



Texas Book Festival 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

TEXAS BOOK FESTIVAL 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

If there was ever any question about the relevance of books today, 2020 proved that we turn to books to educate, captivate, and connect us. In a year filled with cancellations and isolation, the Texas Book Festival was proud to provide free virtual access to a host of exciting, diverse authors and to do what we do best: create a platform where thoughtful and thought-provoking conversations shine.

All this year, through streamed author conversations, storytimes, virtual salons, and social media, we found new ways to create community around books, connecting with more than 75,000 people. Undaunted by the change to our beloved Festival format, and thanks to our financial supporters and volunteers, we worked hard to present 174 authors including Oscar winning actor Matthew McConaughey, *New York Times* best-selling authors Jodi Picoult and Kevin Kwan, National Book Award winners Elizabeth Acevedo, Kacen Callender and Sigrid Nuñez, Pulitzer Prize winners Natasha Trethewey and Isabel Wilkerson, and James Beard Award-winning chef David Chang.

With a commitment to safety and narrowing the digital divide, we provided more than 13,000 books, 65 virtual author visits, and literacy programming to students learning remotely and in-person at 25 elementary schools in Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, and the Rio Grande Valley through our Reading Rock Stars program. Through our Real Reads program, we connected 925 middle and high school students to authors in Dallas and Austin. And we continued our commitment to Texas libraries by awarding \$100,000 in grants to 42 public libraries across the state.

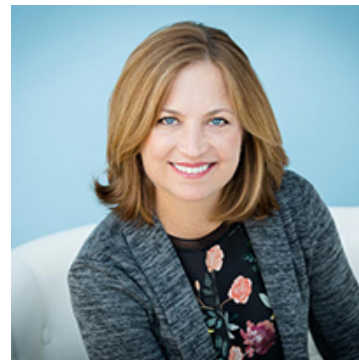
We are planning for this year's Festival with cautious optimism, a commitment to flexibility, and great appreciation to our sponsors, donors, partners, volunteers and the literary community. Your belief in the Texas Book Festival's mission and your ongoing contributions have helped make us stronger than ever. While our 25th anniversary year was anything but what we had planned, we affirmed the strength and breadth of our vision: we can inspire a love of reading in Texans of all ages every day of the year.

Warm regards,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lois".

Lois Kim
Executive Director



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah".

Sarah Queen
Board Chair





FESTIVAL IMPACT

In 2020, the Texas Book Festival pulled together another stellar lineup for its twenty-fifth anniversary. “Texas Book Festival No. 25 . . . is raring to to go,” reported the *Austin Chronicle* in September, “and the proof is in the lineup.” The “literary talent cup runneth over,” reported one outlet; “Austin’s beloved Texas Book Festival publishes all-star lineup for first-ever virtual event,” reported another.

More than 30,000 registrations across 100+ sessions later, the audience appeared to agree. TBF 2020 featured Academy Award winner Matthew McConaughey; MacArthur “Genius” Grant recipient Catherine Coleman Flowers; environmentalist icon Erin Brockovich; dozens of bestselling authors, including Dean Koontz, Yaa Gyasi, and Cory Doctorow; 40+ Kirkus-starred books; more than ten Pulitzer Prize winning or nominated authors, including Isabel Wilkerson, Lawrence Wright, and H. W. Brands; five finalists for the 2020 Kirkus Prize, including Juli Delgado Lopera, Mychal Denzel Smith, Derrick Barnes, and Elizabeth Acevedo; seven National Book Award 2020 longlisters, including Kacen Callender, Natalie Diaz, and Brit Bennett; and three PEN America Literary Awards finalists, including Peniel E. Joseph and Jennifer Ackerman.

The National Book Foundation, PEN America, the Whiting Awards, the Writers’ League of Texas, the Michener Center for Writers, the Texas Center for the Book, and fellow literary events Portland Book Festival and Wordplay joined the Festival in programming and promotional partnerships.



2020 FESTIVAL POSTER ARTIST

The official 2020 Festival poster was designed by the late Austin artist Bob “Daddy-O” Wade, who passed away in December 2019, and whose larger-than-life work is beloved by many across Texas and the United States. His work for the Festival poster, "Let ‘er Rip," depicts a rodeo cowgirl atop a horned toad. Showcasing Wade’s unique mixed-media style and use of technicolor hues, the poster conveys a vintage Texas feel and, of course, Wade’s signature humor.

