



- ▶ We create opportunities for connection and community participation.
- ▶ We deliver inclusive, compassionate, and high-quality customer service.

## Work Highlights

### Public Services & Programs



#### Showcasing local student artists

In March, Manager of Patron Services Martyn Churchouse collaborated with the art educators from [District 97](#) to host the Youth Art Month display in the Main Library Lobby Community Space. This national initiative highlights the importance of visual arts education for children and celebrates their creativity. All D97 elementary schools participate by selecting two students from each grade (K-5) to represent their school.



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#### Sharing the joy of music

To celebrate spring break, the Children's Services Team organized a lively music program on March 30, featuring the beloved local musician, Little Miss Ann. Over 125 attendees of all ages enjoyed an hour packed with singing, dancing, a conga line, and parachute play.



#### A timely civic learning program

On March 5, we partnered with the [League of Women Voters](#) to host a program entitled "Project 2025 and Our Democracy" in the Main Library Veterans Room. The presenter, attorney Jack Bentley, made the content accessible and delivered a program that was interactive, informative, and well-paced. At the end of the program, various local civic organizations made announcements about upcoming meetings/conversation groups available in the area. The audience of approximately 40 community members was very engaged and enjoyed the program. **In a post-program survey, participants praised the program as informative, insightful, and timely, with 100% of respondents indicating that they learned something new.**

### Communications & Development



#### Supporting civic engagement

Each month, the library receives a Google report that includes our top-performing and top-growing library webpages. Leading up to Election Day on March 17, the library's [Voting & Elections page](#) — worked on by Civic Literacy Librarian Simon Czerwinskyj and Content Strategist Kristen Romanowski — consistently appeared in this report. **This was our top-growing webpage in March and the third-highest-performing page, with 2,480 clicks.** (For comparison, the homepage gets 9,060 clicks and is the top-performing page.) Among the top three queries that brought people to the library's website in March was "oak park voting" — behind only "oak park library" and "oppl." The information included on this webpage about elections and voter registration is available from multiple other sources online — **the fact that so many community members visited [oppl.org](#) to access information they could find elsewhere highlights the library's reputation as a trusted community resource.**



- ▶ We encourage exploration of new ideas through diverse collections, programs, and other resources.
- ▶ We support community members and staff in developing the knowledge and skills to reach their goals.

## Work Highlights

### Public Services & Programs



**An engaging environmental program**  
On March 11, approximately 50 community members attended "Planting in the Parkway: A Native Garden Design Workshop" at the Main Library. The Village's Sustainability Coordinator presented on the Climate Ready Oak Park Plan and green infrastructure goals, as well as ideas for starting native plantings in parkways. Participants created their designs using lists and graph paper, while local experts from West Cook Wild Ones, Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory, and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District answered questions. One lucky participant (pictured at right, bottom) won a rain barrel in the raffle!



### Collections



**A literary discussion with our older adult patrons**  
**Collection Management Librarian Kathy Sexton recently shared her experience serving on the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction & Nonfiction committee during our monthly Older Adult Coffee Hour program in March.** She walked attendees through the selection process, offering insight into how titles are nominated, evaluated, and ultimately chosen for recognition. In addition to explaining the process, Kathy booktalked several winning titles and a few notable contenders that did not make the final list. Participants asked thoughtful questions, shared their own reading experiences, and helped create a lively discussion about the featured titles.

## Community Voice

**A patron shared the following feedback after attending our "Zines & Chapbooks: A Self-Publishing Workshop" series in March:**

"I just wanted to say I thoroughly enjoyed the zine event series hosted at the Makery by [Library Assistant] Michael [Rose], [Creative Technology Specialist] Jericho [Savage], and [Creative Technology Librarian] Amy [Hofmockel]. **It was very fun and informative, and [I] would like to see it as an ongoing series or even as a club. It was a wonderful space that encouraged my creativity and curiosity.** I liked seeing what everyone else came up with for their zines. It was interesting learning everyone's creative process."

**On March 2, a patron posted a photo of their visit to the Main Library on their Instagram story and tagged us (@oakparklibrary) with a heartfelt comment:**

"I've been spending time with my kids at the library, and today, as I was searching for a book for myself, I stopped in my tracks and randomly took this photo. **When I was younger, I would go to the library and get lost in stories and art. I needed that escape from parts of my childhood. Today, while walking down the aisles, I unintentionally made my way back to that little girl. And I smiled... knowing she would be so proud of us.**"



- ▶ We provide broad, effective, and equitable access to resources.
- ▶ We care for community resources, library assets, and library staff responsibly, ethically, and sustainably.

