

the storyline

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electric Book Bike**
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THE STORYLINE
Summer 2024

ON THE COVER
This little acorn reading a book is our new Pop-Up Library mascot, created by local artist and author Jacob Grant. Learn more about Jacob, pop-up libraries, and how you can help us name our new acorn friend on pages 6–7.

We love to hear how you use your public library! If you have an idea or story to share with us for a future issue, or if you have any comments or questions, please contact us at communications@oppl.org.

Looking for events? Pick up monthly print calendars for kids & families, middle & high schoolers, adults, and older adults (60+) at all library locations. Find all event details at oppl.org/calendar.

BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES
Find board meeting information and meet the trustees at oppl.org/board.

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Featured in this issue

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“I consider librarians, curators and other wisdom keepers as quiet, hidden, cape-wearing heroes. Our libraries are what make us different from other nations and are the foundation of our freedoms! Your work comforts, educates, elevates, humors, inspires us and generally makes our town a better place to live. Thank you for the light you bring to our community.”
—Lindsay Olson, library patron

‘I love The Storyline!’

We got a nice email from Oak Parker Priscilla Perkins in September, thanking us for the fall issue of this magazine, which covered the freedom to read and digital learning opportunities.

“As a writing and literature professor who teaches an undergraduate course on protest, I was excited to see The Storyline’s accessible explanation of the dangers of book banning and other kinds of censorship,” she told us.

Priscilla also said she’s been using the library digitally since the pandemic. “Having just learned about new resources like facilities for digitizing VHS tapes, though, I know I’m going to start visiting in person again,” she told us. “Thanks for reminding the community of all the reasons we have to love our Oak Park libraries. You all rock.”

You rock too, Priscilla! We love that you found the magazine useful. Our quest is to help inform our community about what the library stands for, and to hear “I didn’t know the library had that!” and “I didn’t know you could do that at the library” just a little less often.

With this issue—our 20th!—we hope to remind you of lots of reasons to use your public library.

—Your library’s Communications Team



Community spotlight

“The last year has been one of the most creative times in my life,” said library user Bob Danstrom (pictured at right) in a LinkedIn post in January. “I’ve used the freedom that I gained by running my own business to schedule time to write, draw, and take on new projects.”

Bob was one of the winners of last summer’s 50 Years of Hip Hop T-shirt design contest. His contest entry, with the help of his friend Andrew Miragliotta, featured a boombox inspired by Prairie-style stained glass and won the 18+ competition.

“It would have been great to leave it at that, but last week I was able to visit the main branch and replace my old library card with a new one featuring our design. Just an incredible honor. I’m so thankful not only to have something I’ll see every week that combines my love of music and this community, but to be able to invest my time into the things that inspire me. Thank you Oak Park!”



From left: Creative Technology Specialists Kay Slater and Jericho Savage, Supervising Librarian of Creative Technology John Gargiulo, and Creative Technology Librarian Amy Hofmockel

Creative Studio turns 1

Since the digital makerspace officially opened last April on the Main Library’s third floor, it’s been a fantastic year of learning, expanding offerings, and, of course, lots of creativity.

“The Creative Studio provides access to technology and tools that help patrons realize their personal, professional, and creative aspirations,” says Supervising Librarian of Creative Technology John Gargiulo. “While access to equipment like microphones, 3D printers, and vinyl cutters can be cost prohibitive to individuals, having this equipment accessible at the library allows patrons to more freely experiment with tools that can help them with a wide variety of projects.”

See the Open Hours schedule, make reservations to use equipment, schedule one-on-one learning time, and register for upcoming classes at oppl.org/creative-studio.

“When you bring the inspiration and ideas, our Creative Technology team can help connect you with resources that will support the journey of your project,” Gargiulo says. “We love hearing about your goals for your project and learning alongside you.”