FESTIVAL NUMBERS

Festival Sessions:

- TTBF = 12
- Adult = 60
- Kids = 24
- Lit Crawl = 8
- Total = 104
- 29 virtual exhibitors

Author demographics:

- White/Caucasian: 47%
- Hispanic, Latinx, Tejano: 25%
- Black/African American: 18%
- Asian / Asian American: 7%
- Native American, American Indian, or Indigenous: 2%
- Croatian Persian: 1%
- Arab-American: 1%
- Total: 104% [figure includes authors who identified as more than one ethnicity]
- LGBTQ+: 17%

TEXAS WRITER AWARD



The Texas Writer Award is given to a Texas writer in recognition of outstanding contributions to Texas literature. The 2020 Texas Writer Award recipient was Stephen Graham Jones, the author of dozens of novels, including most recently the *New York Times* bestselling *The Only Good Indians*. Stephen’s been an NEA fellowship recipient, has won the Jesse Jones Award for Best Work of Fiction from the Texas Institute of Letters, and a Bram Stoker Award, among other accolades. Originally from Midland, Texas, and raised as Blackfeet in West Texas, Jones now lives in Boulder, Colorado.

SHIFT TO VIRTUAL

Spring 2020 marked the beginning of one of the Festival's greatest and most immediate pivots. After weeks of initial uncertainty, what remained were two paths forward: virtual or nothing. We chose virtual.

What followed were months of experiment, analysis, creativity, and a crash course in video conferencing. Constant, too, were countless conversations with authors, publishers, donors, sponsors, vendors, advisers, and stakeholders. New partnerships were forged, and old partnerships remained steadfast.

Come the fall, after the dust settled, two things stood out: Virtual was here to stay, as people loved the flexibility and accessibility that virtual programming offered. Audiences also missed the magic of an in-person Festival and want to see it return stronger than ever.



TICKETED SESSIONS

Total attendance:

- Matthew McConaughey
 - 770 total attendance
- Jodi Picoult
 - 230 total attendance



LIT CRAWL

Lit Crawl Austin—supported by generous sponsors *Texas Monthly*, Desert Door Sotol, and Rambler Sparking Water—celebrated its tenth anniversary at TBF 2020. Nearly 1,750 registrations were logged for the eight-event program, with new community programming partnerships with Typewriter Tarot and Six Square—a nonprofit that preserves the arts and history of Central East Austin—and many programming partners returned, including Literary Death Match, Chicon Street Poets, Awst Press, Austin Bat Cave, and the *Texas Observer*. A *Texas Monthly*-sponsored brunch event bookended the program.

Featured authors included music legend Kathy Valentine, National Book Award nominees Deesha Philyaw and Natalie Diaz, Kirkus Prize finalist Juli Delgado Lopera, *Texas Monthly* taco editor José Ralat, and many more.



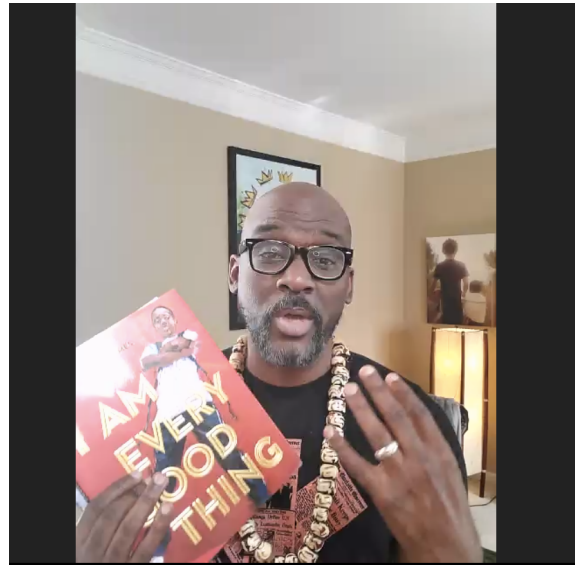
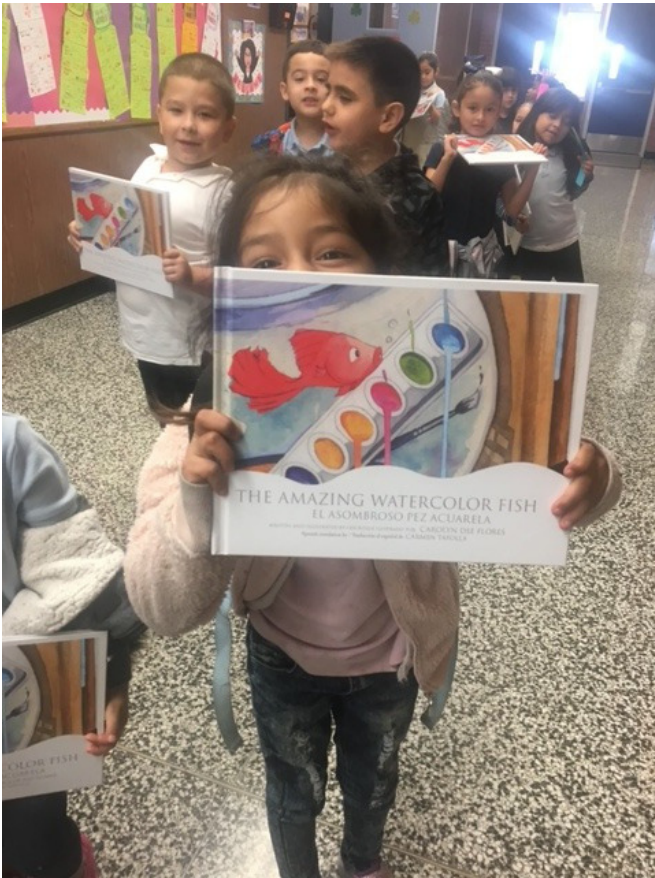
YEAR-ROUND PROGRAMMING

