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Thanks to a \$10,000 grant from the Texas State Library and Archive Commission, staff at the Burleson Public Library will soon have eight Microsoft Surface tablets to work with.

The program is called the Library Edge Initiative and Reimbursement program. It is funded by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services through a grant to the Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

“The purpose of this grant is to help libraries assess their technology services, and the funding is to help libraries ‘move the needle,’ so to speak, towards improving its technology scores and assist with our action plans,” Marc Marchand, director of library services, said.

The top score that libraries could make on the assessment was 1,000. Burleson scored 700 points. The current national average score of libraries of similar size is 569 points.

“The area where we thought we could improve the most, according to the assessment, was on staff training and increasing our digital presence,” Marchand said. “We will use the tablets to provide assistance to patrons on their personal devices, either through one-on-one or group training; provide real-time reference services to patrons on their personal devices either through one-on-one or group training; and, provide key staff the opportunity to attend training in the creation of digital content during work time.”

The director is excited, saying that “We have been making tremendous strides to bridge the digital divide with the implementation of several key technology improvements including RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) self-checkout and automation systems, upgrading to a more robust software system for our patron database services and online card catalog, creating a digital summer reading program, and increasing our digital databases and downloadable audiobook and eBook services.”

This grant is an exciting next step in ensuring that Library staff is staying ahead of the curve in order to assist the public in the use of these emerging technologies. Next year, the Library plans to add digital 3D Printing to their lineup of technology services.