



Kansas City Public Library

15



YEARS OF DISCOVERY

1873 - 2023

Celebrating Service to Community



Overland Park, Kansas-based Dimensional Innovations designed and installed the 26-foot-high Community Bookshelf façade along the south side of the Library's parking garage in 2004.

Contents

3	Welcome Pete B. Browne
4	Yeah, your Library does that Youth and Family Engagement Building a Community of Readers Digital Literacy and Access Your Library on the Move Beyond Books 20 Things to Do With Your Library Card
12	Signature events
13	Art in the Library
14	Celebrating 150 years of discovery
16	Library locations Central Library and L.H. Bluford Branch North-East and Plaza branches Irene H. Ruiz and Southeast branches Sugar Creek and Trails West branches Waldo and Westport Branches Digital Branch and Missouri Valley Special Collections
22	The Community Bookshelf
23	Honors
24	Philanthropy
25	Freedom to read
27	The Library's mission statement
28	Library leadership
29	How to get a Library card

“The Library stands for hope, for learning, for progress, for literacy...”

Vartan Gregorian, 2002

Welcome



WELCOME TO ONE of the nation’s great library systems, the Kansas City Public Library, home to a distinguished history of service to its community dating to 1873.

On December 5, 2023, we mark the 150th anniversary of our founding. Proudly, there is much to celebrate.

Winner of the National Medal for Museum and Library Service, designated six times as a top-tier, 5-star library by *Library Journal*, and recipient of a host of other national, regional, and local awards, the Library is a conduit to information and ideas – “a doorway to knowledge,” as our mission statement prescribes. As one of the city’s leading and most accessible cultural destinations and a hub of community engagement, it has helped set the bar for public libraries in the 21st century.

Twenty-one years ago, as the Library launched a campaign to move the downtown Central Library to its current grand location, the former First National Bank building, the distinguished scholar, historian, and humanitarian Vartan Gregorian offered memorable testament to the importance of public libraries to their communities. Eight years of his remarkable career were spent as head of the New York Public Library.

“In our democratic society,” Gregorian said to the 2002 gathering at the Kansas City Club, “the library stands for hope, for learning, for progress, for literacy, for self-improvement and for civic engagement. The library is a symbol of opportunity, citizenship, equality, freedom of speech and freedom of thought, and hence, is a symbol for democracy itself.”

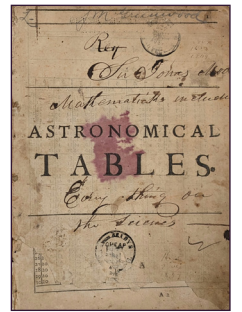
Those words still resonate across the Kansas City Public Library system. While our resources and services have evolved over 150 years, our commitment remains the same. To inform and inspire. To enrich and empower.

These pages offer a snapshot of our work – past, present, and looking to the next century and a half.

Pete B. Browne, President
Kansas City Public Library Board of Trustees



Story hour at the Library’s old Swinney Branch in 1915.



WRITTEN IN 1653... AND AVAILABLE IN THE LIBRARY

The Library’s current collection of more than 800,000 items grew from a modest set of encyclopedias. Those volumes are long gone, but other books remain that have been part of the collection for nearly the same amount of time – and approach being ancient.

The oldest is *Mathematical Tables*, written by Sir Jonas Moore in 1653. Longtime Kansas City school superintendent J.M. Greenwood autographed this copy and presented it to the Library on January 3, 1898, giving the 370-year-old book a special Kansas City connection.

Other “elderly” items in the collection include:

- A 1672 digest of the English legal landscape under kings Henry VIII and Edward VI and queens Mary and Elizabeth I.
- A copy of Arthur Collins’ *The Peerage of England, or, An Historical and Genealogical Account of the Present Nobility from 1709*.
- A 1722 edition of *The History of Virginia, in Four Parts* by Robert Beverley.
- Edmund Burke’s *An Account of the European Settlements in America*, published in 1765.

While books this old deserve gentle treatment, all five are available to researchers for study in the Central Library’s Missouri Valley Room.

The Kansas City Public Library Offers a Breathtaking Range of Services and Resources.

Yeah, Your Library Does That.

