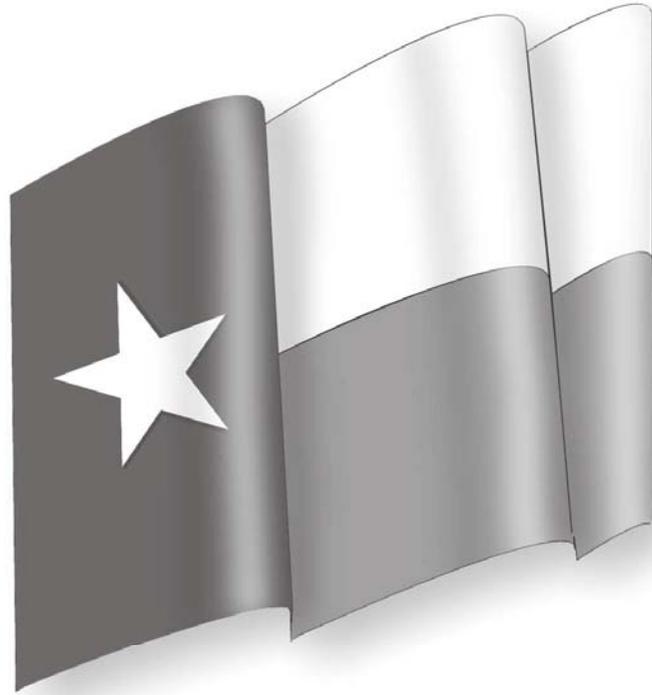


*Summary of Sunset
Commission Recommendations*



**Texas State Library and
Archives Commission**

February 2007





Texas State Library and Archives Commission

Agency at a Glance

The Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) works to improve the availability and quality of library services across the state, and preserve and provide access to significant Texas documents. The origin of today's State Library dates to 1839, when Mirabeau B. Lamar established the National Library of the Republic of Texas. Later, as a State, the Legislature expanded the Library's role to include serving as a depository of historical materials. Today, to accomplish its mission, the Commission:

- ◆ provides financial and consulting assistance to libraries and library systems to promote library development and resource sharing;
- ◆ provides direct library services to persons with disabilities; and
- ◆ ensures access to important Texas documents by coordinating state and local records management, and acquiring and preserving archival documents.



*For additional information,
please contact Amy Trost
at (512) 463-1300.*

Key Facts

- ◆ **Funding.** The agency operated with an annual appropriation of \$28 million in fiscal year 2006, funded largely through a mix of general revenue and federal funds. The largest single expenditure, \$7.5 million, funded ten regional library systems across the state that provided continuing education and technical assistance to more than 500 member public libraries and 300 branch libraries.
- ◆ **Staffing.** The Commission employs 188 staff, most of whom work in Austin at the agency's headquarters and at the State Records Center. Six staff work in Liberty at the Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center.
- ◆ **TexShare.** The Commission coordinates a statewide consortium of about 700 public, academic, and clinical medicine libraries that participate in the group purchasing of databases and resource sharing services. In fiscal year 2006, TSLAC and TexShare member libraries saved more than \$70 million by purchasing access to 50 popular academic databases as a group.
- ◆ **Talking Book Program.** In fiscal year 2006, the Commission provided books on tape and large print and Braille books to about 21,000 Texans who cannot read standard print materials because of visual, physical, or learning disabilities.
- ◆ **Texas State Archives.** The Commission appraises, prepares for research, and preserves historically valuable Texas documents and makes them available to the public. TSLAC's more than 60,000 cubic feet of archives include the Texas Declaration of Independence and the Texas Constitution, along with Texas government records, collections of private papers, maps, photographs, books, and newspapers.