In all, we had more than 30 Instagram Live author interviews or children’s content, along with 18 Read Together Texas storytimes. As of EOY 2020, we had nearly 2,500 IG Live views.

Authors included Kate Elizabeth Russell, Kate Winkler Dawson, Richard Z. Santos, Deb Olin Unferth, H. W. Brands, Lara Prescott, Amanda Eyre Ward, Natalia Sylvester, Mary Pauline Lowry, Ned Baldwin, Russell Gold, Asher Price, Maya Shanbhag Lang, Jennifer DuBois, José R. Ralat, Paul Coggins, and Rebekah Manley.

Children's and YA authors for storytimes, readings, and drawing lessons included Newbery Medalist Avi, Jon Scieszka and Steven Weinberg, Jerome and Jarrett Pumphrey, Tonya Engel, Juana Medina, René Colato Laínez, Naibe Reynoso, Raquel Ortiz, James Luna, Julissa Arce, and Vanessa Brantley-Newton.





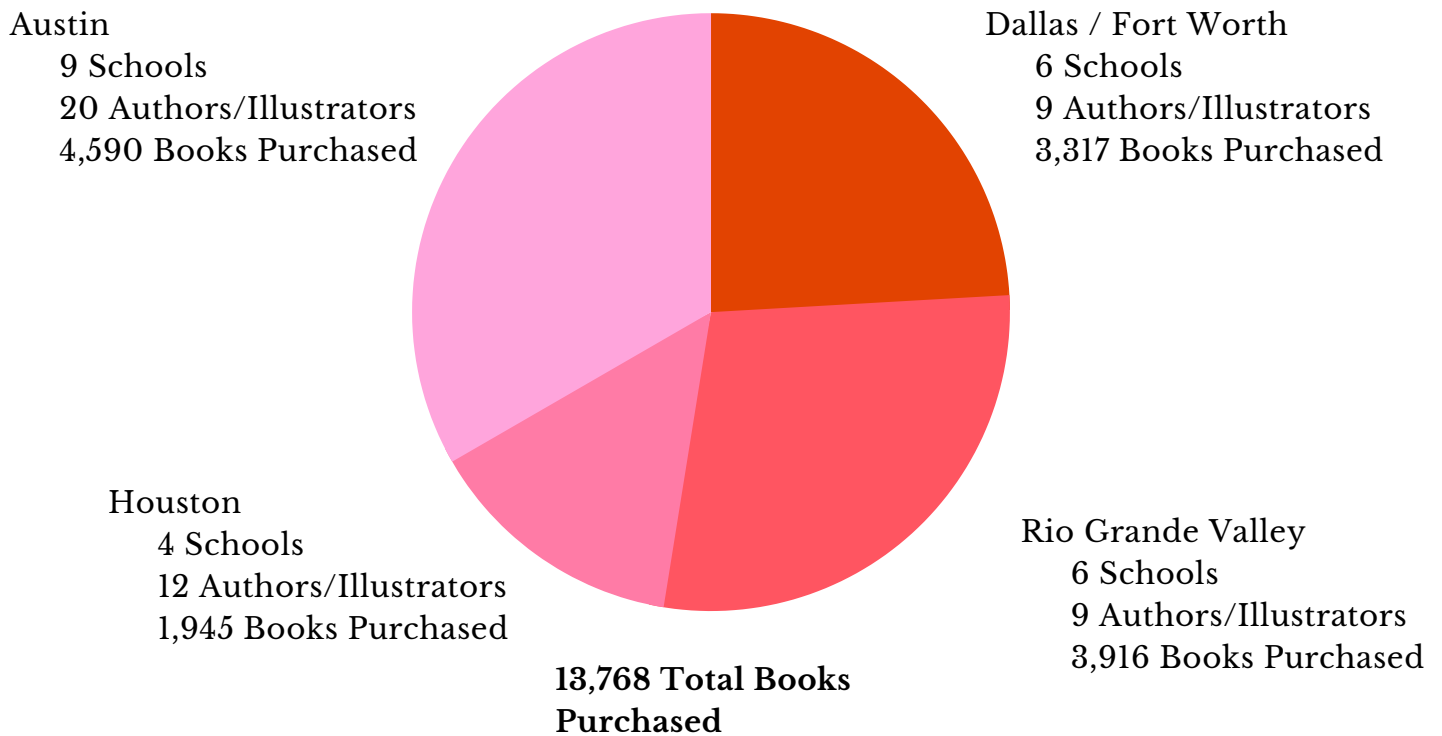
READING ROCK STARS

Reading Rock Stars brings nationally recognized children’s authors and their books to students in Title I elementary schools around the state of Texas. TBF makes a three-year commitment to each school in the program, providing resources and a comprehensive curriculum guide so students can fully engage with the book and author. Since the program’s inception, we’ve given more than 119,000 brand new, hardcover books and hosted more than 415 author visits in Austin, Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, and the Rio Grande Valley.

In 2020, the RRS program shifted to virtual in order to adapt to the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite the challenges for the Title I schools whose communities have historically endured health inequity, RRS was welcomed and supported by our schools. Our core goals remained the same and we worked to create an interactive, engaging, relevant, and culturally sustaining experience for students while abiding closely to a new set of parameters at each campus.

