

A LIBRARY  FOR EVERYONE



2022

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES ANNUAL REPORT

**Making an Impact:
Becoming a
Library for Everyone**





Elmhurst University students enrolled in the school's "Great Chicago Libraries" course begin a tour with library staff.

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ON THE COVER

The Omeyocan Dance Company performed to celebrate Día de Muertos at the Main Library. [Read more in this story on our website.](#)

MISSION & VISION

Our library's mission is to share the information, services, and opportunities that fulfill Oak Park's aspirations. Our vision is to empower every voice in our community.

PRIORITIES

Our library strives to be a library for everyone, one that prioritizes:

- Becoming an anti-racist organization;
- Connecting people and building community;
- Creating capacity for literacy, learning, and lifelong skill development; and
- Sustaining, sharing, and respecting community resources.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report shares examples of library work in 2022 that has made an impact—measurable and anecdotal—on the individual people it serves and the overall community it supports. Thanks for reading and for using your public library, Oak Park!



A MESSAGE FROM JOSLYN

Since arriving in November 2022, I have continued to be inspired and amazed by the hardworking staff and elected trustees that we have here at Oak Park Public Library. They are the reason why we are able to create programs and services with lasting, positive impact to the benefit of the diverse community we serve.

At every level—from the staff you first encounter at our public service desks, to those working diligently in the background in administration and providing ongoing support, to the outreach crew bringing the library directly to you wherever you are in the village, to IT and Facilities keeping our digital engines humming and our buildings clean, fresh, and inviting, to the last Safety Team member closing the library down for the evening—our teams truly embody through dedication and diligence what it means to be a Five-Star-rated Library for Everyone.

I am certain that, after reviewing our progress in 2022, you will be as inspired and proud as I am of our one-of-a-kind library in this one-of-a-kind village, where we have the privilege to work and live. I am excited to continue our equity and anti-racism work and also am looking forward to listening and learning from you as our teams create the next steps in revamping spaces and services in our post-COVID universe.

Stay tuned to see how we continue our never-ending library journey of building, growing, and striving to be better and to do better in 2023 and beyond.

Joslyn Bowling Dixon
Executive Director

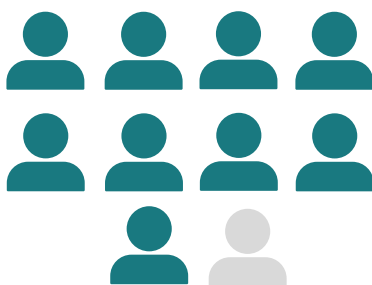
I am looking forward to listening and learning from you as our teams create the next steps in revamping spaces and services in our post-COVID universe.”

BY THE NUMBERS

As a Five-Star Library, our mission is to share the information, services, and opportunities that fulfill Oak Park's aspirations. To evaluate how we fulfill that mission, we collect, analyze, and share stories and data to better understand the library's impact on our community. [Review our core statistics dashboard \(updated monthly\) here »](#)

