

**SAN AUGUSTINE PUBLIC LIBRARY**  
**A HISTORY**  
**1971-2019**

San Augustine Public Library was established in 1971, and is an unparalleled success story in this Deep East Texas area. In 1970 the energetic members of Women's Service League began a major campaign to open a Public Library in this County. Citizens barely remembered the short-lived volunteer library during the late 1950s located in the Masonic Hall's lower floor. The Service League's appeal to both City and County officials resulted in those governing entities providing \$4,000 each from the Library Services Construction Act (LSCA), a federal program available at that time. With these funds plus individual donations, the old Iona Hotel, former home of Emmett and Ima Owen, was rented from Emmett Owen Jr. for the nominal sum of \$90 per month. In 1975 the building was purchased by the City of San Augustine with parking-meter receipts at a cost of about \$20,000. The Library has remained in this convenient, visible location on the corner of Columbia and Ayish Streets for the past forty-three years, although many changes have occurred as times and needs have changed. As a Department of the City of San Augustine since 1975, most of the Library's support comes from the citizens of the City, although limited San Augustine County support is still received each year. Even so, San Augustine Public Library serves all San Augustine County residents free of charge.

The late Jim Love, a member of Houston Area Library System's Advisory Council and the Library Consultant for TLL Temple Foundation during the 1970s, was instrumental in getting San Augustine's new library started in the right direction. On his first visit to San Augustine he found the building in its original, "as is" condition: no books, no air-conditioning, inadequate lighting, fading wallpaper-over-canvas throughout, but still, according to Mr. Love, a perfect location for a quality library to serve the residents of San Augustine City and County.

Thus, San Augustine Public Library opened in 1971 with two boxes of children's books provided "Free" through Mr. Love's connections. At first, children were the primary patrons, thanks to the continued efforts of Women's Service League and Library staff. Soon parents and other adults began to come. As the collection developed, the Texas History and Genealogy

section became one of the best in the State. Popular departments in the Library today continue to be fiction, non-fiction, research, large print materials, microfilm, audios, videos and paperbacks. There are currently 4,800 library card-holders, and approximately 100 genealogy researchers each month. Frequent memorial gifts provide additional funds for constantly adding to the current 20,500-volume collection. Patrons in the expanded facility also enjoy public-access computers, as well as copier, fax, and laminating services. Today, it is a common occurrence after-hours to see cars parked at the Library using the always-available Wi-Fi.

Children continue to be a major focus for the Library, with a strong emphasis upon the Summer Reading Program, and various children's activities throughout the year.

During the early years, San Augustine Public Library's membership in Houston Area Library System served as a means of growth and exceptional success enjoyed by the library patrons living in San Augustine City and County. Over the years, this affiliation provided assistance in a myriad of ways to our Library: Consultants in every area of library service, training workshops for staff, professional guidance in collection development, and Inter-Library Loan for obtaining materials not available locally. Although HALS no longer exists, the Texas Library Association (TLA) has moved to the forefront, and continues to be a dynamic connection for San Augustine Public Library in the areas of training and ideas geared to the ever-changing needs of our society.

Also crucial to the Library's success was the organization in 1975 of San Augustine Friends of the Library, Inc. as the funding arm of San Augustine Public Library. Over the years these dedicated volunteers have conducted membership drives, book sales, lecture series, and a myriad of special events to benefit the Library. SAFOL's most ambitious project was in seeking funding for the \$400,000 addition/renovation project of San Augustine Public Library. Completed in December 2001, the new facility was made possible through generous grants from TLL Temple Foundation, Summerlee Foundation, The Pinewoods Foundation, The Rockwell Fund Inc., Swalm Foundation, Tocker Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Pauline Gill Foundation, and, of course, donations from the citizens of San Augustine City and County. Architects Scott and Strong of Lufkin, Texas designed the expanded Library. San Augustine Architectural Engineer Ray Stripling supervised the construction by J.E. Kingham Company of Nacogdoches.

**Since 2005, Lucy Mitchell and her family's Meyer Foundation has focused on providing San Augustine Public Library with the finest technological advantages available today. Their funding for state-of-the-art computers, printers, and other computer-related needs, plus an emphasis upon facilities and upgrades, has been crucial in keeping San Augustine Public Library in step with the latest technology.**

**In 2012, San Augustine Garden Club partnered with the Library in offering computer classes for Senior Citizens. A grant received from the Tocker Foundation, and the use of the Garden Club's Multiple-Purpose Community House (next door to the Library), made possible after-hours computer classes taught by instructors from Angelina Adult Learning Center, Lufkin, Texas.**

**The Garden Club's Community House has been used for English as a Second Language classes since 2002, as a way of assisting the Library with after-hours programming and helping Hispanic patrons in their efforts to learn English. GED classes were added several years later. A side benefit of the ESL program has been to assist with citizenship papers for attendees.**

**In 2013, San Augustine Public Library moved forward with the addition of "e-books" as a service offered to its patrons.**

**Over the past nine years the growth and outreach of our San Augustine Public Library to the residents of San Augustine City and County continues to be a significant presence in the lives of our people, adding to the improved quality of life for all.**

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