After serious consideration, the decision was made to move on from Houston ISD and to add Aldine ISD for our East Texas presence. The location and demographics of this school district stood out to us as a community that we could feasibly also serve through our Real Reads program. Aldine ISD accepted our invitation and we invited elementary schools to apply. Three schools were selected.





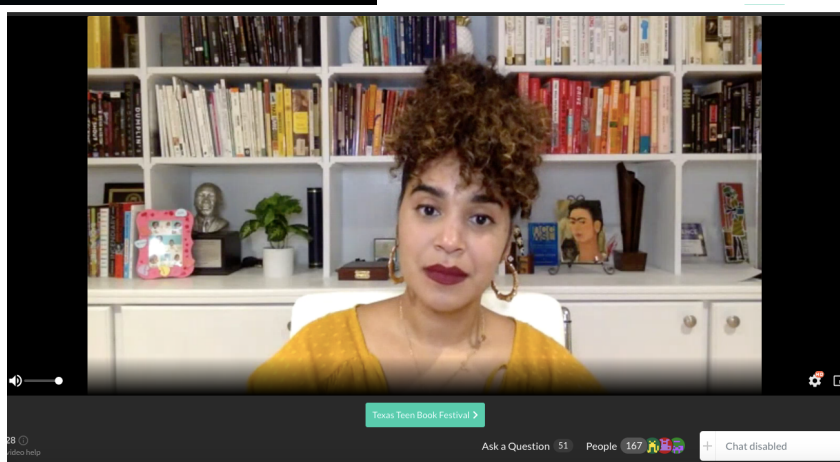
READING ROCK STARS (CONT.)

In 2020, 13,768 total books were given throughout Texas at Thomas Tolbert, Frank Guzick, Harllee ECC, Rosemont, Bill J. Elliott, Meadowbrook, Hurla Midkiff, Bryan, Guillermo Flores, E.B. Guerra, Rudy Silva, César Chávez, Virgil Grissom, Blackshear, Port Houston, Kashmere Gardens, Harmony Science Academy, Austin Achieve, Newton-Collins, Uphaus ECC, Govalle, Pleasant Hill, J. Houston, Oak Springs, and Helping Hand Home.

2020 RRS authors included Kat Zhang, Naibe Reynoso, Julissa Arce, Raquel Ortiz, Vanessa B. Newton, Lamar Giles, Mac Barnett, Greg Pizzoli, Duncan Tonatiuh, Traci Sorrell, Carolyn Dee Flores, Rene Colato Lainez, Sharon Robinson, James Luna, Bethany Hegedus, Anna Meriano, David Bowles, Adam Rex, Varsha Bajaj, Eric Velasquez, Tonya Engel, Alana Mendoza Dusan, Jackie Alcantara, Kekla Magoon, Sam Wedelich, Raúl The Third, Christina Soontornvat, Michael Genhart, Gianna Ruggiero, Isabel Quintero, Zeke Peña, Lee M. Byrd, Chris Barton, Jon Scieszka, Steven Weinberg, Rebecca Gomez, Elisa Chavarri, Jarrett Pumphrey, Jerome Pumphrey, Anika Fajardo, Derrick Barnes, and Meena Harris.

Thank you to all our generous Reading Rock Stars supporters, including H-E-B Tournament of Champions, ECG Foundation, Wright Family Family, The Miles Foundation, The Thomas M Helen Mckee & John P Ryan Foundation, Sid. W. Richardson Foundation, UT Rio Grande Valley, and many individual donors.





