

Fall/Winter 2024–25

# storyline

The Magazine of the Oak Park Public Library



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**OAK PARK  
PUBLIC LIBRARY**





THE STORYLINE  
Fall/Winter 2024-25

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](mailto:communications@oppl.org).

Looking for events? Find a selection of featured events on pages 10-12. To see all upcoming events, pick up monthly print calendars for kids & families, middle & high schoolers, adults, and older adults (60+) at all library locations, and visit [oppl.org/calendar](http://oppl.org/calendar).

BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES  
Find board meeting information and meet the trustees at [oppl.org/board](http://oppl.org/board).

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ON THE COVER

Can you see yourself in a book? Middle & High School Services staff Alexander Gutierrez and Janea Kitchen were great sports for this issue's cover, a play on the popular #Bookface social media trend. Kitchen (right) holds *Bright Red Fruit* by Safia Elhillo, a young adult novel that's written in verse and whose author visited our library for an event in September. Gutierrez (left) holds *My Body Is Paper: Stories and Poems* by Gil Cuadros, a book of prose and poems from our New Books section.





## 'Readers are leaders': Civic engagement & your library

Every September we celebrate Library Card Sign-Up Month. It's an annual initiative by the American Library Association to mark the beginning of the school year and encourage people to sign up to access the full benefits of their libraries. This past September, we were thrilled to welcome more than 400 new cardholders to ours.

As one told us, "Readers are leaders! The very first thing to do when arriving in Oak Park is to join our wonderful, helpful and fun library, which [has] so much to offer to everyone."

Readers are leaders—we support this message, and research backs it up too. For example, studies have shown that reading fiction can help us empathize with other people and show more altruism. And in 2006, the National Endowment for the Arts published a report ("The Arts and Civic Engagement: Involved in Arts, Involved in Life") showing that readers, as well as those who visit museums, attend plays, and support other art forms, are more active in their communities. By a large margin, they show more civic engagement, such as volunteering, donating, and voting.

Literacy and civic engagement go hand in hand at our library as well. In addition to books, movies, and music, we offer cultural

events and spaces for community groups to host meetings. We also help people spot misinformation, understand governmental processes, and participate effectively in civic life.

Teaching people how to be better consumers of information is a fundamental task at the heart of the library profession. Please know that before, on, and after Election Day (November 5), we provide resources related to civic engagement, voting, and government.

On our website, find ways to check your voter info, register to vote, learn who represents you, and check sources of information. Our librarians also can help with specific questions—just ask! Please visit [oppl.org/civic](https://oppl.org/civic) for more.

### Spread the word, get a card

As a public library in a Book Sanctuary Community, our mission is to share the information, services, and opportunities that fulfill Oak Park's aspirations.

Did you know that any Oak Park resident, business owner, or educator can get a library card? Visit [oppl.org/card](https://oppl.org/card) for all the info, or ask us the next time you're in any library location.

—Your library's Communications Team



# Library of Things

When our Library of Things collection made its debut last September, Nicole Brown and her family were ready for it. On previous visits to the Main Library, they'd seen staff assembling the wall in the lobby that showcases items in the collection—things like an electric drill, a pair of tennis rackets, a GoPro action camera, and a projector for outdoor movie watching.

Their fall block party was coming up, so Brown placed a hold on the movie projector, along with a ring toss set. “My kids were really excited,” she says.

## How it works

The 75 “things” in the collection are largely items you might not use regularly or want to own, or you might want to try them out first. Popular items include Chromebooks and hotspots, a sewing machine, a label maker, and lawn darts.

Oak Park cardholders ages 18+ can place holds in person or online and can borrow an item for up to three weeks. All checkouts and returns happen at the Main Library Lobby service desk, and borrowers must sign a lending agreement.

The collection, which has now been circulating for more than a year, was fully funded by a generous gift to the library from former head librarian Barbara Ballinger.

Learn more at [oppl.org/lot](http://oppl.org/lot).

