

Loan Star Libraries Program Survey Report

February 2012

**Texas State Library and
Archives Commission**

Library Development and
Networking Division



Executive Summary

Since 2002 the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) has administered the Loan Star Libraries Program of direct state aid to Texas public libraries. With the elimination of this funding by the Texas legislature, TSLAC surveyed the 541 accredited public libraries between September 26 and October 12, 2011, to gauge the impact of this funding loss; 334 libraries responded. Results of this survey document the impact of this loss, which hits small rural libraries especially hard.

"I just hope that we will be able to keep our doors open."

– Munday City County Library

The elimination of funding for the Loan Star Libraries Program has had the effect of forcing libraries throughout Texas to make difficult choices in order to compensate for the loss in funding. Eighty-four percent of the 334 survey respondents were unable to identify a way to compensate

for the funding loss. While comments are specific to individual communities, all of the comments substantiate the survey results. Texas public libraries keenly feel the loss of the Loan Star Libraries (LSL) Program and are concerned about the impact its loss will have on their ability to deliver high quality community library services.

I. Loan Star Libraries Program Overview

The Loan Star Libraries Program of direct aid to accredited Texas public libraries was based on a partnership between the State of Texas and local political jurisdictions. The program's purpose was to:

- Improve public library services statewide
- Ensure access to adequate public library resources and services for all Texans
- Provide an incentive to local communities to extend public library services without charge to those residing outside of each public library's legal service area
- Build the capacity of each public library to serve as the information resource and lifelong learning center for their community
- Enhance the public library's ability to serve Texans across the "Digital Divide"
- Improve each public library's ability to provide access points to e-government

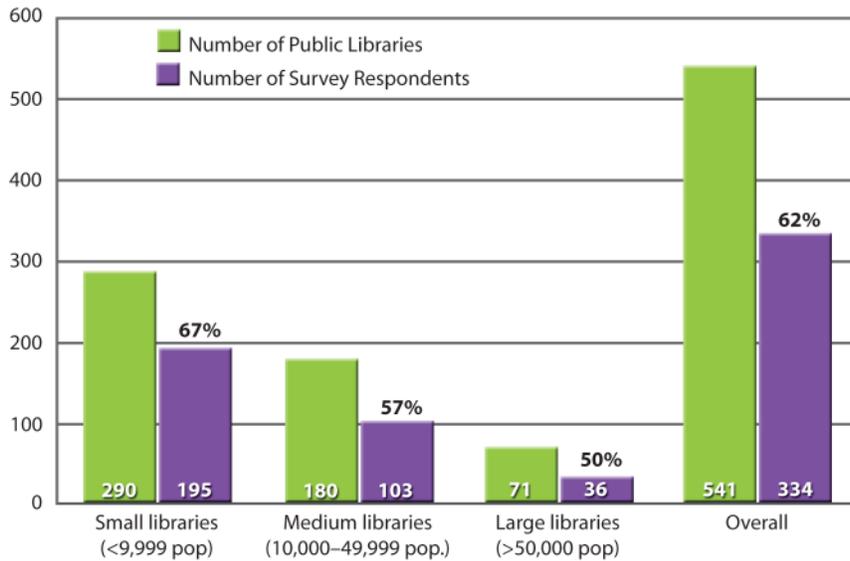
The 76th Texas Legislature appropriated funds for the Loan Star Libraries Program, and the first formula grants were awarded in FY2002. Between 2002 and 2010, the State of Texas provided more than \$41 million to its public libraries to supplement local funding. These funds were used to invest in technology and broadband Internet access; expand hours of operation; hire staff; offer programs for children, teens, and adults; and expand collections of books and audio and video materials. In addition, since FY2002, almost every local library has eliminated non-resident fees previously charged to out-of-area residents.

The 82nd Texas Legislature eliminated all funding for the Loan Star Libraries Program.

II. Loan Star Libraries Program Closeout Survey

In the wake of this funding decision, the Texas State Library and Archives Commission administered a survey to determine the impact the Loan Star Libraries Program's elimination would have on Texas communities.

