overall survey responses, 48 respondents described innovative programs or services at their libraries and offered to meet with the research team. Our team created a set of criteria that included program uniqueness, library size, and geographic location across the state in an effort to present a set of programs illustrating the diversity of services offered by Texas libraries.

From the 48 responses we received, the research team developed 9 short program profiles that illustrate the value and community benefits of special and innovative library programs. Our goal is to use these profiles of libraries from around the state to highlight the variety of ways that public libraries contribute to the economic vitality of their communities. The profiles themselves are presented in Section 5 later in this report. Table 2 includes the names, locations, and program descriptions from these profiles.

Among the significant through-lines common to most of the profiles is the importance of community collaborations that exist to generate new ideas and support programs and services among a disparate group of libraries.

Table 2. Overview of Library Profiles on Innovative Programs

Library Name	City	Program Focus
Speer Memorial Library	Mission	Lawn and Garden Equipment Loan
Harrie P. Woodson Memorial Library	Caldwell	Adult Basic Education Classes
Comanche Public Library	Comanche	Experimenting With New Ideas
Harris County Public Library	Houston	Supporting the Education and Economic Advancement of Unique and Underserved Populations
Plano Public Library	Plano	Workforce Development for People With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD)
Hondo Public Library	Hondo	Digital and Financial Literacy
Hulsey Public Library	Terrell	GED and ESL Classes
Lewisville Public Library	Lewisville	Expanding Access to State and Federal Benefit Programs
Gatesville Public Library	Gatesville	Low-Vision Services

Communicating Library Value: Storytelling, Engagement, and ROI

To conclude the report, we summarize best practices for communicating the value of public libraries through community and stakeholder engagement highlighting storytelling, ROI, and the library's value proposition to its community. Library leadership will find useful communications strategies to pursue in conveying the economic value of libraries to city councils, county commissioners, and the public.

These best practices draw on research and established practice, connecting both to the library profiles documented in Section 5 of this report. Key points of these communications best practices include:

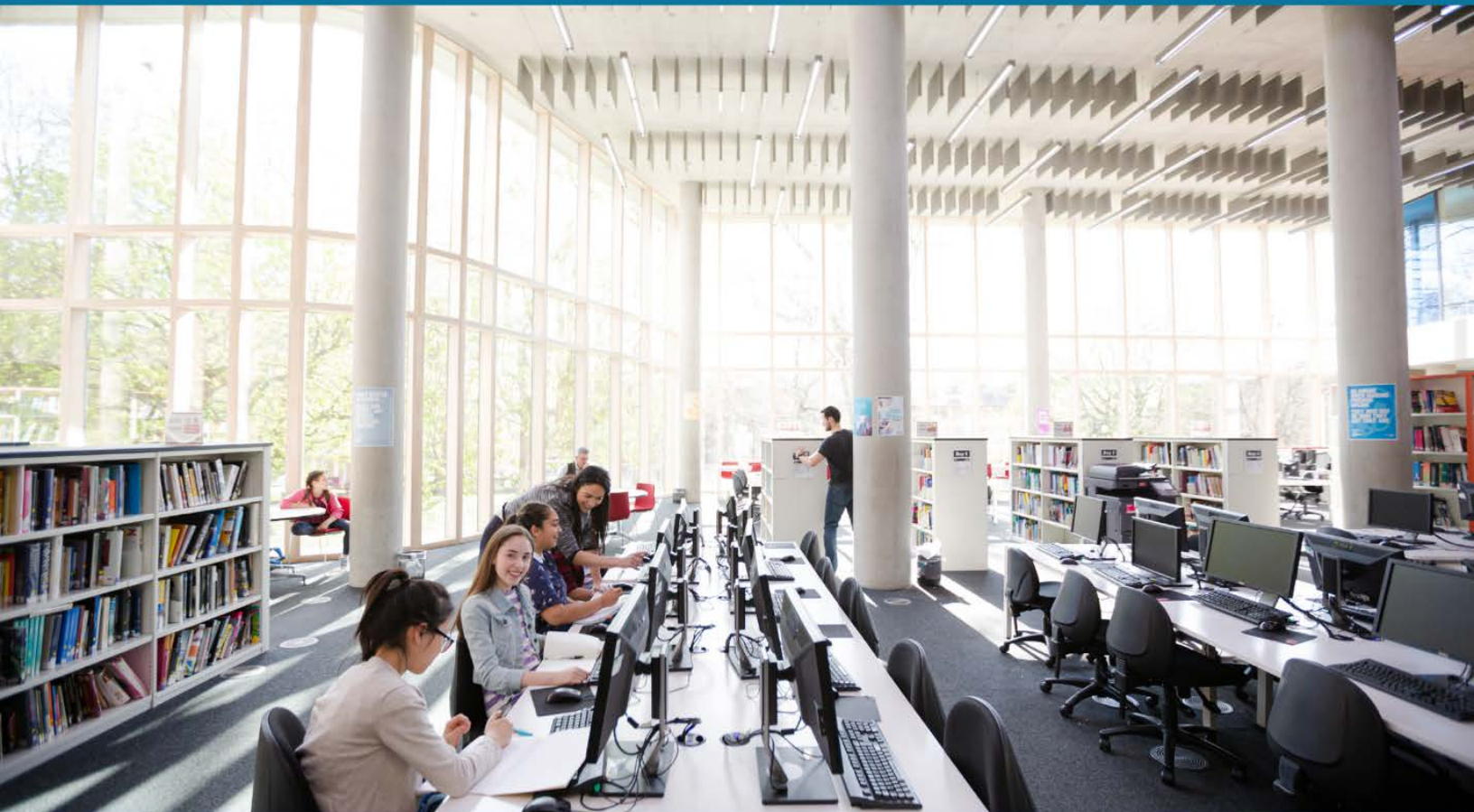
- Pair data with narrative or story.
- Communicate benefits rather than program or library features.
- Develop success stories that already exist and maintain a “story database” to draw upon in future outreach and communication campaigns.

The four channels for community engagement are: digital, media partnerships, events, and direct relationship-building with community members, target audiences, and key stakeholders.

Next, we present further details on each analysis and set of findings from this research, beginning with the overall return on investment Texas public libraries offer to their communities and the state.

SECTION 1

Return on Investment Calculation



Summary of Quantifiable Economic Impacts

Public libraries in the State of Texas generate significant economic impacts. In FY2024, more than 11,200 jobs in Texas were dependent on public library expenditures. When analyzed as business and organizational entities, public libraries produced \$1.35 billion in local economic activity. In addition, the total economic value of services provided by Texas public libraries is conservatively estimated at \$2.478 billion. We present estimates of the values of individual library services in Table 3 next.

Table 3. Statewide Values of Public Library Services, FY2024

Service	Value
Programs	\$58,165,069
Circulation of Physical Materials	\$1,011,796,295
In-Library Use of Materials	\$189,663,338
E-Materials	\$515,350,463
Interlibrary Loans	\$2,027,794
Reference Services	\$23,417,463
Volunteers	\$16,610,679
Computer Terminals	\$163,327,160
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Library Website Usage	\$172,207,150
Electronic Databases	\$122,151,648
Total All Services	\$2,478,878,191

There were approximately \$3.829 billion in total economic benefits from Texas' public libraries in FY2024, the sum of local economic activity and value of services analyses. Spending by public libraries in FY2024 totaled \$808.6 million, with \$717.0 million in operating expenditures and \$91.6 million in capital expenditures. Overall, with economic benefits of \$3.829 billion and expenditures of \$808.6 million, there was a ROI ratio of 4.74: **For every dollar invested in libraries, there was \$4.74 in statewide economic activity and community value.**

This compares favorably with two prior ROI estimates in 2011⁶ and 2015.⁷ The Texas public libraries' ROI from the current FY2024 analysis is slightly higher than the ROI developed prior: In FY2015, the ROI for Texas public libraries was estimated at 4.6, and in FY2011, at 4.42.

Next, we present the IMPLAN analysis, calculating the estimated economic value of library employment, direct spending, and capital expenditures.

⁶ Jarrett, J., & Kuipers, R. (2012). *Texas public libraries: Economic benefits and return on investment*. Bureau of Business Research, The University of Texas at Austin. <http://hdl.handle.net/2152/19093>

⁷ Jarrett, J. (2017). *Texas public libraries: Return on investment*. Bureau of Business Research, The University of Texas at Austin. <http://hdl.handle.net/2152/45600>

A Note: Calculating the ROI for an Individual Library: Methodology

By developing both an ROI estimate of Texas public libraries and an approach for estimating the value of library services, the research team has created a methodology for estimating the economic and employment impacts of individual libraries as well. Economic benefits are essentially the dollars generated and distributed throughout the economy because of the library's existence and operation. The sources of impacts that contribute to economic benefits include the value of services combined with capital expenditures, operating expenditures, off-site employee effects, and secondary effects.

Such impacts could be useful in communicating the effectiveness, size, and scope of libraries or library systems as business entities to local stakeholders and the public, especially if local library officials, city councils, and/or county commissioners are considering expansions (or reductions) in library facilities or staff.

Calculating individual library ROI estimates for each of the 517 Texas public libraries in the set was beyond the scope of the current project. If individual library directors would like to discuss contracting with the research team to calculate a customized ROI estimate for their library, they should contact JBK Economics Group for more information (Bruce@jbkeconomics.com).

SECTION 2

IMPLAN

Economic, Employment, and Fiscal Impacts of
Texas Public Libraries



Summary of Economic Contributions From Libraries

Libraries facilitate information exchange, providing individuals access to books, magazines, music, movies, computers, the internet, and community meeting space. Librarians provide a human resource to stakeholders, helping to guide the discovery of information. Beyond the function of the library is an economic driver—libraries as businesses employ thousands of workers in Texas, buy goods and services from local vendors, and invest in capital improvements. Overall, the impact of the \$808 million in direct library spending in 2024 delivered an economic impact estimated at \$1.35 billion, supporting 11,200 jobs, \$706 million in labor income, and \$950 million in state gross domestic product (GDP).

The Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) serves the state's 517 public libraries and annually collects and provides extensive data on library operations. In this section, we analyze a subset of TSLAC's 2024 dataset, including employment, salaries, benefits, other operating expenditures, and capital expenditures.

Libraries provide employment, resources, and services to communities of all sizes in Texas, ranging from communities with a service population of less than 100 people to a service population of over 2.3 million. Not surprisingly, library systems located in Texas' largest urban areas account for a large proportion of overall spending on libraries in the state. Fifteen of the 517 libraries that TSLAC serves represent roughly half of the total service population, staff, salaries, benefits, and operating expenditures of all libraries in the set. Separately, just three libraries accounted for 62% of capital expenditures in 2024. Similarly, the majority of economic impacts are also derived from just a few library systems: In 2024, 11 mid-market and large urban library systems accounted for just over half of public libraries' statewide economic impact.

While libraries have a public/nonprofit incorporation and tax-exempt status on direct activities, they do pay federal, state, and local taxes on certain spending. For instance, employee income is still subject to federal taxes, and consumption is still subject to state and local sales and use taxes. Such taxes totaled an estimated \$164 million in 2024, with \$150 million from operations and \$16 million from capital spending. Most of this (83%) was estimated to be federal, leaving 17% to state and local taxes.

Methodology for IMPLAN Analysis

The research team estimates libraries' economic contributions to the State of Texas using an expenditure approach by examining operating expenditures and capital expenditures, including employee salaries and benefits. We modeled activity by library and by county in an input-output model, IMPLAN, licensed for all 254 counties in Texas. To account for in-state trade, the Multi-Regional Input-Output (MRIO) estimated economic activity for libraries within counties, as well as economic activity between counties.

We modeled all operating activity in 2024 dollars as Industry Impact Analysis (Detailed), with inputs for wage and salary employment, employee compensation, labor income, other property income, intermediate inputs, and total output. For most libraries, we modeled activity in sector 419 - News syndicates, libraries, archives and all other information services. For some counties, sector 419 did not exist, so the research team selected an adjacent industry as a close proxy.

We modelled capital spending in sector 48 - Construction of new educational and vocational structures. The model estimated the supply chain of goods and services, commuting patterns, and leakage. Given the public/nonprofit status of the libraries, there were no assumed direct taxes on production and imports (TOPI).

Volunteers provide extensive value to libraries, but their hours were not included in the economic impact because this analysis is based on the flow of funds, not nonmarket values. (We include analysis of volunteers' economic value in Section 3 of the report. Libraries also provide value to patrons by defraying spending on renting or purchasing items in circulation (e.g., books, tools), by providing space for community meetings, and by providing other services.

TSLAC provided data published in the Texas Public Libraries Annual Report.⁸ The database included 164 data fields, and 18 of those provided relevant information for economic impact analysis. In addition to the library names and locations, employment and spending categories were aggregated into five major groups:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Library Information | 4. Operating Expenditures |
| • Q003 Library Name | • Q455 Print Material Expenditures |
| • Q004 County | • Q400 Electronic Material Expenditures |
| 2. Employment | • Q456 Other Materials Expenditures |
| • Q122 Staff Degreed Librarians (FTE) | • Q047 Total Collection Material Expenditures |
| • Q347 Staff Non-Degreed Librarians (FTE) | • Q457 All Other Operating Expenditures |
| • Q128 All Other Library Staff (FTE) | • Q053 Total Direct Operating Expenditures |
| • Q130 Total Library Staff (FTE) | • Q054 Indirect Costs |
| 3. Salaries and Benefits | • Q055 Total Library Operating Expenditures |
| • Q453 Salary and Wage Expenditures | 5. Capital Expenditures |
| • Q454 Employee Benefit Expenditures | • Q056 Capital Outlay |
| • Q388 Total Staff Expenditures | |

Operations and Capital Projects

TSLAC provided data on operating and capital expenditures (spending) for FY2024 totaling \$808.6 million. Most of the expenditures related to operations (\$717 million, 89%), of which \$499 million were labor costs. See Table 4.

⁸ Texas State Library and Archives Commission. (2025). *Texas public libraries detailed 2024 data (through September 30, 2024)* [Data set]. <https://www.tsl.texas.gov/ld/pubs/pls/index.html>

Operating expenditures from the 517 libraries were mapped to 233 counties, but capital outlays were only recorded from libraries in 86 counties. Five counties accounted for 54% of all operating expenditures, while the five counties with the largest capital outlays accounted for 78% of capital expenditures.

The remaining 11% of the \$808.6 million was reported as capital outlays, which total \$91.6 million for FY2024. While activity was recorded in 86 counties, just five counties accounted for 72% of the capital outlays.

Table 4. Public Library Spending, (TSLAC, FY2024)

Operations	Spending (millions, FY2024)
Operating Expenditures	\$717.0
Labor	\$499.0
Capital Expenditures	\$91.6
Total Budget	\$808.6

Employment, Salary, and Benefits

TSLAC also provided data on employment, salaries, and benefits. Employment in FY2024 totaled 7,396 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs. Employment data is reported by the U.S. Department of Labor as headcounts, not FTE, so we applied a conversion method to the TSLAC employment count (1 FTE = 1.081 headcount), bringing the total to 7,994 jobs. Library employment was reported in 233 of the 254 counties in Texas. The average salary and wages for employees was \$44,595 in FY2024 compared to the statewide average of \$75,394 for all industries.⁹ Table 5 next shows employment, salaries and benefits, and salary averages using both the FTE and headcount methods.

Table 5. Library Employment and Wages (TSLAC, FY2024)

Labor	FY2024
Employment (FTE)	7,396
Employment (Headcount)*	7,994
Salaries and Wages (\$Millions)	\$356.5
Benefits (\$Millions)	\$142.5
Salaries and Benefits (\$Millions)	\$499.0
Average Salary (FTE Basis)	\$48,204
Average Salary (Headcount Basis)	\$44,595
Average Salary and Benefits (FTE Basis)	\$67,475
Average Salary and Benefits (Headcount Basis)	\$62,424

*Note: Headcount is an estimate based on FTE.

⁹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2024, retrieved April 9, 2026.

Economic Impacts

The \$808 million in direct library operating and capital spending had an economic impact of \$1.35 billion on the Texas economy in FY2024. More than 70% of this, or \$950 million, was estimated to contribute to overall state GDP (value added, or total output minus intermediate inputs). As displayed in Table 6, collective salaries and wages for library employees totaled \$356 million, and benefits totaled \$143 million, bringing total compensation to \$499 million (salaries and benefits). The multiplier effects of spending and employment, as initial expenditures ripple through the economy, mean libraries supported 11,200 jobs and \$706 million in labor income in FY2024. The economic contributions come both from operating expenditures and capital expenditures. See Table 7 and Table 8.

Table 6. Public Library Economic Contribution, Texas (TSLAC, FY2024)

Total Impact	Employment (Thousands)	Labor Income (Millions)	Value Added (Millions)	Output (Millions)
Direct	8.5	\$538	\$629	\$808
Indirect	0.7	\$59	\$98	\$177
Induced	2.0	\$109	\$223	\$366
Total	11.2	\$706	\$950	\$1,350

Table 7. Public Library Economic Contributions From Operating Expenditures (TSLAC, FY2024)

Total Impact	Employment (Thousands)	Labor Income (Millions)	Value Added (Millions)	Output (Millions)
Direct	8.0	\$499	\$578	\$717
Indirect	0.6	\$49	\$79	\$140
Induced	1.8	\$100	\$205	\$336
Total	10.4	\$648	\$862	\$1,193

Table 8. Public Library Economic Contributions From Capital Outlays (TSLAC, FY2024)

Total Impact	Employment (Thousands)	Labor Income (Millions)	Value Added (Millions)	Output (Millions)
Direct	0.5	\$39	\$50	\$92
Indirect	0.1	\$11	\$19	\$36
Induced	0.2	\$9	\$18	\$30
Total	0.7	\$58	\$88	\$157

Fiscal Impacts

The public/nonprofit incorporation of libraries provide them with a tax-exempt status on direct activities. However, the supply chain, employees, and employee purchases are still subject to federal, state, and local taxes. For instance, employee income is still subject to federal taxes, and consumption is still subject to

state and local sales and use taxes. Taxes totaled an estimated \$164 million in 2024, with approximately \$150 million from operations and \$15 million from capital spending. Most of this (83%) was estimated to be federal taxes, leaving 17% to state and local taxes. (See Table 9, Table 10, and Table 11 — due to rounding, the sum of impacts shown in the tables may not equal the totals listed elsewhere in the summary.)

