


# storyline

Fall/Winter 2026

The Magazine of the
Oak Park Public Library

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OAK PARK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

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**Teen summer interns**
Our paid teen internship program celebrated its fifth year this summer. Hear from the five interns who worked at the library this summer—what they did and where they want to go next—and find ways for middle and high school students to learn and grow this fall.



## ON THE COVER

Antonia Celeste Lucas-Ruppert uses the Main Library Creative Studio Audio Booth. In this issue, we dive into how musicians are using the Creative Studio, plus more musical resources at the library. We were inspired by the theme of this year's American Library Association (ALA) Library Card Sign-Up Month: "A library card hits all the right notes." Illustrations featured on the cover were created by ALA. If you don't yet have a library card, visit **oppl.org/card** or any library service desk to get one!

This magazine is printed on post-consumer recycled paper and printed locally.

**We love to hear how you use your public library!**
If you have a story to share with us for a future issue or any comments or questions, please contact us at **communications@oppl.org**.

**Looking for more events?**
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**.

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# A library card hits all the right notes

Welcome to the fall issue of our library magazine. September marks National Library Card Sign-Up Month, an initiative through the American Library Association encouraging everyone to unlock the full potential of their public library.

This year's theme highlights how "a library card hits all the right notes." For us in Oak Park, having a library card is an open invitation to discover new passions, connect with neighbors, and access resources tailored to your daily life. Whether you visit us daily or haven't stopped by in a while, this season is the perfect time to reconnect and fully experience everything your card makes possible (**oppl.org/card**).

**Main Library Strategic Facilities Plan update**

While a library card connects you to everything we offer today, our work on the Main Library Strategic Facilities Plan is all about preparing for tomorrow. First, a sincere thank you to the more than 1,600 community members who completed our survey this past spring, as well as those who joined our in-person listening sessions and the visioning exercise with our architectural team. Your detailed feedback and creative suggestions provided an invaluable foundation for our path forward.

Currently, our Leadership Team and project colleagues at Woolpert are reviewing survey responses and feedback from our in-person engagement sessions to identify themes and trends. I want to reassure our community once again that we are not planning to construct a new building, nor are we requesting additional tax funds at this point. This project is about proactive and responsible stewardship through evaluating our existing footprint and ensuring our current building adapts effectively to present and future needs.

Looking ahead to this fall and winter, our architectural partners will take these community-driven insights, along with input from library staff and trustees, and develop initial space design concepts. This is an exciting stage of the project, and we will share updates as we move forward.

**Library resources to support your interests**

The spirit of aligning our resources with community interests resonates throughout the pages of this issue. On pages 6–7, you will discover how local musicians are using the Main Library Creative Studio to write and record original music. If you are inspired to play an instrument or explore new musical genres, turn to pages 8–9 for a guide to our collection of instruments, sheet music, and streaming services available for checkout.

We are also proud to highlight the vital community partnerships that enrich our offerings. Pages 4–5 illustrate how proceeds from the annual Friends Book Fair directly fund library programs, such as our long-running Folk Music Series and the annual Barbara Ballinger Lecture.

Finally, on pages 10–11, we take a look inside our teen summer internship program, where local youth gain hands-on operational experience while exploring future career paths.

Thank you for participating in our planning process, engaging with our programs, and being an essential part of the Oak Park Public Library.

—Elsworth Carman






# Thank you, Friends

**As a separate 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, the Friends of the Oak Park Public Library have been raising funds and building valuable bridges between the library and community since 1948.**

The Friends are probably best known for the annual Book Fair, a much-loved community tradition they put on with tons of volunteer support. On the first day of the fair every July, people line up outside the Main Library, waiting for the doors to open so they can shop for treasures for a few dollars.



And shoppers can also feel good about supporting their library, because all Book Fair proceeds go directly back into the library, sponsoring highly popular community programming, including the library's annual folk music concert series (see page 5), the signature Barbara Ballinger Lecture series (see page 5), and Spanish storytimes and coding workshops for kids. Proceeds also buy items like an inkjet printer and a cutting plotter that patrons of all ages use to make stickers in the Creative Studio Makery.

This year's Book Fair, held July 10–12 at the Main Library, generated $60,841 in sales across 2,710 transactions. Volunteer commitment is critical to the success of the sale and a strong signal of community ownership. Thank you to the 126 volunteers who put in 1,402 hours of work to make this year's fair a success.

Hundreds of people also made donations to the Friends during the fair, in addition to buying books, DVDs, and CDs, and some decided to become members and join the Friends on the spot.

You can find more information about supporting the Friends and becoming a member at **oppl.org/friends**.