Teamwork makes the dream work

In March, patron D. Floyd wrote to us with praise: “I am expressing my appreciation to your staff Amy [Hofmockel] and Kay [Slater]. ... As a senior not technically savvy who learns differently, they were extremely understanding and willing to help me.”

In helping her complete two 3D printing projects, Amy and Kay were “very patient and patron friendly,” D. said. “My compliments and commendations to both!”

‘When I learned of the Creative Studio offerings I quickly signed up for a class!’

Oak Parker Meg Nelligan and her family are frequent library users. “Beyond borrowing books, we have attended story times, used the children’s computers, tracked reading in the summer programs and always have a queue of holds on the Libby App,” she told us earlier this year. “When I learned of the Creative Studio offerings I quickly signed up for a class!”

With guidance from Creative Technology Specialist Jericho Savage, Meg used the Creative Studio’s Glowforge laser cutter to make two acrylic lamps and the Cricut system to design a laptop sticker. She then ventured into more projects of her own, including coasters, ornaments, and earrings (pictured here).

While it’s “a great outlet for my own creativity,” Meg said she’s also used the Creative Studio for her job. As chief operating officer of Oak Park’s Tapster Robotics, Inc., which manufactures robots that do automated testing, Meg used the laser cutter to create a prototype for a new Tapster product: an acrylic box that blocks out light so that the electronics inside function properly.

Meg tells us she hopes to use the Creative Studio again soon “for some more fun: custom cookie stencils using the Cricut and to transfer my wedding video to a digital format.”



Patron Services Coordinators Kelly (left) and Julie (right) in the Main Library Lobby Community Space.

“I wanted to take a moment to thank all of you for the wonderful services the library offers its residents and members,” Cheryl Gandolfi wrote to us in December.

“I have checked out and read many of the books offered in hard copy or online, my knitting group meets weekly in one of the rooms to knit, share ideas and socialize, and my book club has chosen many books to read that we thought were too difficult to get because the waitlist is too long. But Julie [pictured at left] is always able to get the books for us and staff are quick to make sure we have enough time to read them for our discussion. This really impresses our members who live in Chicago and have long waits for any popular book.”

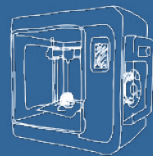
Cheryl says she and her book group are “all pretty prolific readers” who will read almost anything, though “we seem to gravitate toward mysteries and historical novels especially if there is a strong female character.”

Would you like to read more this summer? Check out pages 8–9 for info on our summer reading programs, and learn more about library-led book discussions and local book club support at oppl.org/book-groups.

“Two people I’d like to recognize for their kindness, professionalism, and brilliance: Kelly [pictured at left] at the front desk for many years. When she’s there I know everything is under control—she has answers and a curious mind. Amy Hofmockel [pictured on next page] in creative tech. She has helped me with tech issues a couple of times. A lifesaver.” —Nancy Trock



Almost 130 people have been trained to use the Audio Booth in the past year, allowing them to reserve time in the booth to record podcasts, audiobooks, and songs.



We’ve 3D-printed nearly 930 objects for community members.



Countless memories have been preserved in the Media Preservation Station, which can digitize different types of media, such as VHS tapes, cassette tapes, and film negatives.



Meet author, artist & ‘library guy’ Jacob Grant

Jacob Grant is an award-winning Oak Park author, illustrator, and dad who makes picture books, including *Umami*, *No Pants!*, and *Bear’s Scare*. In April, he was selected as a winner of the prestigious 2024 Bologna Children’s Book Fair Illustration Exhibition. So we were honored when Jacob agreed to design a new character mascot—a cute little acorn, reading a book on a cozy cushion of oak leaves—for our Pop-Up Library initiative, which debuted in April. Below, Jacob shares more about his creative process and why he doesn’t mind being known as “a library guy”!

How did you get your start as an artist?