REAL READS

How do you remain engaging, relevant, and culturally sustaining during a pandemic? Our primary task was to select an author who would not only gain their attention but win over their hearts. Marcelo Hernández Castillo (*Children of the Land*) provided a candid conversation for our young adults at ACC-Ascender. Marcelo spoke about the heavy backpacks that the children of migration often carry and provided a message of agency, hope, and mental wellbeing.

Elizabeth Acevedo was already a favorite author for the teens at Breakthrough Central Texas. Thanks to TBF's partnership with Breakthrough, we were able to include all 700 students during after-school hours. Working closely with both groups, TBF provided books, critical literacy guides, and meet the author choice boards for these programs.

In total, 432 books were given to students at Skyline HS, Austin Community College - Ascender, and Breakthrough Central Texas.

Thank you to all our Real Reads supporters, including the AT&T Foundation.





LIBRARY GRANTS

In 2020, we gave \$100,000 in collection enhancement grants to 42 libraries all over the state of Texas. Since 1995, we have awarded more than \$3.2 million in grants, bringing much-needed brand new books into communities, from large print adult books to nonfiction childrens' books and everything in between.

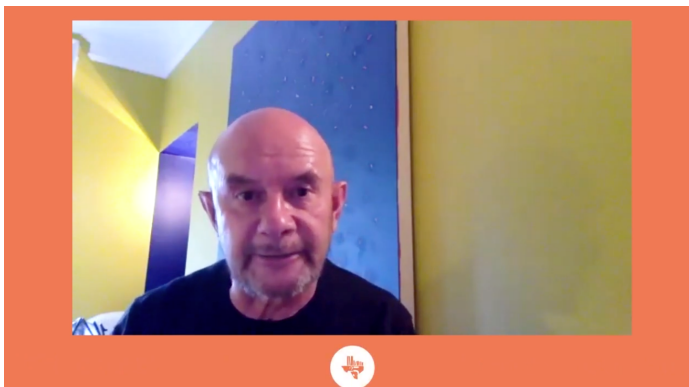
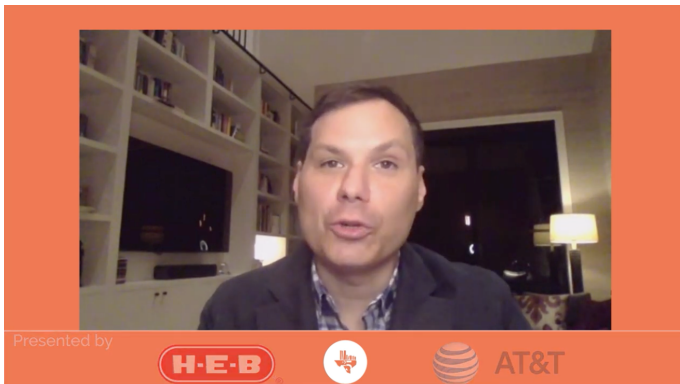
From Azle Memorial Library: District 7

Receiving this grant propelled us forward in creating an adult graphic novel section. We printed bright comic book-like panels to act as a backdrop for this new collection thus highlighting its new shelf location in the library. We posted a story to our Facebook and Instagram as a teaser for the new section. After funds were awarded we shared the good news on social media and in our library newsletter. This collection now attracts a lot of attention. Patrons can often be found browsing the adult graphic novel shelves throughout the day.



FIRST EDITION LITERARY GALA

The First Edition Literary Gala was held virtually on Friday, November 6. The Gala featured authors Julie Alvarez, Natasha Trethewey, and Nick Hornby with comedian Michael Ian Black as the Emcee and also a presenting author. Guests had the opportunity to view author presentations, the 25th-Anniversary slideshow and peruse silent auction packages from the safety and comfort of their own homes. Thanks to Gala Co-Chairs Anna Hargrove and Dalton Young, Board Chair Sarah Queen, and the Gala Committee, the event raised more than \$600,000 through sponsorships, donations, ticket sales, and the auction.



FESTIVAL FRIENDS

TBF has long valued its Festival Friends, community members who donate between \$100-500 per year. In 2020, 314 donors contributed at the Festival Friends level and demonstrated their appreciation of our literary programming and accessibility. Thanks to *Texas Monthly* for offering a free one-year print subscription and Book People for offering one time discounts on a Festival book for each donor, we raised more than \$43,000.