## ‘We’ve made good use of the things’

At their block party, Brown says it was easy to set up the projector to show a movie on the side of their garage for the neighbor kids in the evening.

Since then, Brown has checked out a disco ball party light, which her kids and their friends had fun playing with for a few weeks. And in July, the family borrowed a pair of adjustable hiking poles for a trip out West to eight national parks. As Brown says, “We’ve made good use of the things.”







## Kits to empower

Created for caregivers to share with children, our Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Kits empower kids to share their ideas and feelings with grown-ups and peers. Each kit is based on a book and includes open-ended questions and materials revolving around a theme.

For example, our “sharing” kit comes with Mo Willems’ *Should I Share My Ice Cream?*, plus a play ice cream set that kids and families can use to practice that very skill. It was one of the kits we took on Book Bike visits to block parties this summer, where it was a big hit, bringing neighbors together in collaborative play.

Each kit also comes with information to help adults support communication with kids who are shy or reserved, have speech delays, use augmentative/alternative communication, or are disabled. Kits also are available in Spanish.

“The creation of each kit is a team effort,” says Youth and Family Outreach Specialist Jenny Jackson, adding that she is looking forward to a new kit about love coming soon.

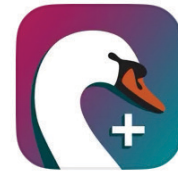
SEL Kits are available at the Main Library and can be checked out for up to three weeks. Only Oak Park patrons can place holds, and the kits are not able to be renewed.

Learn more about these and other play-based learning kits at [oppl.org/kids](http://oppl.org/kids).



Get all your book club members on the same page with a **Book Club Kit**! Each bag holds 10 copies of the same popular title, discussion questions curated by our librarians, and lists of similar titles for ideas on what to read next. Any Oak Park cardholder can place a hold or check out a kit from the shelves at the Main Library.

More: [oppl.org/book-groups](http://oppl.org/book-groups)



**The SWAN Libraries + app makes finding and requesting items easy.** Available for iOS or Android, this app lets you search for materials, place holds, and manage your checkouts all in one place. You can store your library card barcode, view linked accounts, and even scan ISBN barcodes to locate books in the catalog on the spot!

More: [oppl.org/swan](http://oppl.org/swan)



If you don’t find what you’re looking for in the library catalog, we may be able to track it down for you from another library across the state or country.

This is called interlibrary loan, and since we transitioned to using the WorldCat Discovery system this June, it’s been easier than ever to make a request.

Learn how: [oppl.org/request](http://oppl.org/request)



Our Collections Services team members select, order, catalog, shelve, and sort the materials you check out from the library.

## Serving a community of readers

**A**s a wise library patron once told us: “A high quality library that is accessible to all is a backbone of a healthy community.”

We appreciate you, library survey respondent! It’s our goal to be that high-quality library for Oak Park, which is why we work to provide access to the books, movies, music, and more that reflect our community’s interests. It’s why our librarians, who take their professional responsibilities quite seriously, use their expertise to offer a broad spectrum of perspectives, voices, and experiences.

“The most interesting thing about my job is that we live in a community of readers,” says Collection Management Librarian Dontaná McPherson-Joseph. “I get to connect Oak Parkers to the books I know they love and to the ones they may not have found on their own.”

### ‘The library is an ecosystem’

If you talk to Manager of Collections Services Barbara Fitzgerald and her team about their work—deciding what items to buy, how to catalog them so they can be discovered, where to place them in the library, and even when to retire them—you come away with a picture of a thoughtful team, mindful and meticulous, using multiple data points to inform their work.

“Our community is an integral part of how we curate our collections,” Fitzgerald says. “In fact, everything we do is based on community analysis, combined with staff expertise.”

This means they study what patrons are checking out, putting on hold, and requesting. Because our library circulates over a million items every year, in both physical and digital formats, there’s a lot of data to study.

