A library for everyone

As your public library, we are aware of how choosing to be anti-racist touches everything we do. That’s why we hired a new Director of Equity and Anti-Racism in September (see sidebar). And it’s why our Board of Trustees adopted two new policies in October that put our values into action:

The Equity and Anti-Racism Statement commits the library to being equitable and anti-racist in all of our work. This includes our mission and vision, and how we allocate resources.

A Library for Everyone strives to support positive experiences for everyone using library spaces. It outlines guidelines and accountability, and it affirms that the library is committed to serving everyone, especially those who are vulnerable or marginalized, such as those experiencing homelessness or health and income challenges.

Equity and social justice are core values of the library profession, and our library’s commitment to equity has been at least eight years in the making.

Starting in 2013, an intentional process began driving all our work. We started asking Oak Parkers a simple question: What kind of community do you want to live in?

From our patrons, partners, and peers, we consistently heard how important it is that the library be a welcoming place for everyone.

We have a clear vision to empower every voice in our community. So we continue to ask, how can we change to better welcome and serve people who belong to groups that have historically been marginalized and oppressed?

For more on the evolution of our library’s journey, see a timeline on the other side and at oppl.org/timeline.

For questions, more information, and how we can work together, please contact Executive Director David J. Seleb (708.697.6911 or davids@oppl.org) and Director of Equity and Anti-Racism Stephen Jackson (stephenj@oppl.org).
Milestones in our equity & anti-racism journey

October 2013
Ask "What Kind Of Community Do You Want?"
Begin Harwood practice & lead Community Conversations

March 2016
Hire A Social Worker
Provide services for the most vulnerable patrons

October 2018
Host First Restorative Justice Conference

April 2015
Train More Staff & Dig Deeper
Gather with area groups to learn more about diversity, equity & education in Oak Park

June 2017
Eliminate Fines
Increase library use, access, equity

2019-2020
Gather With Allies
Meet regularly with community leaders focused on institutional change

February 2020
Conduct An Internal Equity Audit
Start work with Reesheda Graham Washington & RGW Consulting

April 2020
Help Develop Empathy And Compassion
Create a multicultural virtual learning video series

January 2021
Create Anti-Racism Strategic Plan With Staff Input

March 2020
Use Circles To Honor, Learn From One Other

July 2020
Assemble A Cross-Section Of Stakeholders
Form an Anti-Racism Advisory Team

September 2021
Hire A Director Of Equity & Anti-Racism

Review more milestones of the library’s equity and anti-racism journey and read more about why this work is library work at oppl.org/anti-racism.