

Small Libraries Create Smart Spaces

TRANSFORMATION STORY

Honey Grove Library and Learning Center

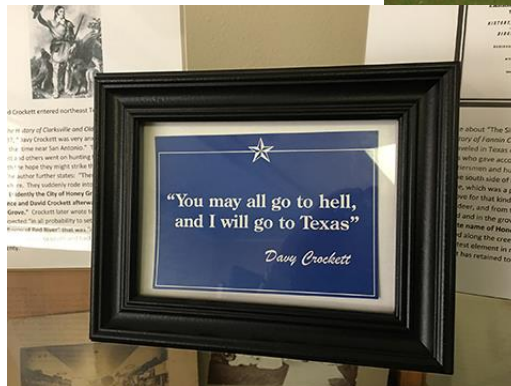
Honey Grove, Texas

The Community

Every community is unique

Honey Grove, Texas

- **Service population:** 1,668
- **Location:** 100 miles northeast of Dallas
- Known as “The Sweetest Town in Texas,” founder Davey Crockett named the town for the abundance of honey in groves of hollow trees.



Storm over North Central Texas by [be▲-t](#) on [Flickr](#) CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

**The Texas State Library classifies
Honey Grove as “small and
extremely rural.”**

Historic grandeur in north central Texas



At the start of the project, the library (photo on the right) bore the name of Bertha Voyer Memorial Library. Its stately structure, originally built as a bank, is a cornerstone of Honey Grove Square. The other 100+-year-old historic buildings facing the square reverberate the town's former prosperity as a railway center and shipping point for area farmers.

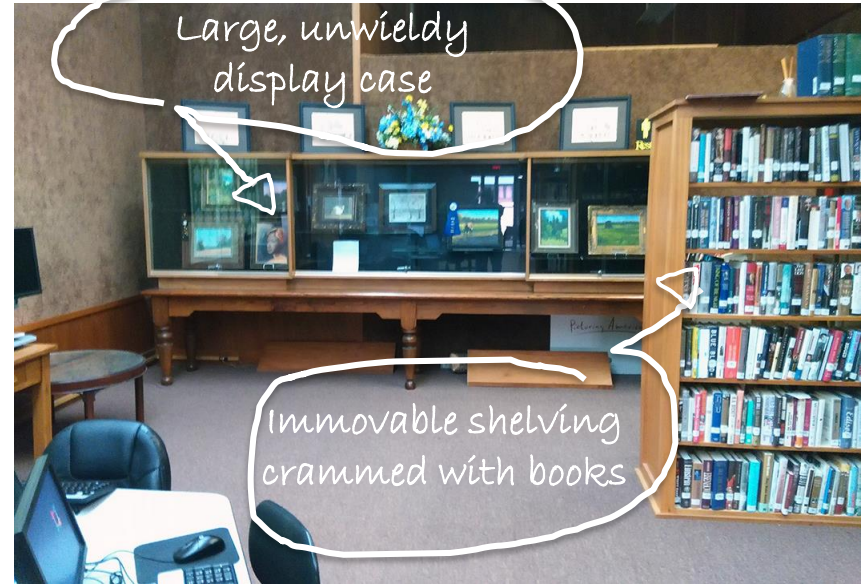
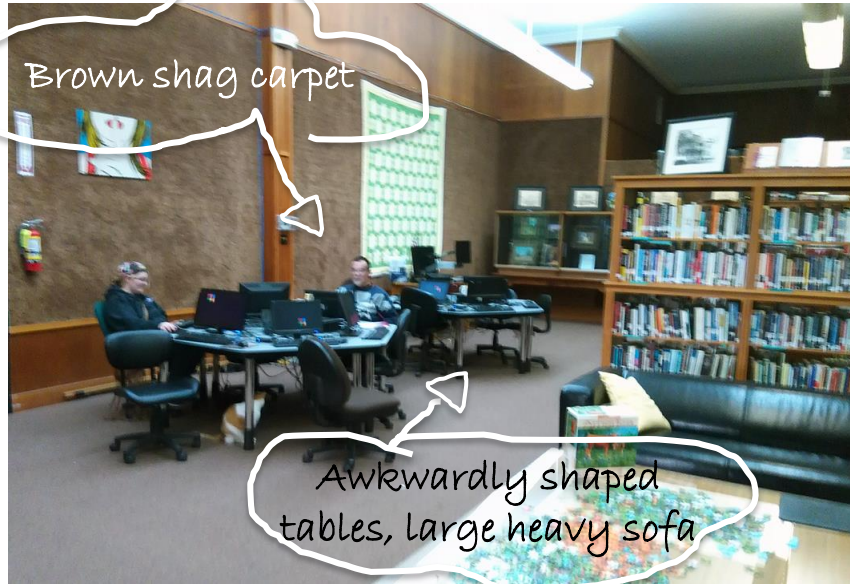
Before the Changes

Small libraries can create Smart Spaces

“The walls are covered with brown shag carpet from the 80s!”

Pattie Mayfield, Library Director

Where do we start?



The vintage bank building in which the library is housed was groaning with old age—the roof leaked, the walls seeped moisture, the façade was crumbling. The interior was a relic from the 1980s, with deep-pile carpeting on the walls, large and immovable furnishings, and shelves packed tightly with books. Although floorspace was ample, it was inefficiently arranged.