Table 9. Total Federal, State, and Local Taxes (\$Millions) From Public Libraries

Total Impact	Federal (Millions)	State and Local (Millions)	Total (Millions)
Direct	\$100	\$1	\$101
Indirect	\$12	\$6	\$18
Induced	\$24	\$21	\$45
Total	\$136	\$28	\$164

Table 10. Public Library Federal, State, and Local Taxes From Operations

Total Impact	Federal (Millions)	State and Local (Millions)	Total (Millions)
Direct	\$93	\$1	\$94
Indirect	\$10	\$5	\$14
Induced	\$23	\$19	\$41
Total	\$125	\$25	\$150

Table 11. Public Library Federal, State, and Local Taxes From Construction

Total Impact	Federal (Millions)	State and Local (Millions)	Total (Millions)
Direct	\$7	\$0	\$7
Indirect	\$2	\$1	\$4
Induced	\$2	\$2	\$4
Total	\$11	\$3	\$15

Library spending supports local economies in the state of Texas. Libraries rely on a human workforce to provide services and maintain facilities; thus, labor costs represented the majority of library expenditures in FY2024. The economic contribution from the \$808.6 million in library expenditures translated to \$1.35 billion in economic activity, \$950 million in GDP, and 11,200 direct and supported jobs. In addition to the economic benefits stemming from operating libraries, additional benefits accrue to communities, ranging from reducing costs to households for access to shared resources, providing space for community organizations to convene meetings, and the downstream educational and economic impacts linked to resources. In the next section, we discuss the services libraries offer, and provide an analysis of their economic value.

SECTION 3

Estimated Economic Value of Library Services



The economic impact of a library comprises two distinct types: (1) its hiring and purchasing, and (2) the value of services provided. The first type is the same as any other organization or business, regardless of its service, goal, or intent. An organization or business that hires individuals and purchases supplies will have a beneficial economic impact on its local community. As described at the end of Section 2, total statewide economic activity from library salaries, operating expenditures, capital expenditures, and associated purchases by supplier companies and household spending in Texas surpassed \$1.35 billion in FY2024.

The second major type of economic impacts/economic benefits is the value of services provided by the public libraries. In this section of the report, we enumerate 11 types of services, adopt methodologies for capturing their benefits, and derive an aggregate monetary value for each. To generate our estimates, we started by analyzing library services data from the 2024 TSLAC Annual Report, which surveyed all Texas public libraries about the activities and services they offer.¹⁰ While extraordinarily detailed and comprehensive, the dataset contained a few anomalous (unexpected) findings that we investigated with the help of TSLAC staff. We made adjustments to the data where necessary and have called out these adjustments in our analysis. For example, we identified and adjusted for extreme outliers by comparing each library's values to the median within its respective population-served range. Observations exceeding 50x their range-specific median were substituted. These adjustments affected less than 0.001% of the dataset.

In addition, there are a variety of services that some public libraries offer that are not included in the data. For example, some libraries serve as a locale for services provided by outside organizations, such as private tutors who conduct sessions at a library and business organizations that counsel/consult with clients in rooms within a library. Some libraries rent meeting rooms and auditorium space. Some offer 3D printing (at a cost based on materials used) or professional studios for making videos, music, or podcasts. These types of services are missing from our calculations because of their infrequency statewide and the difficulty in quantifying their value.

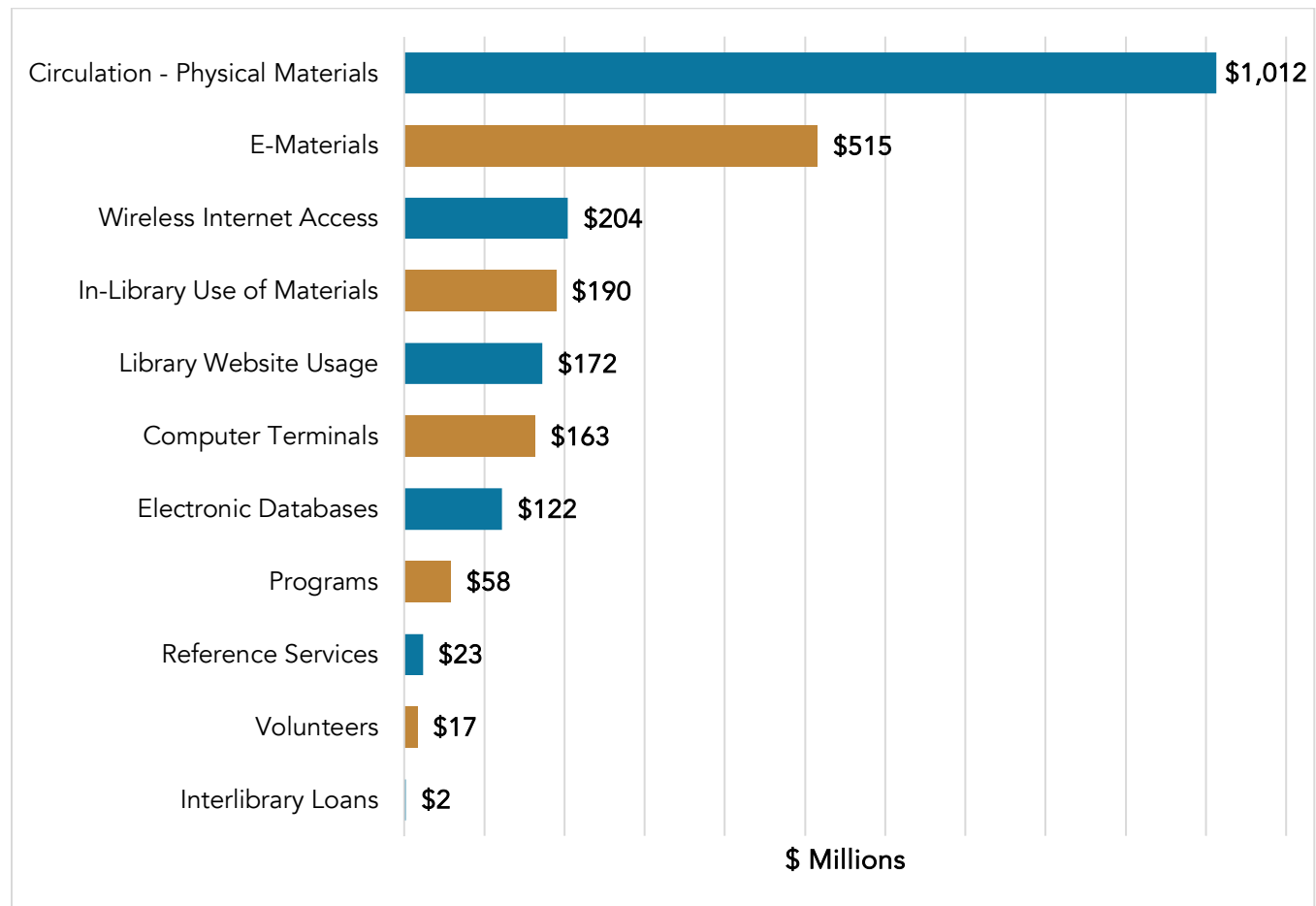
In this section, we examine the following library services:

- Programs
- Physical items circulation
- In library use of materials
- E-Materials
- Interlibrary loan
- Reference services
- Volunteers
- Computer terminals and internet
- Wireless internet (Wi-Fi)
- Library website usage
- Electronic databases

Figure 1 shows the approximate value of each library service, and Table 28 shows exact estimates.

¹⁰ Texas State Library and Archives Commission. (2025). *Texas public libraries detailed 2024 data (through September 30, 2024)* [Data set]. <https://www.tsl.texas.gov/ld/pubs/pls/index.html>

Figure 1. Statewide Values of Public Library Service at a Glance (FY2024)



Note: Figures above are rounded to the nearest million dollars. See Table 1 or Table 28 for detailed dollar figures.

Programs

Programs provided at Texas public libraries are conservatively valued at \$58.2 million

(\$58,165,069). Of the 517 public libraries that responded to the FY2024 TSLAC annual report, only 8 did not conduct programs or workshops for their patrons. Between 2023–2024, public libraries provided 253,083 workshops, training, or other educational programs to more than 6 million library patrons. They provided a majority of these programs (47%) for children. The programs for children were also more widely attended than other programs—57% percent of patrons who attended any program were children and parents at children’s programs.

Programs for young children are focused on instilling a love of books and promoting reading, and frequently involve storytelling or craft projects. Programs for young adults and adults are more varied. While there are book discussion clubs and hobby-oriented programs, many adult programs are devoted to improving community members’ literacy, computer literacy, job skills, or job prospects. And many programs are oriented to businesses.

In the 2026 survey of public libraries that our research team conducted for the current study (see Section 4), more than 50% of the library directors who responded said their libraries provided programs and workshops specifically focused on business-related skills such as:

- Preparing/updating a resume and searching for a job
- Developing marketing materials
- Researching issues related to their business
- Business counseling

Ideally, we would be able to derive an estimate of economic value by reviewing similar types of programs offered by other organizations, but similar types of programs are relatively uncommon. Perhaps the most similar are provided by YMCA and YWCA-type organizations. However, these services are generally provided to members who pay both membership fees and program fees for multiple events, making it difficult to estimate the value of a single-session workshop. Another potential comparison is to museums, as they offer a packaged learning or recreational experience with ticket prices split between adult and child fee levels. Because museum visits often last longer than the average library program, one might assume they are more valuable. However, the facilitated and outcomes-focused nature of certain library programming—particularly in adult education and workforce training—arguably warrants a more comparable benchmark. Table 12 compares 2024 ticket fees for adults and children across the most widely visited museums in Texas.

Table 12. Entrance Fees for Texas Museums, 2026

Museum	Adult Ticket Cost	Child Ticket Cost
Texas Science & Natural History Museum	\$10	\$6
Bullock Museum of Texas History	\$13	\$9
Houston Museum of Natural Science	\$25	\$16
Bush Presidential Library	\$20	\$16
Museum of Fine Arts — Houston	\$24	Free
Dallas Holocaust & Human Rights Museum	\$19	\$12
Holocaust Museum — Houston	\$22	Free
Perot Museum	\$25	\$15
Fort Worth Museum of Science & History	\$15	\$12.50
National Museum of the Pacific War	\$24	Free
El Paso Museum of Art	Free	Free
Dallas Museum of Art	Free	Free
Midpoint	\$12.50	\$8

By taking the midpoint price between the least and most expensive museum tickets, we estimate the values of library programs for children and adults at \$8 and \$12.50, respectively. Then, we multiply these values

by the number of programs dedicated to each, and we use the average of the two (\$10.25) for programs that were recorded, of general interest, or for young adults. This analysis is captured in Table 13.

Table 13. Total Value of Programming by Audience or Medium

Audience	Value Per Visit	Attendance	Total Value
Children	\$8.00	3,553,232	\$28,425,856
Young Adult	\$10.25	305,494	\$3,131,314
Adult	\$12.50	901,242	\$11,265,525
General Interest	\$10.25	1,404,611	\$14,397,263
Recording Views	\$10.25	92,206	\$945,112
Total		6,256,785	\$58,165,069

The most recent library studies and calculators have estimated program values ranging from \$7 to \$45 per patron, per event.¹¹ Using this methodology, the average fee per patron would be \$10.48, which is similar to the lower amounts in that range of \$8 to \$32 in other library reports from previous years.

A final note on the value of programs: For two reasons, we have not estimated the value of the extensive training conducted on electronic devices, i.e., smartphones, numerous software programs, search engines, email protocols, and security and fraud prevention. First, there is likely to be overlap between this number and the attendance at adult programs. To include a separate value would effectively be valuing the training twice. Second, it is unknown to what extent there is overlap. Although nearly half of Texas public libraries have formal programs and training classes on software, hardware, and electronic resources, there is no estimate of how many individuals have taken advantage of these training programs.¹² Because it is unclear how much overlap there is, we provide no estimate of a value in keeping with the overall conservative approach our team has used throughout this analysis.

Circulation of Physical Materials

To derive the value of circulation materials provided by Texas public libraries requires several different data sources, information about circulation materials (books, DVDs, etc.), and several reasonable assumptions. First, we examine the value of books, then look at other materials, and finally derive an estimate of the total value for circulation transactions by public library patrons.

Due to the nature of the data, we make two initial calculations to break down the share of books, audio items, and video items used by children and adults. The first step involves taking the total count of all

¹¹ Adjusted for 2024 prices and converted to USD if necessary: Vancouver Island Regional Library (\$18.01 average value), Woodstock Public Library (\$8.63 average value), Georgia Public Library Service (\$10.20), London Public Library (\$10.10 average value), Toronto Public Library (\$32.00 average value), ALA Library Value Calculator (\$11.33 average value).

¹² See Texas Public Libraries: Serving Communities to Enhance Digital Literacy, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, page 87, available at: <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/items/10ab6a3d-5f1a-4480-b218-4997a0ff9edb>

circulated materials in Texas during FY2024 and calculating each share of the total. This process is detailed in Table 14.

Table 14. Collection by Item Shares, FY2024

Collection Item	Count	Share
Books	32,652,697	0.887
Physical Audio Items	1,128,884	0.031
Physical Video Items	3,022,946	0.082
Total	36,804,527	1.000

Second, we multiply these shares by the total counts of physical materials circulated for both children (under 12 years) and those older than the age of 12. (For the purposes of this study, and based on the target age range for YA [young adult] books and adult books, library patrons over age 12 are considered teens/young adults or adults). This provides a count of each item—book, audio item, or video item—per group, given the share they take up in the total item collection. This is captured in Table 15.

Table 15. Circulated Items by Audience and Type, FY2024

Type	Count	Item	Item Count
Children’s Items	46,847,416	Books	41,562,672
		Audio Items	1,436,924
		Video Items	3,847,820
Young Adult (YA) and Adult Items	33,994,534	Books	30,159,693
		Audio Items	1,042,695
		Video Items	2,792,147

Further, in order to calculate the value of books in each category, we use the most recent values of average book prices compiled by *School Library Journal* (SLJ).¹³ These figures were provided by Baker and Taylor, which was, until recently, the largest distributor of books to public libraries at wholesale prices. Building on their values, we average across fiction and nonfiction hardcover prices, adjust the prices to 2024 levels, and then discount them by 40% to account for the fact that they cannot be resold and are not kept indefinitely.¹⁴ See Table 16.

¹³ SLJ Staff. (2024, February 29). SLJ's 2023 average book prices. *School Library Journal*. <https://www.slj.com/story/slj-average-book-prices-2023-follett-baker-taylor>

¹⁴ Because part of the value of purchasing a new book comes from the ability to resell it after use, it is sensible to discount its value by a certain amount, since patrons do not obtain this privilege when borrowing from a library. This is a common measure

Table 16. Deriving the Value of Books by Audience

Audience	SLJ Average Value	Inflation Adjustment	40% Discount Applied*
Children	\$19.37	\$19.95	\$11.97
YA	\$21.65	\$22.29	\$13.37
Adult	\$29.93	\$30.82	\$18.49
YA / Adult Average:			\$15.93

Finally, in order to estimate the value of physical audio and video items—DVDs, CDs, and CD audiobooks—we picked the lowest values in the range of prices for these goods as they are advertised on the Walmart website and discounted them for 40% as well.¹⁵ This measure enables us to continue comparing library materials with their marketplace equivalents while still observing values that are reasonably low as they were in the past when rental services for physical audio and video items were still available. This brings us to the values in Table 17 next.

Table 17. Deriving the Value of Physical Audio and Video items

Physical Item	Walmart Price	40% Discount Applied
DVDs	<u>\$5</u>	\$3
CD Music	<u>\$5</u>	\$3
CD Audiobooks	<u>\$10</u>	\$6
CD Average		\$4.5

Finally, to estimate the value of all other physical items circulated, we considered the example items listed in the 2026 survey sent to librarians as part of this study. These items include: Wi-Fi hotspots, sewing machines, cake pans, tools, telescopes, board games, and video games. Considering the range of values these items may have, we choose to value each of them at \$5, a conservative minimum we believe is reasonable.

Using these prices, we estimate the total value for circulated items—across all categories discussed—in Table 18.

done by most other reports and we use a rate often cited when reselling books. 40% discount: authorlearningcenter.com, pangobooks.com, thespruce.com

¹⁵ www.walmart.com.

Table 18. Total Value of Physical Items Circulated, FY2024

Type	Count	Item	Item Count	Value	Total Value
Children's Items	46,847,416	Books	41,562,672	\$11.97	\$497,505,184
		Audio Items	1,436,924	\$4.50	\$6,466,158
		Video Items	3,847,820	\$3.00	\$11,543,460
YA / Adult Items	33,994,534	Books	30,159,693	\$15.93	\$480,443,909
		Audio Items	1,042,695	\$4.50	\$4,692,128
		Video Items	2,792,147	\$3.00	\$8,376,441
Other Physical Items	553,803	Other	553,803	\$5.00	\$2,769,015
Total					\$1,011,796,295

In-Library Use of Materials

Beyond what they check out from libraries and the services they utilize, library patrons read periodicals and read/use other materials while inside the library.

In the past, the Public Library Data Service (PLDS) regularly collected information on in-library use of materials in its annual national survey, even though fewer and fewer libraries have reported data for that metric than for any other library metric. For instance, in the 2017 PLDS, only 42% of libraries responding to the survey reported data on in-library use of materials, whereas 88% reported data for programs, 84% reported interlibrary loans, and 92% reported annual circulation figures.¹⁶¹⁷ Despite this, the PLDS data does provide a way to approximate in-house use of print materials in Texas libraries.

Because the annual TSLAC surveys do not request data on in-library usage of materials, our research team devised a circuitous method to provide a gross estimate. Our approach draws on PLDS survey findings to approximate in-house use of print materials by comparing average in-house usage counts with average circulation levels across thousands of libraries. See Table 19 next.

16 For more information, see <https://publiclibrariesonline.org/tag/plds/>

¹⁷ The normal procedure for compiling in-library usage data is “observational counts.” Instructions to public libraries by the Ontario (Canada) Ministry responsible for libraries describes this procedure: “In your typical weekly survey... report the number of materials used inside the library and not checked out. Count any items removed from their usual location by staff or library users. Include reference materials, circulating materials, magazines, newspapers and all other materials used in the library. Count a vertical file, pamphlet file, multimedia kit or language learning kit as a single item—do not count each as a separate element. Do not count audio-visual items unless they were used at viewing/listening stations available in the branch. Do not include items returned from an outside circulation.”

Table 19. Public Library Data Service Statistics

Year	Print Circulation	In-Library Use of Materials	Share of In-Library Use of Materials
2010	1,050,518	429,306	0.408
2011	822,005	309,926	0.377
2012	742,466	273,192	0.367
2013	706,751	271,500	0.384
2014	528,832	249,868	0.472
2017	667,466	103,683	0.155
Average			0.361

Averaging across years provides a rough estimate of the ratio of in-library uses to print circulation of 0.361. Taking the estimate for total print materials circulation in Texas in 2024 (71,722,365) and multiplying it by the derived rate of 0.361 yields 25,891,774 instances of in-house use of materials.

Multiplying this amount by the average price of a library book (\$14.61), discounted by 50% to reflect the short time of usage for audiences of any age, yields a total value for in-library use of materials in Texas public libraries surveyed at \$189,139,409. Compared to the prices used for print materials in other state ROI reports (see Appendix B), ours is at the conservative end of the range. See Table 20.