They also look at what collections may be overflowing the shelves because the items are not getting checked out, and they listen to what coworkers say about how

easy it is (or not) to help patrons find what they’re looking for. They catalog items in a way that people can find them, and they use software to analyze what areas need more representation of underserved communities, such as disabled and neurodiverse authors and subjects.

All this requires teamwork across the library. “Collection work is not done in a vacuum,” Fitzgerald says. “The library is an ecosystem, and we’re all connected to support the mission, vision, and strategic objectives.”

### Casting a wide net

“One of the cool things about collections work, specifically for selecting materials, is that we pull from a wide range of sources to curate the titles that you see in the library,” McPherson-Joseph says. “We read a lot of reviews, attend webinars, have alerts for publishing announcements, and monitor social media for titles that are trending.”

And yet, can we own a copy of every book published? Well, no. And that’s one of the hardest parts of the job, says Collection Management Librarian Kathy Sexton.

“So much is published, in multiple formats,” she says. “Meanwhile, costs for materials are rising. So we do the best we can to balance stewardship and community demand.”

Belonging to the SWAN library consortium is one way

we provide greater access. For example, our library may not own a copy of a particular book, but we can get it from one of the other 99 Chicagoland libraries in the network.

We also use interlibrary loan, which casts a wider net to libraries across the country, and we consider purchase suggestions. If you

can’t find what you’re looking for in our catalog, please visit [oppl.org/request](http://oppl.org/request).

**“I get to connect Oak Parkers to the books I know they love and to the ones they may not have found on their own.”**



# Stuff we love

We asked the librarians who manage the collections to share what they love. See their picks below and get more recommendations at [oppl.org/we-suggest](http://oppl.org/we-suggest).



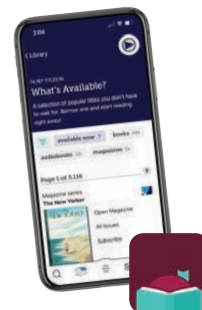
**“Heavy by Kiese Laymon.** Seeing this title pop up on the New York Times’ ‘100 Best Books of the 21st Century’ reminded me that it was one of the most moving, profound and intimate reading experiences, once again prompting me to silently thank Kiese Laymon for sharing his story.” — Kathy



**“The punch needle kit** in the Library of Things. I have found that I have more cognitive awareness and focus when my hands are occupied. The punch needle kit offers me the opportunity to learn a new handicraft, make something fun, let my brain chill out, and expand my screen-free self-care routine.” — Dontaná



**“One of my favorite spots is the New Fiction section,** organized by genre. I love browsing the shelves, discovering the perfect book for whatever mood I’m in. It’s my go-to place when I don’t know exactly what I’m looking for.” — Barbara



**“The ‘available now’ feature in Libby.** As someone who rarely puts digital audiobooks on hold and just needs it when I need it, I love that I can browse new releases and choose only items that are available now. I always find something!” — Kathy



**“Pan’s Labyrinth** is one of my favorite movies of all time. The score, the cinematography, and the story all make up this wonderful movie by director Guillermo del Toro. You can find some of his work and other great directors in our World Film collection.” — Andrea



**“Digital newspapers** for their accessibility and variety. The New York Times offers in-depth analysis, The Wall Street Journal provides comprehensive business news, and Press-Reader delivers a broad spectrum of international papers, keeping me informed and connected with global perspectives anytime, anywhere.” — Barbara



**“We Are Okay by Nina LaCour** is a slim novel from our Teen Fiction collection that packs a giant emotional wallop and holds a tender space in my heart because I served on the 2018 Printz Award Committee that selected this beautiful book as its winner.” — Jenna



**“Creativebug** is a great online DIY service. They offer how-to videos from popular artists such as Twinkie Chan and Faheema Chaudhry. I enjoy the variety of classes they offer, from knitting to painting to the more unique classes such as making your own natural perfume.” — Andrea



# Discover a hidden gem

Special Collections curates, houses, and preserves Oak Park's historical treasures

Tucked away in the northwest corner of the Main Library's third floor are treasures you might not expect to find in a public library.