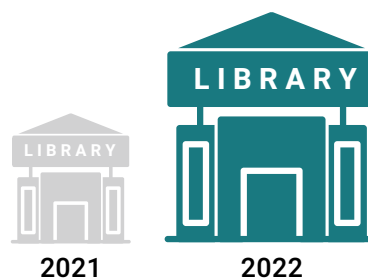
87%

**Surveyed patrons
who are very satisfied**



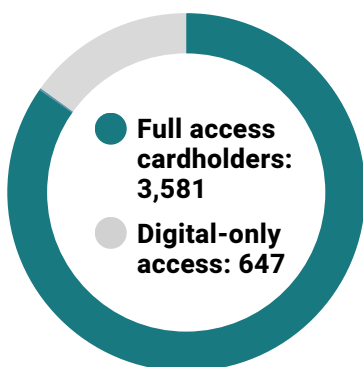
305,176

**In-person visits to all
3 spaces, up 54% from 2021**



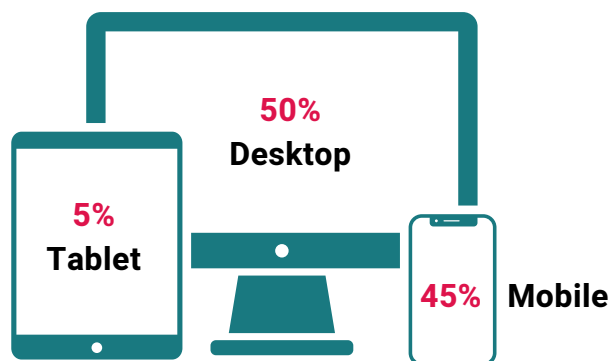
4,228

New library users



390,369

Website users



- Five-Star Library: Library Journal's Index of Public Library Service 2022 ranking. Out of the 5,359 libraries reviewed, Oak Park was ranked #3 in the country in its expenditure range (\$5-\$9.9 million).
- Surveyed patrons: 87.6% of active cardholders who responded to our Net Promoter Score (NPS) survey in 2022 (n=282) rated the library a 9 or 10 in response to the following question: "On a scale from 0 (not at all likely) to 10 (very likely), how likely are you to recommend the library to others?"
- In-person visits: The number of patron visits to the Oak Park Public Library's three physical locations.
- New library users: The number of new account registrations (digital-only accounts or full-access library cards). Digital-only accounts became available to community members in March 2020. Users who obtain digital-only accounts and later convert to full-access cards are only counted once.
- Website users: The number of people who initiated at least one session on oppl.org.



1,449,053

Library materials circulated



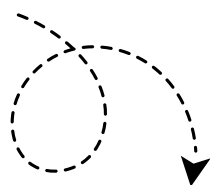
396,204

Digital catalog items
downloaded or streamed



1,052,849

Physical items checked
out or renewed



This included **14,888** materials delivered directly to patrons where they live and work, and **1,014** materials distributed at community events via Oak Park's Book Bike.



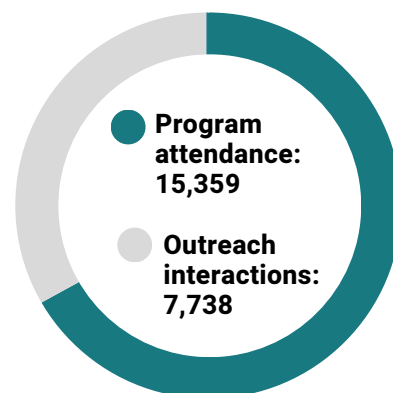
39,391

Online resource sessions across
130+ vetted research tools



23,097

People reached via onsite
and offsite library programs
& outreach visits



- Library materials circulated: Digital circulation is the number of materials downloaded or streamed from Oak Park library collections. Physical circulation is the number of checkouts plus renewals made at an Oak Park library location.
- Online resource sessions: The total number of sessions (logins) for all online resources requiring an Oak Park card, based on vendor statistics.
- People reached: Program attendance is the number of attendees at programs held inside an Oak Park library location or in a library virtual space. Outreach is the estimated interactions from all outside-the-library visits (in-person and virtual) and Book Bike events. (Note: The number shown above is not a count of unique individuals reached during the year; it is the sum of attendance/interactions logged at each unique program or outreach event.)

STORIES TO BE SHARED

Stories fill our buildings' stacks—and are happening in our spaces all year long. This 2022 story timeline highlights (and links to) individual stories that shape the bigger picture: how library work impacts our community. Looking for more? Find new stories at oppl.org/news and new reports at oppl.org/board.



In its ongoing commitment to use less paper to raise awareness, the library in 2022 expanded its number of push emails to eight and incorporated new technology to enable patrons to manage promotional preferences. Close to half (45.9%) of all emails sent were opened. See what's available at oppl.org/subscribe.