Survey respondents



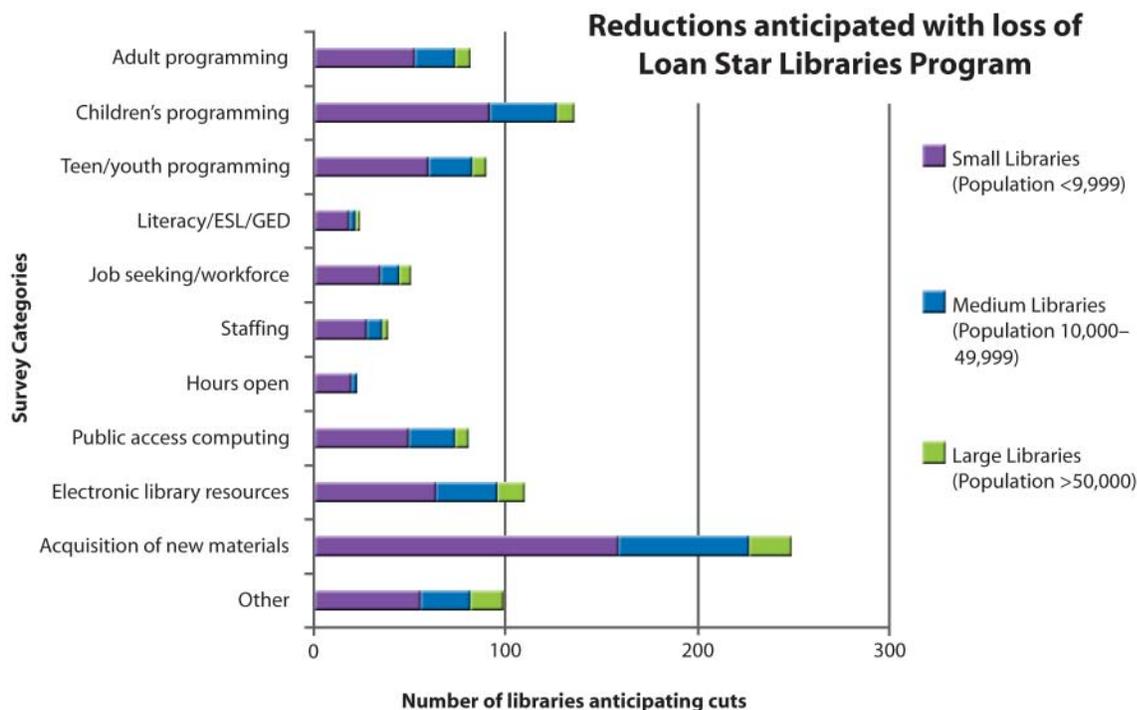
Of the 541 accredited public libraries in the state, 334 completed the survey, a response rate of 62%. At least 50% of the libraries in each population group is represented by responses. The highest response rate came from those public libraries serving fewer than 10,000 residents, followed by libraries serving 10,000 to 49,999 population. The lowest response rate was from libraries serving 50,000 or more population; however a 50% response rate is excellent. Survey respondents were dispersed fairly evenly around the state.

Geographic distribution of survey respondents

	Total number of public libraries	Number of libraries responding	Percentage of libraries represented (responding)
Abilene area	38	25	66%
Amarillo/Panhandle area	28	18	64%
Austin/Central Texas area	77	54	70%
Corpus Christi/South Texas area	56	36	64%
Dallas and Northeast Texas area	107	62	58%
El Paso area	14	9	64%
Ft Worth area	74	38	51%
Houston area	65	43	66%
Lubbock area	35	24	69%
San Antonio area	47	25	53%
Grand Total	541	334	62%

III. Survey Design and Development

In September 2011 the Texas State Library and Archives Commission asked the directors of the 541 accredited public libraries in Texas to respond to a seven-part online survey. The survey deadline was October 12. The survey instrument asked four primary questions. Respondents were given a list of ways in which Loan Star Libraries funding had been used in libraries and were asked to select those services that would be affected by the loss of Loan Star Libraries funding. Directors could select more than one response if multiple service areas were impacted. Respondents had the opportunity to describe in detail what services would be reduced or eliminated and to indicate whether or not any alternate funding sources had been identified to replace Loan Star Libraries funding.