## Work Highlights

### Finance & HR



#### Defining “well-being”

Our Well-Being Committee recently finalized a new framework to support staff’s well-being and success, adapted from the [U.S. Surgeon General’s “Five Essentials” model](#). This work grew directly from the committee’s feedback to ensure our well-being framework reflects our specific library culture and our commitment to equity. We have translated the core pillars – Protection from Harm, Connection and Community, Work-Life Harmony, Mattering at Work, and Opportunity for Growth – into practical “Does” and “Does Not” guidelines that clarify what our daily operations should (and should not) look like. **This framework is a key step in our strategy to support and retain our talented staff, and it will be rolled out library-wide during National Library Week in April.**

### Facilities



#### Maintaining safe & well-functioning library buildings

In March, the [Oak Park Fire Department \(OPFD\)](#) completed their annual **Fire & Life Safety (FLS) Compliance Walkthrough of the Main Library**. FLS compliance is specifically highlighted anytime we have an official inspection or a walkthrough, but is an ongoing priority of the Facilities Team throughout the year. As a result of this continual work, OPFD’s walkthrough found the Main Library to be in substantial compliance, citing zero issues.

**Also in March, Boiler 1 received significant repairs to its burner assembly after a failure in February.** The repairs were completed by our mechanical contractor, [Complete Temperature Systems](#), after which the burner was tested and received a combustion analysis, verifying proper, safe, and efficient operation. This repair highlights the need for proper design in heating capacity and system redundancy, as well as proper care and maintenance, since we needed to rely on one boiler for heat in the building while the failed boiler awaited repairs.

### Collections



#### Grantseeking to support a digitization project

[Special Collections](#) finalized and submitted an application to the [Illinois State Historical Records Advisory Board’s Historical Records Grants Program](#) in March. The grant proposes a collaboration between Special Collections and the [Ernest Hemingway Foundation of Oak Park](#), focused on the digitization of archival holdings related to [Grace Hall Hemingway](#) – the mother of author Ernest Hemingway and an influential local cultural figure in her own right. These materials, currently housed within the library’s archives, include correspondence, photographs, musical compositions, and personal documents that illuminate Grace Hall Hemingway’s life, artistic contributions, and role within her family and community. Applications for this grant program are currently being reviewed, with final decisions anticipated in May and awards announced in June.



- ▶ We develop and implement library policies and practices that promote equitable outcomes and experiences for staff and the public.
- ▶ We support our diverse community through responsive and intentional resource sharing, communication, and relationship building.

## Work Highlights

### Communications & Development



#### Inviting patrons behind the scenes of an Idea Box display

On March 12, we hosted a Q&A panel with the creative team behind the installation *Maintaining Wonder: Deangelo's World*, which was on display from January 29 through March 20 in the Main Library Idea Box.

Moderated by Cam'Ron Hardy, freelance reporter of the Pioneer Press, the conversation offered a behind-the-scenes look at how the installation came to life, from concept to completion. The team of panelists included: Roy Kinsey (Curator, Author, Artist, Librarian – Rapbrary), Alexandria Jones (Set Dressing – Fad2Fresh), Jermaine Thomas II (Photographer & Lighting), Rasheed Owens (Curator & Producer), and John Caleb Pendleton (Floral Design – Planks & Pistils). They shared what inspired them most and explored the many creative details that shaped the experience – from vintage artwork to thoughtfully designed lighting. **Together, they brought *Deangelo & the Dandelion* to life in a truly immersive way, through an installation that centered Black imagination, freedom of expression, and the power of story as resistance.**



### Public Services & Programs



#### Exploring decodable books

Children's Librarian Shelley Harris and Youth & Family Outreach Specialist Jenny Jackson partnered with OPRF High School freshman Sophie Galeener for the program "Exploring Decodables and Literacy," which was part of Sophie's Girl Scout Gold Award Project.

Sophie created decodable books for one of our Reading Discovery Kits and organized a program with librarians.

The children enjoyed making word wands, participating in a special scavenger hunt in the Main Library children's area, and reading in the cozy book nook. Sophie chose to share *Aaron Slater, Illustrator* for storytime, explaining that Aaron has dyslexia, just like she does. This program was meaningful for several reasons, including the opportunity for Jenny to reconnect with Sophie, whom she has known since Sophie was in preschool and attending Friday storytimes at the Dole Branch. **Jenny and Shelley were inspired by Sophie's passion and thoughtfulness in discussing the importance of decodable books, particularly for neurodiverse readers.**