JUL			<p>Gathered anti-gun violence, mental health, and action-based resources</p> <p>As tragedies continued to affect us near and far from home, we continued to curate specific resources to cope, learn, and heal. Read more »</p>
AUG		<p>Supported learning just for fun</p> <p>Highlighting free and easy-to-use video tutorials for crafting and creating, we hope to bring more joy to more lives. Read more »</p>	
SEP		<p>Celebrated new cardholders of all ages</p> <p>We had a blast asking you to pose with your new library card for #LibraryCardSignUpMonth. We still can't get over all those beautiful smiles! Read more »</p>	
OCT		<p>Adopted a resolution of Board support</p> <p>During challenging times, Library Trustees stepped up to show strong support for library staff, programs, and collections. Read more »</p>	
NOV		<p>Welcomed (back) our new executive director</p> <p>Returning to Illinois after a decade on the East Coast, Joslyn Bowling Dixon was hired as Oak Park's new library executive director. Read more »</p>	
DEC		<p>Thanked you for making us a Five-Star Library!</p> <p>High community use placed us third in the nation for our library budget category in the Library Journal ranking. Thanks again, Oak Park! Read more »</p>	



In 2022, our library began the internal process to present and share how we will continue this journey to mitigate the implications of internalized, interpersonal, institutional, and structural racism at the library.

The Board of Library Trustees voted to approve the Oak Park Public Library's first stand-alone Anti-Racism Strategic Plan in March 2021. It was created to address internalized, interpersonal, institutional, and structural racism in both internal and external practices at the library.

As part of staying accountable to the work outlined in that plan, we have committed to reporting separately on its initiatives. On the library's website, at oppl.org/equity, read: **2022 Anti-Racism Impact Report: From Paper to Practice.**





We facilitated connections among diverse audiences through shared community aspirations and experiences.

ABOVE LEFT: The 1619 Project: Family & Community Circles. For the third year running, the library collaborated—with local schools; the E-Team of Oak Park; Dominican University’s Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) group; and Oak Park Township—to host a series of family & community discussions. Students (middle, high, college), parents, teachers, neighbors, and other community participants were able to have a structured anti-racist dialogue inspired by books and other media. This series concluded with a live classical music concert (“The Birth of American Music” by D-Composed, a Black chamber music collective) and a midday meal. [Read more »](#)

ABOVE RIGHT: Library for Everyone: Building Friendships & Empathy. Regular field trips help kids and adults become more comfortable talking about disabilities, with the aim of knowing that disabilities are not good or bad, but a part of life that many people have or will experience; help them feel pride in themselves, inclusive of their disabilities; and encourage all to analyze depictions of disabilities in books and media.

Civic Participation. With each local and national election, we are grateful to remain open and offer library spaces as polling places. Election judges and polling booths both serve as a visual representation of the library’s commitment to civic engagement, the right to vote, and democracy. We continue to co-host local candidate forums and connect everyone—[via oppl.org/voting](https://www.oppl.org/voting)—to information about recent election results, upcoming election dates, and voter registration processes.

Illinois Libraries Present. As founding members of the January-June 2022 pilot season, we were proud to help shape and support the success of nearly 200 state public libraries joining resources to bring together more than 15,000 viewers for shared virtual experiences. Across seven events—featuring New York Times bestselling authors, Grammy-nominated musicians, an Emmy-nominated actor, a Nebula Award nominee, a James Beard Award Rising Star Chef winner and Top Chef contestant, and a Goodreads Choice Awards Best Humor Book winner—the venture proved to be, as one librarian said, “one big positive to come out of the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic.” [Read more »](#)



ABOVE: Stranger Things Night at Maze Branch. One of the most successful programs of the year was a fun and interactive experience for fans of the Netflix series *Stranger Things*. After the library closed on a Friday in September, Maze Branch was transformed into the world of *Stranger Things*, including iconic sites in fictional Hawkins, Indiana, such as Castle Byers, the 1984 Snow Ball, and the dark and scary Upside Down. Elaborate decorations and costumes brought the series to life, and staff developed and led a variety of activities to appeal to all ages: an episode screening with an ice cream treat, a character quiz, a scavenger hunt, a *Dungeons & Dragons* character creation activity, coloring, music, and multiple fun photo opportunities. Patrons—many dressed up as their favorite characters or in '80s fashion—were gleeful as they made their way through the library and engaged with staff and each other. By the end of the night, approximately 300 community members of all ages had participated in this event.

