



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

Work Highlights

Public Services & Programs



A busy month for MHS Services

April was full of activity for the Middle & High School (MHS) Services Team, as they concluded school-year programming, celebrated graduates, and responded to school partnership requests. Throughout the month, the team facilitated more than 10 outreach activities and more than 20 library-led programs. National Library Week was

especially successful, engaging over 100 youth in activities such as Book Golf, a Book Stacking Contest (pictured at right), and Library Trivia. Attendance continues to be strong across MHS programs, and the team has been especially pleased to see the confidence of our regular participants continue to grow. MHS staff noted that many youth who started with us in the fall of 2025 feeling shy and hesitant are now confident and engaged – a testament to the relationships that have been built among our youth participants, and between library staff and youth, over time.



A musical program for kids & families

On April 1, Nissa Anderson, a local Suzuki teacher, hosted an engaging family program titled "Meet a Violin."

During the event, she read a picture book version of "Swan Lake" and periodically played musical motifs to illustrate the story, captivating both the children and adults in attendance. At the program's conclusion, Nissa invited each child to take a turn playing a child-sized violin. This event took place during spring break, attracting several visiting grandparents, all of whom expressed their gratitude for the joyful and educational experience.



A community art project

On April 29, we hosted [By Discovery](#) for their annual Spring Community Workshop in the Main Library Community Space.

This year, the team took inspiration from the art of British-Trinidadian artist Zak Ové and explored themes of identity, diaspora, history, ritual, and mythology. Students in the [Oak Park & River Forest High School](#) Leadership program created the foundation of the design with By Discovery teachers and installed the piece in the Community Space ahead of the workshop. During the workshop, families worked together to create mandalas and radial designs to complement and complete the installation and discussed the themes of the art and how it affects their lives. **The result was a vibrant and colorful piece of art that will be enjoyed by our community until July 13.**





- ▶ 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



Sharing early literacy resources

On April 18, the [Collaboration for Early Childhood](#) hosted a [Baby Expo](#) at Roosevelt Middle School in Bellwood, with a resource fair and workshops for new and expecting families.

According to the Collaboration, approximately 100 people, including 56 families and representing 23 ZIP codes, attended the event. **The library was represented among 30 community partners at the Expo, with Youth & Family Outreach Librarian Sarah Yale hosting a booth in the resource fair.** Sarah spent three hours talking to attendees about the importance of early literacy and how they can incorporate the [Very Ready Reading Program](#) principles into their day-to-day routines with their babies. Sarah's booth featured plenty of diverse board book examples, as well as toys and instruments they could make or use to engage their baby in exploring sounds, music, words, and play.



An artist-led workshop in the Creative Studio

Creative Technology staff Kay Slater, Jericho Savage, and John Gargiulo worked with Library Specialist Joel Javier to plan an opportunity for an artist presenting in the Main Library's Art Gallery to lead a workshop in the [Creative Studio](#) Makery while their exhibit was up. **On April 24, artist Marea Cordero led the workshop "Circle of Ancestors: Design A Pin With Glowforge Laser Cutter."** Drawing inspiration from [Marea's April-May art exhibit](#), attendees designed wearable pins using symbols that resounded with their personal stories and values.



Learning & networking at PLA 2026

Eleven library staff members attended the [2026 Public Library Association \(PLA\) Conference, hosted April 1-3 in Minneapolis.](#) This bi-annual conference offered many engaging sessions, including "Advancing Anti-Racism, Equity, and Justice through Programming Design," "Black Men in Libraries: Our History, Our Heroes, and Our Horizon," and "Creating a SPARK: Developing Library Programs for Justice-Impacted People." **Overall, staff in attendance reported a positive and useful experience. For some staff, it was their first time attending a library conference, and they found it to be both informative and interesting.**

Sharing expertise with library peers

Manager of Patron Services Martyn Churchouse worked with three other Circulation Managers to present at the [Crete Public Library District](#) in April. The presentation, which focused on damaged and unusable materials, was developed collaboratively by members of the [SWAN Circulation Working Group](#) (of which Martyn is a member) and was based on input gathered from SWAN staff over four months in early 2026. Thirty staff members attended the presentation, and their feedback was very positive. Attendees especially enjoyed an interactive component, where they looked at damaged items and decided what to do next for each item.