Table 20. Prices Used Per In-Library Material Use

ROI Report	Year	In-Library Use of Materials Count	Share of Print Circulation	Value Per Use	Discounted Value? (nominal)	Discount Justification
Georgia	2025	5,593,247	25%	\$1	Yes	Following other reports
Woodstock	2018	702,000	-	\$10.33-\$18.08	Yes (range)	Borrowed materials
Barrie	2018	130,416	-	\$20.43	No	Borrowed materials
Vancouver	2016	278,100	-	\$17.96	Yes (range)	Borrowed materials
Ottawa	2016	1,480,000	-	\$9.64	Yes	Borrowed materials
ALA Calculator	-	-	-	\$12-\$17	-	-

Note: This table does not adjust for inflation or convert from Canadian currency. ALA stands for American Library Association.

E-Materials

E-materials require a different approach than physical circulation items. E-materials differ from physical items in that they are licensed by the library rather than owned, meaning they cannot be resold. This changes the original justification for discounting their value to library users, since resale is no longer a factor.

However, a key difference remains between purchased and borrowed digital content. Purchased e-materials typically provide indefinite access, while library e-materials must be returned or eventually become inaccessible to the user. This limited access reduces their value relative to the retail price. For this reason, we retain the 40% discount in our analysis of these items. While the justification differs from that used for physical items, the adjustment remains appropriate and consistent with our broader effort to produce conservative estimates.

Aside from e-books, other library valuation research presents values that vary considerably both in absolute terms and in relation to the value of a book in physical format. This includes valuations of e-audiobooks ranging from \$11 to \$90.¹⁸ We derive values of e-books, e-audiobooks, e-videos, and e-serials separately.

E-books include choices available online—from free e-books up to \$19.99 for e-books of new releases. Without choosing a large sample of genres, authors, etc. and deriving a blended per unit value, any choice of value will be somewhat subjective. Recent research suggests that the consumer pricing of e-books has changed over time and now closely follows the price of hardcovers with a small discount. Therefore, we average across our previously derived values for hardcovers and add an additional 15% discount. This provides us with a consumer price value for e-books of \$12.42 each.¹⁹

For e-audiobooks, we take the lowest average price for the audiobooks with the most common duration of reading time (10–20 hours), and adjust for inflation to 2024 U.S. dollars, giving us \$24.96.²⁰ Then we discount 40% to get \$14.98 each. Notably, this is far below the average retail price for audiobooks according to Audible, which is \$33.²¹

For e-videos, we use the same price of \$3 that we derived for physical video rentals, maintaining a price that is still below the common rental price at Amazon Prime Video of \$3.99 plus tax.

Finally, for e-serials, we use the average monthly subscription cost (\$10) according to an American Press Institute article from 2018, adjust for inflation to 2024 U.S. dollars, and again discount it by 40% to reach a

¹⁸ Utah State Library and Georgia Public Library Service

¹⁹ TonerBuzz. (n.d.). *Paper books vs. eBooks statistics*. <https://www.tonerbuzz.com/blog/paper-books-vs-ebooks-statistics/?srsltid=AfmBOopSYSASN-Df65lUWfYvxexuycNTTXiy3auSZaY70T1-gVRgr0pQ>

²⁰ Author Learning Center. (n.d.). *7 things to know before creating an audiobook*. <https://www.authorlearningcenter.com/publishing/formats/w/audiobooks/6327/7-things-to-know-before-creating-an-audiobook---article>

²¹ Audible. (n.d.). *Audible membership benefits*. <https://www.audible.com/ep/memberbenefits>

per item value of \$7.87.²² This approach makes for a conservative estimate since a monthly subscription for a serial publication is already quite similar to borrowing from the library. This is because, rather than the monthly subscription being primarily for a digital library, such as a Netflix subscription, serial publications are primarily for new media, meaning subscribers are paying for access to content as it is published rather than an existing catalog—a value proposition more closely mirrored by a library's periodical borrowing service, which similarly provides patrons with timely access to the latest issues rather than an archived collection.

Using these prices, and TSLAC circulation data for FY2024, the total values for the e-materials are summarized in Table 21 next.

Table 21. Summary of Total E-Material Values

Type of E-Material	Price	Total Circulation	Total Value
E-Books	\$12.42	18,100,964	\$224,813,973
E-Audios	\$14.98	16,931,589	\$253,635,203
E-Videos	\$3	1,060,799	\$3,182,397
E-Serials	\$7.61	4,430,866	\$33,718,890
Total E-Circulation		40,524,218	\$515,350,463

Interlibrary Loans

In addition to the books available from a library's collection, borrowers can usually request book and materials loans from other libraries at no cost. Interlibrary loans help spread access to in-demand books across the state and save borrowers time and money. In addition, interlibrary loan programs allow libraries with limited budgets and space to expand their “effective” loan capability via providing patrons with expanded access to materials, the economic effect of which is beyond the scope of our analysis. Because the actual items made available through interlibrary loans are already counted in print circulation, we estimate the value of what patrons save from avoiding the costs that may have occurred to purchase a desired item.

To estimate the value of interlibrary loans, we assume that, in absence of the service, a patron interested in borrowing a book not locally available would have to drive 50 miles (100 miles round trip), perhaps to the next county seat or to a regional central library. This assumption isn't far-fetched considering that Texas is over 260,000 square miles and that the average county size is over 1,000 square miles.²³ This also overlooks imaginable scenarios where patrons would have to drive much farther. For example, if someone in

²² American Press Institute. (2018, February 14). *Digital subscription pricing*. <https://americanpressinstitute.org/digital-subscription-pricing/>

²³ U.S. Census Bureau. (2024). *Texas: Population and people*. U.S. Census Bureau. <https://data.census.gov/profile/Texas?g=040XX00US48#populations-and-people>

Terlingua couldn't find the book they wanted in the Big Bend Public Library, their next best option is in El Paso (300 miles away) or Midland (250 miles away).

To estimate the round-trip value of this drive, we use 2024 gas prices in Texas as well as the average gas mileage in Texas in the same year.^{24,25} This gives us the round-trip cost of gas (100 miles) at \$10.97.

The 184,849 total interlibrary loans made in Texas in 2024, at \$10.97 per trip, yields a cost savings or a total value of \$2,027,794.

Reference Transactions

One of the traditional services provided by libraries is a reference desk at which patrons can ask librarians specific questions, in hopes of obtaining reliable answers in a relatively short period of time. Unlike some other library services, there is no market equivalent for library reference services. While there are many online information search and reference services that are free to use, they all have a limited history and provide answers of undependable accuracy.²⁶ Recently, a survey revealed that 42% of people²⁷ say that Google Search is becoming less useful, partly because more people are using Artificial Intelligence (AI).²⁸

Without a reasonable market-based option, the most straightforward method to value a library's reference service is by determining the amount of time librarians spend on the reference questions, and then factoring in librarian compensation. This method of analysis has its own difficulties,²⁹ but still is much preferred to any other approach. The first step is to characterize reference questions. One major study found that 70.9% of reference questions take 1–5 minutes to answer, 19.1% take 6–10 minutes to answer, 7.9% take 11 or more minutes to answer, and 2.1% take an unknown time to answer.³⁰

As with valuing other services in this report, we use a conservative approach and make conservative assumptions whenever such steps are needed. For the large proportion of reference questions, those that take between 1 and 5 minutes to answer, we used an average of 3 minutes. For reference questions requiring 6–10 minutes to answer, we used an average of 8 minutes. For those questions taking 11 or more minutes to answer, we used 11 minutes. And for the small percentage of reference questions requiring an unknown amount of time, we used the weighted average of the prior three categories (11, 8, 3), rounded down to 7 minutes.

²⁴ U.S. Energy Information Administration. (2026). *Texas regular all formulations retail gasoline prices*.

https://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/LeafHandler.ashx?n=pets&emmm_epm0u_pte_stx_dpg&f=a

²⁵ iSeeCars WJBF. (2024, December 14). *Understanding MPG trends across states*.

<https://www.wjbf.com/automotive/understanding-mpg-trends-across-states/>

²⁶ For example: www.google.com, www.bing.com, www.yahoo.com, www.duckduckgo.com, and www.wikipedia.org

²⁷ Goodwin, D. (2025, February 26). Survey: 42% of people say Google Search is becoming less useful. *Search Engine Land*.

²⁸ For example: www.claude.ai, www.chatgpt.com, gemini.google.com, microsoft.copilot.com, and www.perplexity.ai

²⁹ The problem with an equation based on this premise is that a more experienced librarian capable of answering 15 questions in an hour will be valued less than a less experienced librarian only capable of answering five questions in an hour.

³⁰ Spencer, J. S. & Dorsey, L. (1998). Assessing time spent on reference questions at an urban university library. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 24(4), 290-294

In FY2024, Texas public libraries reported that they answered 9,272,567 total reference questions. Though reliance on search engines and AI have likely contributed to a decline in reference questions, there is still significant reliance on rigorously trained reference librarians.³¹

Of those reference questions:

- 70.9% or 6,574,250 reference questions took 1–5 minutes. Multiplying that number of reference questions by 3 minutes and then dividing by 60 minutes per hour, equates to 328,713 hours.
- 19.1% or 1,771,060 reference questions required 6–10 minutes. Multiplying that number of reference questions by 8 minutes and then dividing by 60 minutes per hour, equates to 236,141 hours.
- 7.9% or 732,533 reference questions required 11 minutes or more. Multiplying that number of reference questions by 11 minutes and then dividing by 60 minutes per hour, equates to 134,298 hours.
- 2.1% or 194,724 reference questions took an unknown duration of time to answer. Multiplying that number of reference questions by 7 minutes and then dividing by 60 minutes per hour yields 22,718 hours.

These combine to show that **librarians in Texas spent 721,870 hours in 2024 answering reference questions**. According to the 2024 TSLAC Statewide Summary, a librarian on average has an hourly wage of \$23.17 with benefits valued at \$9.27 per hour, for an hourly rate of \$32.44. Multiplying the 721,870 hours by the hourly rate of \$32.44 yields **a total value of \$23.4 million (\$23,417,463) for reference services**.

The average value of a reference question statewide would be approximately \$2.53 (\$23,417,463 divided by 9,272,567 reference questions). The average value and the individual values are extremely conservative. Most online library service value calculators defer to the Massachusetts Library Association and Chelmsford Library's value of \$7.00 per question,³² while the state of Maine estimates the value at \$23.53,³³ with other values as high as \$42.33³⁴ and \$58.99.³⁵ These values are indexed to 2024 price levels. Even using the lowest of the three alternative values, \$7.00, would generate a total value in excess of \$64.9 million compared to the \$23.4 million we have estimated.

Volunteers

The vast majority of public libraries in Texas supplement their full- and part-time staff with volunteers to provide services and support. In FY2024, more than 731,000 hours were donated to Texas' public libraries, providing volunteers with professional experience and the community with additional services.

³¹ Wong, M. A., & Saunders, L. (Eds.). (2024). *Reference and information services: An introduction* (7th ed.). Bloomsbury Libraries Unlimited.

³² American Library Association. (2026). *Library value calculator*. <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/tools/library-value-calculator>

³³ Maine State Library. (2019). *Library use value calculator explanation*. <https://www.maine.gov/msl/services/calculator.htm>

³⁴ Syracuse University School of Information Studies. (n.d.). *True value calculator*. <https://truevalue.ischool.syr.edu/calculator/>

³⁵ Warren County Public Library. (2021, February). *Library value calculator*. <https://wclibrary.info/calculator/value/>

Information from the 2024 statewide TSLAC database illustrates the importance of volunteer staff for Texas’ libraries. All but 7.9% (41) of libraries utilize volunteers: 11 libraries had the volunteer equivalent of 5 or more full-time employees, 2 libraries had the equivalent of 10 full-time employees and one library system had the equivalent of 26 full-time employees (over 55,000 volunteer hours) donated in a year. Additionally, four public libraries are run exclusively by volunteers.

The Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) specifies that the value of volunteer services to nonprofits be included in financial statements, grant proposals, and annual reports based on the fair market value of those services when they meet certain criteria.³⁶ To comply with that standard, Independent Sector, a nonprofit support organization, creates an annual report on the average value of volunteer hours by state.³⁷ In 2024, Independent Sector identified the average value of volunteers for the State of Texas to be \$33.59 per hour. However, this composite also includes volunteers from professions such as business consulting as well as financial and health services, which may overstate the value.

Based on data in the 2024 TSLAC annual report/database, a Texas public library employee on average has an hourly cost (salary and benefits) of \$32.44, based on 2,080 hours per year. This is a composite of all employees. The same dataset specifies that approximately 24% of employees at Texas’ public libraries have master’s degrees from American Library Association (ALA) accredited programs and another 10% hold the title of “Librarian” but do not hold a master’s degree. Other employees include administrators, coordinators, conservators, instructors, information technology specialists, clerical staff, shelving assistants, and many other specialists in larger libraries.

Because detailed information about the types of services provided and donated by volunteers in Texas’ public libraries is unavailable, our research team considered reasonable and conservative assumptions for this analysis. Volunteers provide a range of services, from unskilled labor to specialized assistance, and volunteers have all types of skills and experiences.

To estimate the proportion of volunteers at public libraries with skilled versus less skilled labor, we use the proportions of full-time equivalent staff (FTE) who hold the title of Librarian (34%) versus those who don’t (66%). This is captured in Table 22.

Table 22. Shares of Library Staff by Title and Degree

Type of Staff	Share of Total Weekly Hours
Staff Degreed Librarians	24%
Staff Non-Degreed Librarians	10%
All Other Library Staff	66%

³⁶ Accounting Standards Codification 958-605-25-16

³⁷ Independent Sector. (2025). *Value of volunteer time*. <https://independentsector.org/research/value-of-volunteer-time/>

To estimate the value of less skilled library labor, we began with May 2024 Texas wage data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The mean hourly wages are captured in Table 23 next.

Table 23. Mean Library Staff Hourly Wages in Texas, May 2024

Job	Number Employed	Mean Hourly
Librarians and Media Collections Specialists	9,430	\$31.21
Library Technicians	5,160	\$18.36
Library Assistants, Clerical	2,340	\$14.11

We calculated the weighted average wage of technicians and assistants, which equals \$17.03. We then divided this figure by the librarian/specialist wage (\$31.21), yielding a ratio of 0.546.³⁸ This ratio represents the relative wage of less skilled staff compared to librarians and specialists, and serves as our discount factor. Applying this factor (0.546) to our previously derived 2024 mean hourly compensation for all library staff results in an estimated less skilled hourly wage of \$17.71.³⁹

By multiplying the proportions of skilled (34%) and less skilled (66%) staff to total volunteer hours, we estimate volunteer hours by more skilled labor at 248,595 and less skilled labor at 482,567 hours. Finally, by multiplying each with their estimated values, we obtained the total value generated by each group, as shown in Table 24.

Table 24. Total Hourly Compensation by Skill Level

Skill Level	Hourly Compensation	Hours	Value
Low skilled labor	\$17.71	482,567	\$8,546,257
More skilled labor	\$32.44	248,595	\$8,064,422
Total		731,162	\$16,610,679

With 731,162 hours of volunteer services provided to public libraries, volunteers contributed services to their communities valued at approximately \$16.61 million.

³⁸ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2025, May). *Occupational employment and wage statistics tables*.

<https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>

³⁹ BLS wage data does not reflect total compensation as it excludes benefits, so we do not use it directly. Instead, we apply a wage-based discount factor to our statewide compensation estimate, which does include both wages and benefits. Because the statewide average already reflects a mix of higher- and lower-paid roles, applying further discount risks double-counting the lower end of the wage distribution—the blended average is already pulled down by the very workers the discount is meant to represent. This makes our estimate conservative. If the statewide average were based only on librarians and specialists, it would be higher, and applying the same discount would yield a higher estimated compensation for less skilled workers.

Computer Terminals and Internet Access

Computer terminals with internet access are a significant economic resource provided by Texas public libraries, and have been for a number of years. Library directors in a 2012 statewide survey said patrons used the internet for a wide variety of purposes that ranged from education to employment to basic needs.⁴⁰ Some of the online activities specifically mentioned included:

- Perform homework and research for classes, from grade school to college.
- Take continuing education courses, online training, and webinars.
- Train and test for job certifications and licenses.
- Search and apply for jobs.
- Apply for unemployment benefits and social assistance.
- Apply for disaster aid, as well as find family and friends during and after natural disasters.
- Work short-term, paid, online jobs.
- Develop and operate online businesses by placing and receiving orders.
- Compare prices.
- Market new products.
- Use online banking.
- File taxes.

Public library directors pointed out that even those patrons who have home internet access often use the library internet access because of its greater bandwidth and faster service, and not all patrons have the option of home internet access. Ranchers and others in rural areas in particular have difficulty obtaining reliable and reasonably priced residential internet. The same can be said for many people and communities in urban areas—while broadband is theoretically available to them in their neighborhood, in practical terms, individuals may often lack the resources for an up-to-date computer or broadband access at home.

Economic benefits to library patrons and the community at large from internet access are difficult to estimate precisely. One approach would be to solicit information from patrons about the value of internet access to them. Because that would entail a large user survey, this report used a different method: examining the cost of obtaining internet access from an alternate source.

While public libraries provide internet access free of charge to their patrons, there are a few companies from which the resource can be purchased.⁴¹ Though prices vary by location for UPS and Staples, the national standard rate set by FedEx for a computer workstation with basic software is \$27 per hour. FedEx also offers a premium computer workstation option with Adobe Creative Cloud and scanning capabilities at

⁴⁰ More than 62% of the library directors who responded to the 2012 survey by the Bureau of Business Research said that internet access was “extremely beneficial,” while a further 20% said it was “quite beneficial” for their patrons. Furthermore, 56% of library directors statewide reported that internet access was the single most important resource provided by their libraries. <http://hdl.handle.net/2152/19093>.

⁴¹ The largest business to provide this resource is FedEx Office, which only provides it in a small portion of their store fronts. Many other studies have used this commercial comparison.

\$45 per hour. Notably, commercial options do not exist in many smaller communities, or even in some areas of larger metropolitan areas. Nonetheless, for the purpose of deriving an estimate of the monetary value of internet access via a public library, the commercial rate is the best option.

Based on the elaborate methodology used in the Bureau of Business Research 2012 study, we have used 1.16 hours for the average internet session length in the current study. Because some libraries did not report a maximum length, we believe the figure of 1.16 hours is very conservative.

Then we applied the hourly rate of \$27 per hour and computed the average internet session at \$31.32 (1.16 hours multiplied by this rate). Because at least a quarter of the total annual use of public computers were from major libraries that also offer the same services as FedEx's premium option and more (Austin, Dallas, Houston, and Harris County Public Libraries), it may be argued that the hourly rate should be higher. We do not know, however, what percentage of patrons at those library systems actually utilize software that is considered a premium service, such as Adobe Creative Cloud.

