



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

Work Highlights

Public Services & Programs



Bringing Shakespeare fans together

Our annual Shakespeare Fest took place on September 20, returning to its original location at the Maze Branch. The event saw its highest-ever participation, with 38 patrons attending to celebrate all things Shakespeare. The open mic was once again a highlight, featuring three enthusiastic middle schoolers who acted out a scene for the audience. The DIY flower crown station was so popular it ran out of flowers, and the insults flew merrily thanks to Library Assistant Brent Haines' Bard-O-Matic Shakespearean insult generator, a crowd favorite activity since our first Fest. Patron Services Supervisor Michelle Springer worked with a dedicated group of library staff to organize the event and was pleased that the changes in location and time of year were successful in encouraging community members to join the fun. Two weeks after the event, the library shared a summary of the fun on social media, receiving over 70 likes and several re-posts on Instagram.



Supporting & connecting local business leaders

Adult Services Librarian Bridget Opholt continues to strengthen our community partnerships with the Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and the OPRF Chamber of Commerce, helping local entrepreneurs connect with these important resources and each other. Working year-round alongside SBDC Director Andy Pham, Bridget provides one-on-one consultations for local entrepreneurs, hosted in library study rooms and at the Oak Park Office of Economic Vitality. In September, she assisted an SBDC client in utilizing library databases —specifically Reference Solutions and Record Information Services — to gather data for their business plan. Additionally, Bridget helped the OPRF Chamber of Commerce in hosting a September meetup for solo entrepreneurs, and assisted in securing monthly library space for the group through the end of the year. She also represents the library during the Chamber's monthly Women in Business meetings.

Collections



An engaging local author talk

On September 23, Collection Management Librarian Dontaná McPherson-Joseph and Adult Services Supervising Librarian Margita Lidaka hosted debut Chicago author Stephanie Soileau for a guest author event at the Main Library. The presentation featured an engaging discussion of Soileau's newest work, *Should the Waters Take Us*, exploring themes of home, displacement, environmental collapse, and industrialism in Louisiana. The discussion was enriched by personal insights shared by both staff members regarding their connections to the region, including reflections on family, culture, and culinary traditions. Books were made available to attendees for purchase through The Dandelion Bookshop.





- ▶ 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



Introducing young patrons to creative technology

On September 23, Creative Technology Specialist Nick Meryhew and Children's Digital Learning Librarian Eileen Saam collaborated in hosting a successful session of "3D Design with TinkerCAD for Kids" — a program where kids in grades 3-5 learn basic tips and tricks for 3D modeling and 3D printing. While this program has been offered by the library before, this was its first time being offered in the Main Library Storytime Room, which allowed for more kids to walk up to the program and check it out. Nick and Eileen also structured this session to be a more open-ended version of the program, with options for each child to decide what to design instead of having a single project that everyone worked on. These tweaks to program format and location allowed for more play, practice, learning, and fun for all participants.



Collections



Sharing insights & building connections with community partners

The new archivist for the [Frank Lloyd Wright Trust](#) visited [Special Collections](#) in September to learn more about our collections and the cataloging programs we use to manage our materials. The visit also provided an opportunity to explore future collaborative programming between the library and the Trust.

Highlighting exciting new book releases

Collection Management Librarian Jenna Friebe was recently featured in a [Woman's World](#) article titled "[America's Librarians Have Spoken: The 10 New Releases They're Most Excited For Us To Read.](#)" The feature highlighted an excerpt from her enthusiastic blurb for the October 2026 [LibraryReads](#) list, where she praised the upcoming novel *Bad Words* by Ríoghnach Robinson. Jenna adored this bookish enemies-to-lovers romance with a smart take on literature and criticism that is a great read for fans of Emily Henry.

Community Voice

An educator from North Carolina recently reached out to share gratitude for our [Tech Tips](#) series:

"Hi! I'm an instructor at Mitchell Community College in Statesville, NC, and I teach a ConEd Computer Basics class. **In my class, I tend to get many seniors who feel left behind by technology and are very eager to learn.** They'll often request references/websites that they can take home or use after class ends, since many of these skills require more practice than I can offer in class.

