

BIBLIOTECA  
PÚBLICA, A.C.

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020



**BIBLIOTECA PÚBLICA**  
DE SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE, A.C.  
*Somos más que libros*

# The President's report



It has been a year since the world discovered that a virus was spreading at an incredible pace and since then the world has been struggling to adapt to new living and working conditions.

We, at the Biblioteca Pública de San Miguel de Allende, were busy planning new activities in our classrooms, new shows at our recently renovated theatre, new platforms for our media components, new construction to add badly needed space for our students and library members and new programs for our scholarship students. Well, some of the plans were postponed and others moved up the priority list during these past few months of forced closing and reduced activities but we discovered what a formidable team we have constituted over the years.

Under the leadership of our Executive Director, Miguel Angel Barquet, assisted by Leticia Rodríguez, our HR Manager, the whole staff worked out a schedule to take care of our facilities while respecting all the sanitary measures recommended by the authorities.

The Theatre's renovation work was completed, class and meeting rooms were cleaned and painted, administrative archives and the book collection were organized, and the employees received continuous training on how to protect themselves and prevent the spread of the virus in our building and in our community.

Thanks to legacy donations that reached us fortuitously just before the crisis hit, we were able to keep all our staff and even fill some positions we had budgeted for. At the same time, we did what we usually do to prepare for a new year except the last one was anything but ordinary so our projected budget is based on hard facts and realistic projections.

Our institution, as well as other NGOs in our town and around the country, had to confront the consequences of the pandemic and its impact on all sectors of the economy as well as adjust to the new tax laws that came into effect on January 1, 2021. In a very succinct summary: any income generated by social enterprises within an association must not go beyond 50% of total income; otherwise the association loses its status as a not-for-profit organization and could even be forced to close its doors.

The Biblioteca Pública has always strived to reach a level of financial equilibrium where income from our various activities would pay for our overhead while donations would go directly to finance our educational programs. The activities in question (Café Santa Ana, Atención newspaper, Teatro Santa Ana, Tesoros, and the House & Garden Tour ) are all managed by library staff and all profits go directly to the library and that is why we describe them as “social enterprises”, a term used widely by NGOs around the world.

Nevertheless, we have asked a number of consulting firms for proposals on how to adapt to the new rules and two of them have supplied us with opinions and recommendations. A number of measures will be taken (some are already in practice) in the next few months that will allow the library to continue its mission without interruption and, hopefully, with as minor an impact on our operations as possible.

While we are hopeful that we have the adequate solutions on hand, we are also very realistic that we need to replace some income loss by a more organized approach to fundraising within our community and with private and public organizations. Marie Moebius was hired last September to spearhead our fundraising department and has already shown promising results. We are hopeful because we invited a new category of people to join our board and our staff: young, energetic, creative and devoted to the mission and goals of the Biblioteca.

We are hopeful because the crisis has helped us revise our use of space, our programs, our media platforms, our fundraising plans, and our community outreach tools.

We are also hopeful because we know we live in a community that feels the need to help those in need of support and understands the importance of health, education, housing, and training in economic and social development.

San Miguel de Allende is proud of the work the many NGOs have been doing in our community and La Biblioteca is proud to have been part of the effort during the last 65 years and intends to continue serving the sons and daughters, even grandchildren, of those it has helped to achieve their goals in the past.

Ali Zerriffi,  
President of the Board





# Mission

We build community. The Biblioteca Pública de San Miguel de Allende AC provides a wide range of educational and cultural activities to a fantastically diverse group of residents and visitors to foster a harmonious and vibrant community.

# Vision

Education, both academic and cultural, is the key to the social well-being of any community. Free access to knowledge is an essential ingredient that helps to build bridges within a diverse community.

The Biblioteca Pública commits to maintain a safe, inclusive and non-judgmental center, which meets the demands for education, skills training, cultural enrichment and entertainment for our entire community.







# The Reading Rooms





**T**he Biblioteca Publica de San Miguel de Allende was founded in 1954 by the Canadian citizen Helen Wale. It all began with a simple idea: opening the doors of her home to her neighbors and inviting them to read her books and magazines. More than 60 years later, the library still holds literacy and reading programs thanks to our amazing bilingual catalog of books.

