



# BiblioTech

## Changing lives with digital services—and Mac.

The future of the public library has arrived. BiblioTech is the first all-digital library. And it runs on Mac.



### Organization Snapshot

- First all-digital public library
- Dedicated to breaking down physical, financial, and geographical barriers to reading and technology
- Enhances education and literacy by providing access to the tools needed to thrive in the 21st century
- Provides 24/7 access to the library's digital collection
- Offers many public services to a variety of patrons
- [www.bexarbibliotech.org](http://www.bexarbibliotech.org)

"As a government official attempting to scale services that reach out to the public, you couldn't do it any better than with Mac."

*Judge Nelson Wolff  
Bexar County Executive Officer*

"A typical branch library costs between \$7 and \$10 million. And BiblioTech cost \$2.25 million."

*Laura Cole  
Project Coordinator, BiblioTech*

BiblioTech is changing lives, one digital book at a time. And if over 20,000 titles and inspiring community programs aren't enough of a draw, the rows of gleaming new iMac and MacBook Pro computers are. Over 300 patrons flock to BiblioTech each day. Many work on the provided Mac computers or check out mobile readers to use at home, while others bring their own devices to download content onsite. But bridging literacy and technology gaps in this underserved community surrounding San Antonio, Texas, is just the beginning. As BiblioTech surpasses 100,000 visitors and 19,000 registered patrons in just the first year, the futuristic library has also become a new model for scaling a wide variety of public services. "Today, understanding how to use technology is almost as essential as learning to read when I was growing up," says Bexar County Executive Officer Judge Nelson Wolff. "By offering Mac, we're able to provide our community with access to the best in technology."

### Delivering the Optimal Experience

It started as the brainchild of visionary and local literacy advocate, Bexar County Executive Officer Judge Nelson Wolff. And in just under 12 months, BiblioTech has proven to be both a win with the community and a cost savings for the county—at least one-third the cost of a traditional library in facilities costs alone—with additional savings expected as their digital collection increases. "The world has changed so much, but public libraries aren't really changing that fast," Judge Wolff explains about his inspiration for BiblioTech. "I knew we needed to be doing things in a different way. And that's where Mac came in."

The goal from the start was to bring the best in technology to what was an economically challenged area with access to few resources. So when it came to outfitting the new library with computers, the Mac won out against alternatives because of its wide range of capabilities. With every Mac, BiblioTech has more platform options to offer patrons, who can easily switch between OS X and Microsoft Windows on a single system. The aesthetics of the Mac also contributed to the decision—the sleek design and enticing interface communicates the contemporary, edgy feel BiblioTech seeks to convey from the moment visitors walk in the door. The built-in layers of security in OS X, including easy-to-use web filtering, were also important to BiblioTech for protecting their public-use systems. The stunning, high-performance graphics in the latest Mac computers make them powerful learning and creative tools for the library's patrons. And BiblioTech has taken advantage of power-saving technologies like Timer Coalescing built into OS X to increase battery efficiency.

"The Mac enables us to switch operating systems whenever it's needed. That way, if a patron wants to perform a Windows operation, they can just switch to that operation without switching computers."

*Judge Nelson Wolff  
Bexar County Executive Officer*

"Built-in security, impressive graphics, and power efficiencies were all reasons we chose Mac."

*Laura Cole  
Project Coordinator, BiblioTech*



## Why Mac at BiblioTech

- Enables both Windows and OS X experiences on a single system
- Beautiful, sleek design entices users and communicates the library's forward-thinking image
- Built-in layers of security, including easy-to-use web filtering, helps keep public-use systems secure
- The incredible graphics capabilities of Mac make it a more powerful learning tool
- Power-saving technologies built into OS X increase battery efficiency

"We were going into an area that was underserved. So we didn't want to give them the minimum," explains project coordinator Laura Cole. "We knew we wanted to offer the optimum in technology. And that's why we chose Mac."

## Mac Makes Integration Seamless

Not only is the Mac making a strong impact on BiblioTech patrons, library employees also rely on Mac for its seamless fit with their back-end systems. The BiblioTech team sources all its digital assets from third-party vendors, then manages circulation and checkout of their digital collection through the Polaris Integrated Library System. With their workflow needing to incorporate multiple platforms and technologies from various sources, some at BiblioTech were uncertain whether the Mac could do the trick. "There was a little bit of panic when we first realized the vendor software required wasn't necessarily compatible with Mac," says Cole. "But using Parallels, it's seamless. We can do it all on the Mac."

And when it comes to patrons who want to use Windows, they can easily run both Windows and OS X on the Mac using Parallels software. But according to Cole, once library visitors lay eyes on a Mac, most who start out more familiar with other computers are inspired to learn Mac instead. "Once they try it for the first time, they almost always gravitate back to the Mac," she says. The result for BiblioTech patrons and staff alike is a seamless and integrated experience—all on the Mac.

## Tools to Thrive in the 21st Century

One step inside, and it's easy to see that BiblioTech patrons come in all ages and with every interest. And its services cover the spectrum, including adult education, assistance with government services, weekday programs for seniors, and toddler storytime on Sunday mornings. One frequent visitor is a 92-year-old widower who first came into BiblioTech to learn about blogging so he could record his life and memories of his wife. There's literally something for everyone, from tax preparation help to resume-building and genealogy classes. And on any given weekday afternoon, students fill the seats in front of stunning new Mac computers, completing homework or using robotics programs and games. "Ten years from now, that's when we'll realize BiblioTech's true value," Cole says. "When the students who've been using our library have learned digital literacy on the Mac—and have become excited about leveraging that technology to further themselves and their families."

## Scaling Services—A Model for the Future

The Mac speaks to the core mission of BiblioTech according to Cole. And that mission doesn't end at the innovative library's front door. BiblioTech services are already scaling into new directions. Classes will begin soon to provide basic technology education to juvenile offenders in the local justice system. And the first BiblioTech satellite location has launched to rave reviews. A small version of the library in the Bexar County Central Jury Room lets potential jurors sign up for library services and download digital reading materials, which has helped increase public awareness about BiblioTech. This resource, along with the many other services BiblioTech provides to the community, enables the library to reach new audiences every day—illustrating first-hand the future of scalable services for Bexar County and beyond.

"It's been a really positive experience for us to have Mac computers at BiblioTech," explains Laura Cole. "Not only are they highly functional, but they speak a lot to our core mission—to provide a service that's important enough to invest in."