I have been referencing your Tech Tips series often in class recently (with full credit, of course!), and I just wanted to send a quick note to say that these tutorials have been so valuable to my students. They are well-written, easy to understand, and contain exactly the amount of information we need — not too long, not too short. Many tutorials or articles that I have found presume a lot of knowledge, and I appreciate that the Tech Tips articles are very approachable if you are a true beginner. **Please share my thanks with your team for creating such a wonderful resource. You are helping people halfway across the country!"**



- ▶ 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 Facilities Team was busy with a number of maintenance and improvement activities in September, at both the Main Library and Maze Branch. With summer coming to a close, we worked with our plumber to clean and evacuate the parking garage sump pump triple catch basin, which processes all of the water that enters our parking garage. Maintaining this system in good working condition ensures that it can process high volumes of water and minimizes the chance of having standing water in the garage. This routine maintenance is critical before the fall and winter seasons, as leaf litter, road debris, and eventually road salt will make its way into our system. Cleaning and evacuating our catch basins ensures we have adequate volume to handle the seasonal demands.

Early in September, the team also diagnosed an issue with the fountain pump at the Main Library after it failed suddenly. We were able to correctly diagnose the problem, source the appropriate replacement motor and impeller, and complete the repair internally, restoring the fountain to service with minimal downtime.

Additionally, a few aesthetic improvements were made at the Maze Branch. The Facilities Team took several days to complete exterior cleanup, including cleaning the window well drains and grates and powerwashing the entry facade, stairway, walkway and sidewalks, and painted handrailings. These jobs, though small individually, created a tremendous visual improvement to the exterior of the building.

Lastly, the team undertook a significant maintenance project on the Main Library's automated materials handling (AMH) system. Using parts on hand, the team disassembled a large curved portion of the conveyor system and replaced every roller band along the conveyor line. Over time, these bands break with normal wear and tear, and the system had reached the point where a re-banding was necessary. Coordinating with the Materials Handling Team, our Facilities Team was able to schedule and complete the maintenance in one afternoon, improving the equipment's operation and reliability.

Community Voice

During the month of September, the library received 15 five-star Google reviews. A sample of positive comments received in these reviews is below:

- "Very clean, **all reading material you can think of... I requested a book in Spanish and they ordered for me!**"
- "**Very nice, helpful people, all kinds of technical, video, computer assistance.** Great choice of literary items, children's play area, etc."
- "**Oak Park Library is beautiful, very clean, very comfortable. It's a well put together Library. I will continue to come to this one, when I need to come to the library!**"



- ▶ 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



Sharing the library's equity & anti-racism work

In September 2022, to support the library's expanded strategic focus on anti-racism and equity, the Communications Team created a new Equity & Anti-Racism email series as a way to highlight the library's commitment to the work. Since launching, the monthly email has regularly included related stories, upcoming events, and title suggestions compiled by our collection librarians. **In September 2026, the most recent edition of this primarily subscription-based email was sent to more than 880 people.** It featured a number of exciting events — The Nap Ministry with Tricia Hersey; Black Panther History in Illinois; Barbara Ballinger Lecture on civics, community, and democracy; a voter education series; and Gender-Affirming Garment Alterations — as well as materials celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month. **This newsletter is a powerful resource for reaching library users about anti-racism and equity efforts at the library and encouraging community members to engage with these important activities and resources.**

Anti-Racism & Equity



Expanding the Equity & Anti-Racism Team

In September, the Equity & Anti-Racism department conducted interviews for the **Restorative & Belonging Practitioner position**. The interview process focused on identifying a candidate with the experience and skills to support restorative practices, foster a culture of belonging, strengthen staff affinity groups, and advance the library's equity and anti-racism initiatives. **This recruitment effort represents an important step in building the department's capacity to support staff and community engagement.**

Social Services & Public Safety



A new health research project with a community partner

Director of Social Services & Public Safety Rob Simmons recently began working with Rush University Medical Center in Chicago on a research project that **examines opioid use and addiction in Western Suburban Cook County**. The project specifically analyzes community informatics and urban data, and the quantitative and qualitative research findings will ultimately be used to help improve local public health programs. Rush has been an excellent partner to the library for years by providing free clinical support to our patrons, and Rob is excited about this new research partnership. The project will conclude at the end of 2027.