The access to our books is free and unrestricted. By purchasing an annual membership (between \$50 and \$200 pesos), the users can access the lending service as well as all our activities (classes, summer camps, workshops, etc.). The library counts at present around 16,000 active members. During 2020, 309 new members subscribed to our services: due to the pandemic, this figure is 3 times inferior to the previous year.

Unfortunately, the lockdown of the library in March 2020 put a temporary hold on our main mission: welcome the community into our facilities and make our books available. Despite the lockdown, the staff of the library kept busy and took advantage of the time to make a book inventory. This work allowed us to evaluate the quality and accuracy of our collections. With a total of 54,400 books, we are one of the biggest libraries in the area. Thanks to the donations by Canadians through the efforts of Amistad Canada, we were able to add 250 new books to our book selection this year.

Our audience is extremely diverse and looks for very diverse information. It can be parents coming into the children's section with their kids to read a tale; or high school and university students looking for resources to prepare their homework (the sections in law, psychology and medicine are the most consulted) and taking advantage of our comfortable working areas; it can also be book lovers in search of a favorite novel; or English speaking expats consulting our wonderful "Latin American Studies" section to enrich their knowledge of Mexican culture.

In total, more than 45,000 people visit our building each year. In 2020, this figure has considerably reduced due to the pande-

mic. Fortunately, the reading rooms opened again in October, and the readers are slowly coming back. To secure our rooms and protect our users, the spaces are constantly sanitized and wearing a mask is mandatory in all places and at all times. The library has implemented a protocol to quarantine the books after being returned to the library.

We know that, for the community to come back and use public spaces like ours, it will be necessary to restore the confidence of our users, and this is only possible if the community makes progress together fighting the Covid pandemic. Yet we trust that spaces dedicated to culture and education -schools, theatres, libraries, cultural centers, etc.- will continue to fulfill an important mission despite the adversity: places to congregate our community around knowledge, curiosity, beauty and creativity. The Biblioteca Publica works every day to maintain this lovely and welcoming space available to all in San Miguel de Allende. ♦

# Scholarship Program



## Mission

The Biblioteca assists students of limited resources via scholarship awards and related services and activities that broaden the educational aspirations of students and support the values of their community.

The Biblioteca Scholarship Coordinator, Alma Elena Cervantes, works collaboratively with an Advisory Committee of dedicated volunteers. Additionally, scholarship events and services are supported by a team of department heads at the Biblioteca including the Executive Director, the Operations Manager, an Administrative Manager, the Information Technology Manager, the Fundraising Manager and our Human Resources Manager.

## 2020 Scholarship Awards

For the scholarship program, 2020 was a time to creatively grow the scholarship program services, learn more about our scholars, and look deeper for the potential to grow together. The Scholarship Program started 2020 with great enthusiasm. As we had done in the past, January and February were dedicated to managing the renewal of current scholarships and coordinating the search for new applicants and the processing of first time scholarship applications. A total of 86 scholarships were awarded to 25 prepa students and 61 university students.

Renewals and new scholarship application management and activities were closely analyzed by the Coordinator and volunteers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program's services. The information that was gathered was essential to help improve scholarship student accessibility and exchange of information.

During March, we quickly made revisions to our communication methods in order to comply with the state's COVID 19 regulations. We strengthened the flow of digital communication. As our scholarship students adjusted to online education, the scholarship program improved and streamlined its digital services. The dispersal of documents and exchange of infor-

mation that in the past was presented in print or addressed during face-to-face visits was now delivered digitally. We evaluated the contact information of scholarship students and categorized them by specific scholarship titles (Becas Plus, Becas Extra, Becas Normal and the 50/50 that supports university certification expenses of graduating university scholarship recipients) to provide appropriately individualized general and detailed information to tailored groups of scholarship students. Communication was facilitated with the use of Whatsapp between the Coordinator and students which helped to provide students with timely responses to questions. In July 2020 approximately 97% of the new scholarship candidates for Fall 2020 were interviewed using Zoom.

During the July to August 2020 scholarship renewal period, in spite of the COVID 19 complications, an estimated 97% of our scholarship renewals met or exceeded the minimum 8.5 grade point averages required to maintain their status as Biblioteca Scholars. The estimated 3% of scholarship students who had below an 8.5 gpa were placed on probation, which meant they were teamed up with a mentor who is either a Scholarship Committee member or an administrative level library staff member. Students and their mentors met either using Zoom or at the library while adhering to social distancing regulations. When needed, tutorial support was identified and provided. At the December 2020 Becas Committee meeting, it was reported that 3 out of 4 students on probation exceeded the 8.5 required. ♦



## Student Survey

In May 2020, the Coordinator surveyed our scholarship students to learn about their access to computer hardware and the cost of their internet connectivity. Access and cost comparisons were made for February 2020, before the COVID 19 lockdown, and April 2020 when COVID 19 San Miguel de Allende lockdown protocols had already been invoked for two months resulting in the closure of businesses, including internet cafes.