1 Youth and Family Engagement

Below left, teenagers experiment with virtual reality during a Digital Media Lab activity at the Library's Southeast Branch. Below right, young patrons enjoy a storytime session at the Central Library.

YOUTH AND FAMILY services have been a signature of the Kansas City Public Library since its first full-time librarian, Carrie Westlake Whitney, added what was believed to be one of the first separate children's areas in a U.S. public library in the late 1800s. From toddlers, preschoolers, and kindergartners to grade- and middle-schoolers and young adults – and their families – the Library is the place to be, engage, and enjoy.



Kansas City Digital Media Lab

Headquartered in the Southeast Branch's Goppert Media Center, the KCDML offers experiential learning for teens in such areas as digital media production, storytelling, robotics, and other maker activities. With that, young participants can make connections between their interests and future academic or professional opportunities. The summer 2023 team created a record label complete with music, art, and video/photography departments. Team members cut three songs and created album artwork, a music video, and a documentary of the process.



PHOTO BY BRUCE MATHEWS

Storytimes

There's a baby, kindergarten readiness, or family session somewhere in the Library system just about every Tuesday through Saturday.

Friday Night Family Fun

Musical performers and storytellers. Magicians and puppeteers. Crafts and creative sessions. One of the Library's most popular series, youth or adult, unfolds Friday nights at the Plaza Branch.

Also ...

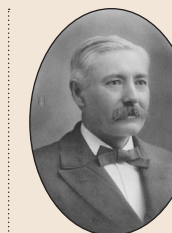
Game nights / Movie screenings / Drama classes / Lego Club / Crafts.

LIBRARY TIMELINE



1873

The Kansas City Board of Education approves a resolution: *That there be established in connection with our schools a library for the use of the officers, teachers and scholars of the public schools of this district, to be known as the Public Library of Kansas City.* The first collection consists of eight volumes of the *New American Encyclopedia*, shelved in an oak bookcase purchased for \$8 and placed in the school superintendent's office.



1874

James M. Greenwood is appointed superintendent of schools and director of the Library, which will remain affiliated with the school district for more than a century.

1876

The Library's more than 1,000-volume collection, previously accessible for reference only, is made available for checkout. Patrons can purchase yearly subscriptions for \$2 or lifetime borrowing privileges for \$10.

2 Building a Community of Readers



THE MAYA ANGELOU BOOK AWARD

This national award for fiction and poetry was established in 2020 by the Kansas City Public Library, the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and five other state schools: the University of Missouri-Columbia, Missouri State University, Northwest Missouri State, Truman State, and Southeast Missouri State universities.

Named for acclaimed, Missouri-born memoirist, poet, and civil rights activist Maya Angelou, it recognizes authors and works focusing on social justice and inclusion and comes with a \$10,000 stipend. Each of the first three recipients won for debut works:

2021 (poetry): Threa Almontaser for *The Wild Fox of Yemen*

2022 (fiction): Buki Papillon for *An Ordinary Wonder*

2023 (poetry): Taylor Byas for *I Done Clicked My Heels Three Times*

BOOKS AND READING remain a library's core. The Kansas City Public Library underscored that in 2009, when its administration and board of trustees drew up a new objective: Inspire and champion Kansas City as a community of readers. Beyond its vast and varied collection of books and other materials, the Library pursues that through a number of initiatives.

Summer Reading

Every June, July, and August, the Library leads the community in a multifaceted celebration of books and reading. Once designed to encourage kids to continue to read while school was out, Summer Reading now extends to an array of family-friendly activities with an emphasis on staying engaged and stimulated. On fostering creativity. On having fun. The Library's Mobile Services department has expanded the reach of the initiative, taking activities to families where they are as part of the Pop in at the Park program.

Nearly 13,000 people – a record – participated in the 2023 program, themed All Together Now. More than a third were adults (4,804, also a record), continuing an upward trend since the Library made Summer Reading a 2½-month, all-comers celebration in 2017. Prior to that, it offered Summer Reading to youth and Winter Reading to adults.

Shelf Help

Stumped on what to read next? This online recommendation service allows you to let the Library's staff of experts know what you like, or think you might like, and get a list of suggested titles tailored to those tastes. Get started at kclibrary.org/shelf-help.