In a third step, we calculated the statewide estimate, utilizing the total number of internet access sessions, information that was obtained from the 2024 TSLAC Annual Report. In FY2024, there were 5,214,788 sessions on internet-accessible computer terminals in public libraries in Texas. **At an average value of \$31.32 per session, public library computer terminals saved users an estimated \$163,327,160 in 2024.**

This figure is conservative. As noted earlier, libraries do not report a maximum internet session length so the average session length in reality is likely to be greater than 1.16 hours. Additionally, many major libraries offer premium software and capabilities. This report also cannot reasonably estimate the values of internet access at public libraries in areas of Texas (largely in the Panhandle, West Texas, and parts of South Texas) without commercial alternatives within a 90-mile radius. In these situations, users would have a significant commute when they wanted to access the internet, and the value to patrons of having internet access locally would be higher than \$27/hour.

Wireless Internet Access

Wireless internet is offered by most public libraries in Texas and is a service widely used and considered extremely important by librarians. Library patrons use wireless internet connections for the same purposes as they use the computer terminals within a public library, but wireless provides several advantages. First, it allows patrons to use their own portable computers and digital devices; thus, they are able to save documents on their own computers as well as keep materials without having to print them. Second, users generally have unrestricted access via wireless, as there is no competition with other users for a computer terminal or limits on the time they have access. Third, users can access a library's wireless service after normal library hours, if they are willing to physically be within a small distance beyond the walls of their library building.

Although public libraries offer Wi-Fi, not all libraries methodically track the number of digital devices accessing their wireless networks. In 2024, the number of Wi-Fi sessions in the TSLAC database was

documented at 26.7 million, after making adjustments for known errors. However, this was the number from only about 55% of public libraries. In other words, more than 230 public libraries did not report data on Wi-Fi sessions.

To provide a more accurate figure, two different estimation methods were employed. First, a simple proportional approach assumed that, if 26.7 million sessions occurred from 55% of the libraries, then if the additional 45% of public libraries had been reported, a total of 48.5 million sessions would have occurred. A second approach assumed that the number of Wi-Fi sessions would be directly proportional to the population served by the libraries that reported them.⁴² We counted the population served by libraries that reported Wi-Fi sessions and found they represented 71.7% of the total population served by all libraries in Texas; larger libraries were more likely to report. Because more large libraries (Austin, Houston, San Antonio, and El Paso) reported than did not (Dallas and Fort Worth), it is reasonable to assume that actual Wi-Fi usage is considerably higher than the number provided by librarians in the TSLAC database/report. **Our analysis indicates that the actual number of Wi-Fi sessions in 2024 was 37,187,820**, which we reached by dividing by the more conservative percentage of population served by the libraries that reported (26,663,667 / 0.717).

Economic Benefits of Wireless Internet Access

One approach to estimate the economic value of public library Wi-Fi would be to look at alternative internet providers. Costs of wireless internet, however, vary from provider to provider and generally involve long-term contracts, are subject to indirect costs, or both. Because of the variety and complexity for alternative providers, in this instance, a more direct approach is appropriate. Considering that a simple substitute for Wi-Fi access from a library is Wi-Fi access from a coffee shop, many reports calculating the value of this service use the cost of a cup of coffee.⁴³ In line with this approach, the cost of a latte, the most commonly purchased coffee from coffee shops in the United States,⁴⁴ was \$5.49 in Texas in early 2024.⁴⁵

Therefore, **the aggregate value of wireless internet access provided by Texas public libraries in 2024 is \$204.2 million annually** (\$204,161,132). This estimate is a straightforward multiplication of \$5.49 per use applied to 37,187,820 uses.

Library Website Usage

For this study, visits to a library's website are reported as a separate service. A Pew Research Center report⁴⁶ from survey data found that people used a library's website for multiple purposes:

⁴² A correlation of .75 exists between number of computer terminals and number of Wi-Fi sessions, a relatively strong relationship. This provides justification for the assumption and also indicates that libraries which do not collect Wi-Fi data are quite similar to those that do.

⁴³ Ottawa Public Library, London Public Library, and Georgia Public Library Service

⁴⁴ Drive Research. (2023, September 13). *Coffee survey: Statistics, trends, and consumer insights*.
<https://www.driveresearch.com/market-research-company-blog/coffee-survey/>

⁴⁵ Toast. (2024, September 26). *The most popular coffee and tea drinks: Toast restaurant trends report*.
<https://pos.toasttab.com/news/most-popular-coffee-and-tea-drinks-toast-restaurant-trends-report?x-craft%E2%80%A6>

⁴⁶ <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2013/01/22/part-2-what-people-do-at-libraries-and-library-websites/>

-
- 82% of them searched the library catalog for books (including audiobooks and e-books), CDs, and DVDs.
 - 72% sought basic library information, such as the hours of operation, location of branches, or directions.
 - 62% reserved books (including audiobooks and e-books), CDs, and DVDs.
 - 51% renewed a book, DVD, or CD. Those ages 30–49 and parents of minor children are especially likely to have done this.
 - 51% used an online database. Those ages 18–29 are particularly likely to have done this.
 - 48% looked for information about library programs or events. Those ages 50–64 are especially likely to have done this.
 - 44% received research or homework help.
 - 30% read book reviews or received book recommendations.
 - 30% checked whether they owed fines or paid the fines online. Those ages 30–49 are particularly likely to have done this.
 - 27% signed up for library programs and events.
 - 22% borrowed or downloaded an e-book.
 - 6% reserved a meeting room.

Based on this data, we estimate that 80% of library website visits are relatively brief and 20% are of moderate duration.⁴⁷ We estimate the value of a brief visit at \$2 and a longer moderate visit at \$10.

As with Wi-Fi, not all Texas public libraries methodically track their website usage. In 2024 the number of website visits was estimated at 39,990,327, after making adjustments for known errors. However, this was the number from only about 47% of public libraries. In other words, more than 270 public libraries did not report website access data.

To provide a more accurate figure, we assumed that the number of website visits in the aggregate would be directly proportional to the population served by the libraries that reported them. We counted the population served by libraries that reported website visits and found they represented 83.6% of the total population served by all libraries in Texas. (All but one of the large library systems reported website visits.)

Dividing the number of library website visits in the TSLAC database/report by the percentage of population served by the libraries that reported indicates that the **estimated total number of visits to libraries' websites in 2024 was 47,835,319** (39,990,327/0.836), **and their value is estimated to be \$172.2 million.** See Table 25.

⁴⁷ Georgia's Public Libraries: Economic Impact and Service Valuation, The Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia, September 2025.

Table 25. Website Visit Valuation, FY2024

Type of Website Visit	Unit Value	Number of Visits	Value
Brief	\$ 2.00	38,268,255	\$76,536,510
Moderate	\$10.00	9,567,064	\$95,670,640
Total		47,835,319	\$172,207,150

Electronic Databases

Electronic database usage by patrons of Texas public libraries is growing. In FY2024, more than 400 public libraries offered TexShare, a suite of 60 databases, a cooperative program of TSLAC and public, academic, medical/health, and affiliate libraries in the State of Texas. Under the TexShare program, patrons have access to databases that include:

e-media materials	e-book titles (full text)	e-serials titles (full text)
10,257,222	388,528	45,864

A more detailed description of the databases is available from [TSLAC](#).⁴⁸

Accessing this wealth of information has become increasingly common. In FY2024, patrons at public libraries performed more than 11.5 million searches and downloaded more than 5.5 million documents from library electronic databases.

Because of this large number, it is reasonable to ask if there may be overlap between the number of database searches and other public library services: reference questions, computer usage, Wi-Fi sessions, and website access counts. Undoubtedly there is some overlap; the issue is whether it is significant or minimal. On reference questions, there appears not to be overlap to a great extent as reference transactions are generally face-to-face interactions between library staff and patrons. Yet, there is certainly some overlap with patron computer usage, Wi-Fi usage, and website access. Unfortunately, at present there is no good method for determining the extent of this overlap.⁴⁹

In the other recent reports about library impacts, various values have been used for database searches and document retrievals, as shown in Table 26.

⁴⁸ See: <https://www.tsl.texas.gov/texshare/databasecontractlistfy2026>

⁴⁹ For instance, while many public libraries direct patrons to an online TexShare portal not associated with their website, other libraries do link to TexShare resources from their websites or through their library catalogs. In both of the latter two situations, library counts for website access and TexShare would be counted. There is no way of subtracting these double counts as there is no current method for sorting how public libraries provide access to TexShare.

Table 26. Various Values Assigned for Database Searches and Retrievals

Library	Metric Counted	2024 Value
Woodstock (Canada)	Per query	\$21.51
London (Canada)	Per search	\$18.45
Vancouver Island (Canada)	Per search	\$22.43
Santa Clara County	Per search	\$37.40
American Library Association Calculator	Per search	\$19.95
State of Georgia	Per document retrieval	\$15.00

Note: Values have been updated from their original publication date and values have been converted, when necessary, from Canadian currency.

There are reasons for adopting a lower value than those used in other studies. First is the unknown overlap in the data for this service with other computer/internet services, discussed earlier. Second, there is variation in the metrics used (searches or retrievals), and the values. Third, the preferred metric by TSLAC is document retrieval, which has not been valued frequently in other analyses. Yet, to value a database search at zero seems inappropriate.

Thus, our research team used a combined approach, which values both documents retrieved and database searches. Because a document retrieval in all likelihood requires a database search at the beginning, the number of database searches will be reduced by the number of documents retrieved. That provides the number of unique searches which did not end with a document retrieval. For this study, database searches are valued at \$2 each, only a fraction of the values in many other studies, and document retrievals at \$20 each, slightly higher than used in the Georgia analysis. Overall, this combined approach and the per metric values chosen yield a conservative estimate for valuing this service.⁵⁰ See Table 27 next for the calculations; **FY2024 public library database searches and retrievals are valued at \$122,151,648.**

Table 27. Electronic Database Searches and Retrievals, FY2024

Metric	Count	Value Per Metric	Value of Metric
Number of Unique Searches	6,043,694	\$2.00	\$12,087,388
Number of Document Retrievals	5,530,213	\$20.00	\$110,064,260
Total			\$122,151,648

In concluding this section of the report, **we estimate the total economic value of all services provided by Texas public libraries is \$2.478 billion.** Values of the individual services are estimated in Table 28 (data matches Table 3 from earlier in report).

Table 28. Total Estimated Value of Each Public Library Service, FY2024

Service	Value
Programs	\$58,165,069
Circulation of Physical Materials	\$1,011,796,295
In-Library Use of Materials	\$189,663,338
E-Materials	\$515,350,463
Interlibrary Loans	\$2,027,794
Reference Services	\$23,417,463
Volunteers	\$16,610,679
Computer Terminals	\$163,327,160
Wireless Internet Access	\$204,161,132
Library Website Usage	\$172,207,150
Electronic Databases	\$122,151,648
Total All Services	\$2,478,878,191

When the value of services is combined with the economic impact of library capital and operational expenditures, **we estimate that the total impact on the Texas economy to have been \$3.8 billion in 2024.**

By rough comparison, public libraries had about the same economic footprint as the Texas motion picture and sound recording industry (\$2.9 billion in GDP in 2024) or the Texas paper manufacturing industry (\$4.0 billion in GDP in 2024).⁵¹ In addition, direct employment by public libraries—at about 8,000 employees with an average annual salary of \$44,595 (excluding benefits) in FY2024—is comparable to the number of people employed as mental health and substance abuse social workers (8,220; average annual salary excluding benefits \$53,450) and paramedics (8,410; average annual salary excluding benefits \$57,590) in Texas.⁵²

The economic impact and leadership potential of Texas public libraries is still underestimated. Public libraries serve their communities by making information and learning readily accessible to anyone who chooses to enter a library’s doors or use a library’s online portal. Those who use libraries directly benefit by gaining knowledge and ideas. Even those who choose not to use their local public library benefit by being part of a more educated community. Substantial research has concluded that economic growth and leadership is highly correlated with highly educated communities. Public libraries offer every person an opportunity to improve their education and every business an opportunity to improve its productivity. Public libraries are an overlooked factor in economic leadership among states.

⁵¹ Bureau of Economic Analysis, SAGDP2 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by State, 2024, retrieved July 17, 2026. While not a straight “apples to apples” comparison because the Bureau’s GDP estimates lack the economic multipliers we have used to analyze the economic impact made by library operations, they are a conservative and useful yardstick.

⁵² Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS), May 2025, retrieved July 17, 2026.

SECTION 4

Texas Public Library Director Survey Findings



Our research team conducted a short survey in the spring 2026 among directors of all public libraries in Texas.⁵³ This survey, designed both to supplement and update information obtained from the 2024 TSLAC dataset, gathered data and views about business-oriented library services, collected information about community-oriented programs and activities, and identified unique library activities and collaborations for further review and analysis. This section of the report provides a summary of survey responses and findings, with related questions included verbatim (in italics). The survey instrument in its entirety is included in Appendix A.

Library Service Population

What is the population of your library's legal service area? Please choose from the available population ranges, based on your response in the TSLAC 2024 Texas Public Libraries Annual Report.

Over three-quarters of the respondents lead libraries that serve populations of fewer than 50,000 residents. See Table 29.

Table 29. Libraries by Service Area Population, 2026

Population Served	Number of Libraries Responding	Percent of Libraries Responding	Percent of Public Libraries Statewide
Under 10,000	138	46.6%	49.5%
10,001-49,999	109	36.8%	33.8%
50,000-99,999	17	5.7%	6.8%
100,000-249,999	21	7.1%	6.6%
250,000-499,999	3	1.0%	1.7%
500,000-999,999	3	1.0%	1.0%
1,000,000 or more	5	1.7%	0.8%

Business-Oriented Library Services

Your library may provide a range of library services and resources for self-employed individuals, entrepreneurs, small- and medium-sized businesses, job seekers, and members of your local business community. Please rate the patron usage of each service listed below.

- *Business periodicals (print or online)*
- *Business-related programs and workshops*

⁵³ The research team used available email addresses from the Texas State Library and Archive Commission's 2024 Annual Report to contact 513 of the 517 directors of Texas public libraries, inviting them to participate in the survey. We sent initial email invitations to the directors on February 20, 2026, as well as three subsequent reminders in late February and early March to non-responders. A total of 298 responses were received for a survey participation rate of 58%. The survey responses were representative of the entire universe of public libraries in Texas, based on population sizes served by the libraries (Chi-Square Test Result: $p = 0.55$).

- *Job application assistance*
- *Directories of businesses (local, state, or national)*
- *Economic and/or demographic data, and statistics*
- *Specific business-related databases*
- *Small-business, self-employed tax information*

Of the seven services/resources listed, 82% of the libraries provided job application assistance, about two-thirds (65%) provided business periodicals, and 60% provided economic and/or demographic data/statistics. A smaller percentage of libraries provided the other three business-oriented services. See Table 30 for the full list.

Table 30. Business Services Offered by Public Libraries, 2026

Business Service	Percentage of Libraries Providing Service
Job application assistance	82%
Business periodicals (print or online)	65%
Economic and/or demographic data, statistics	60%
Directories of businesses (local, state, or national)	59%
Specific business-related databases	55%
Business-related programs or workshops	53%
Small-business, self-employed tax information	51%

Survey participants also identified other business services with “high usage” among their patrons, in particular, notary services. They frequently mentioned copy, print, scan, fax services, and meeting space as being moderately to highly used as well. Additional quotes from the survey about programs and services are shown next (in italics), with other quotes included later in this section on other topics.

“The library hosts monthly programs in the Small Business Success Series, partnering with the city's economic development corporation, the county SBDC, the local chamber of commerce, and other partners.”

“Several small businesses use the library regularly for assistance designing and printing menus, flyers, coupons, closure notices and a variety of other items. We are the only printing service available for 25 miles, and we are less expensive.”

Community-Oriented Library Services

Your library may offer programs, services, and resources to help connect patrons to community social, legal, governmental, and health services. Please rate patron usage of each service listed below.

- *Telehealth rooms and/or resources*
- *Facilitating local residents' applications for government benefits (i.e., social security, Medicaid, Medicare, disaster assistance)*
- *Voter registration*
- *Partnerships and/or programming with local social service agencies or organizations*
- *Onsite social services*

The data in Table 31 show a clear pattern: Voter registration and partnerships with local social service agencies are two services provided by a large majority of libraries, and usage is moderate on average. One service (facilitating applications for government benefits) is provided by a smaller majority of libraries. Onsite social and health services are provided by approximately one-third of survey participants' libraries.

Table 31. Community Services Offered by Public Libraries

Community Service	Libraries Providing Service
Voter registration	93%
Partnerships and/or programming with local social service agencies or organizations	84%
Facilitating local residents' applications for government benefits (i.e., Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, disaster assistance)	68%
Onsite social services	38%
Telehealth rooms and/or resources	30%

Twenty-eight (28) survey respondents provided comments about the community-oriented services they provide, a sampling of which is included next. Several librarians noted programs such as food pantries, meeting spaces for community organizations, and retiree programs.

“Legal Aid provides regular clinics at our Library for patrons to receive needed legal services.”

“On-site social services include monthly Medicare classes, which receive regular attendance.”

“Texas Department of Motor Vehicles, patrons can have a quiet area for online training, [to] watch reinstatement videos for driver's licenses, [and do] online application, training, and printout of Safe Food Handler's certificates.”

Additional Services, Resources, and Events

If your library currently provides any of the community services listed below, please rate patron usage for each.

- *Weather-related emergency safe shelter*
- *Adaptive technologies, such as screen readers, magnifiers, Braille embossers*
- *Recreation or leisure space*
- *Space for regular meetings of community service organizations (i.e., Rotary, Kiwanis, Optimists, Lions)*
- *Special events (i.e., lectures, book clubs, community meetings, discussion forums)*
- *Non-traditional items (i.e., tools, musical instruments, 3D printers, art supplies, audio- and video- production equipment)*

A very high percentage of responding librarians indicated that their facility provides traditional library community services such as special events, recreation and leisure space, and hosting regular meetings of local nonprofit groups. More than half of the libraries now offer “new” items to check out, such as tools, art supplies, and audio and production equipment. Nearly half (42%) offer various adaptive technologies. See Table 32 for the full list.

Table 32. Additional Community Services Offered by Public Libraries

Community Service	Libraries Providing Service
Special events (i.e., lectures, book clubs, community meetings, discussion forums)	95%
Recreation or leisure space	86%
Space for regular meetings of community service organizations (i.e., Rotary, Kiwanis, Optimists, Lions)	82%
Non-traditional items (i.e., tools, musical instruments, 3D printers, art supplies, audio- and video- production equipment)	56%
Adaptive technologies, such as screen readers, magnifiers, Braille embossers	42%
Weather-related emergency safe shelter	29%

Libraries provide a variety of other services, which survey participants noted in supplemental comments. Multiple libraries offer plant seed libraries, genealogy assistance, baking pans, and workshops. Other library services included the following:

“[We] host Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) employee recruitment with use of computers and space for interviews”

“We hold quarterly blood drives at the library, and the county health nurses provide health screenings several times a year.”