Two important points of information were extracted, first over half of the students who responded to the survey did their classwork and homework using their smartphones. Second, the shutdown of schools and internet cafes resulted in more students having to spend additional money on their smartphone accounts to keep up with fully online learning. We were especially concerned with the data that showed our university students lost access to public and private computer venues.

To better understand our access results for university scholarship students, we set out

to identify how many university students were engaging in online courses without a laptop. During the months of August and September 2020, we followed-up our written survey with a phone survey of university scholarship students. By the end of September 2020, the phone survey identified 19 out of 61 university students who did not own a personal laptop. Funds were raised and by mid September, all 19 university students were presented with a new laptop.

Quality of internet connectivity was also covered in the survey. In the past internet connectivity problems were addressed with some or little success by both the city of San Miguel and the state of Guanajuato. Poor connectivity is still experienced in municipalities outside of San Miguel's Centro area. Some of these municipalities include but are not limited to: Banda, Rancho Cañajo, La Laguna Escondida, Guadalupe de Támbula, Rancho Viejo, El Moral Puerto de Sosa, El Salitrillo, Los Rodríguez, Los González, Purísima de Ríos, La Laguna Escondida and Don Juan Xido Cabras. We have two scholarship students from Comonfort and are hopeful that the number will grow during the January 2021 application period.

In 2020, monthly scholarship family incomes ranged between 5,000 and 15,000 pesos per month. The size of their families varied between 2 to 8 members. We currently have no data to describe how COVID 19 impacted the monthly incomes of scholarship families.

Throughout the year, the Scholarship Coordinator checked on students either by direct phone call or using Whatsapp. While some students felt overwhelmed they were all quite determined to succeed in all of their semester courses.

Some scholarship students live less than a kilometer away coming from Centro's surrounding colonias as well as the community of Infonavit. Approximately 48% of our scholarship students live in San Miguel de Allende municipalities located 8 to 27 kilometers away from our library. Before the COVID 19 closing of schools, several students who live in municipalities began their travel to high school and universities as early as 5:30 a.m. They walked 1 to 3 km in darkly lit roads that lead to the main road where they caught their bus.

While 2020 seemed to challenge our natural ways of communicating, the surveying of students inspired the wish to learn more about our scholarship students and how we might be able to be supportive in other ways. When the Biblioteca doors were reopened in October 2020, students slowly began to appear. Wearing masks and adhering to social distancing requirements did not prevent them from saying hello.



## Inspiring Stories

It is difficult to share all the inspiring stories that our students offer. This report ends with one that has inspired the Becas team to continue into 2021 and develop ways to encourage families to learn together.

In the below photo, scholarship student Alma Ximena Rodríguez is flanked by her little brother Carlos Fernando and mother María Elena Ramírez Vázquez. They are from Banda, approximately 10 km from the library. Her father Manuel Ramírez Robles is a gardener by trade and one of his employers offered a printed copy of the scholarship application for his daughter whose scholarly achievements he often spoke of proudly. Alma presented a carefully prepared scholarship application with 10.0 grade point average. She became a scholarship recipient in February 2020. Recently she expressed that the scholarship was not only financially helpful to her but visiting the library opened a new place where she can meet other students and enjoy browsing and learning more about her favorite topic, psychology. She also expressed that becoming a scholarship recipient filled her with a new sense of happiness as she thinks of the future of her education. Her little brother loves books and Alma's mother who enjoys reading is also pleased by the opportunity to come to the Biblioteca and help him select a few books. Education is contagious.



# Childrens' chorus





Since 2010, the childrens' chorus has provided a quality musical education using the art form of song. Today, the chorus brings together 22 children from 7 to 18 years old. The group meets twice a week for sessions of 3 hours in the Sala Quetzal at the Biblioteca. The chorus is directed by Ramiro Granados Ramírez, a graduate from the music school of the University of Guanajuato, founder of the pipe organ festival in San Miguel, and organist of the Parroquia de San Miguel Arcángel. Once a month, a professional pianist visits the rehearsal to recreate the conditions of a real concert. Throughout the year, the group appears in public offering concerts, at the Santa Ana Theatre or in different churches in town. The children sing a repertory of sacred music, as well as Mexican and Latin-American traditional songs.