JG: As far back as I can remember, I always wanted to make art. I was a shy kid, and art gave me a voice. Lucky for me, that voice was encouraged by my family, and through all those years growing up art was part of my life. Which eventually led me to the Art Academy of Cincinnati, where I started as a painting major, and later switched to graphic design out of survival concerns. I worked as a graphic designer for five years or so after school, always plotting how I could get back to making more art.

How did you become a professional children’s book author and illustrator?

It was around this time that our niece was born, and my wife and I found ourselves shopping for children’s books. I remember being amazed at how many wonderful books there were on the shelves, but more importantly, how many awful books there were. Being naive, I said to myself, “Surely, I could make a picture book!”

After a number of failed attempts later, I learned that making a good book was not so easy. But the best thing I did at this time was to simply keep making stuff. As soon as I sent out a concept to publishers and agents, I’d start a new one. And eventually one of these ideas found its way to an editor’s desk. Since that day, I’ve written and illustrated 12 books.

What makes for a good character in a kids’ book? What makes for a good story?

The best way I know to tell a story is to start with a character that wants something. Like a bear that wants a spider out of their home (*Bear’s Scare*). Or a goat in a petting zoo that wants personal space (*Through With The Zoo*). Or just a rascal that has decided they do not want to wear pants (*No Pants!*). If you have a character that wants something,

the story can tell how they go about getting it, or how they fail. It might not always be a good story, but it’s a good place to start!

What’s your creative process?

My creative process almost always begins in my sketchbook. I draw every day—sometimes things from my imagination, sometimes observation; other times, recording something funny or poignant from the day. When I’m lucky, one of these drawings will have a story to tell.

How do you and your family use the library?

We love our library! I probably love it most. When my son was in kindergarten he was excited to share what I do, and instead of saying that I was an author or illustrator, he described my job as being “a library guy.” Which is a pretty good description! I spend loads of time in libraries and working with librarians (who are just the best people), and I adore a good library. You’ll often find me walking out of the new picture book section with a stack so tall it’s sliding out of my arms. I’m even guilty of squeezing some of my new favorite books onto the display shelves. If you spot me, don’t hesitate to say hello—I’m always happy to suggest a good book!



Would you like to help us name our new mascot? Look for voting booths at all three library buildings and online starting June 1!

Pop-up libraries: Read while you wait

In our continued quest to be a library for everyone, we strive to offer the widest possible access with the fewest barriers as possible. So we’re thrilled to offer a new way for community members to use the library and read library books when they’re out and about in the community: pop-up libraries!

Pop-up libraries are library collections—both physical and digital—that you can access outside library buildings, in spaces where people already congregate. Our goal is to provide great reads and enrichment for community members in locations outside the library, no library card or checkouts needed.

At the CRC

Our first Pop-Up Library is located in the lobby of the Park District of Oak Park’s Community Recreation Center (CRC), at 229 Madison St., Oak Park.

While this collection includes titles for all ages, it’s particularly geared toward the middle and high schoolers who gather at the CRC

after school and on weekends. Students are invited to take books off the shelf to read while they’re there.

“Our partners have shared that students are visiting the CRC for multiple reasons—esports and basketball, discreet mental health services, and to just hang out with friends in the free lobby space, which is where we put the Pop-Up Library,” says Community Engagement Librarian Sarah Yale. “Thanks to funding from the Friends of the Oak Park Public Library, we’ve stocked the shelves with graphic novels, short stories, books in verse—diverse titles that appeal

to tweens and teens and can be enjoyed socially and in one sitting.” Library staff will visit regularly to maintain the collection and rotate items, to keep it “fresh and interesting,” Yale adds.

At Thrive Counseling

Our epop-up library is a new curated collection that offers free, seven-day access to digital titles and selections curated by our Oak Park librarians. Using a phone or tablet, community members scan



Daisy Rios, Clinical Program Manager in Youth Services, poses with epop-up library posters at Thrive Counseling Center

a QR code on posters placed in the community to download and read ebooks from wherever they are. No library card is needed.