- ▶ 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



Celebrating & caring for library staff

National Library Week (April 19–25) and National Library Workers Day (April 21) centered on the theme "Find Your Joy," providing an opportunity to advance our stewardship priority of caring for library staff. Celebrations began on Monday with a popcorn bar at all library locations, followed by a catered lunch from Alpine Subs on Tuesday. The week continued with wellness and creativity through therapy dog visits, a sticker-design session in the **Creative Studio** Makery, and a restorative sound bath. As noted by Executive Director Elsworth Carman in his weekly message to staff, **these initiatives highlight how staff joy serves as "fuel" for our strategic work in engagement, learning, stewardship, equity, and anti-racism.** Responsibly caring for our staff through moments of gratitude ensures that the library remains a place of connection, belonging, and joy for the entire Oak Park community.

Facilities



Maintaining library facilities

In April, a series of life safety inspection, testing, and maintenance (ITM) visits occurred at the Main Library and Maze Branch. Inspections were performed on our fire alarm systems, sprinkler systems, and fire extinguishers. Regular ITM visits ensure that our systems are compliant and will function properly in an emergency, and help us identify performance issues for repair. This year, several pressure gauges were flagged for replacement, and deficiencies were noted on a dry valve and air makeup device. Repairs are scheduled for completion in late May.

Technology



Keeping IT resources up-to-date

IT Assistant CC Crumlish recently initiated a project to thoroughly review and reorganize all of the IT Team's internal knowledge base (KB) articles and documentation. The primary goal of this effort is to maintain a current and reliable repository for IT support to both staff and patrons. This involves updating existing guides to reflect our current environment, such as the Windows 11 operating system, and identifying and retiring duplicate or obsolete documents.

Public Services & Programs



Updating our printing policy

Due to concerns about sustainability and rising printing costs, the library recently decided to reduce the number of free pages available to patrons for printing from 50 per day to 25. This change was communicated to staff in late March in preparation for its implementation in mid-April. During the first week of April, we emailed details about the new policy to cardholders and included it in the OP/FYI newsletter. Signs describing this change were also displayed at library service desks. **When the change took effect on April 20, both staff and patrons felt well-prepared as a result of our early communication efforts.** We appreciate the hard work from all staff members who contributed to ensuring a smooth transition.



- ▶ 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

Anti-Racism & Equity



Welcoming a new director

On April 7, our new Director of Equity & Anti-Racism Shalonda Lane started in her role at Oak Park Public Library. Shalonda previously worked in higher education at the [University of Illinois Chicago](#) and [Dominican University](#), and most recently worked in local government at the [Village of Oak Park](#). Shalonda joins our Leadership Team and library with a passion for the Oak Park community, and both the library and Shalonda are excited about her important work here.

Public Services & Programs



Celebrating autism acceptance

In recognition of Autism Acceptance Month in April, the Children's Services Team hosted several programs, including two on April 12: Neurodivergent Nerdout brought together people of all ages, making it a fun event full of curiosity. Our screening of the first two episodes of [A Kind of Spark](#) was attended by many families, including autistic adults and kids. A representative from [CAYR Connections](#) provided a popcorn maker for attendees to use and enjoy. Kids were happy to have fidgets available during the screening without having to ask, and both kids and adults enjoyed the show, with many planning to finish watching the season that night.

Collections



Honoring the legacy of a local trailblazer

Since 2022, the [Special Collections Team](#) has curated an annual poster exhibit each April to honor the birthday and legacy of Dr. Percy Julian, a pioneering Black chemist and former Oak Park resident. The 2026 exhibit is displayed at the Maze and Dole Branches, as well as all three floors of the Main Library. **Notably, this year's exhibit includes a poignant new addition honoring his late daughter, Faith Julian.** Following her recent passing, Special Collections created a tribute poster highlighting her life and legacy. This "In Memoriam" piece is featured in the lobby alongside materials celebrating her father.



Social Services & Public Safety



Sharing our social services & public safety model

[Salt Lake City Public Library's](#) Director of Social Services & Safety, Nicole Campolucci, visited Director of Social Services & Public Safety Rob Simmons and our Public Safety Team in April. Having served in her role since 2025, Nicole spent two days learning about how Rob and his team strategically integrate a social services and public safety model into a public library system. **Rob highlighted the importance of building community partnerships that provide social services, public health services, and public safety support.** Both Rob and Nicole are members of the [Urban Libraries Council](#) (ULC) Social Workers group.

Community Voice

An April 10 [Chicago Tribune article](#) highlighted the library's recent Hidden Disability Healing Circle.