There's an essay that Ernest Hemingway wrote as a teen: "A Trip to Field Museum."

The baby book of his older sister, Marcelline, which

documents

the first 18 months of a girl born in Oak Park in 1898.

An artist's paint palette used by their mother, Grace Hall Hemingway, who instilled a love for the arts in her children.

"This archives is a hidden gem here in the library," says Linda Montalbano, Archivist in Special Collections.

## Connecting past, present & future

The library's Special Collections curates, houses, and preserves

Oak Park's historical

treasures, and makes them

publicly available

both in person

and digitally.

In three climate-controlled rooms, the archives contains letters, photographs, rare first-edition books, architectural renderings, Civil War records, a 1996 oral history project, and even baseball ticket stubs and baby shoes from the families and associates of Oak Park's historical movers and shakers.

These items are "the intellectual and cultural traces of those who have gone before us," as Montalbano says, and they remain relevant today. For one, they serve as primary sources in books, feature films, and documentaries. A recent example: *Hemingway*, the 2021 documentary by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, drew on our archives to show images of a young Ernest growing up in Oak Park.

"While most public libraries have materials that are locally unique and special to them and their community, we are pleased to make accessible to the community museum-quality materials related to internationally known individuals who were residents of Oak Park," says Kathleen Spale, Manager and Curator of Special Collections.

## Making connections

Special Collections Librarian Carrie Vacon says her team of three is always trying to find ways to increase the visibility and accessibility of the collections. They regularly welcome tour groups, both local and national, and hold weekly open hours.

"One goal of public libraries is to







“One of our goals is to fill the gaps so that the contributions of historically marginalized people are elevated, since they often can be forgotten or overlooked otherwise,” Spale says.

### Beyond the big two

In addition to collections the library owns, Special Collections also provides space and access for community partners, including The Ernest Hemingway Foundation of Oak Park Archives.

It also goes beyond Hemingway and Wright—these two famous figures who may come to mind first when thinking about Oak Park’s history. Other notable figures represented in Special Collections include chemist Percy Julian, author Carol Shields, children’s book author and civil rights activist (and former microbiologist) Harriette Gillem Robinet, and local historian and photographer Philander Barclay, who documented the early days of Oak Park.

The archives also contains print and audiovisual records related to Open Housing in Oak Park, dating back to 1971. This was the movement for racially integrated housing that made Oak Park a national leader in being a free, open, and inclusive community.

### Visit the archives

The team holds open hours in Special Collections every Wednesday and Thursday, 1–4 pm. Anyone can attend, and no library card is needed. Archival research and reference services are also available by appointment and email.

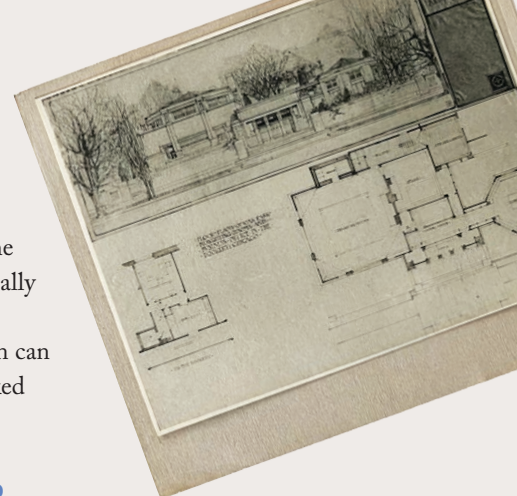
“I get excited every time we have a new request, or appointment, or visitor,” Vacon says. “I enjoy getting to see what people are interested in, and we get to learn from the people who visit us just as they learn from seeing the materials. It’s amazing to make connections both locally and all over the world.”

provide access to information, and having a Special Collections in a public library gives more people the ability to interact with primary sources to gain information,” Vacon says. “But you don’t need to be a researcher or a scholar, and you don’t even need to have a library card to visit and see these materials. History is important, and we can all learn from it, or even just enjoy it.”

