



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

Libraries serve citizens by actively providing information in many forms. While books, magazines, and microfilm resources still draw citizens to city libraries, visitors can also gain access to the Internet while sipping coffee, attend a computer class, or join a conversation group to improve their English. Quality libraries encourage new business by serving as an indicator of a strong city with an educated work force, and a city that can support business growth.

*More than a building that
houses books and data,
the library has always been
a window to a larger
world—a place where we've
always come to discover big
ideas and profound
concepts that help move the
American story forward.*

*And so the moment we per-
suade a child, any child,
to cross that threshold into
a library, we've changed
their lives forever,
and for the better.*

—President Barack Obama

Library Funding Reduced

In the past, city libraries used grants from the Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund (TIF) to improve access to telecommunications technology. The grants made it possible for more citizens to gain access to information twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Citizens and businesses benefit from sharing employment information through the Internet with access for all citizens at city libraries. Unfortunately, the TIF program's annual revenue collections totaling roughly \$221 million are no longer directly available for grants because they were diverted into the state's general fund in 2003, and later eliminated altogether.

Citizens of all ages benefit from city libraries. While the children's story hour will always be an opportunity to share old favorites, city libraries make new ways of sharing books possible. Last year, about 500,000 Texas children participated in the Texas Reading Club. City libraries are the primary information source for many children. Libraries support programs that bring resources to the youngest city residents with bookmobiles and early development programs.

City libraries assist “students” of all ages to learn new skills. Many cities provide classes to improve basic Internet access skills and teach many computer programs. Sometimes the most needed skill is literacy, and many literacy programs focus on English-as-a-second-language groups. City libraries also fuel the growing interest in genealogy, which depends on such unique collections as marriage records housed in certain libraries.

Libraries encourage city residents to actively read and share ideas and information. Austin, Richardson, Victoria, Corpus Christi, and Mansfield are a few of the cities that have promoted city-wide book club programs as a unique way to bring people in the city together. ★

*Information is the currency
of democracy.*

—Thomas Jefferson