Middle & High School Services. Expanding staff support, dedicating two unique second floor spaces, and creating opportunities that responded to middle and high school age interests had a dramatic and measurable impact in 2022. In January, Manager Latonia Jackson joined the library, bringing her enthusiasm and 20+ years of professional wisdom as the high school's outreach coordinator. She grew and focused a new team to include a dedicated teen librarian, a programming supervisor, a programming specialist, and a library assistant. All team members engage middle schoolers and high schoolers as two separate groups with unique interests and needs. One summer 2022 highlight: collaborating with local artist Paul Branton and student artists Paola Campuzano, Isabella Nache, Geneva Rader-Carter, and Aaliyah Thurman to envision, then execute an expressive and colorful mural titled "Yesterday, Today, and Forever." Still on the library's second floor south wall, the art is a one-of-a-kind focal point that energizes the open and flexible high school services area.



ABOVE: Creative Studio, 2022 | **INSET, TOP RIGHT:** Computer Classroom, 2021. (Yes, it's the same room, still located on the Main Library's third floor, across from the west wall's bank of public computers.)

We worked to prepare people for continuously changing technology and to improve lives through opportunities that create new skills.

In February, the library submitted a grant proposal to the Illinois State Library entitled "Ctrl + Alt + Create: Supporting Creativity and Digital Learning in an Expanded Creative Studio" with requested funding supporting the addition of audio and video content creation resources.

The \$25,000 proposal was approved later that spring, and has since been used to help transform the space pictured above from a basic computer classroom to a lively Creative Studio, complete with an audio-recording sound booth and related equipment and software.

To make it all happen, a new cross-area digital learning team was assembled, and surveys were distributed to gather both library staff and patron feedback.

Results are helping guide continued development of the space. The goal is to offer services and programs that provide equitable, inclusive, and relevant digital learning for a wide variety of ages and interests.

In late 2022, staff-led learning began in the space, including a TechGirlz learning series; see next page.

2023 will offer wider opportunities for independent learning and activities with 3D printers, a laser cutter, a large-format printer for posters and other oversize print jobs, and the new sound booth. Software and tools for editing professional-quality audio and video content creation, as well as preservation equipment for digitizing analog media such as VHS tapes, also are on the way for everyone to explore in 2023.



LEFT: Creative Studio learning with TechGirlz building 3D Custom Stamps using CAD.

RIGHT: More Creative Studio learning with TechGirlz making Edison robots run.

New tech learning opportunities supported with grant-funded equipment. Since 2020, the library has collaborated with TechGirlz, a nonprofit inspiring middle and high school age girls to explore the possibilities of technology to empower their future careers. For the 2022-2023 school year, Digital Learning Librarians Eileen Saam, Amy Hofmockel, and John Gargiulo pursued—and received—a generous \$12,000 TechGirlz grant, of which funds helped purchase two new 3D printers and a laser cutter. The new equipment is being used in a total of 23 TechGirlz programs during the school year, and will remain in the Creative Studio for patrons of all ages to use and explore after the grant-funded series is complete.

At the end of 2022, the goal—to reach more than 100 area girls in grades 5-8 with hands-on learning experiences, including creating Edison Robots using Python, building 3D Custom Stamps using CAD, and getting a technical introduction to podcasting—was well in sight.

We provided broad, effective, and equitable access to resources.

Supporting Oak Park's Special Collections.

In 2022, our team expanded to better support the library's continued commitment to archiving, digitizing, and connecting the world to the variety of local treasures safely preserved at the Main Library. And while we continued to highlight materials related to Ernest Hemingway and Frank Lloyd Wright (through community partnerships with the Ernest Hemingway Foundation of Oak Park and the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust), we created new exhibits and programs highlighting significant contemporary and historical Oak Park residents who have not yet been well represented. These include scientist Percy Julian and journalist and filmmaker Stan West. To support wider local exposure and to reach more of a Chicago-area audience, we enthusiastically participated in Open House Chicago (photo above) in the fall of 2022. Close to 500 unique visitors engaged with us throughout the weekend-long program, learning about Oak Park and Special Collections.