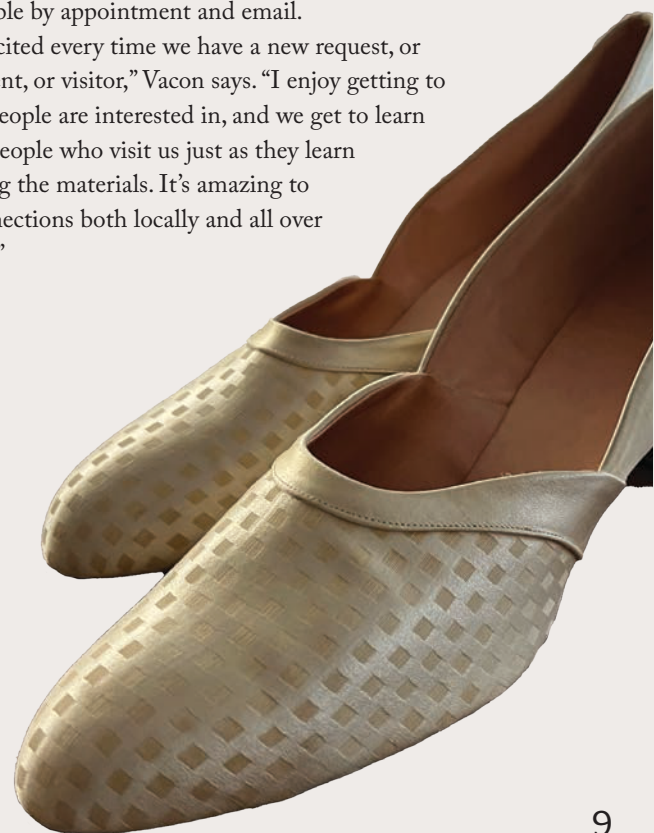
### Filling gaps

In August, members of the Society of American Archivists were in Chicago for their annual meeting, and they came out to Oak Park to visit the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio and our Special Collections (pictured above). Like Spale, Montalbano, and Vacon, these archival professionals also work to inventory, catalog, house, preserve, and help people discover items in collections across the country.

The main highlight here at the library? Original architectural prints from Frank Lloyd Wright’s first published work, the 1910 Wasmuth Portfolio. As the Special Collections team pointed out, Wright would go on to become the famous architect known worldwide. But behind his success was Marion Mahony, his head draftsman and the first female licensed architect in Illinois. Mahony is also owed credit for the Wasmuth Portfolio and other work. Her distinctive drawing style contributed to the Prairie School and to making Wright famous, yet she never achieved the same level of fame—despite going on to design Canberra, the capital city of Australia, along with her husband.



Learn more: [oppl.org/specialcollections](https://oppl.org/specialcollections)





# Upcoming events

Locations: ● Main Library ● Dole Branch ● Maze Branch ● Virtual

## All Ages

### ● Special Collections Halloween Open Hours

Wednesday, October 23, 12–5 pm, Main Library

Special Collections gets scary with strange and unusual facts about Oak Park and its historical figures and Halloween history. Treats and surprises await! Costumes encouraged.

### ● Idea Box: Día de Muertos/Day of the Dead Community Ofrenda

October 21–November 4, Main Library

Honor, celebrate, and remember the dearly departed at our community ofrenda (altar and offering).

### ● Folk Music Concert: Dennis Warner

Wednesday, November 6, 7–8 pm, Main Library

Join us for a lively musical performance, brought to you by the Friends of the Oak Park Public Library.

### ● Bingo and Brunch With Bubbie

Sunday, December 22, 12:30–2 pm, Main Library

Merriam Levkowitz, America's Favorite Drag Bubbie, brings glamour and humor to bingo, with songs, treats, prizes, performances, and jokes galore! Celebrate kindness, acceptance, and being unapologetically yourself.