“Participation in this project would help us to better serve those in the community that come to the library for the learning and growth center it needs to be—there is no other place locally to turn to!”

Pattie Mayfield, Library Director

Engage & Explore

Engaging community members in visioning and planning

“We began to ask questions.”

Pattie Mayfield

Open-ended questions for the Honey Grove community

To learn more about the community's interests, the library created question boards which posed these questions:

- If given the opportunity, what would you do to build a better library?
- What could your library do better? What do we do really well?

The boards were taken to several community locations and events, where they collected lots of ideas on colorful sticky notes.



A question board set up at a local crafts fest

Then it went to the library board.



Director Pattie Mayfield took those ideas from the community to the Hall-Voyer Foundation Board meeting in May 2017.

“I asked for 15 minutes for a brief exercise,” said Mayfield, “and it turned into an hour and a half of discussion and lots of post-it notes!”

Spoiler alert!

**This is the crucial moment when
real transformation happened.**

Community Input Ignites Library Board!

Mayfield had been trying for years to convince the Hall-Voyer Foundation Board that the library needed improvements, both structural and programmatic. It will always be a bit of mystery what flipped the switch and sparked the enthusiasm of the members.

“Be the
center of
learning”

Seeing the colorful visual evidence of community love and aspiration for the library was key to igniting momentum for sweeping changes.

From
“Me to We”

“Connecting
people”

“The depth of the community surveys and discussions was a real eye-opener for us. Involving my board in these discussions gave them a whole new insight into what I had been trying to convey to them—hearing it from the people directly made a huge difference.”

Pattie Mayfield

Let the transformation begin!

From that one meeting in May 2017, the Board launched initiatives that would completely transform the library.

Change the name from
Bertha Voyer Memorial
Library (old-fashioned)
to ...

**The Honey Grove
Library and
Learning Center**

**Write a new mission
statement:**

...to provide access to
and use of information
sources, life-long
learning opportunities
and other services to
improve the quality of
life for the citizens of
Honey Grove and the
surrounding community.

**Create a new logo
and new website**

**“Access...
Knowledge...
Community”**

New logo



(old logo)



And also ...

The Big Good News

As of December
2018, the Honey
Grove Library Capital
Campaign raised
\$649,000!

A Capital Campaign Launches

To get a clear idea of the structural status of the library building, the Board hired a building inspector/mechanical engineer specializing in old buildings. The 48-page report raised a host of items of immediate concern.

The capital campaign officially started in March 2018, with a goal of \$300,000 to cover the anticipated repairs. However, when the bids started coming in to fix everything wrong with the aging building, the library realized they needed a lot more funding. They increased the goal to \$691,000.

To reach that ambitious amount, the campaign was broadcast throughout the state, including a major fundraising event in Dallas. Texans tend to retain deep loyalty to their roots, so anyone born, raised, or with family history in Honey Grove might want to sweeten the pot with support for the hometown library.

**“We are so excited that our community
has come together for the cause!!
I give this [Smart Spaces] project total
credit for kickstarting our capital
campaign and getting things moving!”**

Pattie Mayfield

Prepare for Change

Making way for transformation

Move the Immovable Furnishings

Amidst the flurry of the capital campaign, Mayfield and her staff got busy on immediate changes in alignment with the Smart Spaces grant. They began inventorying and clearing out the main room to make way for active learning.

First thing to go was the huge display case, which found a new home in the meeting room of the local historical society.

Next, the staff tackled the large octagonal computer tables that had left no room for any other activities. With the grant funds, they purchased small, mobile computer stations and stackable chairs.



The Honey Grove Historical Society is happy to have a case for rotating displays of their artifacts.

Focus on Active Learning

Now that there was a clear 8 X 10-foot space, the library could do some active prototyping of the kind of active learning they will be offering, like STEM activities, painting classes, photography group meetings, and lots of other programming for which they currently have to find other spaces.



The Music Program is designed to help kids who are struggling with math through rhythm and counting activities, all set to rockin' good tunes. Teachers from the local school specifically select students who also have challenges around attention and discipline.

The kids' rapt focus on staying on beat, giving accurate call and response, and respectfully taking turns leading the rhythm is a display of well-mannered exuberance.

And now for the weeding challenge



The goal is to remove this entire shelf to double the width of the flexible active learning space. As staff clear the books, they organize and move them to the back office.



In the back office, library volunteers are doing searches on all titles that look like they might have some value or historic interest. If they do, they get listed on eBay.

Transform

Make it happen!



It's a Cliffhanger

With the amount of work that is planned, the estimate for completion is late summer or fall of 2020.

We'll all have to wait until next year to see how this story evolves.

“We applied for this grant with only a very narrow plan: to update one room ... Now we have a whole new feeling for the board, staff and ENTIRE COMMUNITY!”

Pattie Mayfield

For more information on how Small Libraries
Create Smart Spaces and more case studies
please visit [**oclc.org/SmartSpaces**](https://oclc.org/SmartSpaces).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Association of Rural & Small Libraries (ARSL) worked collaboratively with WebJunction on all project phases.
- Project for Public Spaces (PPS) provided subject expertise, consultation and instruction.
- This project is made possible by support from OCLC and by a grant from the Institute of Museum & Library Services, LG-80-16-0039-16