IV. Statewide Impact of Loan Star Libraries Program Elimination

Survey results document that basic public library services such as library collections, as well as enhanced services, such as library programming, will be affected by the loss of the Loan Star Libraries Program. A breakdown of survey responses by library service population indicates that the greatest impact of the loss of the Loan Star Libraries grant funding statewide will be on the ability of Texas public libraries to add new print, electronic, and audio visual materials to their collections for the shared use of their communities.

Each year, approximately 40% of the total Loan Star Libraries Program funding was used by libraries to purchase materials. The public expects libraries to have an increasing array of materials and formats, print and electronic. The Loan Star Libraries Program enabled libraries to enhance their collections and expand into new areas such as CDs, DVDs, eBooks, and materials in other languages to meet user demand.

Survey respondents reported that they are also being forced to discontinue or reduce the number of library programs they offer their communities. Libraries used LSL funds to enhance specialized educational experiences for all ages. For children, libraries offered

“We will be able to stay open through 2012 with careful and prudent spending of monies; however, the future of our library is doubtful.”

– Shackleford County Library

free early literacy programming, homework assistance, and reading programs throughout the summer months when school is not in session. For adults, libraries had offered free hands-on computer skills training, literacy/ESL (English as a Second Language) or GED classes, as well as adult reading clubs and discussion groups.

Public computer facilities housed in public libraries will be affected by the elimination of the Loan Star Libraries Program. For 81, or 24%, of the responding libraries, the Loan Star Libraries funding allowed purchase and maintenance of computers. In many communities throughout the state, especially in rural areas, public libraries offer the only

free source of access to the Internet.

The elimination of the Loan Star Libraries Program has also forced libraries to reduce or eliminate staff positions. For 10% of survey respondents, staffing levels have been negatively impacted.

V. Impact on Library Operating Hours

The loss of Loan Star Libraries funding has had a moderate impact on library hours of operation. Twenty library directors reported that they have reduced the hours the library is open. The library directors reporting that library service hours will be reduced are from small, rural libraries serving communities that lack a large core of community services. In these cases, the library oftentimes serves as the center of community information and engagement.

VI. Ability to Replace Loan Star Libraries Program Funding

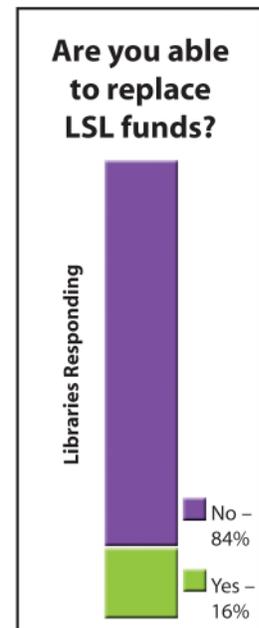
The elimination of the Loan Star Libraries program will require communities to make difficult choices and find alternatives to compensate for the loss in funding. Eighty-four percent of survey respondents indicated that they have no alternative funding source to replace the funds received from the Loan Star Libraries Program.

Sixteen percent of survey respondents who indicated that they did have a source of replacement funding were asked to identify that source. The majority of those respondents plan to turn to local government or local library foundations or Friends groups to request additional funding needed to maintain current service levels. Even for this small group of respondents, it is unclear what the outcome of their requests will be or what they will do if their requests are not approved.

VII. In Their Own Words: Comments from Library Directors

Library directors responding to the survey clearly feel the loss of the Loan Star Libraries Program. Eliminating the program will affect public library services of all types and libraries large and small.

As part of the survey, TSLAC asked respondents to comment on the impact that the elimination of the Loan Star Libraries Program would have on their library services and their com-



“This grant has not only helped us to improve our library, it has helped us to improve our community as a whole. It has helped us to buy new computers, funded our internet service, and allowed us to keep up with ever changing technology. This support has aided in helping patrons look for jobs, and has allowed us to be the leading workforce regenerator in our small rural town.”