Book groups

You're into tales of adventure? Mysteries? Classics by African or African American writers? Queer-themed books or the works of queer writers? We've got you – and many more – covered with 18 Library-sponsored book discussion groups that gather regularly across the KCPL system. For youth, there are Bobby's Books for Boys, which meets at the Plaza Branch, and the Tweens Reading Club at the Central Library. Find a group that meets your interests at kclibrary.org/readers-services/book-groups.

The Kauffman Collection

This special selection of books and other materials is intended to enhance the Library's overall collection with works of high quality, both in content and construction. Principally falling within the humanities, they embody classical ideas and ideals or have made significant contributions to other areas and range from printed books, e-books, and audiobooks to pamphlets, essays, maps, interview transcripts, still images, and videos. The collection is made possible by the Ewing Kauffman Book Fund, established in 1991 through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and named for the late Kansas City entrepreneurial, philanthropic, and civic leader Ewing Marion Kauffman. It also includes supporting materials that assess, critique, and examine the featured works.

3 Digital Literacy and Access

IN AN INCREASINGLY online time, when our quality of life is tied to the quality of an internet connection, the Kansas City Public Library stands as a local and national leader in the provision and promotion of digital literacy and access. That starts with computer labs and stations at every Library location, including the expansive OneNorth technology center on the first floor of the Central Library, and extends to a number of innovative and impactful programs.

Tech to Go

The Internet to Go service offers more than 80 mobile Wi-Fi hotspots for checkout for 21 days at a time. Each device supports basic web browsing on as many as 10 desktop or laptop computers, tablets, and other devices or can accommodate streaming on two or three devices, allowing an entire family to connect.

The Chromebooks to Go program makes 250 laptop computers available for checkout, again for 21 days at a time, allowing borrowers to complete homework, work on business projects, apply for jobs, pay bills, or take care of other everyday tasks and activities online.

Tech Access

Launched in 2016, the unique Tech Access program offers one-on-one sessions, classes, and other resources to help adult patrons learn to employ technology and other digital tools in their day-to-day lives – everything from using a smartphone to creating an email account, setting up a Zoom meeting, using Snapchat or Slack, and bolstering online safety and security. Drop-in sessions are scheduled at most Library locations, and classes are offered five days a week at community and senior centers and low-income housing complexes.

Digital Literacy Leadership

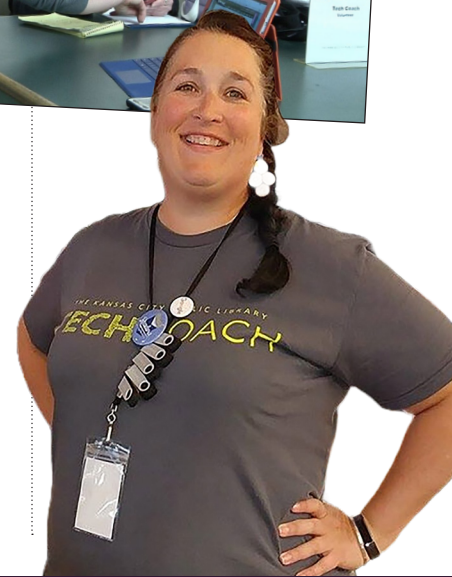
The Library has played a lead role in local and national efforts to narrow the digital divide – the economic, educational, and social inequity between those who have computers and online access and those who do not. KCPL figured prominently in the founding of Digital Inclusion KC, a coalition of representatives from 80 nonprofits, government agencies, corporations, and other entities.

Carrie Coogan, the Library's deputy director for public affairs and community engagement, has implemented and overseen an array of Library initiatives and currently is part of the Digital Inclusion KC steering council. She also served on the board of directors of the National Digital Inclusion Alliance and was part of a select team that put together the Digital Equity Strategic Plan adopted by Kansas City's city council.

Former Library Director Crosby Kemper III chaired the board of directors of the Washington, D.C.-based Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition.



DISCOVER
kclibrary.org/technology



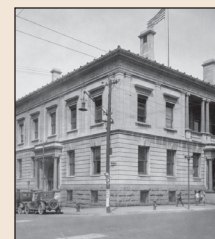
LIBRARY TIMELINE



1881
Carrie Westlake Whitney becomes the Library's first full-time librarian (equivalent to today's director). She serves for 30 years, overseeing great innovation and growth, and gains an enduring identity as the "Mother of the Kansas City Public Library."

