

# Thriving Libraries Reflect Thriving Cities

*Perhaps no place in any community is so totally  
democratic as the town library.*

*The only entrance requirement is interest.*

—Lady Bird Johnson

Public libraries—both city and county—consistently rank high among taxpayers in terms of community services. A 2008 public opinion survey, conducted on behalf of the Texas Library Association, found that Texas voters were nearly unanimous in their belief that public libraries create educational opportunities for all citizens (97 percent agreed), and 95 percent of voters believed that public libraries improve the quality of life in their community.

Trusted and diverse institutions, city libraries offer a wide array of education and business resources in varied formats, including both electronic and print media. Additionally, city libraries offer access to the Internet and valuable technology services. From promoting literacy and education to helping people

find jobs and improve their work skills, city libraries are an essential part of a community's education infrastructure.

Communities value their city libraries as centers of information and learning, as well as a gathering point for ideas and discussion. City libraries are representative of local education and community vitality. In fact, many businesses—particularly those requiring a highly skilled workforce—look to the city's library as a barometer of local commitment to education and workforce readiness. And for many small businesses, the library provides needed research resources that they could not otherwise afford. ★

## Use of Public Libraries in Difficult Economic Times

As the economy has worsened, public libraries have seen usage increases of ten to thirty percent. Keith Michael Fiels, executive director of the American Library Association, explains that "people are coming to libraries to look for jobs, they're coming to libraries to access government services and government assistance, and they're coming to libraries because libraries are a great deal for people who are trying to stretch a dollar."

In a 2008 public opinion survey:

- 90 percent of Texas voters agreed that during hard economic times, public libraries provide an important resource to families and job seekers;
- 83 percent of Texas voters believed that public libraries support the economy through job skills training, career and job information, and resources for local businesses; and
- 94 percent of Texas voters agreed that public libraries are a good value for the tax dollar.

An American Library Association study found that:

- 74 percent of Texas libraries report that they are the only provider of free public Internet access in their communities; and
- More than 75 percent of Texas public libraries report they regularly help patrons understand and use e-government services.

Sources: American Library Association, 2010 State of America's Libraries Report (Apr. 11, 2010)  
Fall 2008, KRC Public Opinion Survey conducted on behalf of the Texas Library Association  
American Library Association, Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study 2007-2008