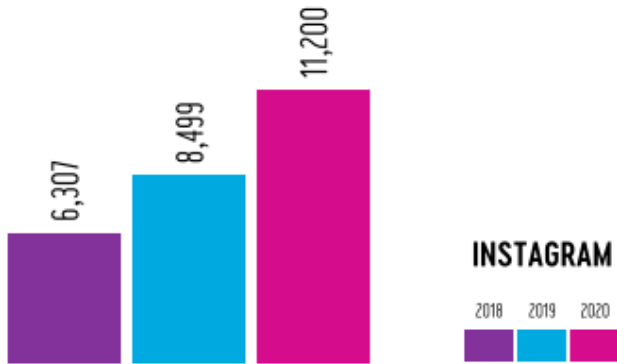
ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITY

The Texas Book Festival always seeks to reach people across the state of Texas, and one way to do that is through digital communication. This year was a unique opportunity to also reach audiences across the country and internationally through our social media programming, including our Literary Lunch Break series on Instagram Live. Our book club group on Facebook is a designated hub for enriching discussion about our monthly book club picks with readers in the community and for featuring virtual conversations with the authors. For the virtual Festival, we used our social media platforms to inform attendees about upcoming panels with daily schedules on Facebook, daily posts promoting books from a featured author on Instagram, and reminder tweets before each session. Daily emails were also sent to showcase the day’s sessions.

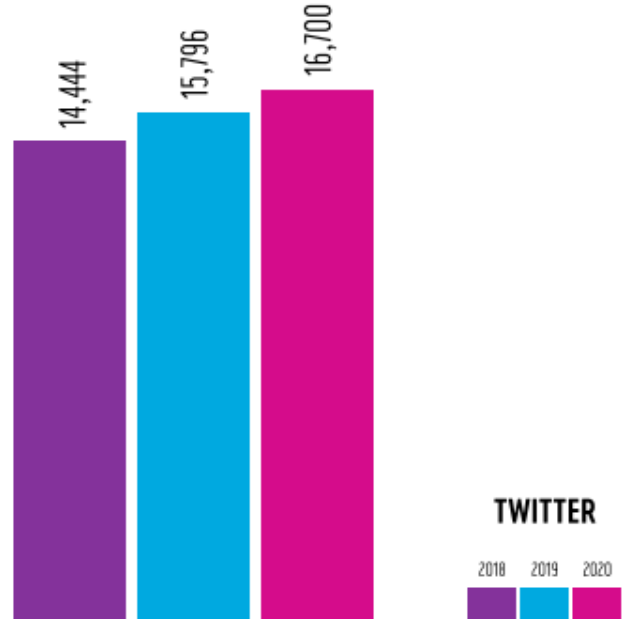


ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITY

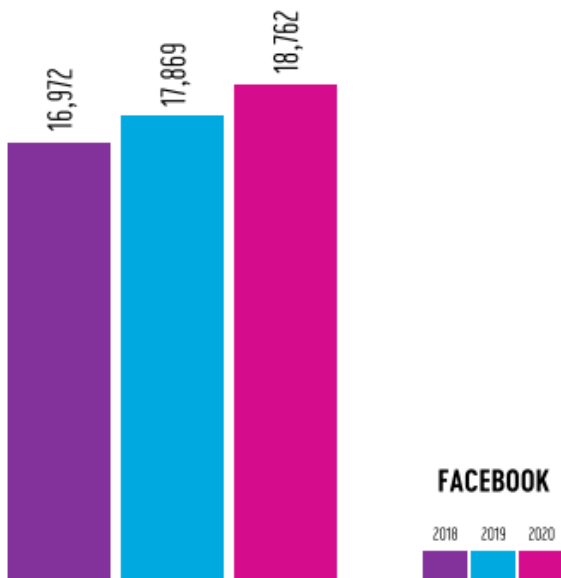
AUDIENCE GROWTH 2018-2020



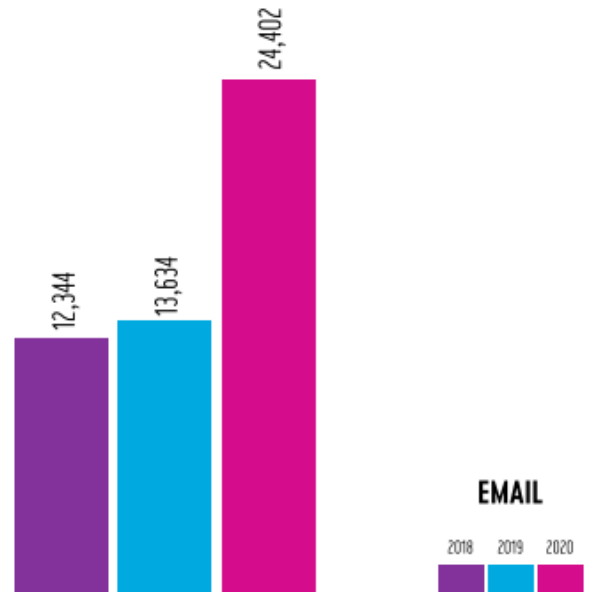
AUDIENCE GROWTH 2018-2020



AUDIENCE GROWTH 2018-2020



AUDIENCE GROWTH 2018-2020



TOP FACEBOOK POSTS OF 2020

31.4K



8.4K



TOP INSTAGRAM POSTS OF 2020

770 LIKES



484 LIKES



TOP TWITTER POSTS OF 2020

OCTOBER

Top Tweet earned 36.2K impressions

Want to help [@BookPeople](#), [@interabangbooks](#), [@BlueWillowBooks](#), [@BrazosBookstore](#) and so many other great Texas indie bookstores? Do your holiday shopping early this year: ow.ly/hvpF50BUxKC

Tag your favorite independent bookseller in the replies!

