



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

Work Highlights

Public Services & Programs



Supporting local food access

In July, the library partnered with The Community Fridge Project — a local organization with a mission to provide free food to anyone who needs it — to host a **food donation drive at each of our library locations**. The donation drive helped restock their network of free community refrigerators across the Oak Park and Austin communities. Anyone can take what they need from the fridges at no cost, without an ID, and with no questions asked. Their website describes the fridges as being “stocked by volunteers, donors, and neighbors who believe in the power of mutual aid.” **The donation drive was a great success, with volunteers visiting each library location several times a week throughout July to collect donated food.** One Dole Branch patron really got into the spirit of the drive and began purchasing an extra basket of groceries for the donation bin every time she did her weekly shopping. **It was wonderful to see our patrons embracing the opportunity to support their neighbors and to see the library serve as a place where community members can come together to help one another.**

A successful summer of youth engagement

The Middle & High School (MHS) Services Team is in the final stretch of its inaugural Summer Exploration series, which included Art on the Street (a new art adventure each week, culminating in the creation of our 2026 community mural), DIY Lab (a hands-on creative project each week), Becoming (a youth-centered personal development journey), and Dungeons & Dragons Camp. **With the addition of these new programs, MHS Services has seen its highest summer participation to date and received overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants.** The team is excited to build on this momentum and continue expanding these offerings next summer.



Communications & Development



Friends Book Fair

The 54th annual Friends of the Oak Park Public Library Book Fair was hosted July 10-12 at the Main Library, welcoming community members to peruse a wide selection of books, DVDs, puzzles, and more. As patrons began lining up outside the building before the library opened on July 10, Graphic Designer Gabriela Denton was on site to interview patrons about what they were hoping to find that day. Once the library opened and the **Book Fair** was underway at 9am, Gabriela was already editing and posting **a short video** to the library's social media accounts. The video received more than 2,200 views on Instagram and more than 8,200 views on Facebook! **We were pleased to see so much excitement and community engagement around this well-loved annual event that supports the library.**





- ▶ 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



A popular Creative Studio program

Creative Technology Specialist Kay Slater and Supervising Librarian of Creative Technology John Gargiulo offered a [Creative Studio](#) program on July 31 for patrons interested in converting VHS tapes to a digital format. This program

demonstrated how to use the library's equipment to digitize a VHS tape from start to finish, and participants were then able to schedule times to digitize their VHS tapes at a future date. Patrons also learned about other digitization equipment available in the Creative Studio, and there was time at the end for them to discuss their archiving processes and workflows with each other. **This is a popular program that has been offered previously at the library, sometimes seeing a waitlist for participation. In this most recent session, we once again saw all available participant spots filled.**



Exploring America's history of protest

On July 31, the Children's Services Team celebrated America's semiquincentennial with an American Girl program centered around American protests. Children's Librarian Shelley Harris focused on Felicity (Revolutionary War), Samantha (women's suffrage), Melody (Civil Rights), and Julie (Title IX), with stations for kids to make signs, write to elected officials, make buttons, and learn about real life American Girls who stood up for what is right: Dolores Huerta, Patsy Mink, Ida B. Wells, students in The Children's March, and, inspired by Disability Pride Month in July, Judy Heumann and Jennifer Keelan.

Collections



Sharing the work of Oak Park creators

[Oak Park Creates](#) — our unique local creators program and collection that features residents' original print and ebooks, movies, and music in physical and digital formats — **continues to preserve and share the creative work of our community.** Collection Management Librarian Kathy Sexton recently worked with a community member named Missy to add the memoir of her 91-year-old friend and former Oak Parker, Bonney Rega, to the collection. Bonney and her family were thrilled to see her memoir included in Oak Park Creates. Missy later shared the experience in a [blog post](#).



Curating themed movie collections

Collection Management Librarian Andrea Trejo recently won a contest held by [Midwest Tape](#). The contest was entitled "Name That Binge Box" and invited contestants to submit their ideas for themed movie collections called Binge Boxes. Andrea submitted two themes: "She's A Star" and "Now That's Drag." **The marketing team at Midwest Tape selected the "Now That's Drag" theme, which highlighted movies that showcase drag performances,** including *The Birdcage*, *Some Like It Hot*, *Victor/Victoria*, and *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar*. The prize included \$500 in Midwest Tape credit.