Participation in a chorus has many benefits: the children widen their music appreciation, learn about music history and learn how to sing in a group and as soloists. While their talent grows, they also raise their creativity and spread their cultural awareness. More than just musical training, the young singers receive the experience of working as a team. It is indeed necessary for each individual to serve the group; in that way, they improve their concentration, listening skills and accuracy, all qualities that are useful in their student life and future adult and community life.

The sense of comradeship is at the core of the chorus of the Biblioteca. Professor Granados has managed to create a strong connection between the singers. The result is the strong commitment of the children; indeed,

some of them have been part of the chorus since its beginnings. The parents also take part in this effort. Mothers and fathers are strongly involved in the chorus: they accompany the children to the concerts, fundraise and help in any possible way.

All those elements converge to feed one of the most successful programs at the Biblioteca. It is such a pleasure to see these children singing together, happy and empowered. It is also wonderful to witness the determination and pride of Professor Granados who leads the children in their education. The concerts given by the Childrens' chorus of the Biblioteca Pública is a delight for your ears and heart; it is a testimony of the harmony that a diverse group of people can reach when they are moved by art, work and joy. ♦

# The art programs



**W**e believe education through arts is as essential as academics. We also know that schools in San Miguel de Allende don't adequately cover the practice and instruction of art.

The Biblioteca offers a range of visual art activities that develop skills, creativity, and self-confidence.

Our teachers and programs:

- **Rick Brunson** leads the Stirling Dickinson art school at the Biblioteca Pública. An art teacher in high school and university in the USA and China, Rick believes that solid education in arts can change the future of the youth. Under the motto "Create your future and transform the world", he has created this high-proficiency program that develops skills in drawing, sculpture, and painting. The 12 students aged 14 to 16 are selected over a portfolio review and all accepted students may continue until they are 18. They receive classes of 5 hours per week and commit to not having more than 2 absences per semester. The program is 100% free for the students: Rick Brunson generously gives his time, passion, and skills, while the cost of maintaining classrooms and purchasing art supplies will be covered by the Biblioteca.
- **Irineo Muñoz** has taught art to the younger children at Biblioteca since 1990. Originally from San Miguel de Allende, Irineo Muñoz's story with the library begins when he was a child. He still remembers how he pushed open the doors of Biblioteca as a kid and participated in the painting and drawing classes given back then. He particularly cherishes the memory of his first student's exhibition organized at the library. Since then, he knew that his professional life would be dedicated to introducing the youth of San Miguel to the joy of making art. Irineo Muñoz gives painting, drawing, and creativity classes to young children all year long and also during the summer camps organized at Biblioteca. All classes and art supplies are free of charge for the children.



# The Santa Ana Theatre



**T**he Santa Ana Theatre is a small performing arts space with a very special charm all its own. Situated inside the Biblioteca Pública, it offers 91 seats. The theater was completely renovated in 2020; with a new control cabin, insulated roof, new air conditioning, lights, sound and movie screen, the Santa Ana Theatre now provides better comfort for the audience and high-quality equipment for the artists.

The mission of the theatre is to provide: a forum for local artistic talent; a diverse and rich cultural offering to the widest audience, and funds for the social programs offered by the Biblioteca.

In February 2020, the newly renovated theater re-opened, with a series of theatrical productions that began with Joan of Arc, The Maiden, and 3 Hotels. In addition to successful theater productions, we hosted the Reel Docs film festival, which quickly sold out. In addition to plays and films, we briefly hosted lectures and music, until the pandemic put a sudden stop to our programming.

During confinement, from mid-March to September, our theater was closed to the public. Like many performing art venues, musicians and production companies, the Santa Ana Theater had to learn to engage with its audience from a distance. Thanks to the Library's technology department various performances were offered to the public in virtual version: concerts by the library's children's and youth choir, tango, flamenco guitar and jazz, with better and better results as we learned more.