11 replies, 51 retweets, 95 likes

Top Tweet earned 23.1K impressions

Our first session of the day features James Beard award winners [@davidchang](#) & [@ButtermilkRoad](#) as they share their struggles & success on their paths to becoming acclaimed chefs: bit.ly/3khS37g (sponsored by [@centralmarket](#)) pic.twitter.com/KBjpNq4AzB

David Chang and Lisa Donovan



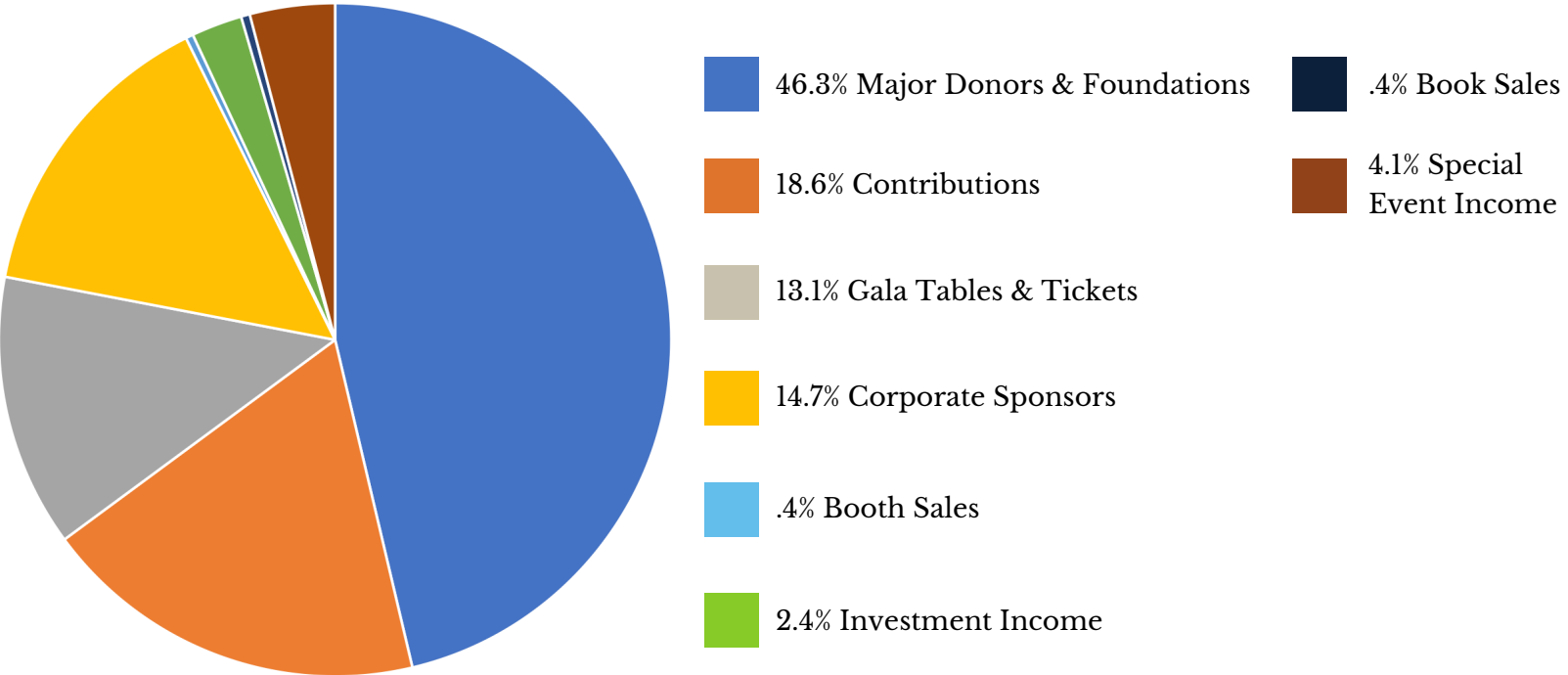
Sponsored by Central Market

Friday, November 13 | 10:00 a.m. CST

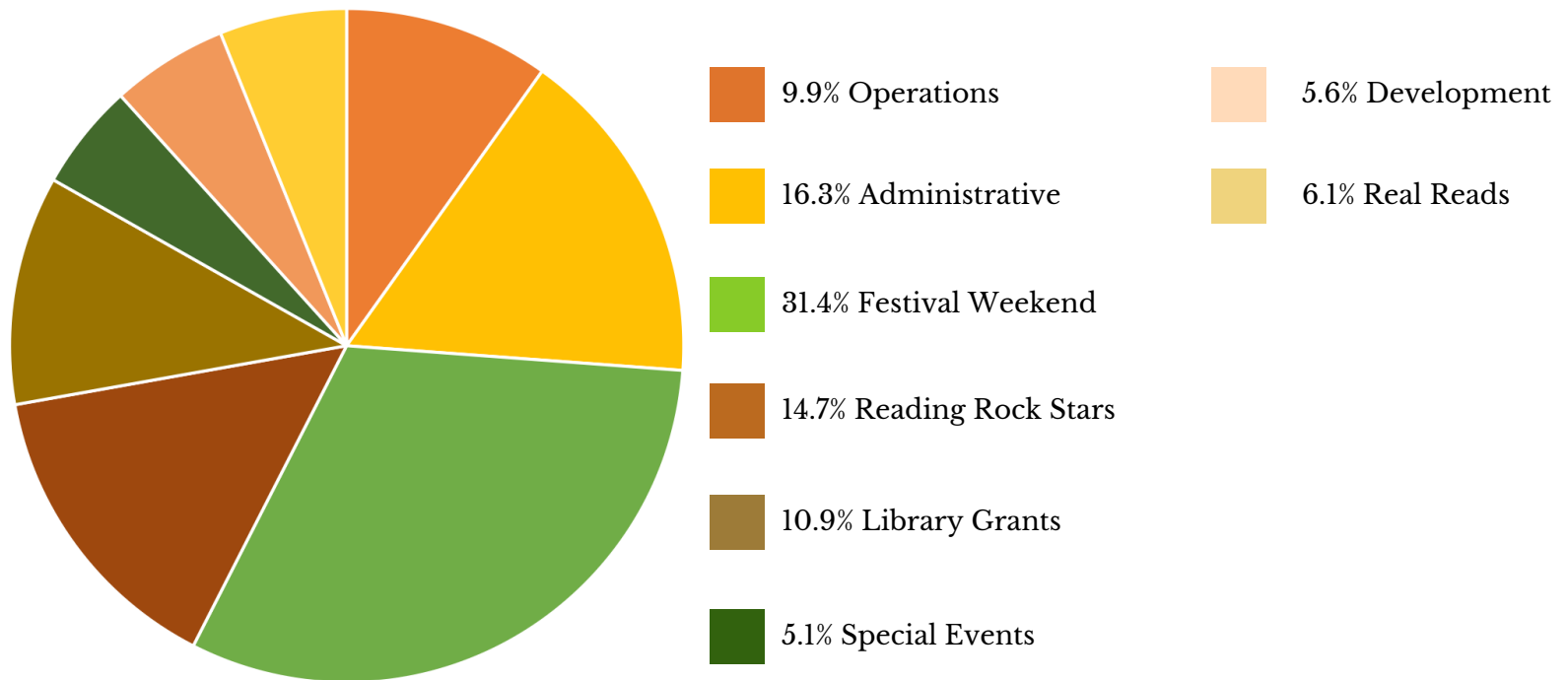
1 reply, 9 likes

INCOME AND EXPENSES

2020 Revenue



2020 Expenses



MAJOR SPONSORS



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Brigid Cockrum
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TexasMonthly

BUENA VISTA
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statesman.com

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\$25,000+

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SPECIAL THANKS

City of Austin Cultural Arts Division
 Nora Roberts Foundation
 Texas Commission on the Arts



Texas Book Festival

THANK YOU!

Because of your support, TBF is able to provide the annual Festival free of charge and offer high quality literary programming and books to communities across Texas. Thank you for sharing Texas Book Festival's vision to inspire all Texans to love reading.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

VOLUNTEER

Texas Book Festival relies on nearly 1,000 volunteers during the Festival Weekend! If you're interested in volunteering, please contact Nicole Wielga, Logistics and Volunteer Coordinator, for more information, nicole@texasbookfestival.org

ATTEND THE GALA

The First Edition Literary Gala is our main fundraising event of the year! It will be held on October 29, 2021, and will include a silent auction and inspiring program featuring some of the year's best authors.

DONATE AND BECOME A FESTIVAL FRIEND

Every donation we receive goes directly to ensuring that the Annual Festival remains free and open to the public, as well as supports our state-wide outreach programs. As a Thank You for any donation of \$100 or more, we will send you a Festival Friends Pass, which provides you special access to the Festival. To make your tax deductible donation today, visit texasbookfestival.org/donate.