# Upcoming Events

*Please register at **oppl.org/calendar** to attend*

*These events are sponsored by the Friends*

## Beyond the Headlines: Civics, Community & Democracy

**Thursday, October 29, 6:30 pm, Main Library**

Join us for a panel discussion on what active, meaningful citizenship looks like today. This year's Barbara Ballinger Lecture brings together local leaders and thinkers—Marie Newman, Monica Eng, Dr. Michael A. Spikes, and Heather Cherone—to explore how strong communities build stronger democracies.




## 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.**



### Inside the Empire of AI With Karen Hao

**Thursday, Sept. 17, 7 pm, virtual**



### Preserving History With Geoffrey Baer

**Tuesday, Oct. 20, 7 pm, virtual**



### Words, Power, and Community: Dr. Eve L. Ewing

**Thursday, Nov. 12, 7 pm, virtual**

## Folk Music Series



### Anne Hills

**Tuesday, September 8, 7 pm, Main Library**

Anne Hills is one of the most beloved voices of the contemporary folk music scene. Her song "Follow That Road" has been a certified folk classic since the late 1990s.



### Claudia Russell and Bruce Kaplan

**Thursday, October 8, 7 pm, Main Library**

California singer/songwriter Claudia Russell and her trusty sidekick, Bruce Kaplan, traverse a wide Americana landscape, stopping at wondrous musical landmarks along the way.



### Chris Walz

**Tuesday, November 10, 7 pm, Main Library**

Bluegrass multi-instrumentalist Chris Walz spent many years touring with bluegrass group Special Consensus and is a gifted teacher at Chicago's Old Town School of Folk Music.

# ‘Creativity belongs to everyone’: Making music in the Audio Booth

Music has always been part of Antonia Celeste Lucas-Ruppert’s life. “I call myself a gospel blues singer,” she says, tambourine in hand.

Antonia (pictured below) grew up singing in the church choir and taking piano lessons when she could. She inherited her love of the blues from her grandfather, and she can remember her grandmother’s voice as the whole family sang “Pray On My Child” by The Williams Brothers, a gospel group from Jackson, Mississippi.

“The singing is what kept us together,” Antonia says.

Antonia kept that mindset when her father, who loved old Southern gospel, was dying from cancer. In the year leading up to his death in 2014, she would send him recordings of herself singing into her phone.

“You know, to encourage him to keep going,” she says. “And after he passed, I kept making music.”

**‘This is a gift’**

This past summer, Antonia was trained to use the Audio Booth in the Main Library Creative Studio. There in the acoustically treated space, she’s been recording songs for an album, *Devotions*, that she hopes to release in October.

