



NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Aug. 19, 2010

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**TEXAS STATE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES COMMISSION AWARDED
\$8 MILLION GRANT TO INCREASE COMPUTER ACCESS FOR TEXANS**
Libraries add \$3.7 million for project to enhance learning, job opportunities

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Assistant State Librarian
Edward Seidenberg

*Making
information
work
for all
Texans*

AUSTIN, Texas— Thousands of Texans will gain access to new educational and economic opportunities through a major federal grant awarded to the Texas State Library and Archives Commission Wednesday. The nearly \$8 million grant, from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, will be matched by nearly \$3.7 million from the commission and its partners in an initiative to provide public computing capabilities to underserved people throughout the state.

The Technology Expertise, Access and Learning for All Texans project—TEAL—will fund new or upgraded computer centers at 38 libraries and branches, plus community colleges, public schools, recreation centers and health facilities, as well as three mobile learning labs that will be used to provide computer training wherever it's needed.

With more than 1 million unemployed Texans, a 16.3 percent poverty level and the lowest percentage of high school graduates per capita of any state, Texas desperately needs to close the digital divide so all its residents can learn, work and prosper. The federal Broadband Technology Opportunities Program grant will fund upgrades at 125 public computer centers and create 30 new ones, including 2,200 new and 480 upgraded work stations, enabling an additional 76,000 users a week to obtain computer access while increasing average connection speeds by 5Mbps. For the 67 percent of Texans whose local library provides their only source of free computer access—and only resource for online learning, job hunting, social networking and other pursuits essential to productive participation in society—these funds will foster life-changing opportunities.

“Libraries are first-responders to the needs of the community,” says Sandra Pickett, chairwoman of the state library and archives commission. “It’s not just about computers and wiring. It’s about helping people connect to ways to improve their lives.”

Adds Peggy D. Rudd, the commission’s director and librarian: “It’s a commitment to education, gainful employment and successful lives for people all across the state. Lack of opportunity shouldn’t be a deterrent to success. This project will give people the means to reach their potential as productive citizens, and boost Texas’ economy as well.”

(more)



The commission will oversee the project, which includes 38 public libraries and library systems serving 6.9 million Texans, 28 percent of the state's population. They range from the Houston Public Library System, which serves more than 2 million people, to Valley Mills Public Library, which serves 1,389. In addition to Houston, the Austin, Arlington, Harris County and San Antonio library systems are participating, along with 33 other libraries (for a complete list, click or type <http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/news/docs/2010releases/BTOPGRANTLIST1.pdf>). Through this project, the commission and its partners will help provide a solid foundation for decades of economic growth in Texas.

Project outreach efforts will focus on economically disadvantaged youth, seniors and non-English-speaking residents, as well as unemployed residents, people with physical impairments and anyone in need of building computer skills. The Lancaster Veterans Memorial Library, for example, will establish a computer center at a senior citizens facility, where specialized computers tailored for their needs will be available in a welcoming environment.

The Atlanta Public Library will add 20 computer work stations to the seven it has now, allowing staff to help many more patrons with job searches, resume-writing and online applications so they won't have to travel to the nearest job center, 25 miles away in the next county.

"Texas has always been a place of limitless possibilities, where people willing to work hard can fulfill their potential and make their dreams come true," says Rudd. "Thanks to this grant, so many more Texans will have the chance to do just that."

For more information, please contact Peggy D. Rudd or Lynne Margolis at (512) 463-5514 or lmargolis@tsl.state.tx.us.

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ABOUT THE TEXAS STATE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES COMMISSION

Formed in 1909, TSLAC is committed to giving Texans access to information and programs they can use to improve their lives and communities. We provide history and genealogical search assistance, federal and state government documents, electronic research and library services to all Texans, including those who are unable to read standard print material because of physical or reading disabilities. For more information, visit www.tsl.state.tx.us.

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