1889
The Library moves into a new two-story building at Eighth and Oak streets, the first in Kansas City dedicated solely for library use. Construction cost: \$10,000.

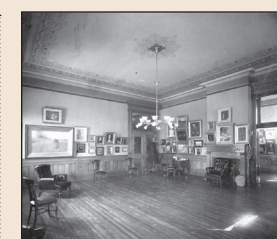
1894
Real estate developer George Sheidley gives the Library \$25,000 (the equivalent of \$800,000 in 2023), the first large donation in its history. The Library is able to expand its collection by nearly a third, to 40,000 volumes.



1897
A new, two-story Main Library, costing \$200,000, opens at Ninth and Locust streets. Whitney adds a separate children's area, believed to be one of the first of its kind in a library in the U.S.

1898
The Library's subscription system is discontinued; it is now free and open to all.

1899
A first branch is added when the city of Westport is annexed into Kansas City. Its 1-year-old Allen Library becomes the Westport Branch.



1901
The Main Library's Western Gallery of Art, already holding a collection donated by William Rockhill Nelson, is renamed the Nelson Gallery of Art after he contributes additional works. The gallery later separates from the Library and eventually becomes the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.



1911
Rapid expansion of the branch system begins under Head Librarian Purd Wright. Eleven locations are added in the next five years, nine more in the 1920s and '30s. Many branches are housed in schools, allowing the Library to contain costs as it expands to better serve Kansas City's growing population.

4 Your Library On the Move

The Bookmobile serves patrons at Kansas City's Clymer Community Center. The customized, brightly emblazoned Library on wheels, operated by KCPL's Mobile Services department, offers a rotating collection of books for on-the-spot browsing and checkout, tech resources, and special monthly programs for kids and adults.



OUTREACH HAS BEEN an important element of the Library's services since the 1870s, when it hosted public lectures in an effort to burnish its educational and cultural standing while boosting interest and pride in Kansas City. Today's outreach services are geared to patrons who have difficulty reaching a Library location, connecting them with many of its resources. That ranges from the Bookmobile, which makes regularly scheduled stops across the metropolitan area, sets up at selected community events, and is available by request, to the Books to Go program serving preschools, kindergartens, and child care

sites. The Lobby Stops program sets up small, monthly pop-up libraries in senior housing sites. KC Library by Mail provides mail delivery of books, DVDs, and other materials to homebound patrons.

Of note: In concert with the Library's Community Resources department, the Bookmobile also offers a selection of reading glasses for patrons who need them – to keep, not just borrow – and care bags of food and hygiene items for individuals experiencing homelessness or with emergency needs. Bookmobile staffers also can help individuals connect with social service providers.

5 Beyond Books

THE LIBRARY PLAYS a central role in the lives of people across the Kansas City area in many, many ways – emblematic of the evolution of public libraries in the 21st century. KCPL is a true community center, a source of resources and services for a range of community needs.

Community Resources

This dedicated team provides individuals experiencing life challenges with needed connections, services, and support; help with the completion of forms for utilities, rent, and other housing; assistance in locating free meals, food pantries, clothing, and showers; and direction to medical and dental services. Monthly Coffee & Conversation sessions offer a cup of coffee, healthy snacks, direct access to resources, and emergency supplies such as socks or hygiene items.

The award-winning Street Sheet provides vulnerable patrons who lack access to common means of media or communication tools with a regularly updated guide to available services and financial assistance. Printed in both English and Spanish, it's available at all 10 Library locations.

Community Reference

Meet one-on-one with our specialists for assistance with:

- Small business and entrepreneurship (starting and growing a nonprofit or small business, business plans, business research)
- Health and wellness (health literacy and programming)
- Legal and government affairs and civic engagement (tax preparation, voter registration, legal forms)
- Career development and personal finance (résumés and cover letters, interview coaching, test proctoring, financial literacy)

Through Legal Aid in the Library, patrons can make appointments to meet one-on-one with attorneys from Legal Aid of Western Missouri.

