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Media Contact: ECPR Texas
512-472-9599
tla@ecprtexas.com

New study shows Texas public libraries return nearly \$5 for every \$1 invested

Texas public libraries generate \$3.8 billion in economic benefits and support 11,200 jobs statewide

TEXAS—Texas public libraries generate nearly five times the value of the public investment they receive, according to a new statewide study released today by the Texas Library Association during a virtual press conference.

The 2026 “Beyond the Stacks: Economic and Community Value of Texas Public Libraries” study found that every \$1 invested in Texas public libraries generates \$4.74 in community value, with libraries delivering \$3.8 billion in total economic benefits in fiscal year 2024. Public libraries also directly and indirectly supported 11,200 Texas jobs.

Commissioned by the Texas Library Association with support from the Mellon Foundation and conducted by JBK Economics Group, the study examines the economic value of public library spending and the broad range of services libraries provide to Texans.

This study, coupled with results from a [Public Library Public Opinion Poll](#) conducted by KRC Research on behalf of TLA and supported by the Mellon Foundation, demonstrates that public libraries are smart investments in Texans and their futures.

“Public libraries are practical, welcoming and rooted in the communities they serve — they are unmistakably Texan,” Shirley Robinson, executive director of the Texas Library Association, said. “This study puts a dollar value on the opportunities libraries create every day. Whether someone visits a library to apply for a job, access the internet, learn a new skill or simply find a new favorite book, those services create real value for Texans and their communities.”

Nearly \$2.5 billion of the total economic benefit came from the estimated value of library services, including physical and electronic materials, programs, internet and Wi-Fi access, reference services and electronic databases. Another \$1.35 billion in statewide economic activity was generated through library operating and capital spending.

The research also illustrates the role public libraries play as workforce and business resources. Among libraries responding to a statewide survey conducted as part of the study, 82% provide job application assistance, 60% provide economic or demographic data, 55% offer business-related databases and 53% provide business-related programs or workshops.

“Texas’ economic security depends on communities having the tools and infrastructure people need to work, learn and build businesses,” Justin Yancy, president and CEO of the Texas Business Leadership Council, said. “Public libraries are core to that infrastructure. They connect Texans with technology, workforce resources and information that help people participate more fully in their local economies.”

The findings reinforce a broader picture of public libraries as essential community infrastructure. In fact, 90% of Texans surveyed believe public libraries should be treated as an essential public service—placing them alongside other critical community infrastructure like community centers, schools and public transportation. Libraries responding to the study reported partnering with social service agencies and providing services including telehealth resources and community meeting space, among others.

“In a state as large and diverse as Texas, finding common ground isn’t always easy,” Robinson said. “Public libraries are places where opportunity is shared, neighbors come together and communities have access to resources that improve their quality of life.”

The full “Beyond the Stacks: Economic and Community Value of Texas Public Libraries” study is available [HERE](#).

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ABOUT TEXAS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

The Texas Library Association (TLA) is the largest state library association in the U.S. Its 5,000+ members represent all library types: academic, public, school and special. TLA provides professional development, education, resources and opportunities for collaboration to strengthen libraries and library professionals across Texas. Learn more at [TXLA.org](https://www.txla.org).