In October, Protección Civil gave permission for the theater to reopen at 50% capacity (45 seats). We began hosting various events for the public, strictly in compliance with all safety measures: space between seating, ventilation, sanitary filters and obligatory masks. The performances by Luna Flamenca, Shira y Samir Belkacemi received a warm response from our audiences. Films were again shown in the theater. Weekly concerts by local musicians took place in the Sala Quetzal.

Here we are in Spring 2021, and once again we are restricted from offering cultural

events because of the Covid pandemia. Please don't despair, just as soon as we are permitted to reopen we have a series of cultural offerings booked with local, national and international actors, musicians and dancers, and of course we will again offer films.

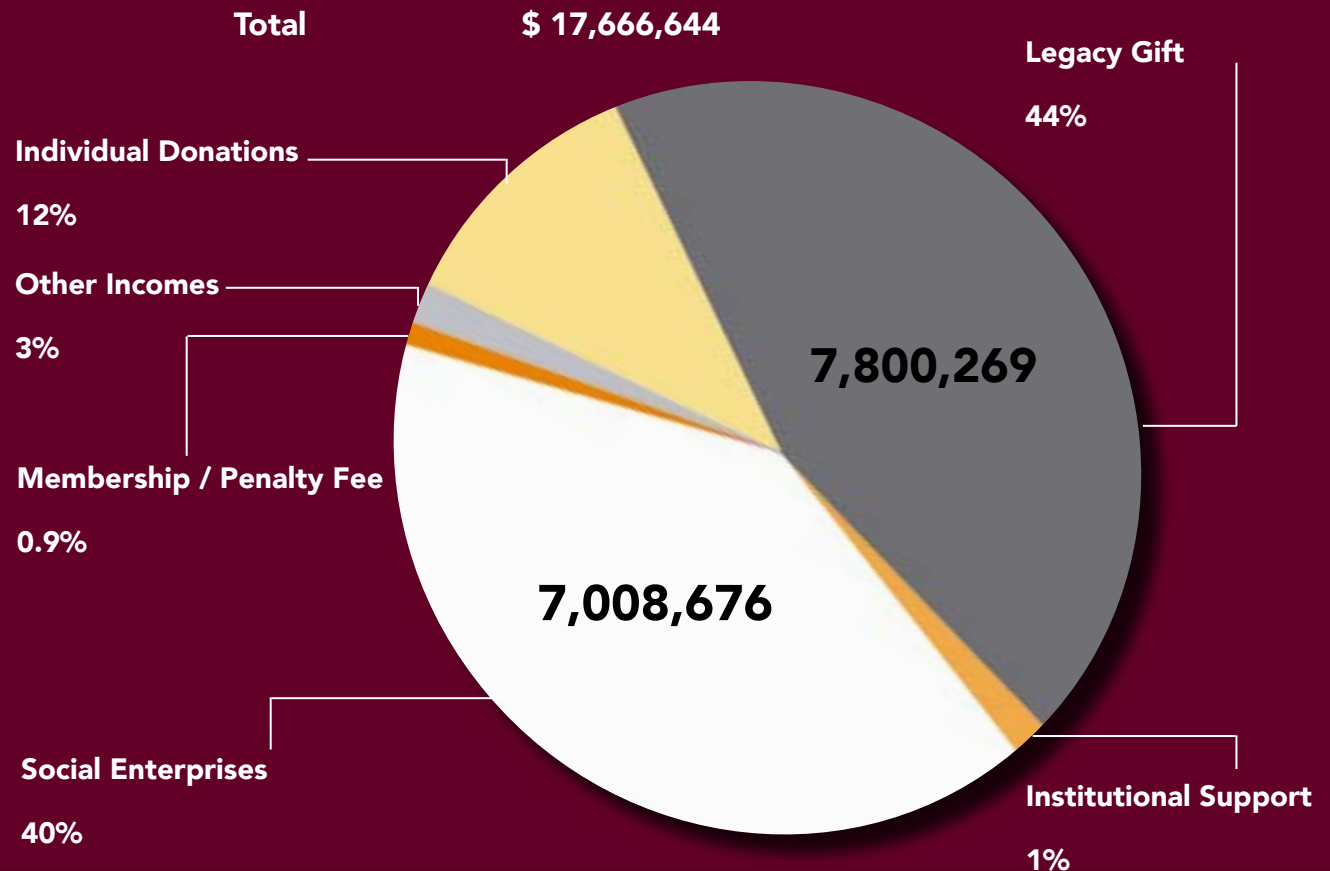
Like everyone during this pandemic, we long for the vibrant cultural life of our community. San Miguel de Allende is a city of culture and history, recognized for its artistic offerings, its many festivals, theaters, and spaces for artistic creation. What makes the live show so endearing is the pleasure of gathering with friends around the talent of the artists, experiencing expressions of beauty that unite us. At the Santa Ana Theater we hope that it will soon be possible to meet again safely to celebrate artistic talent. ♦