– Stamford Carnegie Library

munities. What follows is a sample of the many narratives submitted.

Library programming – El Paso

The Loan Star Libraries program was the only source of money for library programming, staff training and travel and some computer resources. Loan Star has helped us reach out to 30,000 community members through library programs in the past year alone. We have already made plans to reduce programming this fall and winter. – El Paso Public Library

Library collections and staffing reductions – West and Central Texas

We depended on the Loan Star Libraries program to pay for our leased book program. Our patrons had grown accustomed to the program, which was very popular. We also will have to reduce the number of staff working during the week in order to have enough money to keep the library open on Saturdays. Loan Star had supported the Saturday hours so we have to reduce hours elsewhere in order to meet patron demand for Saturday service hours. – Marfa Public Library

With Loan Star Library funds, Kyle could barely keep ahead of having one item in its collection per person served. Now

having the double whammy of losing Loan Star funding and having significant cuts at the local level, the library may be crippled in its ability to keep up. – Kyle Public Library

One paid staff member, the Library Director – Central Texas

Our Loan Star funds have been almost one-third of our budget. When a library is open only 20 hours a week and has just one staff person, finding time to apply for replacement funding is difficult. Programs for children will be impacted as will our ability to purchase new bestsellers and an additional reference resource for children. Our town does not have a bookstore; Waco is a long drive away for many. – West Public Library

Many areas of library service, including computer technology – Houston area

Without the Loan Star Libraries program, I will only be able to purchase a limited number of new materials and the collection will not remain relevant to our users. I used some of our Loan Star Libraries funding to replace 11-year-old computers in the library; a luxury I will not be able to fund in the future. The need will remain but I will no longer have an avenue to replace computer equipment. Our small libraries will suffer the most because with so many people still unemployed, senior citizen numbers growing each day, and many families having access to no computers or having to disconnect the internet due to their inability to pay for the internet connection at home, we will have great difficulty keeping up with the growing needs of our community. Eliminating this program will impact lifelong learning as well as the ability of rural citizens to find stable employment. – Alma Carpenter Library, Sour Lake

“Loan Star funds have made an enormous impact on our small rural library. We were able to offer services that we could not have offered otherwise.”

– Reagan County Library

Staff availability – North Texas

The Loss of the Loan Star Libraries program could not have come at a worse time. The absence of this funding will affect our ability to staff our library adequately. During the 2000-2010 period, the following have all increased: Circulation 156%, Computer use 371%, Door count 42%, Adult & Youth program attendance 162%, Reference questions 293%. However, our staffing levels have only increased 20%, which is not enough. The Loan Star funds were going to help us meet our need for additional staffing by paying for part-time help during our busiest times.

– Watauga Library

Budget adjustments – North Texas

The entire Summer Reading Club program is made possible through this grant. Losing this grant, I've had to scramble to find a way to keep this important summer program afloat for 2012; however, I am not sure how to keep it funded each summer. This program is a safe place for children to meet up in the County, keep students away from the “summer slide” of reading comprehension, and was a great way for families to do something free together all summer long. The loss of this grant will be greatly missed and the children of Hood County will definitely be impacted by this loss of service if it is not funded by any other means.

– Hood County Public Library, Granbury

More staff and services – Northeast Texas

With the loss of the Loan Star funds, we lost an employee. For the past three years, we have used this money to hire a program coordinator. This coordinator planned and conducted after-school programs for children and teens. Our coordinator also taught ESL classes with some of our Spanish speaking patrons. We were also using this employee to keep our library open extended time on Thursdays throughout the year. We are having to use remaining personnel to continue the child/teen programs. These programs will be on a much smaller scale without the elaborate planning, ideas, and creativity (one person can only do so much!!!) At the present time, we are looking for funding for the ESL classes. We will no longer be able to remain open extended hours. The loss of these funds will definitely have a long term effect on our services to our patrons. I personally believe this loss shows that the state government of Texas does not value libraries or the services they provide.

– Howe Community Library