The first location to host our epop-up library poster, in both English and Spanish, is Thrive Counseling Center, 120 S. Marion St., Oak Park.

“Partnering with the Oak Park Public Library’s digital library is an opportunity for Thrive clients to access digital reading materials at any time, including while they wait for services,” says Daisy Rios, Thrive’s Clinical Program Manager in Youth Services. “Families who spend time together at our agency will have this great resource for parent-child connection.”

Where would you like to see the library pop up?

With both kinds of pop-up libraries, our goal is to be responsive to community needs and encourage literacy outside library buildings.

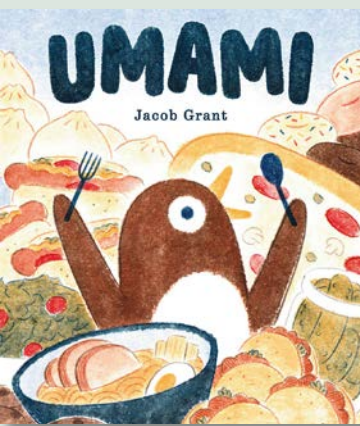
“We want to find more partners who will champion and encourage use,” Yale says, adding that a pop-up library could be a shelf of books in a laundromat or coffee shop, or an early literacy scavenger hunt activity at a grocery store. “You’re there anyway, so how can the library help make the experience more language-rich?”

Do you have an idea for where you’d like to see a pop-up library in Oak Park? Please contact Sarah Yale at sarahy@oppl.org.



Pop-Up Library made possible by generous funding from the Friends of the Oak Park Public Library.

Some of the books Jacob has written & illustrated:



ADVENTURE — BEGINS AT — YOUR LIBRARY™

June 1–August 21

FOR KIDS AGES 2
THROUGH RISING
6TH GRADERS



Sign up for summer reading at the library or online via Beanstack. Track reading and activities to earn prizes all summer! More: oppl.org/summer

Summer fun for all

Calling all kids age 2 through rising 6th graders! Adventure Begins at Your Library on June 1. Sign up in person or on the online platform Beanstack, then track your reading and activities to earn beads and prizes through August 21.

Adults, join in! From June 1 through August 21, sign up via Beanstack, track your reading, and complete activities for chances to win a \$100 OPRF Chamber of Commerce gift card for local businesses. And we're talking activities you probably want to do anyway, like reading your favorite book, watching your favorite film, taking a course in Creativebug or LinkedIn Learning, visiting the Creative Studio (see page 5), and attending library events! No library card is necessary to sign up. See all library events at oppl.org/calendar.

Middle & high school students: Bee a reader, bee an artist, bee social ... Just Bee at the library all summer! From June 10 through August 2:

- Complete a bingo card of activities and win prizes
- Game with us once a week at Maze Branch (video games, Dungeons & Dragons, and more)
- Find special activities at the Main Library Monday-Friday, 1-5 pm

Get the details for all ages: oppl.org/summer





Partnering for mental & physical health

American teens are in a mental health crisis, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and it began even before the COVID-19 pandemic. That’s why, since 2019, assistant professor and researcher Ashley Knapp (pictured above, left), who studies teens, technology, and mental health at Northwestern University’s Feinberg School of Medicine, has been partnering with the library to create more support and remove barriers to accessing help.

Why partner with the library? For kids in grades 6-12, public libraries are a central community hub and a safe space staffed with trusted adults, Knapp said—“a unique and promising” context to help bridge the gap between research and practice. The goal of this partnership is to create a widely accessible, evidence-based technology service to prevent and treat anxiety disorders in youth.

By teaming up with the library’s Director of Social Services & Public Safety Rob Simmons (pictured above, right) and Middle & High School Services staff, Knapp has held focus groups and design workshops with teens and staff at the library, to assess both what they need and barriers that stand in the way. Last year, the project won an award for its strong collaborative research principles and work to impact health and equity in Oak Park and neighboring communities.