### ● Kwanzaa Celebration

Monday, December 30, 6–8 pm, Main Library

Celebrate with dance, drumming, poetry and storytelling in honor of this Black American Harvest celebration.

### ● Idea Box: Dream Hands

January, Main Library Idea Box

See a display honoring Martin Luther King Jr. and add your own dreams for the future.

## Learn to cook Virtual cooking series

### ● Global Harvest

October 23, 6:30–8 pm, Virtual

Explore how different cultures around the world celebrate the flavors of fall.

### ● Cooking With Julia Turshen

Wednesday, November 6, 6–7 pm, Virtual

Award-winning cookbook author Julia Turshen will share tips and tricks from her kitchen as she leads the class in making a shaved fennel apple salad and a roasted chicken pot pie. Brought to you by the Friends of the Oak Park Public Library.

### ● Holiday Brunch

November 20, 6:30–8 pm, Virtual

Learn to create a delightful array of seasonal dishes perfect for gathering friends and family.

### ● Holiday Cookies: Baking & Decorating With Royal Icing

December 11, 6:45–8 pm, Virtual

Learn how to bake the perfect sugar cookie and get step-by-step guidance to use royal icing in decorating.







## Illinois Libraries Present

Illinois Libraries Present is a statewide collaboration among 200+ public libraries, including ours, offering premier events for participating member libraries of all sizes and budgets. Made possible in part by the Friends of the Oak Park Public Library. All events are held virtually on Zoom; visit [oppl.org/calendar](https://oppl.org/calendar) to register.

### ● Raise Your Voice With Jason Reynolds

Tuesday, October 22, 7–8 pm, Virtual

Hear from the New York Times bestselling author, advocate, mentor, and 2020–22 National Ambassador for Young People's Literature.

### ● Holiday Tips and Tricks With Chef Art Smith

Wednesday, November 20, 7–8 pm, Virtual

Bring some culinary inspiration into your holiday season with the two-time James Beard Foundation award winner.

### ● The Magic of Raina Telgemeier

Tuesday, December 10, 7–8 pm, Virtual

Discover the magic behind Raina's heartwarming and relatable stories as she shares insights into her creative process, inspiration, and the power of graphic novels.

### ● Experience *Little Women: The Musical*

December 20–22, Virtual

Experience the beloved story of the March sisters brought to life through music and dance in this heartwarming musical adaptation.

### ● Chicago Pizza: Past, Present & Future With Steve Dolinsky

January 9, 7–8 pm, Virtual

A deep dive into the history, evolution, and culinary artistry of Chicago pizza with the renowned pizza expert.

### ● Love and Laughs With Michelle Buteau

January 23, 7–8 pm, Virtual

The comedian shares her hilarious and heartfelt stories about love, life, and everything in between.

## Kids & Families

### ● Understanding ADHD and Autism

Sunday, November 24, 2:30–4 pm, Main Library and virtual

Learn facts and dispel myths about autism and ADHD by listening to self-advocates of all ages. Presented by a neurodivergent librarian.

### ● Holidays Around the World

Sunday, December 15, 1–2 pm, Main Library

Celebrate and discover world holidays and traditions! Create crafts, play games, and share stories.

### ● Sibshop for Kids Who Have a Disabled Sibling

Kids who have a disabled sibling come together, talk about their experiences, and play games.

- Kids ages 6–11: Thursday, January 2, 11 am–12:30 pm, Main Library
- Kids ages 3–6: Sunday, January 12, 2–3 pm, Main Library



## Middle & High Schoolers, Young Adults

### ● Young Adult Social Night: Retro Game Night

Thursday, November 14, 5–6 pm, Maze Branch

Come hang out with us and meet some new people at an open game night! For ages 18–24.

### ● Dungeons and Dragons Middle School Campaign

Wednesday, November 20, 5–7 pm, Maze Branch

For middle schoolers, whether they are polished veterans or just learning how to play.

