



Bexar County Commissioners Court

San Antonio, Texas 78205-3036

210.335.2555

210.335.2926/fax

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Contact: Laura Jesse
210.335.0073/o
210.787.9038/m

BiblioTech will offer residents modern concept in libraries, literacy

Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff and Precinct 1 Commissioner Sergio “Chico” Rodriguez announced Friday plans to build the first book-less public library in the country. The pilot BiblioTech, located on the South Side, will offer residents thousands of electronic titles; access to desktop, laptop and tablet computers; and e-readers that can be checked out by patrons.

“BiblioTech is Bexar County’s new concept in offering library services, it should not be seen as a replacement to the traditional library,” Judge Wolff said. “It is an enhancement to the current system to which all County residents have access. The ever changing landscape of technology means that literacy is no longer about picking up a physical book and being able to comprehend the words; technology is changing the way we read, learn and thrive as citizens of the 21st Century.”

Extensive growth in the unincorporated areas of the County has resulted in greater distances between patrons and libraries, as well as a drive for more city-like services to be offered by the County. BiblioTech will remove barriers to library access, enhance education and literacy and promote reading as recreation all by using technology. Residents will be able to come in BiblioTech and use computers on-site, or check out an e-reader to take with them for a limited time period.

But residents with their own e-readers or tablets would be able to access the collection remotely once they have a library ID. The location also will have study spaces, meeting rooms and a designated interactive children's area. The center will be open 7 days a week. Eventually, Judge Wolff would like to see the BiblioTech concept expanded to other areas of unincorporated Bexar County.

The first BiblioTech will be inside the Precinct 1 Satellite Offices at 3505 Pleasanton Road in a 4,989 square foot shell space; it is expected to open this summer. On Tuesday, Commissioners Court will consider a package of items to create BiblioTech, including:

- A request for proposals to provide e-book distributor services;
- A request for qualifications for architectural services to finish out the shell space;
- A request to establish a budget;
- And the creation of a 7 member BiblioTech Advisory Board to be appointed by Commissioners Court.

"Students who live in this area of Precinct 1, which is in the Harlandale School District, have limited resources to complete research, use a computer or simply read a book outside of their school facilities," Commissioner Rodriguez said. "Once we open BiblioTech this summer, they will have a world of learning available to them all the time."

The BiblioTech proposal starts with 100 e-readers for circulation, 50 pre-loaded enhanced e-readers for children, 50 computer stations, 25 laptops and 25 tablets to use on site; additional e-reading accommodations will be made for the visually impaired. The collection will include 10,000 current titles to start, with access to tens of thousands of classic titles.

"This is the most cost effective way we could find to bring library services into the County," Judge Wolff said. "But I want to emphasize that it will be open to anyone who wants to come in."

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