Local Emergency Management Support

Does your library have a special designation for emergencies, serve as a distribution center during public health emergencies, or serve as a center for community members and first responders during disaster recovery?

Eighteen percent (18%) said “Yes” and 82% said “No.”⁵⁴ More than 50 survey respondents provided comments, with 17 librarians reporting that their libraries were designated warming/cooling centers. Multiple libraries are responsible for managing and coordinating donations in the event of a local emergency. Some libraries have served as the local operational sites of first responders from outside the community, and other libraries have served or would serve as family reunification locations. Other verbatim comments included:

“All branches serve as warming/cooling stations, we also provide services in community shelters in the immediate aftermath and host assistance programs like FEMA during the longer-term recovery.”

“[In] the most recent City of Amarillo COOP (Continuation of Operations Plan), the libraries are designated as potential distribution centers and family reunification locations.”

Unique Community-Oriented Activities

The research team will prepare a limited number of short profiles of unique programs and services that will demonstrate the value libraries bring to their communities. If your library has an innovative and successful program or service, please provide a brief description.

Forty-eight (48) participants opted in on this item and provided details about unique programs and activities at their libraries. Based on these responses, the research team developed a set of nine library profiles that are presented in Section 5.

⁵⁴ In the previous question, 29% said their libraries served as a weather-related emergency safe shelter. The lower percentage reporting being involved in emergency management in response to this question is probably because libraries have not received a formal, official designation for health emergencies or local disaster recovery efforts.

SECTION 5

Library Profiles



To highlight the variety of ways that Texas public libraries contribute to the economic vitality of communities, the research team developed 9 short program profiles that illustrate the value and community benefits of special and innovative library programs. Common to most of the profiles is the importance of **community collaborations** to generate new ideas and support programs and services among a disparate group of libraries.

Table 33 lists the nine profiles found in this section.

Table 33. Overview of Library Profiles on Innovative Programs

Library Name	City	Program Focus
Speer Memorial Library	Mission	Lawn and Garden Equipment Loan
Harrie P. Woodson Memorial Library	Caldwell	Adult Basic Education Classes
Comanche Public Library	Comanche	Experimenting With New Ideas
Harris County Public Library	Houston	Supporting the Education and Economic Advancement of Unique and Underserved Populations
Plano Public Library	Plano	Workforce Development for People With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD)
Hondo Public Library	Hondo	Digital and Financial Literacy
Hulsey Public Library	Terrell	GED and ESL Classes
Lewisville Public Library	Lewisville	Expanding Access to State and Federal Benefit Programs
Gatesville Public Library	Gatesville	Low-Vision Services

Bridging Testing and Language Gaps - Hulsey Public Library -Terrell, TX

Through the WINGS Adult Education Program and Testing Center, Hulsey Public Library has brought within reach free GED and ESL programs that have prepared hundreds of community members to not only to study for exams, but to take them much closer to home. What began as a small literacy effort has evolved into a growing workforce and educational resource for Kaufman County.

Starting Small

The WINGS program has existed at the library for nearly 30 years, though in its earliest years, it operated on a much smaller scale. A single Adult Literacy Coordinator managed limited GED and ESL classes with the support of small grants from civic organizations, such as the Rotary Club. Much of the early funding went toward helping students afford GED testing fees.

Building a Reputation

As more students enrolled, the library expanded the WINGS program by adding instructors, increasing class times, and introducing multiple ESL levels to better serve students with varying needs. Today, WINGS offers GED preparation courses in all four GED subjects, as well as beginner, intermediate, advanced, and conversational ESL classes. During the 2025–2026 academic year alone, the program received 244 total GED and ESL applications and enrolled more than 180 students.



WINGS program graduates and instructors. Photo courtesy of Hulsey Public Library.

Over time, local employers also began to approach the library for help training workers through ESL services, further demonstrating the program's growing reputation and value to the local workforce.

Finding Partners and Seizing Opportunities

Sustaining such growth required partners, and those relationships came together through community engagement as much as formal grant-seeking. The Friends of the Library provided early support, and the Terrell Economic Development Corporation (EDC) connection grew out of library staff consistently engaging with the local business community. When the EDC asked what the library was doing to develop the local workforce, WINGS made a compelling case, and the EDC later issued a second grant specifically to fund the testing center. Trinity Valley Community College donated classroom space and technology for courses at no cost to the library after years of collaboration on adult education initiatives.

Expanding Opportunity

As enrollment increased, library staff began to notice another community challenge: Students who completed GED preparation often struggled to actually take the exam. The nearest testing centers were located outside the county, and waiting lists could stretch for months. For many students balancing work, transportation, and family responsibilities, those barriers prevented them from finishing the process.

Recognizing that need, library leadership began to explore the possibility of creating a local testing center. As Library Director Rebecca House put it, *"Knowing exactly what your community is looking for is going to be key because you don't want to put a lot of time and energy into creating a program that's really not what people want."* This was essential considering the many steps associated with opening up a separate testing center. In order to comply with testing rules, they couldn't test at the same location as they had taught classes.



Testing center exterior and interior. Photos courtesy of Hulsey Public Library.

Sometimes, the right opportunity can come from unexpected places: A city staff member offered the library the lease on Terrell's historic downtown train depot after a prior tenant fell through. After noise studies and approval from testing providers Pearson VUE and PSI, the depot became the home of the new testing center. With support from the EDC, the library launched the testing center in November 2024. The new center quickly became an important regional resource. Between October 2025 and April 2026, the facility administered more than 1,500 Pearson and PSI exams, with projections reaching 2,600 tests annually. In addition to GED testing, the center now supports professional certification and workforce exams across multiple industries.

Expanding Economic Opportunity - Plano Public Library - Plano, TX

Through both workforce development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and a host of economic development opportunities, Plano Public Library (PPL) fosters economic growth and bolsters individual achievement for the community.

Reaching Unique Populations

After building a reputation as a safe space for people with IDD, the library offered individuals with disabilities the chance to volunteer with tasks like shelving books. After the parent of a volunteer reached out about partnering with MyPossibilities, a nonprofit providing continuing education for people with cognitive disabilities, PPL worked with them to set up a program to help people with IDD prepare to join the workforce. Since 2021, the program has graduated 40 individuals.

The IDD workforce program runs in 8–12-week sessions, for two hours twice a week. Participants complete tasks chosen for transferability to outside employment, such as shelving, inventory, processing, and toy cleaning. They are supervised by a staff member who assigns work and provides training alongside a job coach from the partner organization. The program culminates in a graduation where graduates and families share their experiences on how rewarding the program has been for them.

One participant's story stands out: After being turned away from another library for shelving too slowly, a volunteer became fearful of libraries. After completing the PPL program, he came to love libraries again and subsequently gained employment at a local railway museum.



MyPossibilities participants and staff/coaches. Photo courtesy of Plano Public Library.

A Suite of Offerings

Beyond the PPL's workforce development program for people with IDD, its economic development programming spans formats and audiences. At the center is the TUES (Team Up for Entrepreneurial Success) Community, a monthly meetup on the fourth Tuesday of the month featuring outside speakers on topics from search-engine optimization (SEO) and digital marketing to franchising and financial literacy. The library also runs two to five additional business-focused events monthly, a Youth Entrepreneurship Academy for high schoolers in the summer, and Spanish-language programming and mentoring throughout the year. Physical and digital resources—such as business databases, free Udemy courses, 3D printers, digital creation spaces, and free Wi-Fi—are also accessible for the community. SCORE Dallas, a nonprofit supporting small businesses through education and community building, offers mentoring by appointment at three PPL locations; in its first year of mentoring, PPL facilitated roughly 26 appointments, more than doubling to over 55 appointments by year two. In 2025 alone, PPL reached over 2,470 community

members through in-person programming and logged more than 15,185 hours of digital engagement in workforce, business, and technology training.



Nonprofit networking. Photo courtesy of Plano Public Library.

Building the Partnerships

PPL's partnerships share a common thread: The library did not wait to be found. For entrepreneurship, PPL proactively reached out to SCORE Dallas after identifying a gap in its business programming; the relationship has grown over seven years into one of its most active collaborations. Once established, the Work Experience Program was sought out by Collin County's designated mental health authority Life Path and by

the Solomon Center, a Plano ISD transition school. Development Coordinator Kristin Linscott regularly attends community meetups for entrepreneurial and workforce groups on the library's behalf, making PPL a known and valued resource in Plano's broader support network. For other libraries, the PPL experience suggests that visibility and willingness to reach out are essential strategies to expand the library's economic value and engagement in the community.

Developing the Programs

PPL staff emphasize the importance of just getting started. *"We didn't walk into [workforce program development] knowing very much, but we've learned so much because of that feedback loop,"* said Jessica Rico, Programming and Engagement Librarian. *"You can start small and make an impact, and then scale up depending on the resources that you have in your staff and community,"* added Cecily Ponce de Leon, the Assistant Director of Libraries. That feedback loop is structured and deliberate: After each program cycle, PPL gathers input separately from participants, partner organizations, and staff, using all three perspectives to improve the next round. *"Including the input of the audience you are seeking to reach is important,"* Rico emphasized.

The broader lesson from PPL is that the library's position—free, trusted, and neutral—gives it unusual capacity to serve populations other institutions may overlook. *"We are a trusted collaborator in the community. As a neutral public entity, the library functions well as a community hub and a gathering space,"* says Ponce de Leon. The library does not compete with its partners but amplifies them and reaches people who might never otherwise walk through the door of a workforce agency or small business development center on their own.

A Slate of Education & Consulting Services - Harris County Public Library - Harris County, TX

Highlighting four programs for their role in supporting the education and economic advancement of unique and underserved populations, Harris County Public Library (HCPL) demonstrates the range of ways a public library can meet community members at transformative moments in their lives.

Career Online High School (COHS)

COHS offers adults an accredited, self-paced path to a high school diploma alongside a career certificate in a field of their choice. The program came together when the COHS organization reached out to HCPL at the same time the library was hearing from adult patrons asking about diploma and GED options. With an existing adult literacy program already in place for over a decade, adding COHS was a natural extension. The library funds scholarships that cover the cost of instruction for some students.



COHS graduates. Photo courtesy of Harris County Public Library.

The program has been running for over four years across all 27 HCPL locations. Applications are open on a rolling basis, with participants given 18 months to complete the coursework at their own pace. Applicants complete some prerequisite work before receiving a scholarship. One coordinator manages the program system-wide and organizes the annual graduation event; a designated staff liaison at each branch supports enrolled students, checking in on both coursework and any outside circumstances that might be affecting student progress. Community partners include Union Pacific, which has funded the graduation event for several years, and the Carnegie Foundation, whose grant last year added scholarship funding alongside ESL support—an opportunity identified by HCPL's Research & Development director as a direct match to existing work. Graduates have followed up with their libraries to report college acceptances and new jobs. Across 330 sessions, 71 graduates have finished the program.

FutureU

FutureU is a college and career navigation service that helps patrons with college applications, FAFSA (financial aid for higher education applications), job applications, certifications, and employment connections. It serves all ages and operates in library branches, community spaces, and online by appointment. The program originated through Harris County Precinct 2, which identified college and career navigation as an unmet need in the community and saw the library as a natural place to address it. Harris County invested approximately \$1.2 million, primarily for staffing, and brought in United for

College and Career Success (UFCS) as a consultant to help HCPL find its footing. UFCS primarily works in schools; HCPL's version of the program can serve anyone who walks in.

The 10-person team was hired deliberately, with each member bringing complementary expertise. One came from the Texas Workforce Commission, another had experience as an application and writing tutor. Led by FutureU Manager Kwon Bill, staff operate in geographic zones across the county's 27 branches, going out to job fairs, classrooms, and community centers rather than waiting for patrons to come in. They also assist unhoused residents, making connections to help people stabilize their situations. Additional partnerships have formed organically through this outreach. Through over 180 events and nearly 1,300 appointments, FutureU has served thousands of community members. As the Division Director of Programs, Partnerships, and Outreach, Linda Stevens described it: *"As you get out and do the work, you meet other people in the ecosystem and you make those connections... once you get moving [in developing the program], those connections are made much more easily."*

ESL Program

HCPL has offered free ESL instruction for at least 20 years. Over its two decades in operation, community growth needs have stretched the program's capacity due to Harris County's expansive language diversity. It began as a grassroots effort where volunteers were trained to lead classes while the library provided curriculum, training, and administrative infrastructure. Over time, as demand grew, staff took on teaching roles alongside volunteers. The program now operates at all 27 locations, offering multiple proficiency levels, structured classes, conversation classes, and citizenship preparation.

Structured classes follow the Step Forward curriculum system-wide, a consolidation made after an earlier period of fragmentation across too many different materials. Conversation classes use News for You, a current-events resource that instructors adapt to class interests; these classes often develop into ongoing community hubs where participants return even after becoming proficient in English. A Coordinator for Adult Literacy Services oversees training



ESL class. Photo courtesy of Harris County Public Library.

and supports staff and volunteers across all locations. Where the volunteer base is limited, grant-funded staff fill the gap, scheduling classes in the evenings and on weekends to reach learners whose schedules require it. A Houston Endowment grant funded 10 dedicated ESL and citizenship staff across library buildings and community centers; that funding ends May 2027, and HCPL hopes to receive funding to retain those positions given the program's reach. A Carnegie Foundation grant provides additional ESL

support. HCPL tracks citizenship outcomes and hears regularly from patrons who have completed their naturalization interviews. Since 2024, over 32,000 students have attended ESL classes.

LAWPods

LAWPods are sound-dampened legal access workspaces installed at HCPL branches where patrons can access legal forms and databases, conduct private research, and receive one-on-one consultations and referrals from Harris County Law Library staff, all at no cost. The program came together through a partnership rather than a HCPL initiative. Harris County Law Library, a separate county entity that has

historically served attorneys from a downtown location, received a grant to purchase and deploy the pods, and under a new director with a public-facing mission, approached HCPL to provide space in its branches.



A LAWPod. Photo courtesy of Harris County Public Library.

Placement was deliberate: Pods were sited at branches near court facilities, so that people already navigating the legal system have nearby access to support without an additional trip across a large county. For residents in the outskirts of Harris County, traveling downtown where parking is costly and distances are long has historically been a significant barrier to accessing legal help. HCPL provides the space while Harris County Law Library provides the staffing and expertise. Together, the community benefits from free legal support and resources.

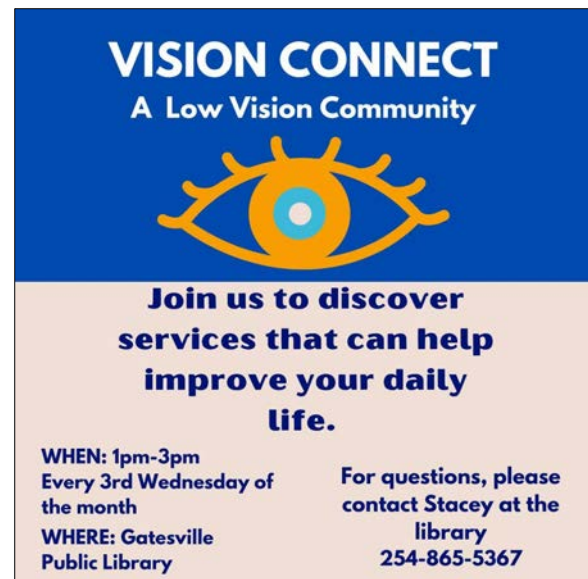
Vision Connect - Gatesville Public Library - Gatesville, TX

Gatesville Public Library has a small North-Central Texas service area of 8,000 and a staff of seven people. The library was founded in 1936 and built by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression. Its current director, Shea Harp, grew up in the area and started at the library when she was an 8-year-old volunteer. *“I didn’t want to participate in the library’s story time anymore, and I approached the library director, and she said, well, if you don’t want to do story time, you need to volunteer. And so that’s what I did, because I didn’t want to be in a room full of preschoolers.”*

Vision Connect

Harp’s vision for her library is focused on building community by providing resources needed by Gatesville residents. When a regular library patron began losing her eyesight a couple of years ago and became frustrated by the lack of resources for people with vision impairments in the area, Harp jumped in to explore services that the library could provide. Harp surveyed optometrists in town and confirmed that a program that reduced the isolation experienced by people with vision impairment, combined with access to services, could work at the library. Harp and her staff made program flyers in big block letters and took them to optometrists, hospitals, assisted living homes, and rehab facilities around Gatesville.

The result was Vision Connect, a low-vision support group that meets once a month at the library. Vision Connect brings in guest speakers and service providers from across the state and U.S. to educate patrons who may be experiencing vision loss, and their caretakers, about how to overcome everyday challenges. For instance, Texas Workforce Commission staff have trained the group on how to use a cane properly, how to prepare food in a microwave safely, how to use a cellphone, and how to apply for a guide dog. Patrons, usually about 10 per month plus a few caregivers, come not only from around Gatesville, but from as far away as Waco and Temple as the program grows by word of mouth.



Support group flyer. Image courtesy of Gatesville Public Library.

Beyond Services, Community

Harp has invested her modest program budget in materials from Vox Books that have an audio feature and large print, a Braille activity book from the Texas State Library and Archive Commission that allows patrons to understand how Braille works, and a mobile screen-reader. *“I am proud of our small but growing low-vision book collection, which is actually larger than other libraries in the region,”* Harp said.

The Vision Connect program is run by an energetic patron, her popular guide dog Cadbury, and Caitlin Wafford, a part-time program clerk at the library. Meeting once a month, for now, feels about right to Harp and Wofford, given how difficult travel to the library can be for participants. Donations from the

Friends of the Gatesville Library pay for snacks; beyond that, the library hasn't approached other city departments or businesses for support or sponsorships.

While monthly meetings are organized around a speaker or training, Harp believes that the community aspect of the group is just as important as skills building. *"Vision Connect has become a community over time. Our patrons feel uplifted when they come. They've developed friendships through the program."* Harp definitely senses improvements in the quality of life for several attendees. *"Some were very isolated when they started. Now they have friends and talk regularly outside of meetings. They know we care about them, too. One patron had to miss three months in a row, but they called before each meeting to let the library know they couldn't make it, it was that important to them,"* Harp says.

Impacts

Besides building a sense of community among program participants, there have been other positive impacts. *"We've been surprised by the number of caregivers—who by and large are family members or neighbors—who have reported that their loved ones are more confident being on their own, which has enabled the caretakers to take much-needed time off for errands or rest,"* Harp says.

