



PRIORITIES FOR THE 85TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

*Supporting the Texas Knowledge-Based Economy
& a Commitment to Learning and Literacy*

The Texas Library Association's (TLA) almost 7,000 member librarians support the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) budget request, including provisions for expansion of affordable e-resources, broadband access for Texas communities, computer security, staff pay equity, and state and local record programs support.

**\$8.4 million for quality,
affordable STEM e-resources**

**\$1 million to increase access
to affordable broadband**

Who Benefits?

All Texans, whether they are researchers, entrepreneurs, students, parents, policy makers, advocates, artists, writers, inventors, or citizens looking for information benefit from access to and use of the vast resources of Texas libraries, and the knowledge and skills of Texas librarians. Specifically:

- 24 million Texans served by 875 public libraries across the state
- 6 million Texas students and their teachers
- 1.4 million students and faculty at over 200 institutions of higher learning

Affordable E-Resources for Education and Workforce Readiness (exceptional item #2)

\$8.4 million for quality, online STEM resources

Quality and current digital resources, especially in the areas of science and technology, are among the most expensive materials needed in libraries, schools, and colleges. TSLAC leverages buying power to acquire access to databases and other e-resources to make them available through the **TexShare** and **TexQuest** digital resource programs at a deeply discounted cost to schools, public libraries colleges and universities throughout Texas.

Think of it as a Costco-like program for libraries. TSLAC uses statewide licensing to maximize purchasing power and acquire e-resources; libraries 'join' TexShare and/or TexQuest, pay to be 'members', and gain access to quality online information at about 1/10th the cost of purchasing those same materials locally, thereby giving millions of Texans access to the information they seek on a myriad of subjects. Smart shopping!

Without the State Library's collective purchasing agreement, it would cost my library just short of \$114,000 to purchase access to all the resources in TexShare. I'd like you to take a guess at what we actually pay. Our invoice for this year was \$569.58. Less than \$600 for \$114,000 worth of valuable digital resources our customers demand!

- Rebecca Sullivan, Terrell Public Library



Broadband Access for Texas Communities (exceptional item #5)

\$1 million to increase the number of public libraries with affordable high-speed Internet

If you have ever been frustrated watching the rotating color wheel spin on your computer screen for what seems like an hour, you fully understand the importance of high-speed Internet connections. However, 94% of Texans do not have access to adequate Internet speeds at their public libraries, and public libraries are the only source of public Internet access for approximately 60% of communities.

High-speed Internet can cost between \$24,000 and \$48,000 per year, per location. **E-Rate** discounts are available to public libraries to bring this cost down to \$6,000 to \$12,000 per year, but only 23% of Texas public libraries participate in the program, compared to 65% of all U.S. public libraries.

The money is there waiting in the Universal Service Fund for Texas libraries to use. Libraries that complete the application correctly, supply all of the required documentation, and have a provider in their area are basically guaranteed to get the discount.

The catch? The application for this Federal program is extremely cumbersome and complicated, and libraries need help to do it correctly. TSLAC will contract with an expert consultant to assist up to 100 libraries in applying for E-Rate funding, and will provide one year of support for increased broadband expense incurred at discounted rates.

A few years ago, we formed a local committee to help guide us through the E-Rate application process. It was extremely challenging and time consuming, and unfortunately we were unsuccessful. I would like to apply again, but I simply do not have the expertise needed. Our community qualifies for the 90% discount, and having a professional consultant help us with the application process would benefit us tremendously!

- Norma Fultz, Director, Rio Grande City Public Library

Last Word

TSLAC and Texas libraries are exceptional stewards of the public funds they receive, leveraging every dollar to support family literacy, educational opportunities, and workforce development.

Enabling TSLAC to acquire access to quality science and technology digital resources ensures libraries of all types will be able to access these e-resources at reduced costs to benefit their customers/students. Increasing access to affordable broadband Internet connections at more public libraries not only makes excellent fiscal sense, but also ensures that Texans have access to content and technology that is essential to a competitive workforce.

For more information contact:

Wendy Woodland

TLA Director of Communications

512.338.1518 | wendyw@txla.org