Commission Members (7)

Sandra J. Pickett, Chair (Liberty)
Sharon T. Carr (El Paso)
Diana Rae Hester Cox (Canyon)
Martha Doty Freeman (Austin)
Cruz G. Hernandez (Burleson)
Sandra G. Holland (Pleasanton)
Sally Ann Reynolds (Rockport)

Agency Head

Peggy Rudd, Director & Librarian
(512) 463-5460

Recommendations

1. Continue the Texas State Library and Archives Commission for 12 years.
2. Restructure regional library systems' funding to provide flexibility to meet changing conditions and encourage innovation.
3. Eliminate state certification of county librarians.
4. Authorize TSLAC in law to provide direction and leadership to collaborative efforts to develop online access to historical resources.
5. Require TSLAC and the Texas Education Agency to develop a joint study of school library needs, and to assess which needs each agency should address.

Issue 1

Texas Has a Continuing Need for the Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

Key Findings

- ◆ Texas has a clear and continuing interest in improving library services, as well as preserving and providing access to important historic documents. The Commission has been successful in leading these efforts.
- ◆ While other state agencies perform functions that deal with libraries, archives, and other cultural resources, consolidation offers no significant benefits over the current structure.

The Texas State Library and Archives Commission's responsibilities – to improve library services, and preserve and provide access to important documents – continue to be important to Texas. The Commission's efforts help meet the information needs of Texans through the support of libraries statewide and better access to historic documents and government records. Additionally, the State must have a library agency to receive federal library funds. The Legislature has considered consolidating TSLAC with other state agencies that play a role in supporting and preserving the State's cultural resources, but aside from administrative efficiency, no significant savings would result.

Recommendation

Change in Statute

1.1 Continue the Texas State Library and Archives Commission for 12 years.

The recommendation would continue TSLAC as an independent agency for 12 years.

Issue 2

The Structure for Funding Regional Library Systems Fails to Provide Flexibility to Meet Changing Conditions or Encourage Innovation.

Key Findings

- ◆ TSLAC administers a network of regional library systems to improve public libraries.
- ◆ Having the system funding formula in state law does not allow TSLAC to make adjustments for changing conditions.
- ◆ The current funding method does not encourage innovation or help advance targeted state or federal goals.

TSLAC provides statewide assistance to public libraries by administering and funding 10 regional library systems. The systems, in turn, provide continuing education, technical assistance, and other programs to help public libraries offer better services to their patrons. However, TSLAC cannot make funding modifications to respond to changing conditions because the formula is set in statute. In addition, the current method of funding does not provide TSLAC with the flexibility to encourage or reward innovation.

Recommendations

Change in Statute

2.1 Remove the system funding formula from statute and require the Commission to adopt a new formula in rule that provides flexibility but continues to ensure funding for basic system support services.

The recommendation would take the funding formula for system operation grants out of TSLAC's statute and require the Commission to adopt a new one through its rulemaking process. Removing the formula from statute would provide the Commission with needed flexibility to address changes while ensuring that each system continues to receive funds to provide the basic system services of technical assistance and continuing education.

2.2 Require TSLAC to distribute a portion of system funds in competitive grants aimed at increasing innovation and targeting state and federal goals.

This recommendation would require the Commission to develop a program of competitive grants for regional systems and all Texas libraries. These grants would enable the agency to encourage innovation and target state and federal goals, such as collaboration among different types of libraries and programs for special populations. The Commission should require grant recipients to report best practices and performance outcomes from which other systems and libraries could benefit. In setting up the competitive grant program, the Commission should ensure an appropriate balance between a base amount of funds needed for systems operation, and funds to help encourage and reward innovation.

Management Action

2.3 TSLAC should use its Library Systems Act Advisory Board in the development of a new system formula.

In developing a proposed formula for the Commission, the Advisory Board should consider a variety of factors including, but not limited to, the number of member libraries in a system and regional economic conditions, in addition to the systems' populations. The Advisory Board should hold public meetings to receive stakeholder input on the new formula. Also, TSLAC should prominently post on its website agendas and other information to be discussed at Advisory Board meetings at least two weeks before the meetings to allow stakeholders adequate time to study the documents. The Advisory Board should submit its proposed formula to the Commission for consideration and adoption.

Issue 3

State Certification of County Librarians Is Not Needed to Ensure Public Access to Quality Library Services.

