



August 29, 2018 | Sunset Commission Hearing  
Testimony on Texas State Library & Archives Commission  
Susan Mann, chair, TLA Legislative Committee

Mr. Chairman and members of the Commission, I am Susan Mann, director of the Hillsboro City Library in Hillsboro, Texas. I am here today as chair of the Texas Library Association's Legislative Committee. On behalf of the TLA's more than 6,500 members, we want to express our appreciation to the commission staff for their diligent work and outreach to stakeholders – this has been a very inclusive, positive and productive process.

**Issue 4: The State has a Continuing Need for the Texas State Library and Archives Commission**

The Texas Library Association whole-heartedly agrees with the recommendation to continue the Texas State Library and Archives Commission for another 12 years.

We also support the recommendations related to commission member training and authority to establish advisory committees in rule as needed.

**Issue 3: TSLAC's Grant Program Needs Improvements to Increase Transparency and Fairness**

This is the only issue in the report that directly relates to libraries. While we believe the state library does very good work in this area, we understand that there is always room for improvement. These grants are critically important to libraries of all types, and we look forward to working with the agency as they address these issues.

**Issues Raised in TSLAC Self-Evaluation for Consideration**

The state library raised two issues in their self-evaluation report which we hope the commission will consider.

**1. Enable advertising and promotion of the State's historical and information resources**

Currently, TSLAC does not have the statutory authority to advertise their services and develop educational materials for the public and for sale. This results in underutilization of a vast network of information resources. For example, only 5% of eligible Texans with a visual or physical disability participate in the Talking Book Program. Stakeholders have long asked the agency to increase awareness of commission resources and services.

We ask that the Commission give the agency statutory authority to advertise their services and develop educational materials for the public for sale, similar to the authority agencies like TXDOT and the General Land Office currently have to promote services and resources to build tourism, teach history, and expand their educational services.

**2. Focus key digital information interests**

The state library is uniquely positioned to be a leader in coordinating public access to digital information across the state to ensure greater digital inclusion, and strengthen the digital infrastructure for all

Texans. In fact, one of the agency's strategic goals is "to support efforts to ensure digital inclusion for Texas."

The state library already has strong strategic partnerships with key stakeholders – both public and private- in this area thanks to the **TexShare** and **TexQuest** e-resource programs. These programs level the playing field among all types of libraries - whether they are urban or rural, with large or small budgets - by providing equitable access to digital information.

Expanding **broadband access** is critical to digital inclusion, and the state library has made great progress in this area. Thanks to a \$1 million rider approved during the last legislative session, the state library has been able to help 84 public libraries increase their internet speeds by an average of 927% through the *Libraries Connecting Texas* initiative which helps libraries access affordable broadband through the federal e-rate program.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Texas Education Agency and state library are each working on how to incorporate **Open Education Resources** (OER) into education at all levels. OER could offer significant cost savings to students, their parents, taxpayers and the state. However, issues related to curating and creating materials, promoting availability and training users are challenging, particularly with limited coordination among the agencies and no statewide policy direction.

Libraries and librarians are the common denominators in these and other digital information issues. They have the professional training, expertise, and mission to facilitate digital inclusion. TSLAC has a strong network of all types of librarians and key partners across the state that could be leveraged to support these efforts.

Therefore, TLA supports giving the state library authority to develop strategies and programs for addressing statewide need for digital educational content.

#### **Additional Issue – School Libraries**

School librarians are educators first and foremost. Their work directly impacts state education policy: building a foundation of reading, preparing students for career and college, and improving student performance.

Currently, TSLAC is the only state agency which directly supports school libraries and librarians. TLA would like to see a more formalized relationship between the Texas Education Agency and the state library established to leverage the expertise of the network of school librarians to support state education programs and goals.

Thank you and I'm happy to answer any questions.