After one monthly meeting that featured how to navigate a big box store on their own, one of the patrons told Harp that on her next visit to Walmart, she felt confident enough to leave her daughter in one section of the store while she navigated another section by herself. Hearing other people's tips and tricks convinced her she could do it, Harp shared.

Harp is convinced that her library is the perfect place for a program like Vision Connect. Gatesville, she says, doesn't have many other nonprofits with a physical building that is as comfortable and convenient. *"Libraries are meant to be spaces to gather and connect. We are not selling services. Vision Connect's goal is to never charge patrons for this. Folks know they won't be charged for our programs when they come to the library, they know they won't hear pitches or advertisements."*

Food Bank Access - Lewisville Public Library - Lewisville, TX

Lewisville Public Library is a medium-sized, single-location facility with a staff of 46 and a service area of 140,880 residents in Lewisville. It is large enough, though, that it can offer library cards to any Texas resident. Kelly Brouillard, Lewisville Library Services Manager, says many of the library's patrons come from across Denton County, even from the farther reaches of the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. One of the reasons this library thrives is that it is seen by residents in southern Denton County and beyond as a community anchor in ways that may not be initially obvious.

Tarrant Area Food Bank North

One of Lewisville Public Library's special programs is a partnership with the Tarrant Area Food Bank North (TAFB). When library patrons think about food banks, what naturally comes to mind are soup kitchens, food pantries, and canned food drives. But when Brouillard received a request last year from TAFB's Community Resource Specialist, Zahira Alcantara, the focus of their conversation wasn't exactly related to food delivery. Besides offering food assistance in a 13-county area in North Texas, TAFB's mission is to help individuals and families apply for and renew their public benefit programs like SNAP, CHIP, TANF, Healthy Texas Woman, Medicaid, and Medicare Savings Program. Alcantara needed a community partner to provide meeting space for one-hour interviews with applicants in a quiet, confidential space that was safe and easy to access. Brouillard loved the fit with her mission to make Lewisville Public Library a community hub. She immediately agreed.

Since June 2025, library patrons and area residents have been able to make an appointment to meet with a TAFB Community Resource Specialist like Alcantara in the library. She schedules meetings with clients during her once-a-month visit to the library and is usually able to meet with 4-5 applicants per visit. Alcantara said that, for TAFB, the partnership is a great fit. *"Anyone can go to the library, and most of our clients are already familiar with where it is. It's a good central location, with a kids' area to play in while moms and dads meet with me."* Brouillard agrees. *"From the library's viewpoint, we have great infrastructure like meeting space and wi-fi. Serving our community in this way was super appealing."*

Minimal Cost, Maximum Impact

Brouillard says the library's direct cost to provide meeting space for TAFB's outreach is negligible. *"We help with marketing and advertising the service on the library's calendar, the adult services program page on our website, and on our social media, and we put up posters and flyers in English and Spanish around the library, but otherwise our partnership with TAFB requires no library staff time."* In addition, the library's bilingual librarian, Brouillard says,

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Se requiere identificación para inscribirse y recibir beneficios estatales.

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Food bank flyer. Image courtesy of Lewisville Public Library.

“does a great job of promoting and referring to programs like this when she is assisting our Spanish-speaking library patrons.”

Karina Verdin, TAFB North’s Agency Services & Store Donation Coordinator, manages relationships with 84 community partners in the area like Lewisville Public Library. The meeting space that the library provides—quiet, comfortable, and confidential—is at a premium among her other partner locations.

“Usually, food pantries are busy and loud, and space—any space—is at a premium. We couldn’t do the kind of outreach we do with the library at many other partner locations.” She adds that when Alcantara visits the library she’s a welcomed, familiar face and known by library staff and patrons as “the Food Bank Lady.”

What’s Next

TAFB North’s Alcantara believes that the collaboration with Lewisville Public Library has been so successful, after only a year, that she can expand the number of appointment times at the library in the coming months. *“In fact, I’ve already approached three other libraries in Roanoke, The Colony, and Carrollton about partnerships there. What we’ve begun with Lewisville could absolutely be successful at other libraries.”* Brouillard thinks that starting a special program like this one at a library works so well because the partnership started small, and communication was clear. *“From the start, we wanted to understand what TAFB North’s goals and objectives were for the collaboration, and how those aligned with the library’s mission. And we started small. Sometimes we’ll get requests from groups who want to do things every week, but starting slowly and building on success is a great tactic for us. We’re good at experimenting.”*

Digital and Financial Literacy Programs - Hondo Public Library - Hondo, TX

Hondo Public Library serves a small community that sits on the southern edge of the Texas Hill Country to the west of San Antonio, with a service area of 8,600. Like many towns near major metropolitan areas, the City of Hondo feels the slow push and pull of urban growth while wanting to retain the quality of life that long-time residents appreciate and love.

Economic Future

Library Director Elsie Purcell sees a role for her library to play in workforce training that the City of Hondo needs in order to demonstrate to young people that they have an economic future in the city and region. In addition, *“I recognize from Census Bureau data that Hondo has a poverty rate that’s slightly higher than the state average, and we have a lot of residents who have very little knowledge about how to use a computer. As the world moves more and more online, it’s important that our library try to help people navigate that world.”*

In 2023, and following the pandemic, Purcell had grown frustrated that attendance in her Microsoft Office digital literacy classes had dropped off after a 9-year run. She tried adjusting the time and day that she offered the classes. She also switched her financial literacy classes to 1-on-1 sessions to try to make patrons more comfortable talking about financial hurdles. She was running a relatively successful “Thinking Money” program for kids that used American Library Association (ALA) provided games and brought in local bankers to teach financial literacy. Overall, participation numbers in her programs were low and steady, but the programs weren’t growing. Then in 2025, Purcell received an ALA “Connecting Communities” grant to expand her offerings. Recognizing, she says, that *“only about a quarter of the people in the Hondo area have internet at home,”* Purcell used grant funds to expand the library’s existing Wi-Fi “hotspot” loan program for home internet access. She bought two laptops to give away as incentives to attend her monthly classes, and she expanded the library’s holdings of financial literacy books.

The result was not only a modest increase in class attendance (up to 5-6 people a month), but a much closer relationship with area partners with whom she worked to run class sessions on workforce development, financial literacy, and career development that dovetailed with the economic growth engines in the region. Guest presenters included representatives from the Federal Reserve Bank, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the U.S. Air Force, and San Antonio’s renowned CyberPatriot program. Purcell was especially excited about using CyberPatriot teachers who were already running programs in Hondo and in

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- **12/09/2025** Digital & Financial Literacy
Tuesday "Using Your Online Banking Tools"

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Library classes flyer. Image courtesy of Hondo Public Library.

Medina Valley schools. *“I feel like the library is now part of a city-wide effort to reach our kids early, and keep them local. With the data centers that are being planned and built in Medina County, digital literacy is more important than ever for young people. Learning how to access online information, and search the internet safely and productively, is such an important skill.”*

Life After Grant Funding

The ALA grant period is over now, but Purcell plans to keep offering the financial and digital literacy classes this fall. With a full-time staff of five, she believes the library can handle it. *“The real trick is getting the people who need our classes to actually realize they need it and show up.”* To reach them, she advertises using local radio, local newspaper ads, the library’s monthly newsletter, social media, signs around the library, and flyers posted around town. *“Word of mouth is important, too. We hope that the new library patrons who attended our grant-supported classes and programs will tell their friends and family about us.”* She estimates that half of program participants during the 2025 grant period were drawn to the library for the first time and became card-carrying members. The programs, of course, were free of charge, but *“some attendees were so pleased with the programs afterwards that they were willing to pay our small out-of-service-area library card fee,”* she says.

For other library directors thinking about starting digital and financial literacy programs, she believes that it is important to continuously reiterate that there are limits to the advice that library staff and guest presenters can give. *“For people seeking financial literacy help, we as library staff need to be aware of the fact that we’re dealing with people’s private information and advise them that there are limits to our expertise.”* The same applies to digital literacy. *“Our staff are well trained in computer technology, but program participants should understand our limitations. We’re happy to help them get started.”*

Adult Basic Education - Harrie P. Woodson Memorial Library - Caldwell, TX

Heidi Frazier, Director of the Harrie P. Woodson Memorial Library, is passionate about the role libraries can and should play in delivering adult basic education (ABE). The COVID-19 pandemic, and then federal budget cuts, upset the delivery model for people hoping to complete their GED or in need of English Language Learning (ELL) classes in Caldwell, a town of 5,200 in Burleson County. Frazier, and the library's full-time ABE Coordinator, Paris Chandler, are convinced that their library, with its staff of five, can improve basic literacy levels and life outcomes for some of the most marginalized people in their community.

Recognizing Community Need

"I had a romanticized notion of literacy before I worked as a librarian," Frazier says. "I used to think that the only people who couldn't read were farmers who weren't able to finish school past third grade. The reality is, a typical GED student is someone with a story: the person who dropped out of school to be a caregiver for a relative, or someone who's been incarcerated, or a person with a learning disability, or a disconnected youth with no trusted adults in their lives."

Frazier embraces the strong connection between the need for literacy services in her community and the fundamental role that public libraries play. *"If nothing else, libraries are about spreading and encouraging literacy skills in any community,"* she says. Recent data support her position: A [public opinion poll among Texans](#)⁵⁵ in late 2025 commissioned by the Texas Library Association found that, among all services provided by public libraries in the state, supporting academic success and career development are the top two most important.



Adult education program participants. Photos courtesy of Harrie P. Woodson Memorial Library.

Filling Gaps

Almost 5 years ago, Blinn Junior College had a contract with Brazos Valley Council of Governments to deliver GED and ELL classes and was looking for a building in Caldwell for class meetings. Frazier had a more expansive vision: *"We said, well, if we're going to do this, we don't want just to provide the building, we want to help recruit students. We want to help enroll them. We want to provide extra education. So that's what we did, we offered our courses with them in our library, they offered others outside the county, it was a good model."*

⁵⁵ See: <https://txla.org/news/texans-strongly-support-public-libraries-according-to-new-poll/>

Since then, Education Service Center Region 6 has taken over the contract but has been forced to reduce the number of ABE classes it offers because of severe budget cuts. Frazier has stepped in to help. Today, Harrie P. Woodson Memorial Library, with its \$2,000-a-year program budget supplied by the city, offers 3 GED and 3 ELL classes per year, all in its facility, with rolling enrollment.

Personal Touch

ABE coordinator Paris Chandler has a background in youth development and a passion for successful learning strategies. He has applied the skills he honed with youth to helping adult learners at Woodson. *“Human contact is the most important determinant of successful outcomes,”* Chandler says, so he and other Woodson staff stay focused on helping their students “over the wall.” Chandler also teaches one of the library’s three GED courses and acts almost as a guidance counselor to all of their students. Frazier adds, *“When I started our program five years ago, I went to a conference by Literacy Texas, and the keynote speaker said the number one determiner of a successful program is not the curriculum. It is not the teacher, per se. It is not how many hours the students put in. It’s human contact, and that’s what we provide.”* Chandler creates individualized learning plans for every student and closely tracks their progress, and because every student is required to put in two hours in the library’s computer lab each week, he added, *“I’m around the students a lot. Not everyone graduates, people drop out and come back to us, there’s a pattern. But our approach definitely improves their chances.”*

Success Stories

Frazier and Chandler report averaging about 25 students in the library’s GED program per year; in 2025, 7 students graduated (since its inception over four years ago, the ABE program has graduated 20 GED students in all). Among the success stories was a troubled 17-year-old GED student who they paired with a mentor. The student eventually passed his GED, strengthened his life skills in another program in the area, and most recently was working at Goodwill and regularly borrowing books from the library. Another graduate was promoted as the general manager of a Whataburger.

Woodson’s ELL program has 10–15 students currently enrolled, and two of their ELL students have gone on to earn their U.S. citizenship.

Workforce Education

Frazier believes that a greater focus on workforce education classes is a logical next step. *“Younger ABE students too often just stop after obtaining their GED,”* so she is talking with community businesses about their labor force needs. *“There are simply no other adult education courses offered in Burleson County, and College Station is 30 miles away and too far to commute for many of our students,”* she says. She sees her library sponsoring more adult workforce training classes locally. *“Having the GED is not enough to be successful in today’s economy, which is why workforce education is so important.”*

Whatever the future holds for these programs, Frazier urges other library directors to form coalitions with community organizations. *“Make sure you are not duplicating effort,”* she says, *“but form coalitions with others who are doing similar work. Whatever the challenge is, in the end, it’s about reading and the role that our library plays as a literacy center in our community.”*

Toolshed Community Program - Speer Memorial Library - Mission, TX

Less than three years old, Speer Memorial Library's Toolshed Community Program has already brought in new patrons to the 110-year-old library and made an outsized contribution to the City of Mission's "Keeping Mission Beautiful" initiative.

How it Started

Library Director Yenni Espinoza, a career librarian, credits the library's collaboration with the city and business partnerships for sustaining Speer's tool lending program. With a yearly budget of \$2,000 from the City, and donations of equipment and funds from local hardware stores and banks to maintain and replace tools when needed, the program makes lawn and garden equipment like power tools, mowers, and trimmers available to city residents. Espinoza began the program after hearing about a health department elsewhere in the state doing something similar. Her hope was that starting a new initiative at her library would expand its reach into the community.



Toolshed vehicle. Photo courtesy of Speer Memorial Public Library.

Why it Works

Espinoza believes, as many librarians do, that her library serves as a community hub in Mission, TX, and that she'll support whatever strategy works to get residents acquainted with the library and reading more. In addition, a tool lending program was a natural fit for Speer Memorial because it had an inventory system already in place for tracking books, so why not expand that to tools and lawn equipment? *"By offering this program,"* says Espinoza, *"the library helps residents maintain clean and safe properties, reduces the financial burden of purchasing expensive equipment, and strengthens community pride. It also expands the library's role as a valuable community resource that supports practical needs and neighborhood well-being."*

Partnerships Are Key

The City of Mission had begun a beautification initiative that involved a number of city departments, including Permits, Health, Legal, Water, and Parks and Recreation, so Espinoza had plenty of help in designing a sustainable plan for Speer Memorial. The Parks and Recreation Department, in particular, continues to play a key role in the Toolshed program, training the Speer Memorial staff in how the equipment operates and occasionally repairing a lawnmower motor or two. *"All of my staff of 26, not just the folks in the Circulation Department, are trained on how the equipment operates, so they can step in and serve a library patron when needed."*

Moving Ahead

Today, the library loans out 30–40 pieces of equipment for up to two days, although many borrowers return their items within a couple of hours, knowing that others in the city of 134,000 are relying on the program to maintain their lawns. Over the past two years, the library has averaged 173 equipment loans per year and is already outpacing its average in 2026. Since Toolshed began, only one single late fee has been imposed and only one piece of equipment (a leaf blower) has gone missing.

Espinoza is encouraged by the new energy and community involvement that Toolshed has brought to her library. *“Building the program put us back on the map in Mission. Libraries aren’t just for young families or seniors. We are more than just books.”* Her advice to library directors starting a program like this is not to be afraid to try something new to get people in the door. *“New programs should attract new patrons, and ours has done that.”* She also credits “good rules and good partnerships” with city officials for the program’s success, listening to others in the community about local needs and then trying to fill them.

Community Buy-In - Comanche Public Library - Comanche, TX

Upon reopening after the COVID-19 pandemic, Comanche Public Library saw a transformation of its service offerings, including an annual festival with 200 people in attendance from its community of 4,000, as it transitioned from a “book-centric” to a “community-centric” library.

Offering New Events

After taking up the directorship of the Comanche Public Library, Deborah Hanson led the creation of four annual events that stand out among the rest when it comes to community turnout. "Saturday with Santa" brings in families to create Christmas crafts, get goodie bags for the kids, and take pictures with a community member—sometimes the Chief of Police—who dresses as Santa Claus. "Turkey Tuesday" involves decorating edible treats, making paper crafts, and singing festive songs. It started small, drawing in 11 participants in its first year, and 84 people by its third year. The library also hosts an Earth Day festival in partnership with Neighborhood Forest, a national organization that sends free trees to registered children, alongside vendors including the Boy Scouts, the state forestry department, Master Naturalist volunteers, and a gardening club. Finally, a charity mini golf tournament converts the entire 2,700-square-foot library into a 19-hole course, raising roughly \$5,000 in net proceeds annually.

Coming Up With Ideas

Most events grew organically from Hanson's instinct for what would resonate locally. Turkey Tuesday, for instance, was simply an idea she liked and built out from there. The Earth Day festival expanded by reaching broadly into the community and asking organizations what they could contribute. The mini golf events were inspired by an article about how another library hosted one. Hanson tests ideas informally by talking to patrons as they come in, then scales up based on responses.



Child and family programming. Photos courtesy of Comanche Public Library.

Cultivating Partnerships

In a town of 4,000, relationship-building is direct. Hanson approached Texas Bank's president because she banks there. She walked the town square asking businesses to post flyers. She attended community events, joined the Chamber of Commerce board, served on other local boards, and made a point of spending money at businesses that support the library. Staff member Angie Evans, who grew up in Comanche, leveraged existing ties to the school district that Hanson had found harder to establish from scratch. The through-line across all of this is what Angie described as treating the community as "an entire ecosystem" and investing in partners' priorities as opposed to just soliciting their support.

Advocating for the Library

Hanson founded the Advocates of Comanche County Libraries in 2023, a county-wide friends group structured explicitly to benefit any library in Comanche County, not just her own. When the director of the De Leon library passed away and closure was considered, the Advocates intervened. The group has since helped to fund holiday programming and is working toward a bookmobile. Hanson frames sponsorship requests around concrete deliverables, such as a detailed list of craft supplies and costs, a 2x8-foot banner in the library window for two weeks, so sponsors understand both the community benefit and the visibility they receive in return.

Dividends

The returns have compounded over time. A local museum that once competed with the library over genealogy club materials eventually became a collaborator and, upon the disbanding of the genealogy club, the museum ended up recommending that the club split its remaining funds between the library and the local museum—a gift that would not have materialized without years of relationship repair. The Chamber of Commerce now cross-promotes library events to its full business membership.

SECTION 6

Communicating the Value of Public Libraries

Storytelling, Community Engagement, and ROI



This section summarizes best practices for communicating the value of public libraries, with attention to storytelling, ROI, and the library's value proposition to its community. It contains useful communications strategies for library leadership to pursue in conveying the economic value of libraries to city councils, county commissioners, and the public. It draws on research and established practice and references some of the programs contained in the library profiles in Section 5 to illustrate ways of persuasively using economic impact in communicating the value of libraries locally.

Pairing Data With Narrative

A central finding across communication research is that quantitative evidence and narratives serve different functions, and they are most effective in combination.

- Data establishes credibility and scale.
- Narrative provides the specific, human context that makes the data meaningful to an audience.