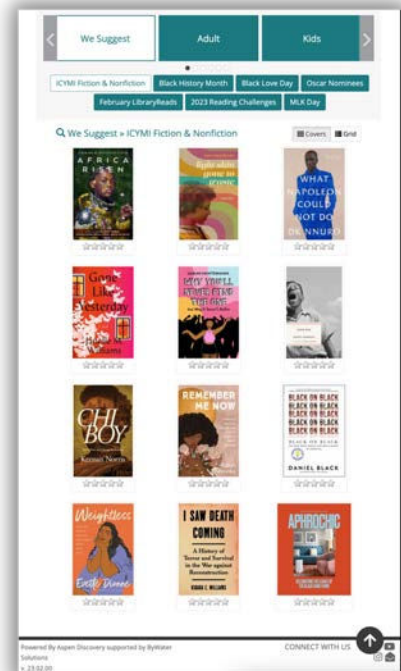


Promoting an inclusive collection. With 1.4 million items circulated in 2022, how is it that readers make the most of the variety the library curates for its community? For example, how do you find your next great read, and/or new items not yet on your radar?

We Suggest—recommendations powered by a team of collection management librarians who are well read and well connected to what's circulating—has many custom answers for those questions. The team used that knowledge to curate 60 differently themed lists in 2022.

Some lists focus on specific cultural and heritage celebrations such as Black History Month, LGBTQIA+ Pride Month, Disability Pride Month, and Hispanic Heritage Month. All lists are built with inclusivity as the goal.

According to Manager of Collections Barbara Fitzgerald, this means “there are titles showcasing unique representation (for example BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, disability representation) on every single list. This includes award-winning titles, book club favorites, and recently published fiction and nonfiction.”



Browse all We Suggest lists—by date at oppl.org/lists and by theme at oppl.org/catalog.
Subscribe to emails at oppl.org/subscribe.



We invited everyone into library spaces that are welcoming, safe, and inspiring.

New spaces for study and work, with more WiFi access. In February 2022, we installed 10 indoor study carrels on the Main Library third floor (above, middle photo), positioned near electrical outlets and able to comfortably seat two people. Later that spring, we installed six metal picnic tables (two near the butterfly garden at the Maze Branch and four on the paved plaza outside the Main Library) to provide patrons with an option for working outside and accessing our free WiFi even when library buildings are closed.

These carrels were the result of a grant request submitted one year earlier. “On the Road to Recovery: Transforming Library Spaces” was a grant proposal to the Illinois State Library requesting funds to support the purchase of indoor and outdoor seating to create additional safe spaces for study, work, and WiFi access for our patrons during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Specifically, the grant requested \$22,000 to purchase the carrels and outdoor tables with attached seating. In October 2021, ISL approved this proposal. And since introducing these new mini-spaces as an alternative to study rooms and gathering spaces, library staff have observed they are used consistently.

Also in February 2022, we completed installation of the outdoor WiFi Access Points for the Main Library east plaza and south side of the building near Lake Street. An outdoor WiFi Access Point was also installed at the Maze Branch, covering the courtyard on the south side of the building (above, right photo). These upgrades were essential to ensure that the library’s WiFi infrastructure can support reliable internet access for community members who use the new outdoor furniture at these locations.



We supported library staff to achieve happiness, well-being, and success.

Staff self-assessments. In 2022, the library started the practice of completing bi-annual self and manager performance assessments. According to Director of Human Resources Billy Treece: “At the library, we want staff to feel valued, and the self-assessment helps us better understand how our staff members are doing by asking everyone, ‘How well does Oak Park Public Library recognize my value?’ The most recent self-assessment completed in December 2022 shows that 62% of staff feel highly valued. This is an increase compared to July 2022 self-assessments, when only 44% of staff reported feeling highly valued. This increase may be due to a number of factors—annual pay increases, the arrival of a new executive director, an incredible Staff Engagement Day, something else, or a combination of it all.”