# Financial Information 2020

Since its beginning, the Biblioteca has always been looking for financial sustainability. The social enterprises (Atención newspaper, Tesoros boutique, Tours, and Café Santa Ana) have provided the Biblioteca with the necessary funds to cover the operational expenses and part of the costs of our programs for decades. But the economic crisis due to the Covid pandemic has caused those enterprises to operate at a deficit. The staff of the Biblioteca is working on improving this situation.

## Income

Individual Donations	\$ 2,140,008
Legacy Gift	\$ 7,800,269
Institutional Support	\$ 100,000
Social Enterprises	\$ 7,008,676
Memberships / Penalty Fee	\$ 89,810
Other Income	\$ 527,881

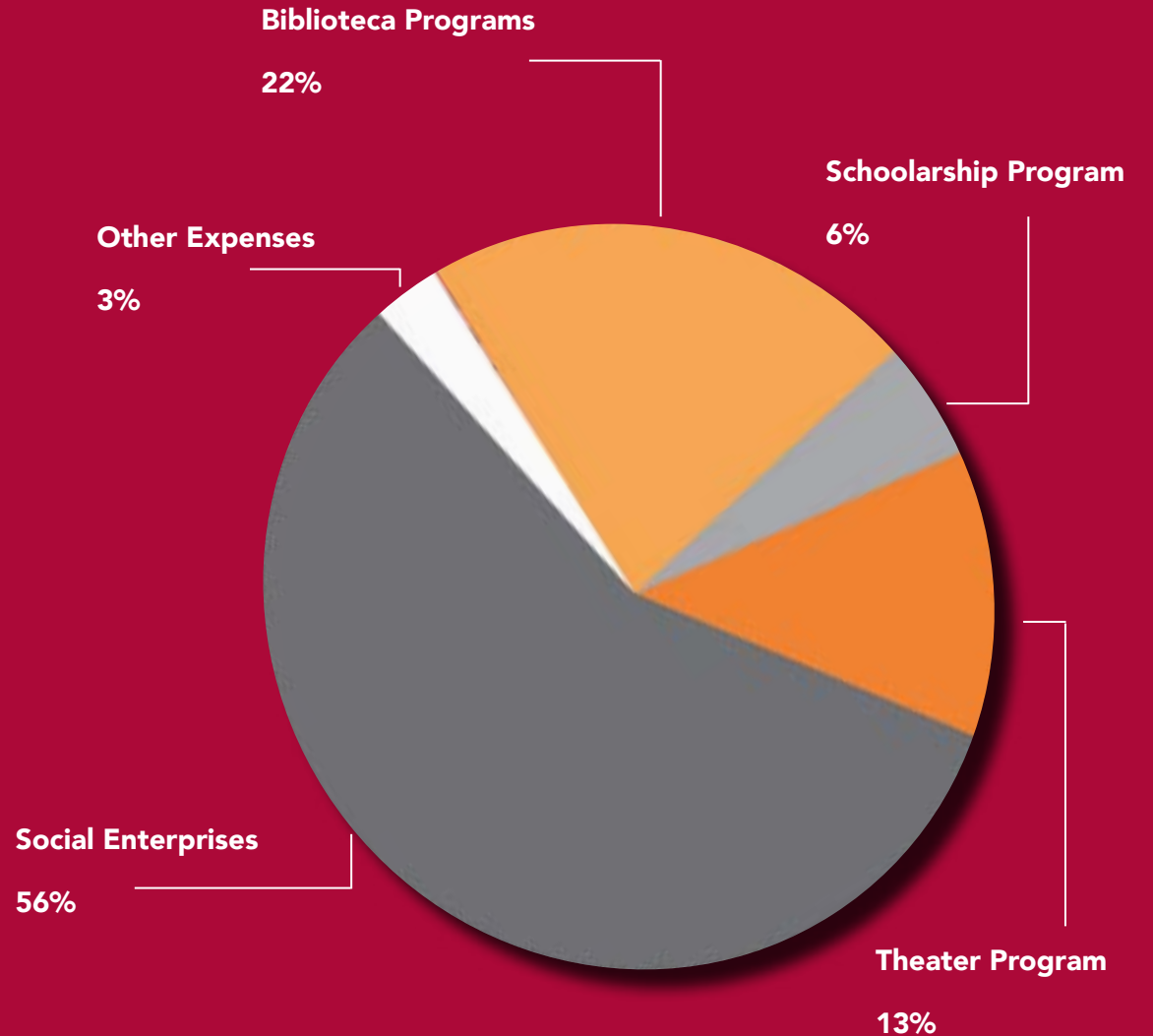




# Expenses

Biblioteca Programs	\$ 2,968,998
Scholarship Program	\$ 786,156
Theater Program	\$ 1,674,542
Social Enterprises	\$ 7,575,834
Other Expenses	\$ 418,188

**Total**      **\$13,423,718**



# Our Team



## Board of Directors

The Assembly of the Biblioteca held its annual meeting on March 4, 2021. The new assembly and members of its executive board are listed below:

- Debra Broussard  
PRESIDENT
- Robert Remak  
ASSISTANT TREASURER
- Carmen Rioja  
VICE PRESIDENT
- Stephanie Bubela  
AT LARGE 1
- Jennifer Posner  
SECRETARY
- Sally Avigdor  
AT LARGE 2
- Gerardo Espinosa  
TREASURER

## Associates

Rick Brunson  
Rossana Conte  
Liz San Elias  
Pat Ellsworth

Ana Delia López Rodríguez  
Susan O'Neil  
Jean Paul Peretz  
Cornelia Ulrich  
Federico Vidargas  
Ali Zerriffi

# Our Staff

- Miguel Ángel Barquet Fuentes  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
- Octavio López García  
ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGER
- Leticia Rodríguez Chávez  
HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER
- Viridiana Gutiérrez Tejeda  
LIBRARY OPERATIONS MANAGER
- Daniel Herrera Vázquez  
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MANAGER
- Marie Moébius  
FUNDRAISING MANAGER
