



ETHA Upgrades Digital Access to the *East Texas Historical Journal*

For the entirety of its 60-year existence, the East Texas Historical Society has published scholarly research on the region in the *East Texas Historical Journal*. Most people think of the *Journal* as something that arrives in their mailbox two times a year or has space on a shelf in the reference section of your favorite library. There is another version of the *Journal* that is read and referenced by people all over the world.

It was no surprise when 90% of the respondents to our 2022 ETHA Member Survey said they value their readership of the *East Texas Historical Journal* and see it as one of the primary benefits of membership. However, we expect that it would be a complete surprise to almost 100% of our members that online articles in the *Journal* are viewed and downloaded upwards of 6,000 times a month!

Since the *ETHJ* became available online as part of SFA ScholarWorks in March of 2015, it has been a key resource for a diverse readership.



- 312,736 article downloads since *ETHJ* was first available in ScholarWorks.
- 68,204 downloads in just the past 12 months.
- Readers in 205 different countries around the world have originated downloads.
- 2,316 educational institutions and 67 different libraries are represented.
- Eight individual articles have each been downloaded over 3,000 times, with the top three between 4,600 and 6,200.

And you thought we had a nice little journal? So do a lot of other people. . . all over the world.

For the World, We ARE East Texas History

Until recently we did not fully understand or appreciate the reach of the *ETHJ*. Most of our members know it is there or discovered an article when doing online research, but there is no forward-facing gauge of the extent of its importance. Most users do not see it, but at the bottom of our opening page in ScholarWorks there is a map of the world showing Real-Time Readership of the *Journal*. There you will see the name of the articles, authors, and originating locations where content has been downloaded for the current day. One can see that a reader from

Alexandria, Virginia downloaded a 2010 article by Judy Gentry titled “Confederates and Cotton in East Texas,” and a reader from Terre Haute, Indiana read Jennifer Bridges’s article, “The Katy's Ladies: Prostitution in Early Denison, Texas, 1872-1880.” These were just two of 155 articles accessed that day.



A Year for “New Looks”

To enhance our reader’s impressions of ETHA and the online *Journal*, we have made several design improvements in our content within SFA ScholarWorks.

- Redesign of the landing page with new colors, formatting, and the new ETHA logo.
- Addition of an active link on the landing page that brings readers to the ETHA website.
- Updated cover page for article downloads that promotes the ETHA website and displays the new logo as a banner.

Building awareness of ETHA for the readers of our journal articles will begin to open the door to broader membership.

Why It Makes a Difference

Some have asked why the online *Journal* is free and openly available to non-members. The answer to that is found in our recent member survey. When asked about the primary purpose of ETHA members provided two clear answers: 1) ETHA promotes the study of East Texas history; and 2) ETHA fosters an open conversation among scholars, non-professional historians, and history buffs on the past and present of East Texas.

What better way to demonstrate our commitment to those dual missions of scholarship and dialogue than to make the *Journal* available to anyone who shares those interests? It is our memberships, donations, and sponsorships that help make *ETHJ* available to others.

Members do still have the exclusive benefit of receiving the print copy of each new edition before it is placed online – the most recent volume will be withheld from publication on ScholarWorks. Given what we now know about the reach of our publication and our organization, the East Texas Historical Association can be proud to deliver what is clearly a much-appreciated resource.

To see all the changes to the *East Texas Historical Journal* in SFA ScholarWorks, just click the link to get started. You can also access the *Journal* through the ETHA website via the Publications tab.

See the new online *ETHJ* at <https://www.easttexashistorical.org/resources>.