Staff circles. As part of our ongoing effort to support staff well-being, several of the library’s trained circle keepers worked in 2022 to build a monthly talking circle practice. Circles are intentional spaces for staff to build relationships, gain understanding, and support one another. Attending and participating in a staff talking circle is voluntary. In circle, everyone has an equal opportunity to speak and to listen, and everything said in circle is confidential—attendees must commit to the idea that learning leaves, while stories stay in the circle. Each month, the circle keepers met to debrief and plan the next month’s circles.

Staff beekeeping. Under the watchful eye of beekeeper Debbie Becker, a core group of seven staff members were trained in 2022 to help maintain the library’s rooftop hives, with additional equipment and support supplied to ensure safety. In addition to supporting the library’s commitment to sustainability, this work and the training described also provided the opportunity for staff to explore new interests, develop new skills, and build new relationships with each other, ultimately supporting the library’s focus on supporting staff development and well-being.



We acted on our shared values of diversity, equity, and inclusion, collaboration, and compassion.

Food insecurity. In September 2022, in partnership with Suburban Unity Alliance and with support from Byline Bank, we welcomed a new Unity Fridge at the Main Library outdoor plaza. Located just outside the library's main entrance, the fridge and storage shelves provided 24/7 access to free food and hygiene items for community members in need. Previously stationed at the Carnival Grocery store on Oak Park Avenue, the decision was made to relocate this fridge to the Main Library, given the library's role as a community hub and our work to support patrons experiencing homelessness, and as a logical extension of the library's priority to equitably serve Oak Park's diverse community members.

Teen mental health. 2022 was year three of partnering with Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine on a five-year grant in which an app is being built to help teens manage anxiety. In 2022, the Social Services team reviewed data from staff and teen needs assessment interviews, contributing to planning a strategy for the app's design stage workshops.

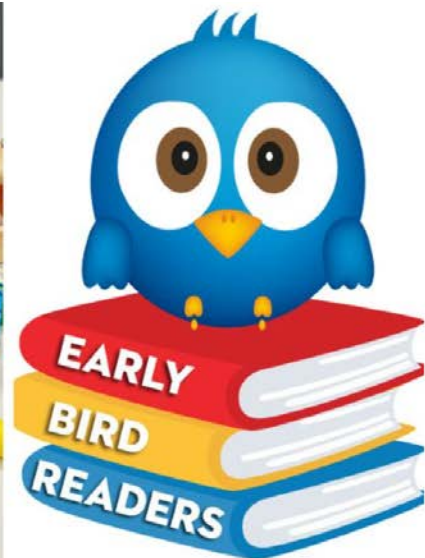


Library staff interview results suggested two services would fulfill their needs:

- 1) A repository of reliable and culturally relevant mental health resources, and
- 2) A training curriculum guiding staff on how to best support teen mental health needs.

Teen patron interview results suggested that they prefer hands-on, digital skill-building apps tailored for teens that could be "checked out" from the library for free.

Based on stakeholder feedback, we continue to work with Dr. Ashley Knapp to co-design a mental health training curriculum for library staff. We are also working with teens on next steps for the teen-facing services. Ideas have ranged from partnering with commercial digital mental health app companies, in which the library could buy a subscription and teen patrons could "check out" these apps for free, to working with existing applications in the research domain and thinking about sustainable models.



We acted on our shared values of access, education, and literacy, accountability and sustainability.

Intergovernmental agreements in 2022 focused on intentional sharing of resources to reach and support more families with little ones and struggling teens, as well as save money on behind-the-scenes spending such as fuel costs. Did you know the library van moves items between all three libraries twice a day, seven days a week?

- Collaboration for Early Childhood.** 2022 continued longstanding partnership work between the library and the collaboration, including inspiration for a virtual learning video series and the creation of social-emotional and other themed family learning kits. [Read more about supporting early learners and their caregivers »](#)
- Oak Park Township.** 2022 also continued longstanding partnership work between the library and the township's Youth Engagement Program (YEP). Managed by the Oak Park Township Youth and Family Services and financially supported by all government entities, YEP is a collaboration whose goal is to provide a holistic approach to support the mental health and wellness of youth ages 6-18 in our community. The program has been in place since 1996 and has been recognized from the Illinois Lieutenant Governor's Offices as a "shared service best practice." YEP is free and designed to provide supportive services, including individual and group counseling and mentoring, to youth as they navigate complex trauma, crisis, anxiety/depression, behavioral issues, gang involvement, or any pressing needs.
- Village of Oak Park.** The library collaborates with other Village of Oak Park agencies to improve efficiency and minimize cost in various areas such as the library refueling of its van at the Village of Public Works location. This reduces fuel costs for the library and supports the village's purchasing power.