Key Findings

- ◆ State law requires TSLAC to certify county librarians.
- ◆ State certification of individuals working within a library is not needed to protect the public.
- ◆ No rationale could be found for singling out county-funded libraries for additional state scrutiny.

State law requires TSLAC to certify county librarians, whom the agency interprets as directors of libraries that receive any amount of county funding. However, the agency has never received a formal

complaint about a certified librarian, and already directs concerns about the quality of public library service to the appropriate local entity.

State regulation of a profession should be limited to those posing a threat to the health, safety, or welfare of the public, not for advancement or promotion of a profession, no matter how valuable a service they provide. Since the State already ensures the quality of public library service by regulating library facilities, certifying the individuals working within them is not necessary.

Recommendation

Change in Statute

3.1 Eliminate TSLAC's certification of county librarians.

This recommendation would remove the requirement to certify county librarians from TSLAC's statute, discontinuing the state regulation of individual librarians. This recommendation would not adversely affect the quality of public library service, since the local entities employing these librarians could set standards to ensure their individual competence, leaving the State to focus on the broader oversight and support of library facilities statewide.

Issue 4

Lack of Statutory Direction Could Threaten the Success of Efforts to Provide Online Access to Texas' Historic Documents.

Key Findings

- ◆ TSLAC plays a key role in voluntary efforts to digitally preserve and provide online access to important historic documents housed at institutions across the state.
- ◆ Without collaboration, institutions may digitize their collections separately, spending more money and time on less useful products.
- ◆ TSLAC is providing initial leadership for the Texas Heritage Digitization Initiative, but lacks a clear statutory directive to give ongoing and stable support for this type of collaboration.

Since 2004, TSLAC has been a key member of the Texas Heritage Digitization Initiative, a project involving more than 80 diverse institutions working to make historic Texas resources available online. Digitization and the creation of an online search tool not only deliver a resource frequently requested by the public, but also assist efforts to preserve the original documents. State-level coordination is essential to ensuring consistent standards, and would provide significant cost savings. TSLAC is the most appropriate agency to coordinate and promote a statewide digitization program, as it is already coordinating the Initiative, and is the only statewide entity with existing relationships with archives, libraries, and local governments.

Recommendation

Change in Statute

- 4.1 Authorize TSLAC to promote, and provide leadership to, collaboration between a wide range of Texas institutions to develop online access to digitized cultural resources.**

This change in law would demonstrate the State's interest in digitally preserving and enhancing online access to important historic resources. Providing statutory support for TSLAC to coordinate partnerships between diverse groups would help ensure a consistent and cost-effective approach as individual institutions move forward to digitize their collections. As part of this recommendation, the Commission's ability to include museums in the collaboration, which hold many important resources, should be clarified. Finally, providing statutory support would help Texas secure federal grants and private funding to sustain the collaborative digitization project and online access.

Issue 5

Public School Libraries Lack Comprehensive Support From Any State Agency.

Neither the Texas Education Agency (TEA) nor TSLAC include support of Texas' approximately 7,000 public school libraries in their core missions, and as a result, school libraries have received minimal state-level support in recent years. Previously, TEA provided a staff person dedicated to school libraries and subsidized access to electronic books and online articles, but eliminated the programs in 2003 due to budget shortfalls. TSLAC began negotiating database subscriptions on behalf of school libraries in 2005, but does not subsidize any of the cost, and does not include school libraries in its larger TexShare consortium of academic and public libraries. Both TEA and TSLAC work together to develop voluntary public school library standards.

Recommendation

Change in Statute

- 5.1 Require TSLAC and the Texas Education Agency to develop a joint study of school library needs and to assess which needs each agency should address.**

This recommendation would require TEA and TSLAC to conduct a joint study to determine school library needs. Each agency should also determine which school library needs it is best suited to address, and this information should be included in the joint study. The study should be completed by September 1, 2008, and presented to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the House, and the appropriate oversight committees in the House and Senate.

Fiscal Implication Summary

These recommendations would not have a significant fiscal impact to the State.