



Public Libraries and Broadband Connectivity in Texas

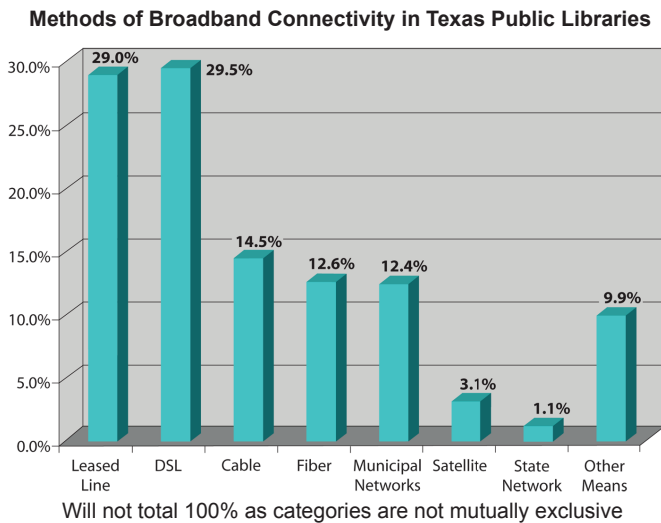
There are 563 independent library jurisdictions operating 878 outlets that provide public library services to the people of Texas. Just over half (54%) of Texas public libraries serve communities with fewer than 10,000 people.

Public libraries in Texas may be legally established as departments of cities or counties, as library districts, or as non-profit corporations with contracts with a public entity.

PUBLIC LIBRARY CONNECTIVITY

According to data collected in 2008, 29 percent of Texas public libraries had Internet connectivity that was less than 1.5 Mbps and 61 percent had speeds of 1.5 Mbps or higher.

The majority of public libraries in Texas connected to the Internet using leased line (29 percent) or DSL (29.5 percent). A smaller percent of libraries connected using cable (14.5 percent), fiber (12.6 percent), municipal networks (12.4 percent), satellite (3.1), the state network (1.1 percent), or other means (9.9).



Seventy-four percent of Texas libraries reported that they provide the only free, public Internet access in their community. Fifty-seven percent of Texas libraries reported that their connection speed

was insufficient or only sufficient to meet user needs at some times. Forty-two percent said that their connection speed is sufficient to meet user needs at all times. (From Public Libraries and the Internet 2008 Report available at http://www.ii.fsu.edu/plinternet_reports.cfm.)

PUBLIC SECTOR STATEWIDE NETWORKS

Texas Education Telecommunications Network (TETN)

The Texas Education Telecommunications Network is a consortium of twenty-one entities: the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the twenty Texas Education Service Centers (ESCs). TETN's mission is to improve student performance and to increase efficiency of educational operations via an effective telecommunications network. TETN connects the 20 ESC networks and their 800 plus school districts with video capability.

TETN is replacing its traditional network with high-speed broadband connections among the Education Service Centers and adding new services beyond video conferencing. School districts that are members of their ESC regional network will have access to the statewide education intranet.

Lonestar Education and Research Network (LEARN)

The Lonestar Education and Research Network is a cooperative effort of Texas institutions of higher education to provide high-speed connectivity between their institutions and to research networks across the country.

LEARN is a charter member of the National Lambda Rail (NLR), the 12,000-mile nationwide, advanced optical network infrastructure that supports over 180 research institutions and federal agencies. At present, NLR has a full-service node in Houston, and some services available in Dallas, San Antonio, and El Paso. LEARN shares co-location space with NLR along its Houston to Dallas

path and leases a 10-g service from NLR between San Antonio and El Paso.

Texas Higher Education Network (THEnet)

Managed by the University of Texas System Office of Telecommunication Services (OTS), the Texas Higher Education Network is a subscriber service that provides Internet and Internet2 access to education, research, and health care institutions. OTS offers IP-based network services to THEnet subscribers via the UT System Network (UTSN), a high-performance backbone network that provides advanced networking capabilities to UT System universities and health institutions. THEnet subscribers have included universities, colleges, community colleges, public and private K-12 schools, libraries, museums, health care organizations, research institutions, and local, state, and federal government agencies. OTS operates THEnet solely on a cost-recovery basis.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS ENVIRONMENT

The Public Utility Commission (PUC) of Texas is responsible for regulating the telecommunications industry as well as authorizing statewide video franchises. The PUC also manages disbursements from the Texas Universal Service Fund (TUSF).

Mapping Initiatives

The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) and the Public Utility Commission recently issued a joint Request for Information and subsequently a Request for Proposals to undertake a statewide broadband mapping project and to establish Connected Texas. Texas would like to establish a “baseline assessment of broadband service deployment,” and identify a variety of actions to help stimulate broadband demand. Additional information is available at http://www.agr.state.tx.us/agr/program_render/0,1987,1848_6061_0_0,00.html?channelId=6061.

Statewide Video Franchise

Texas Public Utility Regulatory Act Chapter 66 (Sections 66.001- 66.004) moved the authority to issue cable and video franchising from municipalities to the Public Utility Commission of Texas. Under this law, a state franchise holder is not subject to mandatory build-out provisions, but is required to pay each municipality within which it provides cable

or video service a franchise fee of five percent of gross revenue.

Texas Utilities Code § 43.001 permits electric utilities to own and operate Broadband over Power Line (BPL) systems or to allow a third-party entity to provide BPL services using its facilities. The Code provides that no additional easements or consideration are required prior to the installation of a BPL system.

Texas Public Utility Regulatory Act § 26.143 addresses the need and the methods for telecommunications service providers to make available, when requested, rural telecommunications services at comparable costs and conditions to urban services.

E-Rate

As of August 3, 2009, the Federal Communication Commission’s Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) received \$4.325 million in commitment requests from public libraries in Texas and has committed \$1.109 million in funding.

These totals for 2009 do not reflect any discounts received by libraries applying as a consortium. Therefore, the number of libraries in Texas benefiting from E-Rate discounts may be greater as several public libraries may be partners with community school systems and apply jointly for these discounts.

The principal source for E-Rate assistance for Texas public libraries is TSLAC’s E-Rate Coordinator. Texas Library Systems vary in the level of consulting assistance that they provide to their member libraries in regards to applying for E-Rate. Most of the library systems do not provide in-depth consulting assistance to public libraries on applying for E-Rate, but instead provide general guidance about the process.



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