- Tania Noriz  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF ATENCIÓN NEWSPAPER
- Ana Laura Mendoza González  
MANAGER OF CAFÉ SANTA ANA
- Irineo Muñoz  
THEATER MANAGER
- Karla Téllez  
TIENDA TESOROS MANAGER
- Alma Elena Cervantes  
SCHOLARSHIP COORDINATOR
- Héctor Ramírez  
TOUR MANAGER



# Volunteers

Gabriela Nava

Susan O'Neal

Cornelia Ulrich

Cristina Serna

Kathleen Ellsworth

Pat Pore

Judy Rosenthal

Patricia Macleod

Timaree McCormack

Felipe Pinilla

María Victoria De la fuente

Juan Saavedra

Helios Saavedra

Victor Saavedra

Stephen Clark

Christian Ricardo Ruiz Vargas

Ramiro Granados

Marisol Martínez Gutierrez

Ma. Salazar Hernández

Marcia Owen

Martín Zapatero

Judith Turner

Martha Ridgley

Pat McMackin

John Hittell

Joanne Martin

Pat Macleod

Anna Tomka

Norman La Peters

Patricia Frey

Bill Gringer

Anne McCotter

Lulu Lum

Clare Howell

Kate McKorkle

William Conklin

Melanie Harper

Ann Downie

Anita Karp

Melp Karp

Harvey Palmer

Pat Dobie

María Alicia Guerrero

Miike Edward

Michael Baron

Sofia Isabella

Leslie Lum

Tim Brockington

Daisy Díaz

Suzette Carter

Marie Brown

Sheila Sawyer

Luis Barreto

Herb Rosenoff

Keith Johnson

Patricia Frey

Natalie Taylor

Ginger Juhl

Miguel Ángel Morales Saenz

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Donations: <https://labibliotecapublica.org/en/donate/>

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A photograph of a courtyard scene. In the foreground, a young boy in a red tank top and camouflage shorts stands next to a girl in a colorful patterned dress who is holding a book. They are near several large, ornate blue and white ceramic planters filled with green plants. In the background, a girl in a pink shirt is leaning over a stone fountain, and another child is partially visible behind her. The courtyard has a red building with arches and a large tree in the background.

“We are  
more  
than books”



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