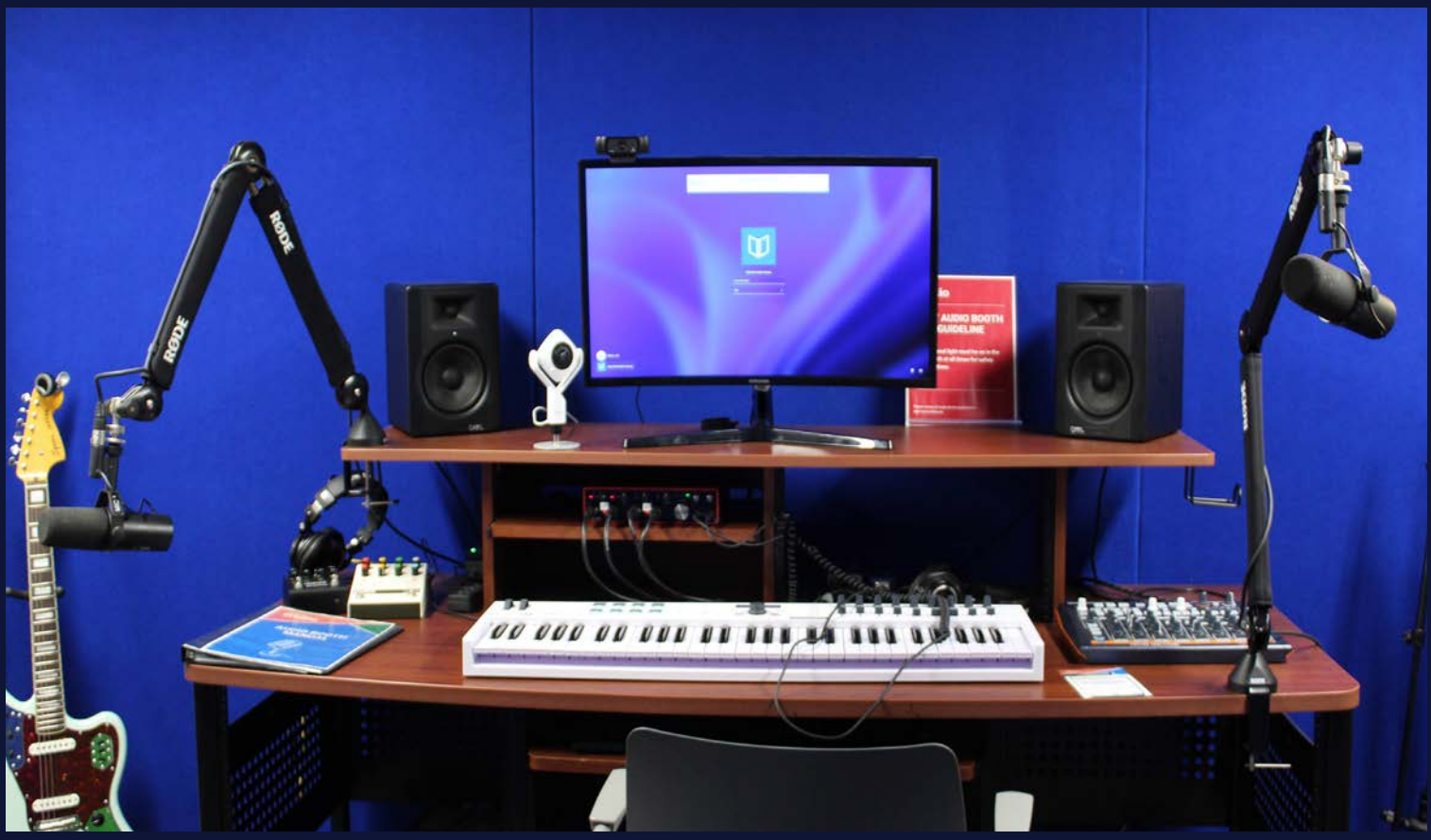
“I’ve tried so many times to get my music produced,” Antonia says. “This is a gift. I didn’t see it coming.”

In the Audio Booth, she’s playing tambourine as she sings “Lawd,” a new song that came to her in the shower. She’s harmonizing with a voice recording from her aunt singing “Pray On My Child,” the song their family loved so much. And in honor of her 25th wedding anniversary, she’s re-recording “Holding On to Our Love,” a song she wrote in 2023 when her and her husband’s youngest went off to college.

“It’s a win, and not just for me,” she says. “I encourage a lot of creatives to do this. This would have cost me lots and lots and lots of money and time and resources.”

> **“I’ve tried so many times to get my music produced. This is a gift. I didn’t see this coming.”**






**'You don't need an engineering background'**

Another Audio Booth user, reggae artist Robert Lewis, agrees. "You walk in and immediately have access to professional tools … all without needing a home studio or expensive gear. You don't need to be an expert or have an engineering background. You just need curiosity and a willingness to explore."

Trained users can reserve the Audio Booth once a week, for up to three hours at a time. To get trained, you schedule a Learning Lab appointment to go over the equipment and software with a library staff member—for example, Supervising Librarian of Creative Technology John Gargiulo, himself a guitarist who also plays mandolin and lap steel. The Audio Booth is used a lot for podcasts, John says, "but there are a lot of music-making tools in here for people to know about."

Tools like the four microphones, which capture vocals and instruments and produce a richer sound than what you might get by recording on your phone. There's also an electric guitar, effect pedals, a drum machine, and a MIDI keyboard that can digitally produce the sounds of all kinds of instruments, such as organ, flute, and violin.

Different digital audio workstations (DAWs) are available on the computer in the Audio Booth: REAPER, Ableton Live, and Pro Tools Studio. "DAW subscriptions can often be cost prohibitive for individuals," John says, "so the fact that we have access to industry-standard tools at the library for free is kind of sweet."

**'Creativity belongs to everyone'**

Access—to tools and space, without financial barriers—is why Robert has made the Creative Studio *his* studio.

"The Audio Booth is where the magic happens: clean vocals, warm harmonies, and everything needed to bring a song to life," he says. "Pre-production and post-production facilities are also available through full workstations, allowing for an uninterrupted workflow."

Robert says, for him, reggae is "a way of staying connected to something positive and steady in these very unsteady times."

"Creativity belongs to everyone," he adds. "You don't need permission to make art. You don't need credentials to express yourself. Reggae taught me that peace is a rhythm you return to. This library gave me a place to return to it."