“As a community space that is free and open to the public, libraries often serve adolescents who are most experiencing

inequities and are from historically underrepresented racial and ethnic communities,” Simmons said. “Public libraries, including ours, have made efforts to create safe spaces for these adolescents by prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion.”

Now in the final year of a five-year grant, the team is pursuing usability testing, a pilot trial of an app, the creation of community advisory boards, and future grant funding.

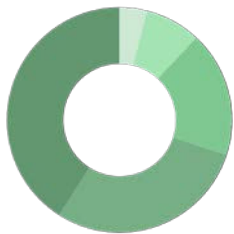
Offering life-saving resources



The library is proud to offer life-saving resources in partnership with the Village of Oak Park Department of Public Health’s Opioid Overdose Prevention Project. Since March 2023, free naloxone pouches have been available to patrons via an opioid overdose box in the Main Library vestibule, next to the Idea Box. It’s one of seven boxes installed in accessible, public-facing locations throughout Oak Park, each containing nasal spray naloxone and instructions on how to provide overdose first aid. On average, 16 naloxone pouches are picked up from the Main Library each month, and this spring we added more on each floor near the AED machines. Learn more via this QR code.



In 2023, 588 patrons received referral-based or outreach services, for help with...



- Housing (41%)
- Public aid or financial assistance (29%)
- Food insecurity (18%)
- Mental health (8%)
- Immigration (4%)

The library’s Social Services & Public Safety team ensures safety in the library and refers people to resources for mental health, housing, employment, health care, immigration, domestic violence, and more, drawing on a wide network of relationships and connections. For example, in 2023, the team facilitated 300 hours of free clinical mental health support to patrons via the library’s partnership with Rush University Medical Center, which began in 2019. Please contact Rob Simmons, Director of Social Services & Public Safety, with any questions (roberts@oppl.org or 708.697.6910) and see oppl.org/social-services for more information.

Paperback Rider gets a friend

What’s better than one Book Bike? Two! Since 2015, we’ve been pedaling the red-and-white Paperback Rider to all corners of Oak Park. Every April through October, we stock the bike full of books and other library materials and ride it to schools, parks, block parties, local businesses, summer camps, community festivals, the farmers market, and more. “With the Book Bike, we bring the library to you,” says Community Engagement Librarian Sarah Yale (pictured above, at left, with Librarian Ian Gosse). “It’s been so popular that one of our biggest challenges is we can’t be in two places at one time. We can’t fulfill all the requests we get, especially on busy summer Saturdays.”

That’s why we’re so excited to add a brand-new, bright green, electric-assist Book Bike to our stable. “We still may not be able to pop up everywhere we’d like to,” Yale says, “but we hope that having this second bike with an electric assist can help more library staff be comfortable riding it, and having more riders means we can increase our reach.” **Want to help us name the new bike?** We’ve got some ideas, including Wheelie Wonka, En-Cyclo-Pedia, Electric Bookie, and ... well, we’ll stop there for now. Because we want to hear yours! Please visit oppl.org/bike to learn more and get involved.

Visit a summer pop-up shop

New merchandise is available online and at pop-up shops around town: oppl.org/store





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

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

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



SUMMER CLOSINGS

All library buildings
closed all day

Wednesday, June 19, 2024

Thursday, July 4, 2024

Monday, September 2, 2024

oppl.org/visit

Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. Postage PAID
Permit No. 134
Oak Park, IL

ECRWSS
POSTAL CUSTOMER



Friends Book Fair

Donate June 1-29 at the Main Library*
Shop July 12-14 at the Main Library
More: oppl.org/fair



*Accepted: Books, movies, and music. Not accepted: Magazines, textbooks older than five years, general reference materials such as encyclopedias, and books in poor condition. Drop off donations in the Main Library Lobby Community Space. If you have a lot of donations, you can drop them off at the library's loading dock on Saturdays in June, 9 am-1 pm.