The mechanism is documented in neuroscience and persuasion research. Character-driven stories that follow a person through a challenge prompt the release of oxytocin, a neurochemical associated with empathy and trust, which in turn increases the likelihood that an audience will act on what it has heard. Comparable effects are not observed for statistical information presented on its own.^{56,57} Related research finds that a listener's neural activity begins to align with the speaker's neural activity during a narrative, which helps explain why a single account of an individual experience is often retained more readily than aggregate numbers.⁵⁸ The sequence of sharing data and stories is also an important consideration: research supports sharing a story first to establish context, and following it with the supporting data as confirmation.⁵⁹

For example, a budget presentation or funding pitch might open with the experience of a local resident who completed a GED credential and obtained employment, followed by the return (ROI) that the relevant program generates for each public dollar invested. Statewide figures are generally more persuasive when expressed in local terms, since a county commissioner or council member is more directly concerned with the ROI to a specific jurisdiction than with a statewide total.

Communicating Benefits and Features

A widely used principle from the value-proposition literature distinguishes between a feature and a benefit. A feature is a *service or activity* an organization provides. A benefit is the *change* that service produces in the

⁵⁶ Zak, P. J. (2014, October 28). Why your brain loves good storytelling. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2014/10/why-your-brain-loves-good-storytelling>

⁵⁷ Zak, P. J. (2015). Why inspiring stories make us react: The neuroscience of narrative. *Cerebrum*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4445577/>

⁵⁸ Stephens, G. J., Silbert, L. J., & Hasson, U. (2010). Speaker–listener neural coupling underlies successful communication. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 107(32), 14425–14430. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1008662107>

⁵⁹ On structuring messages as concrete, narrative units to aid retention, see: Heath, C. & Heath, D. (2007). *Made to stick: Why some ideas survive and others die*. Random House. On application to libraries specifically, see: McDowell, K. (2025). *Critical data storytelling for libraries*. ALA Editions.

circumstances of the people it serves. The distinction is frequently underused in public-sector communication, where messaging often catalogues services rather than describing outcomes.^{60,61}

Stating a feature and then the benefit it produces clarifies the message. The library profiles in this report provide examples:

Feature: Hulsey Public Library in Terrell operates a GED testing center through its WINGS program.

Benefit: Residents of Kaufman County can complete the credentialing process locally rather than waiting months and traveling outside the county to test, a barrier that had previously prevented many from finishing. The center administered more than 1,500 exams in its first six months.

Feature: Speer Memorial Library in Mission lends lawn and garden equipment through its Toolshed program.

Benefit: Residents maintain their properties without the cost of purchasing equipment, and the city's beautification initiative advances. The library director noted that the program demonstrated how the library is more than a source of books.

Feature: Gatesville Public Library hosts Vision Connect, a monthly group for residents experiencing vision loss and impairments.

Benefit: Participants regain a degree of independence and social connection, and the family members who serve as their caregivers gain time for other responsibilities.

In each case, the feature identifies the program, and the benefit identifies the outcome. Presenting information in this way is extremely effective and has greater impact on stakeholders.

Developing the Stories That Already Exist

The library profiles compiled for this report indicate that documented accounts of community impact are already present across the state. Hulsey's WINGS program developed from a single literacy class into a full GED testing center located in a restored downtown train depot. Speer Memorial's Toolshed program established a new role for the library in Mission. Gatesville's Vision Connect serves residents experiencing vision loss. Comanche Public Library built four annual events into a central feature of community life in a town of 4,000. Each profile has material that can be developed into a narrative. Drawing on their own programs and services, library leaders could identify similar opportunities for communicating value to local stakeholders. There are two key communications tasks here:

1. Develop library profiles into structured narratives, each organized around an individual, a need, and an outcome.

⁶⁰ Osterwalder, A. & Pigneur, Y., Bernada, G., Smith, A. & Papadakoz, T. (2014, October) *Value proposition design: How to create products and services customers want*. Wiley.

⁶¹ Pogue, G.P. (2022). *Creating a customer-centric value proposition*. IC² Institute, The University of Texas at Austin.

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2. Identify additional stories of outcomes/impacts, which most libraries possess but have not systematically recorded. Use brief interviews with patrons, partner organizations, and program participants to gather this information.

Collecting such accounts on a regular schedule throughout the year, rather than only when a funding decision is imminent, allows a library to maintain a reserve of documented examples for use in advocacy and public communication.

Four Channels for Community Engagement

Stories and supporting data reach audiences through four communication channels. Effective communication programs generally use all four rather than relying on any single one.

Digital

The digital channel is the most expansive in scope and the most accessible in cost. It includes:

- A library's website and social media presence
- Short-form video distributed through existing platforms that already reach the library's audiences
- Earned placement in online community forums, local news sites, and statewide publications
- Occasional paid digital placement for targeted campaigns.

Digital communication also includes thought leadership: library directors contributing written pieces to civic and professional publications, participating in community conversations online, and positioning their institutions as credible voices on education, economic development, and community wellbeing.

The consistent finding in practice is that **regular publication of authentic, locally produced content outperforms infrequent, high-production campaigns**. Libraries that maintain a steady presence over time—sharing patron accounts, program updates, and data with a human face—build cumulative recognition that a periodic campaign cannot replicate.

For example, Milwaukee Public Library's communication program, built around community stories and program outcomes rather than institutional announcements, has received recognition in library communication circles as an example of this approach applied at an urban library scale. Mychal Threats, a library director whose short-form video content reached audiences far beyond his institution's local community, demonstrated that an individual voice grounded in genuine service can generate reach that institutional marketing rarely achieves.

The point is not that every director needs a public following; it is that authentic voice consistently outperforms polished messaging, and that digital platforms give libraries the ability to distribute that voice at no significant cost. Free production tools place this channel within the capacity of libraries of any size. What requires investment is not equipment but discipline: a consistent publishing schedule, a clear sense of audience, and content organized around outcomes rather than service announcements.

Media Partnerships

Libraries can extend their reach substantially by partnering with organizations whose function is producing and distributing stories. Local journalists, documentary filmmakers, public radio and television stations, and community communications professionals bring audiences, distribution networks, and credibility that libraries cannot independently access. **A story told through a trusted local outlet carries different weight than the same story told through the library's own channels.**

The same principle operates at smaller scale through co-authored op-eds with partner organizations, guest columns in local newspapers, joint announcements that place library programming in contexts the community already follows, and co-hosted events with civic partners.

Events

Events bring residents into the library and create occasions for engagement. Their communicative value increases when the event mixes education and entertainment, as in community events that pair a public activity with information about available programs and services. Events additionally generate photographs, participant accounts, and other material that supports the digital and media-partnership channels.

Direct Relationship Building

Firsthand experience and individualized outreach are powerful. Inviting decision-makers to observe library programs in operation provides a form of evidence that written material cannot. An elected official who has observed a GED class or a children's program acquires a direct understanding of the library's function, and the visit provides an occasion for the official to be publicly associated with the institution. Timing is a significant factor. Relationships established before a funding decision is under consideration are more durable than appeals initiated after a reduction has been proposed. Within direct relationship-building, it is appropriate to present the economic findings of this report directly, in local terms, to the officials responsible for local budgets.

The four communication channels are mutually reinforcing. An event produces material for the digital channel; a media partnership extends the reach of that material; a relationship developed through a site visit can lead to further partnerships. Community engagement is most effective as a continuous practice across all four channels rather than as a single periodic effort.

Maintaining a Story Database

Effective library communicators treat stories about the positive impact of library programs, services, and offerings as an ongoing inventory. The practice of developing and maintaining a story database has three parts.

1. **Identify assets:** the stories a library already holds. These include documented program outcomes, patron accounts, partnership results, and data with a human face. Collecting these on a regular schedule throughout the year, rather than only when a deadline is approaching, gives a library something to draw on rather than scramble for.

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2. **Recognize opportunities.** An emerging program, a new partner, or a milestone in a community member's trajectory can become a story before it becomes a statistic. The director who tracks these moments in real time has material that a director focused only on information like this for annual reports does not.
 3. **Assess liabilities.** These might include communication liabilities, such as operational and political risks (a pending budget vote) or a challenge to a library program, a period of declining usage, or circumstances in which the absence of a proactive narrative leaves an institution without the standing to respond effectively. A library that maintains current communication assets is better positioned when a challenge arrives than one attempting to build a case after the challenge has materialized.

Public-interest organizations, including libraries, should treat storytelling as a standing institutional function rather than an intermittent campaign, and the accumulation of material over time produces a library of evidence that single examples cannot.

Brief interviews with patrons, program participants, and partner organizations provide the raw material for a story database. A library that builds the habit of capturing these accounts produces over time a reserve of documented cases that is available for use in budget presentations, grant applications, and other purposes.

The strategies summarized here are well established in the communication, value-proposition, and community-engagement literatures, and the profiles in this report indicate that many are already in use among Texas libraries.

Conclusion

Using quantitative and qualitative methods, this report has examined the significant economic contributions that public libraries make to the Texas economy. It is very true that public libraries have intrinsic value that is hard to quantify. What, after all, is the value one could place on literacy promotion for a local resident, in a community, or for democracy more broadly? But in an era of tight public budgets, and to be accountable to the taxpayers who fund those budgets, being able to estimate the economic value of public libraries can add a valuable and effective perspective on the important roles that libraries play in their communities.

At every step, the research team has used conservative analytical techniques to avoid inflating the results. Especially in the Services section of this report, we have chosen commonly used library services to analyze and have explicitly presented the arithmetic and econometric calculations we employed in the analysis. In Appendix B, the reader can see summaries of other state-level economic impact studies, and how the results of this study fall squarely in a mid-range of other state-level ROI studies.

We hope that the profiles of particular library programs and services presented here have provided some color and nuance to what can sometimes come across as dry economic analysis. Some of the data collected here highlights the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced the closure of libraries for a year or more and accelerated the adoption of digital and virtual technologies by libraries and patrons alike. We trust that all of the library programs and services noted highlight the human aspect of this analysis and make vivid what can be hidden behind the numbers—that libraries are important and valuable community hubs for small towns and big cities across the state of Texas.

Appendices



Appendix A: Public Library Director Survey Instrument



Texas Public Library ROI Study

The Texas Library Association (TLA) has contracted with JBK Economics Group to conduct a Return on Investment (ROI) study analyzing public library funding, usage, and community impact. The purpose of this survey is to collect information about programs and services that are not included in the annual TSLAC accreditation report.

Your answers to the questions below will be kept confidential and anonymous, and nothing you report here will be attributed to you or your library.

1. What is the population of your library's legal service area? Please choose from the available population ranges, based on your response in the 2024 TSLAC Texas Public Libraries Annual Report, if applicable.

- ☐ 1,000,000 or more
- ☐ 500,000-999,999
- ☐ 250,000-499,999
- ☐ 100,000-249,999
- ☐ 50,000-99,999
- ☐ 10,001-49,999
- ☐ Under 10,000

2. Your library may provide a range of library services and resources for self-employed individuals, entrepreneurs, small- and medium-sized businesses, job seekers, and members of your local business community. Please rate the patron usage of each service listed below.

	<u>Not Provided</u>	<u>Low Usage</u>	<u>Moderate Usage</u>	<u>Regular Usage</u>	<u>High Usage</u>
Business periodicals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Business-related programs or workshops	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Job application assistance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Directories of businesses (local, state, or national)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Economic and/or demographic data, statistics	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Specific business-related databases	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Small-business, self-employed tax information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Other Business Services (please describe briefly and specify amount of usage)

3. Your library may offer programs, services, and resources to help connect patrons to community social, legal, governmental, and health services. Please rate patron usage of each service listed below.

	<u>Not Provided</u>	<u>Low Usage</u>	<u>Moderate Usage</u>	<u>Regular Usage</u>	<u>High Usage</u>
Telehealth rooms and/or resources	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Facilitating local residents' applications for government benefits (i.e. social security, Medicaid, Medicare, disaster assistance)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Voter registration	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Partnerships and/or programming with local social service agencies or organizations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Onsite social services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Other Community Services (please describe briefly and specify amount of usage)

4. Your library may offer a range of services and resources for the community. Please indicate the frequency with which your library provided any of the services or resources listed below to your community in the past four years.

	<u>Not Provided</u>	<u>Provide As-Needed</u>	<u>Provide Occasionally</u>	<u>Provide Regularly</u>
Weather-related emergency/safe shelter	☐	☐	☐	☐
Adaptive technologies, such as screen readers, magnifiers, Braille embossers	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recreation or leisure space	☐	☐	☐	☐
Space for regular meetings of community service organizations (i.e. Rotary, Kiwanis, Optimists, Lions)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Special events (i.e. lectures, book clubs, community meetings, discussion forums)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Non-traditional items (i.e. tools, musical instruments, 3D printers, art supplies, audio- and video- production equipment)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other services and resources for your community (please describe briefly and specify frequency)				

5. If during the past four years your library has provided or currently provides any of the community services listed below, please rate patron usage for each. If your library has never provided any of these community services, please skip to the next question.

	Not Provided	Low Usage	Moderate Usage	Regular Usage	High Usage
Weather-related emergency/safe shelter	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Adaptive technologies, such as screen readers, magnifiers, Braille embossers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recreation or leisure space	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Space for regular meetings of community service organizations (i.e. Rotary, Kiwanis, Optimists, Lions)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Special events (i.e. lectures, book clubs, community meetings, discussion forums)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Non-traditional items (i.e. tools, musical instruments, 3D printers, art supplies, audio- and video- production equipment)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Other community service (please describe briefly and specify amount of usage)

6. The research team will prepare a limited number of short profiles of unique programs and services that will demonstrate the value libraries bring to their communities. If your library has an innovative and successful program or service, please provide a brief description. Also please provide the name, phone number, and email address for the person we should contact for a short follow-up Zoom interview.

Appendix B: Summaries of Recent State and Local ROI Reports

These short summaries provide information about research in other states, towns, and regions on the economic impacts and ROI of library systems, placing the current Texas study and report in the context of other research performed on library systems and adding the Texas analysis to the growing body of work on the impact of public libraries on their state and local economies.

This section includes the following states and cities/towns.

States

- Georgia
- Utah
- California
- Ohio

Cities and Towns

- Ottawa, Ontario
- Multiple Ohio cities
- Vancouver Island, British Columbia
- Edmonton, Alberta
- London, Ontario
- Woodstock, Ontario
- Multiple Wyoming towns

State of Georgia

Georgia's Public Libraries: Economic Impact and Service Valuation, FY2024, *Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia, September 2025*

The report is a comprehensive analysis of the economic impact and service valuation of Georgia's public libraries for FY2024. It evaluates the financial resources supporting the libraries, quantifies the value of various library services to patrons, estimates the libraries' broader economic impact, and examines factors influencing library usage across the state. The study was conducted in partnership with the Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS) and uses data from **408 library facilities operating in 60 systems that serve all 159 counties in Georgia.**

Georgia's public libraries generated substantial measurable economic and community value relative to their operating cost in FY2024. GPLS and local library systems delivered an estimated **\$3.75 in services and economic impact for every \$1 invested** while providing educational, digital, informational, and civic access across the state. The findings indicate that libraries function as statewide public infrastructure, supporting access to information, connectivity, and economic activity.

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- **\$1.06 billion** in combined statewide benefit, including direct service value and broader economic impact.
 - **\$857.4 million** in direct value from quantifiable library services.
 - **Technology access and circulation** represented the largest components of measurable value.
 - **5,488 total jobs supported** through direct, indirect, and induced effects.

Total funding for Georgia’s public libraries in FY2024 was \$282,475,327, including operating support and state capital, maintenance, and technology grants. Local governments and local sources contributed the largest share, while state and federal funding supported operations, technology access, facility investment, and the broader infrastructure required to deliver services on an equitable statewide basis.

What Creates the Most Value

The largest value component of quantifiable services was technology access, including computer use, wireless connections, website access, circulating devices, and related digital services, with an estimated value of **\$393.0 million**. Traditional circulation was the second largest component at **\$339.5 million**, indicating that books, audiobooks, eBooks, and other materials continue to provide substantial value alongside the expansion of digital services.

Additional service categories also generated measurable value—with libraries serving as digital access points, educational platforms, cultural resources, and community spaces. Database retrievals accounted for an estimated **\$65.0 million**, programming for **\$27.4 million**, reference services for **\$10.8 million**, meeting and study room use for **\$5.6 million**, and volunteer hours for **\$4.8 million**, with special circulation items and in-library use of materials contributing additional value.

Economic Impact and ROI

In addition to the direct value of services, Georgia public libraries support economic activity through employment, payroll, purchasing, and household spending. The study estimates **\$202.8 million** in indirect and induced economic impact, which, when combined with the direct service valuation, results in a total FY2024 benefit exceeding **\$1.06 billion**.

Library employment also produced direct public value and meaningful statewide effects. The report estimates **3,625 direct library jobs and 5,488 total jobs supported** (direct, indirect, and induced). Total labor income associated with these effects exceeded **\$310.7 million**.

State of Utah

Utah Public Libraries Return on Investment, 2019

The Utah State Library Division commissioned *Utah Public Libraries Return on Investment, 2019*, to evaluate the economic value generated by Utah’s public libraries relative to the public funds invested in them. Using an econometric approach, the study calculates that Utah public libraries returned **\$7.04 in value for**

every \$1.00 spent in 2019. Although this represents a strong positive return, it marks a decline from the **\$7.35 ROI reported in 2009**, and below the **\$8.72** estimated in a 2013 follow-up study.

The report explains that ROI is derived by comparing the estimated economic value of library services with total library operating expenditures. For Utah, the total economic value of services in 2019 was calculated at approximately **\$863.2 million**, against a statewide library budget of about **\$107.3 million**. Key contributors to this value included physical circulation, electronic circulation, internet and wireless access, reference transactions, program attendance, interlibrary loan activity, and database services through Utah's Online Library.

Methodologically, the report combines statewide library usage statistics with estimated retail or replacement values for comparable services and materials. For example, values were assigned to book and e-book circulation based on average retail prices, while programming, reference, and internet services were valued through a statewide survey of library users. The study acknowledges that some measures are inherently subjective, particularly those based on survey respondents' "willingness to pay" for library services. It also notes that some data were drawn from the most recent available annual reports rather than all from a single reporting year.

A central finding of the report is that the decline in ROI appears connected to broader economic and technological changes—a reflection of changing public behavior and expectations. The author suggests that during stronger economic periods, public perception of library value tends to decrease, whereas library use and perceived value often rise during economic downturns. In addition, the increasing prevalence of personal electronic devices and mobile data plans may be reducing the perceived importance of library-provided internet and technology access.

The report also identifies a broader concern: Overall library use is declining relative to population growth. From 2007 to 2017, Utah's legal service population increased substantially, but the percentage of registered borrowers fell, and library visits declined by 4.2%, mirroring the decrease in ROI over the decade. In response, the report argues that libraries must adapt by strengthening marketing, rebranding their services, and demonstrating their relevance more effectively to contemporary communities.