Learn more about the Audio Booth and other Creative Studio offerings: **oppl.org/creative-studio**

Sign up for quarterly Creative Studio emails: **oppl.org/subscribe**

# Make & enjoy music at

## 1. CDs are back

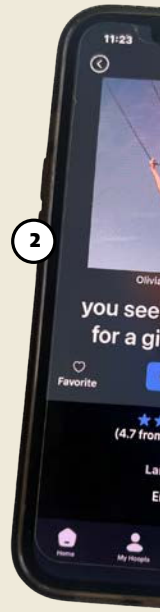
CD sales surged in the U.S. in the first half of 2026, according to the entertainment data firm Luminate. If you're among those enjoying a return to the compact disc, why not browse the library's collection? Pop one in, read the liner notes, and enjoy the screen-free physical media experience. And, since library CDs aren't for keeps, you don't need to reinvest in towering furniture to hold all those jewel cases. Bonus: If you don't have a CD player, you can put one on hold for checkout from our Library of Things!



1

## 2. Stream albums on Hoopla

Hoopla has chart-toppers and loads of popular stuff, including Olivia Rodrigo, Drake, and Noah Kahan. Genres include soundtracks, electronic, punk, country, blues, reggae, jazz, classical … and the list goes on. The streaming service also has music from Laufey, a Grammy-winning Icelandic-Chinese musician who is this year's representative for the American Library Association's Library Card Sign-Up Month (see page 3). Check out **oppl.org/hoopla** and see what sounds good, from opera to metal.



2

## 3. Learn through play

Discovery Kits are backpacks full of hands-on activities for kids to learn through play and experimentation, including eight music-themed kits. To help lay a musical foundation, check out the Sound Kit and the Words, Musical Words kit, which come with baby- and toddler-friendly instruments like handbells, maracas, and tambourine. And then, why not try out all the instruments and see what sticks? Place holds on the guitar mini kit (ages 3+), ukulele kit, xylophone kit, lap harp kit, steel tongue drum kit, and guitar pro kit (ages 8+). Happy music-making!



3



# your library






4

### 4. Karaoke at home

Check out items like a karaoke machine, Bluetooth speaker, and CD player with FM radio in the Library of Things collection (**oppl.org/lot**).

### 5. We Suggest: Music festivals

Our Collection Management Librarians can't resist a good summer music festival list. So they made three! Check out their recommendations on CD and Hoopla at **oppl.org/music**.

- For the Pop Lover: Lollapalooza
- For the Headbanger: Riot Fest
- For the Lawn Music Listener: Ravinia






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### 6. Online music lessons

LinkedIn Learning is a tremendous resource for those who want to learn to play an instrument, write songs, record and mix tracks, and promote their music. This online platform, accessible to library cardholders, has lessons on banjo, piano, and acoustic and electric guitar, as well as courses on music notation and theory, songwriting, copyright, and recording and releasing music. For complete beginners or experienced musicians who want to learn new tricks, check out **oppl.org/linkedin-learning**.






Course

**Banjo Lessons: 1 Fundamentals**

2h 43m · Beginner · Oct 2016

LinkedIn · By: Tony Trischka

4.7 ★★★★½ (22) · 34,329 learners

6

# Pathways to success

**To help teens prepare for college and career—as well as provide exposure to library career paths—we welcomed five paid teen interns at the library this summer.**

From mid-June through July, two interns worked in Materials Handling, two in the Main Library Creative Studio, and one in Facilities.

"I'm passionate about libraries and third spaces," says Seth Hazarian, who interned on the Materials Handling team, sorting and shelving books. "I like the idea of a place where people can go and just exist and not have to spend money. Also, the distribution of knowledge for free? It's great to be a part of that."

**'I didn't believe I got the job'**

To get the internship, each teen completed a job readiness series in the spring before applying and being interviewed. Alpha Pare, who will be a high school sophomore this fall, says that when he learned he got the internship in the Creative Studio Makery space, "I didn't believe that I got the job. I was very excited, very happy."

Alpha, who will be a high school sophomore this fall, says he applied because his friends were applying, and because he wanted to learn new skills and meet new people. Like fellow Creative Studio intern Giovanni Uzokwe, Alpha spent his time helping library users with Makery equipment and projects during open drop-in hours. (Favorite project: Making stickers. Most challenging? The sewing machine.)

"There's a lot of equipment and projects in the Makery to learn about, and Giovanni and Alpha have hit the ground fast when it comes to learning the skills necessary for supporting library users in this space," says John Gargiulo, Supervising Librarian of Creative Technology. "It's been great to have the interns offer some extra support for the public during our busy summer season."