THANK YOU, FRIENDS

As a separate 501c3 nonprofit organization, the Friends of the Oak Park Public Library have raised funds and built valuable bridges between the library and community since 1948. [Learn more about our Friends »](#)

- **Scoville Circle (\$1,000):** Joan K. Chow
- **Sustaining (\$500):** Nancy Clark
- **Benefactor (\$100):** Chet & Barbara Purington Taranowski, Derek Strain, Eric J. Olson, James Strait, Kathleen Bell, Nancy Hartman, Paul & Patricia Koko, Paul Buchbinder, Raymond & Barbara Sedivic, Susie Smith, Tazewell Rowe
- **Donor (\$50):** Elizabeth M. Streit, Gordon Waldron, John & Carol Fisher, Susan Doyle
- **Patron (\$25):** Alan Solid, Alice Rose, Ariel Schick, Barbara Mayes, Denise Roser, Dianne Olson, Elizabeth Marszalik, Ellen Cutter, Eric Bryning, Eric Gyllenhaal, Jane Bularzik, Jon Fjortoft, Kenneth Kosmala, Kristina Roque, Lisa Molter, Loretta Bober, Nadine Thompson, Nancy Fjortoft, Peggy Conlon Madigan, Rich & Doris Adamczewski, Russell Glidden, Shirleen Kajiwarra

ANNUAL BOOK FAIR HIGHLIGHTS

In 2022, the Friends' Annual Book Fair moved to the Main Library, collected 32,000+ donated items and sold 14,000 items over a long weekend in August. More than 125 volunteers signed up for 500+ shifts, representing 2,000+ hours of work. History and biography were the high-donation and high-sales volume areas of interest.





ABOVE: Library staff posing at our December All-Staff Learning and Engagement Day. **BELOW:** 2022 comments from the library's ongoing virtual customer satisfaction survey.

I actually brought someone new to your library with me when I was there last. We both loved the place, the service, the atmosphere and the innovative direction of the exhibits and art on display."

I think this library is extensive, very user friendly, and conveniently located. Accessible to children of all ages, with many educational opportunities."

OPPL has been a part of my life since I moved here 26 years ago. It stays relevant, changing as media and formats change while still maintaining what a library has been historically."

THANK YOU, LIBRARY DONORS

The library is grateful for these generous donors who contributed to these endowment funds:

Bernard & Cecelia Sinkevitch Fund

- Jennifer Bulls
- Michael Schiffer
- Linda Schiffer

Fallon Family Library Fund

- Pamela Murphy
- Shannon O'Hara

Friends of the Oak Park Public Library Fund

- Better World Books
- Laura Kahan

Helen M. Harrison Oak Park Library Books Fund

- Stephanie Crawford

Jim Madigan Oak Park Public Library Staff Education Fund

- Timothy Zarazan

To learn more about each fund, [visit oppl.org/give](https://www.oppl.org/give).

THANK YOU, OAK PARK, FOR USING YOUR PUBLIC LIBRARY



Main Library

834 Lake St. | 708.383.8200
Monday–Thursday: 9 am–9 pm
Friday: 9 am–6 pm
Saturday: 9 am–5 pm
Sunday: 12–5 pm



Dole Branch Library

255 Augusta St. | 708.386.9032
Monday: Closed
Tuesday–Thursday: 10 am–9 pm
Friday: 10 am–6 pm
Saturday: 10 am–5 pm
Sunday: 12–5 pm



Maze Branch Library

845 Gunderson Ave. | 708.386.4751
Monday–Thursday: 10 am–9 pm
Friday: Closed
Saturday: 10 am–5 pm
Sunday: 12–5 pm