### ● Mindful Monday

Monday, December 9, 4–5 pm, Main Library

For middle and high schoolers. Mental health resources, mindfulness activities, and self-management strategies, facilitated by Oak Park Township.

### ● Move Me Soul

Friday, December 13, 4–6 pm, Main Library

For middle and high schoolers. Freely express yourself and unwind through yoga and dancing.



# OAK PARK 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

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



## CLOSINGS

### All library buildings closed all day

- Monday, October 14
- Monday, November 11
- Thursday, November 28
- Friday, November 29
- Tuesday, December 24
- Wednesday, December 25
- Wednesday, January 1, 2025
- Monday, January 20, 2025
- Monday, February 17, 2025

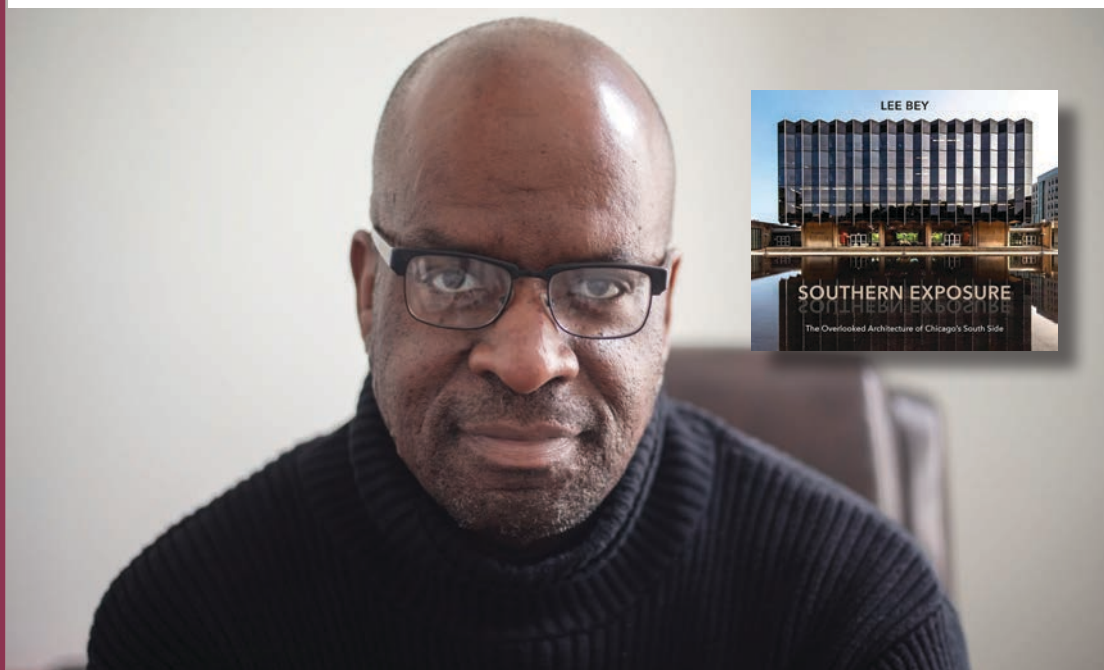
### Library buildings close at 5 pm

- Wednesday, November 27
- Tuesday, December 31

[oppl.org/visit](https://oppl.org/visit)

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## Meet Chicago author Lee Bey

Saturday, November 2, Main Library

For this year's annual Barbara Ballinger Lecture, we welcome Lee Bey, architecture critic for the Chicago Sun-Times, where he writes editorials on city governance, neighborhood development, politics, and urban planning.

Bey is the author of the book *Southern Exposure: The Overlooked Architecture of Chicago's South Side* and is currently working on a book about the architecture of Chicago's West Side. Bey is also the main photographer of the book *Who Is the City For? Architecture, Equity and the Public Realm in Chicago* by Blair Kamin.

Books will be available for purchase. This event is presented with generous support from the Friends of the Oak Park Public Library.

Register: [oppl.org/ballinger](https://oppl.org/ballinger)