Ultimately, the report finds that Utah public libraries continue to provide substantial economic value to residents, even as both usage patterns and public perceptions evolve. Its core message is that libraries remain highly valuable public institutions, but sustaining and increasing that value will require strategic adaptation, stronger community engagement, and clearer communication of the benefits libraries deliver.

State of California

The Value of California's Public Libraries, *California State Library; Sacramento, California, August 2021*

The Value of California's Public Libraries presents a rigorously argued and evidence-based account of the multifaceted public value generated by California's library system. The research was conducted between 2017 and 2019 and synthesizes library usage statistics, survey findings, scholarly literature, stakeholder

interviews, and case examples to demonstrate that public libraries are not merely cultural amenities, but core civic institutions. The report's central claim is that libraries create measurable educational, economic, social, technological, and public health benefits that far exceed their operating costs. In doing so, the study positions public libraries as indispensable public infrastructure in contemporary California.

A major strength of the report is its insistence **that libraries must be understood in broader institutional terms**. Public libraries are described not simply as repositories of books, but as community hubs that connect individuals to information, learning, public services, technology, and one another. Across California, libraries function as trusted, accessible, and noncommercial public spaces that remain open to all regardless of age, income, or background. The report emphasizes that this **universal accessibility** is itself a significant public good. In an era marked by widening inequality, social fragmentation, and digital dependence, libraries provide one of the few civic environments where residents can access essential resources without financial or social barriers. Their importance therefore lies not only in the services they provide, but also in the democratic and inclusive manner in which those services are delivered.

The report further underscores the role of libraries in promoting lifelong learning across the life course. For children and families, libraries support early literacy, school readiness, and developmental growth through story times, family literacy initiatives, summer programming, and educational enrichment. For school-age youth, they provide homework support, reading opportunities, leadership development, and safe after-school environments. For adults, they offer literacy tutoring, English-language instruction, technology training, workforce preparation, high school completion pathways, and access to information needed for civic and economic participation. These functions are not ancillary; they are central to the report's argument **that libraries contribute to human capital formation**. By improving literacy, digital competence, and educational attainment, libraries generate long-term benefits not only for individual users but also for communities and the state as a whole.

The report's discussion of economic value is especially notable and merits particular attention. It argues that public libraries should be regarded as economic engines because they strengthen workforce readiness, support entrepreneurship, reduce household costs, and generate a substantial return on public investment. Citing multiple studies, the report states that **for every \$1 invested in public libraries, between \$2 and \$10 in direct and indirect benefits are returned, with the most common range falling between \$3 and \$6**.

The report broadens the concept of ROI beyond conventional accounting measures. It highlights "social return on investment" frameworks that assign economic value to outcomes such as improved literacy, job attainment, better health decision-making, increased digital access, and reduced isolation. This is a crucial analytical move because many of the most important benefits produced by libraries are diffuse, preventive, and long-term. For example, the report links low literacy to major societal costs in lost productivity, unemployment, crime, health care burdens, and reduced tax revenue. Libraries help offset these costs through adult literacy tutoring, family literacy initiatives, digital skills development, and employment services. Similarly, by helping residents access health information, insurance resources, and social services, libraries may reduce downstream public expenditures that would otherwise arise from preventable crises or

unmet needs. From this perspective, library funding should be viewed not as discretionary spending, but as an investment in social infrastructure that produces both immediate and cumulative returns.

The report also frames libraries as contributors to local and regional economic development. They assist job seekers through résumé support, interview preparation, internet access, and workforce partnerships. They help entrepreneurs and small businesses access planning tools, research databases, and community networks that can lower barriers to market entry and business formation. The report further notes that libraries can stimulate nearby commerce through “halo spending,” whereby library visitors also patronize surrounding businesses. Thus, the economic effects of libraries extend beyond institutional walls. Their presence can strengthen neighborhood vitality, support commercial ecosystems, and foster local development in ways that are difficult to quantify fully but nonetheless economically meaningful.

Beyond economics, the report documents the broad public health and social benefits libraries provide. Libraries serve as trusted sources of health information, sites for wellness programming, and referral points for services related to housing, food insecurity, mental health, and social support. They help mitigate loneliness and isolation, especially among seniors and other vulnerable populations, while also offering programs that promote cognitive engagement, resilience, and wellbeing. California’s libraries are also shown to be especially important for populations facing structural disadvantage, including immigrants, veterans, low-income families, unhoused individuals, and those experiencing mental illness. Because libraries combine accessibility, trust, and local embeddedness, they are uniquely positioned to support populations that may face barriers in other institutional settings.

Another major contribution identified in the report is **libraries’ role in advancing digital equity**. With tens of thousands of public internet terminals, widespread Wi-Fi access, device lending, digital collections, and technology training, libraries serve as critical infrastructure in a society increasingly organized around digital participation. The report makes clear that digital exclusion remains a serious problem in California, particularly for low-income, rural, senior, and otherwise marginalized populations. Libraries help address this divide by providing both access and instruction. In this sense, libraries do not simply offer technology; they enable civic, educational, and economic participation in the digital age.

Finally, the report highlights libraries’ value in crisis response and disaster resilience.

State of Ohio

The Return on Investment of Ohio’s Public Libraries & A Comparison with Other States,

Howard Fleeter & Associates, Ohio Library Council; Dublin, Ohio, August 2021

Ohio’s public library system demonstrates a substantial measurable return on public expenditure, based on 2019 statewide data. The system served a population of more than 11.5 million residents through **251 library districts** and recorded high levels of use across circulation, reference activity, technology access, programming, and in-person visits. In this context, the report’s principal finding is that Ohio libraries generated significant quantifiable value relative to their operating expenditures.

The report's central result is the statewide ROI estimate. Using a methodology that assigns approximate market values to library services, the analysis estimates that Ohio public libraries produced approximately **\$3.07 billion in direct economic benefit** in 2019, compared with approximately **\$779.7 million in operating expenditures**. This corresponds to a **direct benefit-to-spending ratio of 3.94**, indicating that the estimated direct value of library services was nearly four times annual operating expenditures. When a household consumption multiplier is included to reflect broader economic effects, the estimated total benefit rises to approximately **\$3.88 billion**, yielding an expanded ROI of **4.98**.

The distribution of this estimated value is also notable across multiple service categories. The largest component came from the circulation of physical materials, which accounted for approximately **\$1.35 billion, or 43.9%** of total direct value. Reference services accounted for approximately **\$660.0 million (21.5%)**, while computer and technology services contributed about **\$494.5 million (16.1%)**. Electronic circulation added approximately **\$345.4 million (11.2%)**, and library programs and other services contributed about **\$222.2 million (7.2%)**.

Overall, the report presents Ohio's public libraries as institutions generating substantial estimated public value on a statewide basis. Its findings indicate that the direct and broader economic benefits associated with library services were considerably larger than annual operating expenditures in 2019. For purposes of summary, the most important conclusion is that Ohio's ROI, measured through the report's valuation framework, was high and was driven by a wide range of heavily used library services.

City of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Check Out the Benefit: The Economic Benefits of the Ottawa Public Library, *Ottawa Public Library; Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, August 2016*

The 2016 *Check Out the Benefit* report evaluates the economic value generated by the Ottawa Public Library (OPL) in 2015 using a conservative methodology adapted from the Martin Prosperity Institute. It estimates that OPL generated \$256 million in total economic benefit from \$49.5 million in expenditures, equal to **\$5.17 for every \$1.00 invested**.

The largest share of value came from direct user benefits, estimated at \$179.1 million, driven mainly by collection use at \$172.9 million, including circulation valued at \$148.7 million. Additional direct benefits came from in-house material use, holds delivery, programs, reference and database services, and technology access, all of which reduced household costs by providing services that would otherwise require paid alternatives.

The report also estimates \$76.9 million in indirect benefits from OPL spending on employment, operations, capital projects, and materials. The largest indirect category is employment spending at \$48.8 million, followed by operations spending at \$16.4 million, materials spending at \$6.1 million, and capital spending at \$5.6 million, showing that the library contributes economic activity beyond direct patron use.

Its central finding is an ROI of **\$5.17 per \$1.00 invested**, based on **\$256 million** in total benefit versus **\$49.5 million** in expenditures. The report adds supplementary indicators of **\$266 per resident**, **\$635 per household**, **\$1,038 per active cardholder**, and **\$2,208 per open hour**, showing that the library's value is visible both in aggregate and when distributed across users, households, and service hours. Taken together, these findings present OPL as a strong public investment whose measurable benefits substantially exceed annual costs. The report also notes that its assumptions are intentionally conservative, supporting the conclusion that Ottawa's library system delivers substantial value through both direct service use and broader economic spillover effects.

Multiple Ohio Cities – CLEVNET Library Cooperation

CLEVNET Return on Investment Analysis, *Howard Fleeter & Associates; Columbus, Ohio, May 2022*

Part I of the analysis evaluates the direct benefits accruing to patrons from participation in the CLEVNET library consortium (shared resource network) by assigning market values to physical circulation, digital borrowing, database access, and Wi-Fi use. The study estimates that users received about \$106.45 million in benefits in 2019 at a cost of about \$5.56 million, equal to roughly 19:1 in value per dollar spent.

The largest sources of value were shared physical circulation and digital borrowing. More than 4.8 million physical items circulated across institutions in 2019 with an estimated value of \$41.1 million, while more than 3.1 million electronic items generated about \$48.5 million in value. Database and Wi-Fi access contributed another \$16.8 million, reflecting the consortium's growing importance for research, connectivity, and digital inclusion.

The report also shows that usage grew far faster than costs over time. Combined physical and digital circulation rose from about 2.9 million transactions in 2007 to nearly 8 million in 2019, while total benefits increased from roughly \$27.2 million to \$106.5 million and system costs rose much more modestly. As a result, ROI increased from **6.37 to 19.13** in 2007 vs. 2019, supporting the conclusion that CLEVNET's shared access model and economies of scale generate very high value relative to cost.

Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada

Assessing the ECONOMIC IMPACT of Vancouver Island Regional Library on our Member Communities, *Vancouver Island Regional Library Administration; Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada, July 2016*

This report evaluates the economic impact of the Vancouver Island Regional Library (VIRL) on its member communities using a market-substitution methodology. Rather than relying solely on conventional activity measures such as circulation, visits, and program attendance, the study estimates the monetary value of library services by comparing them with equivalent market costs. The analysis examines three components: direct tangible benefits, direct spending within service areas, and indirect tangible benefits associated with local multiplier effects.

The findings indicate that VIRL generated substantial measurable economic value in 2015. On a mid-range basis, the total economic impact was estimated at \$94,783,558, demonstrating that the library produces

benefits well in excess of its operating cost. Direct tangible benefits constituted the largest share of this value, particularly through collection use, supplemented by programming, reference and database services, technology access, and meeting space use. The analysis also identified additional indirect economic effects arising from local spending and employment.

Key ROI figures:

- Mid-range total economic impact: \$94,783,558
- Low estimate: \$51,913,120
- High estimate: \$137,653,995
- Economic impact per dollar spent: \$5.36
- ROI mid-range: 335%
- ROI range: 149% to 521%
- Economic impact per resident: \$229.49
- Value of one open library hour: \$1,107.73
- Cost of one open library hour: \$277.29

Even under conservative assumptions, the library generates a positive return for member communities. The study also notes that the reported figures are likely understated, as several important outcomes—including contributions to literacy, employment, social inclusion, and wellbeing—could not be monetized reliably.

City of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

The Economic and Socio-Cultural Impact of the Edmonton Public Library, *Nordicity, The City of Edmonton Library Board; Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, March 2016*

This report evaluates the economic value generated by the Edmonton Public Library (EPL) using a replacement-value methodology that estimates both direct service value and broader operational impact. It concludes that EPL generates just over \$187 million in annual economic impact from approximately \$60 million in expenditures, equal to **\$3.11 in value for every dollar invested**.

The largest component of that impact is the use value of library services, estimated at about \$131.5 million annually, reflecting the savings users receive from access to collections, programs, technology, databases, and library space. The study also estimates nearly \$213 per resident, indicating that measurable benefits exceed costs even under conservative assumptions.

A second component comes from library operations, which the report links to **719 full-time equivalent positions** and about **\$55.9 million in GDP** through direct, indirect, and induced effects. The report emphasizes that the ROI estimate is conservative because some longer-term educational, workforce, and social inclusion benefits are not fully monetized, so the documented return likely understates EPL's broader public value.

City of London, Ontario, Canada

The Economic and Social Value of London Public Library, *Brightsail Research, London Public Library; London, Ontario, Canada, August 2023*

This report evaluates the economic value of the London Public Library (LPL) using a cost–benefit framework in which the monetary value of services provided is compared to the costs required to deliver them. ROI is defined as the ratio of total economic benefits, including both direct and indirect benefits, to total direct spending.

In 2022, LPL generated an estimated total economic impact of approximately \$153.6 million, compared to direct spending of \$23.7 million. These figures correspond to an **ROI of 6.48**, indicating that each dollar of expenditure is associated with \$6.48 in economic value.

Direct benefits, estimated at \$82.5 million, represent the value of services accessed by users, including collection use, programs, reference services, technology access, and space utilization. These values are calculated using conservative market equivalents for comparable services. Collection use accounts for the largest share of direct benefits, exceeding \$70.7 million.

Indirect benefits, estimated at \$47.4 million, reflect the secondary economic effects of library expenditures, such as the re-spending of wages and operational costs within the local economy. These are calculated using an economic multiplier applied to direct spending.

Additional measures indicate that the estimated economic value corresponds to approximately \$364 per resident, \$681 per household, and \$850 per cardholder.

City of Woodstock, Ontario, Canada

Economic Benefits of the Woodstock Public Library: Study 2018, *Woodstock Public Library; Woodstock, Ontario, Canada, February 2020*

This study evaluates the economic impact of the Woodstock Public Library (WPL) using a cost–benefit framework that quantifies both direct and indirect benefits relative to operating expenditures. The analysis applies a methodology developed by the Martin Prosperity Institute, which estimates the monetary value of library services using market comparators and incorporates multiplier effects associated with institutional spending.

The total economic impact of WPL in 2018 is estimated at approximately \$19.3 million, consisting of \$14.7 million in direct benefits, \$2.6 million in direct spending, and \$1.9 million in indirect benefits. Direct benefits reflect the value of services used by patrons, including collection use, programs, reference and database services, and technology access, with collection use accounting for the largest share of value. Indirect benefits are derived from the economic effects of library expenditures, such as employee wages and procurement, which generate additional economic activity through multiplier effects.

ROI is calculated as the ratio of total benefits to the cost of operating the library. Based on total expenditures of approximately \$2.6 million, the study estimates that each dollar invested in WPL generates about \$7.20 in economic benefits. Using a midpoint estimate of total benefits (\$16.6 million relative to \$2.68 million in spending), the study reports **an ROI of approximately 619.9%**. These metrics indicate that the estimated value of benefits substantially exceeds the cost of providing library services.

Additional measures contextualize the distribution of benefits across the community. The study estimates economic value at approximately \$478 per resident, \$1,113 per household, and \$1,508 per active library user. It also estimates that each open hour of library operation generates approximately \$4,427 in economic value. These indicators provide alternative interpretations of ROI by linking aggregate economic impact to individual and operational measures.

Multiple Wyoming Cities - Park County Library System⁶²

A single tax dollar invested in the Cody, Meeteetse and Powell libraries returned **\$4.28** in materials borrowed, program attendance, device training, public computer logins, and meeting rooms booked during the last fiscal year. According to a report from the Park County Library System, the county budget of \$1,705,894 yielded more than \$7 million in services, if they were purchased at retail price.

Over the course of a single fiscal year—from July 2018 to June 2019—books, movies, digital downloads, music CDs and periodicals checked out totaled nearly 84% of the value for services. Programs, classes and volunteer hours accounted for over 6% of the total. Public computer use, wireless sessions, device training and access to online resources such as Ancestry.com, Universal class and NoveList added up to another 7%+. Meanwhile, library meeting rooms provide gathering places for the whole community, and more than 2,000 bookings in Powell and Cody alone amounted to the retail equivalent of \$195,452, according to library officials.

The value of volunteer hours was substantial, with data from Independentsector.org suggesting volunteer time is worth \$25.43 an hour. Active Friends of the Library organizations and many other volunteers contributed the equivalent of a full-time position in a year.

Personal device training has increased 19-fold since 2016, when only 141 sessions were recorded. In 2019, with the prevalence and proliferation of cellphones, tablets, and computers, library staff logged 2,700 sessions with patrons. Libraries helped people download and enjoy eBooks, audiobooks, movies, magazines, and music on a myriad of platforms as well as helped people resolve many technological issues.

Meanwhile, circulation of actual books, audiobook CDs and DVDs decreased slightly as digital downloads have gained share in Park County. Use of the public computers has decreased significantly in the years

⁶² The sources for the data and analyses below include: www.parkcountylibrary.org; <https://powelltribune.com/stories/report-local-libraries-provide-significant-return-on-investment,21290>

examined. In 2016 they were used 42,109 times, while the figures for 2019 shows only 13,685 sessions. Wireless sessions, however, have remained steady.

Attendance at library programs for all ages increased during the study period, including the largest gains in children's events.

One library in this system, Teton County Library, provides a ROI of **\$6.21 per each \$1 spent**.⁶³

Estimated Values of Circulation Materials in Other State-Level ROI Studies

The next two tables include a summary of estimated values of circulation materials in other locations to offer context and comparison to the current Texas study. They do not account for inflation or convert from Canadian currency.

Table B1. Estimated Values of Circulated Physical Items as Listed in Other State-Level ROI Studies

Area & Year	Book Price	Audio Item Price	Video Item Price	Borrowing Discount	Other Items Price
Georgia 2025	\$9-\$11	\$3	\$3	25%-40%	\$2-\$104
Ohio 2021	\$13.67	-	-	50%	
Ottawa 2015	-	-	-	40%	-
Vancouver 2016	\$17.96	\$17.96	\$17.96	0%-80%	-
Utah 2019	\$25.99	-	-	-	-
Woodstock 2018	\$15.76-\$25.26	\$15.30	\$15.37-\$26.05	0%-80%	\$2-\$5

Table B2. Values for E-materials Used in Other Recent Library ROI Reports

Area & Year	eBook	eAudio	eVideo	Serials
Georgia 2025	\$11.00	\$11.00	\$3.00	\$1
Ohio 2021	\$13.67	-	\$4.59	-
Utah 2019	\$22.08-\$56.18	\$37.25-\$89.47	-	\$67.92
Woodstock 2018	\$12.91	\$12.91	\$12.91	\$6.89
Vancouver 2016	\$11.67	\$17.96	\$17.96	-

⁶³ Source: <https://www.flipsnack.com/tclibrary/tclf-report-bundled.html>