**A full-circle moment**

The internship program is now in its fifth year. Middle and High School Services Manager Latonia Jackson is proud to point out that this summer, former intern Kiara Behensky was hired as a library staff member while attending college.

After she graduates, Kiara plans to pursue a Master of Library and Information Science degree program. "Being able to work at the library has been a great opportunity for me," Kiara says, "because it has given me a taste of what it would be like to work in a library professionally, and confirmed that this is something I would want to do."









"That full-circle moment is exactly why we do this work," Jackson says. "We're not simply providing jobs. We are building confidence, skills, and pathways to future success."

Seth, intern in Materials Handling, agrees he's getting tangible experience that's applicable for a future job. "Everyone is super helpful," he says. "It's a great environment."

Amaka Uzokwe, who also interned in Materials Handling, says she wanted the internship because she's spent a lot of time at the library, going to programs and making friends, and she hoped this experience will help her get a job. She wants to go into nursing or hospital administration.

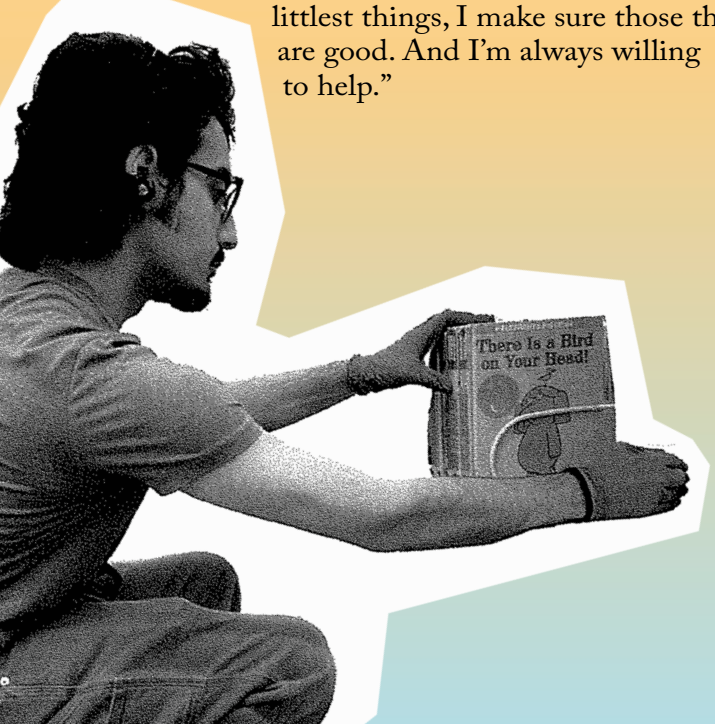
**'Whatever they do, I'm doing'**

Chawn Anderson, who graduated high school in May, came to the internship with some previous experience. He was a library intern in previous summers, took some trade school classes, and worked in facilities for a Chicago law firm as part of his high school work-study program.

Still, "I never got on a ladder as much until here," says Chawn, who worked with the library's Facilities Team doing everything from painting walls to fixing plumbing problems, cleaning HVAC filters, and ferrying bins of books between the Main Library and the Dole and Maze branches. "Whatever they do, I'm doing," he says, referring to Facilities staff members. "Everybody is great. It makes work fun."

Chawn is headed to college at Southern Illinois University this fall, where he will study cybersecurity. He believes this career path will have longevity, and says he hopes to do repair and maintenance-type jobs on the side.

"I always ask questions, if I don't know something," Chawn says. "I always pay attention. Even the littlest things, I make sure those things are good. And I'm always willing to help."




## Upcoming programs for college & career

**Beyond the Books Co-Ed Mentor Program**
**Mondays, 4–5:30 pm, Main Library**
Empowers teens to grow socially, emotionally, and personally while learning how to design their futures with intention. Through vision-building, goal setting, and real-world skill development, students discover who they are, what they want, and how to create a step-by-step plan to achieve it.

**Leading Edge Teen Advisory Board (LETAB)**
Apply to join this teen-led organization that promotes, supports, and creates library initiatives at Oak Park Public Library and throughout the community. We focus on programs, service, and advocacy that give teens a voice and facilitate opportunities for leadership.
More: **oppl.org/letab**

Get notified about all upcoming Middle & High School events. Sign up for emails at **oppl.org/subscribe.**



OAK PARK PUBLIC LIBRARY

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## CLOSINGS

**All library buildings closed all day**

- Monday, September 7
- Monday, October 12
- Wednesday, November 11
- Thursday, November 26
- Friday, November 27
- Thursday, December 24
- Friday, December 25

**All library buildings close at 5 pm**

- Wednesday, November 25
- Thursday, December 31




### 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