- ▶ 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

Facilities



Maintaining & improving library spaces

The tuckpointing project at the Main Library continued through most of July, with the crew taking a short break at the end of the month to complete another job they had in progress. **To date, the work is roughly 50% complete.** We look forward to continuing the project in August, including completing all remaining repairs, applying the masonry sealant, and installing all new control joints around the building.

Also in July, two previously-noted deficiencies from our annual fire alarm inspection were completed at the Main Library, as well as one additional repair at Maze Branch. These repairs not only keep us in compliance with fire and life safety code, but also ensure that our equipment will perform reliably and as expected in the event of an emergency. Repair technicians from our fire systems contractor, **Shambaugh & Son**, worked quickly and cleanly to make these repairs, causing no interruptions for patrons or staff.

Public Services & Programs



Connecting patrons to free musical experiences

This summer, the library once again partnered with Ravinia Music Festival for its Words & Music Program — a free ticket initiative that provides patrons of Chicago Public Library and suburban Chicagoland libraries with lawn passes to select classical concerts at Ravinia. After launching our website request form on June 25, all 44 available tickets to 11 performances were claimed by 22 unique patrons by July 21. Manager of Patron Services Martyn Churchouse reports that **this was our first year distributing 100% of our available Ravinia tickets.** When one patron learned on July 16 that his request had been successful for a show that was taking place just three days later, he emailed the library to say, “Wow, this is such a wonderful surprise. Thank you so much, Oak Park Public Library!” We love being able to offer this free resource to our community, and we were thrilled to see such enthusiastic participation this year.

Technology



Improving IT infrastructure

The IT Team has successfully modernized the library’s security and connectivity infrastructure by replacing legacy equipment at the Maze and Dole Branch locations with next-generation wireless access points. By leveraging our existing firewalls for centralized management, the team ensured streamlined configuration and improved policy enforcement across these sites. This important work provides enhanced network performance, future scalability, and increased reliability for both our staff and patrons.



- ▶ 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

Public Services & Programs



Celebrating Disability Pride

Throughout July, the library celebrated Disability Pride Month with a variety of activities and resources. Multiple posters about disabilities and disability pride were on display throughout the Main Library all month for patrons to view. Our Neurodivergent Nerdout program, which has been offered a few times this year, had its most popular session yet on July 19, with 10 attendees. Also on July 19, our Disability Pride Ice Cream Social, co-hosted with [CAYR Connections](#), had over 50 attendees. Disabled dancers from Oak Park's [MOMENTA Dance Company](#) led two inclusive creative movement workshops on July 20, and we hosted a Disability Healing Circle on July 26. We were especially excited to see more than 50 people attend the 4th annual Disability Pride March on July 11. A disabled senior in attendance shared that they had spent most of their life ashamed of what they could not do, and they were really pleased not only to celebrate personally, but also to see so many children already celebrating for themselves.



Collections



Making a special collection more accessible

The [Special Collections](#) Team has continued to make progress with its efforts to improve access to the Stan West collection. West is a journalist, author, documentarian, and retired professor, who lived in Oak Park for years and whose work has helped chronicle local Black history. Over the past month, [Aviary](#) uploaded all recordings in the Stan West collection, and the recordings are now being prepared for transcription and indexing. This process will make the collection more accessible and easier for patrons to search and use for future research.

Community Voice

During our most recent Neurodivergent Nerdout program (mentioned above), Rainbow Services Librarian Hal Patnott noted that three teens in attendance seemed to make a great connection: “They were so excited to share back and forth about their interests and encouraged each other when they felt self-conscious. At one point, one of them said, ‘I think we’d be great friends!’ and another said, ‘Then we should be!’ Afterward, they all exchanged phone numbers.”

Attendees also shared positive feedback in a post-program survey, including the following comments about what they liked most about the program:

- “The diversity in topics and enthusiasm people had to share their interests.”
- “Openness and acceptance.”
- “So many cool interests shared with the group!”