In partnership with several justice-involved organizations, monthly Tap in Centers at the L.H. Bluford Branch allow individuals facing warrants to meet with an attorney, learn their case status, apply for a public defender, connect with local services, and get other assistance in navigating the court system.



Below, the Library's Outreach team engages bus riders at RideKC's East Village Transit Center.

LIBRARY TIMELINE



1914
The Garrison Square Branch opens December 26 in a recreational facility in Garrison Square Park, the first sustained effort by the Library to serve the African American community.



1922
The Lincoln Branch opens at Lincoln High School, becoming the only library location specifically serving African Americans in the state of Missouri.
—
Library circulation surpasses 1 million.

1931
Library circulation surpasses 2 million.

1937
The Bulletin of the American Library Association identifies the Library as one of eight in the nation hosting regular radio programs for children. The segments involve storytelling, reviews of children's books, and author interviews.

1939
The Library is caught in a nationwide debate over the suitability of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. Against the wishes of Head Librarian Louis Nourse, the school board orders the book removed from circulation – then allows its return nine months later (still keeping it off Library shelves and inaccessible to children).

1944
A remarkable 44% of Kansas City's population holds library cards, highest among the nation's large cities.
—
Patrons check out some 2 million books during the year.

1945
More than 170 names are listed in an honor roll of Library alumni who served in World War II. Seven former staff members were killed in the conflict, including U.S. Army Air Forces Lt. Glessner Reimer, a P-47 Thunderbolt fighter pilot who participated in more than 60 air missions. The former Main Library stack room staffer died in action over Vire, France, in July 1944.

Beyond Books (Cont.)

Working with the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri, the Library and its RISE team have hosted 13 naturalization ceremonies at the Central Library since 2016.



Refugee & Immigrant Services & Empowerment (RISE)

Under the direction of a fulltime refugee and immigrant services outreach manager, RISE offers a range of services including English Language Learning (ELL) courses and preparation for naturalization. The Central Library is a frequent location for naturalization ceremonies conducted by the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri.

Kids Café

The Library has worked with the Harvesters community food network for more than 10 years to provide after-school and summer meals for children and teens at selected Library locations.

The Library VISTA Project

AmeriCorps VISTA members serve communities across the country in myriad ways and are essential to KCPL's outreach efforts in the Kansas City area. The Library's VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America)

Project engages a cadre of stipended AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers at agencies across the city. In February 2023, they packed 365 personal hygiene kits for individuals experiencing homelessness, sorting enough donated soap, shampoo, conditioner, and lotion to fill another 700 kits. Additionally, AmeriCorps members in the Library's 1-year-old Digital Corps have helped more than 1,000 members of the community access and use vital digital resources, including assistance in applying for jobs, submitting assistance applications, and writing emails.

Also ...

Free notary service at all Library locations / Passport services / Excel Adult High School / Yoga sessions and other free fitness classes / Blood pressure check stations across the Library system / Senior services, including the Senior Listen Line with recorded stories and tips on health, fitness, and other senior-related topics.

20 Things To Do With Your Library Card

YOU CAN DO so much with your library card (and even some things without it). Here are just a few examples:

- Access **digital editions** of *The New York Times* (games and recipes, too) or *The Kansas City Star*.
- Learn or relearn a language through the **Bluebird** app.
- Research family history through **Ancestry.com**.
- Learn woodworking on **Craftsy**.
- Check out full orchestral **performance scores** by more than 100 composers going back to 1680.
- Use **PressReader** to read magazines and newspapers, domestic and international.
- Brush up on your Kansas City-specific history at **pendergastkc.org**.
- Watch A24 movies on **Kanopy** on a themed movie night
- Use **AtoZdatabases** as a new phonebook.
- Access **EBSCO Databases** for deep dives and to keep up on information literacy.
- Read comic books and graphic novels on hoopla.
- Watch animated books on **BookFlix**.
- Grab a space to practice/learn piano in a fourth-floor study room, equipped with a **Yamaha Clavinova** digital piano, at the Central Library. Headphones and an instruction booklet are also available.
- Learn a new instrument on **ArtistWorks**.
- Access **DigitalLearn** to build tech skills.
- Improve your tech skills with **Tech Access** – for beginners through advanced users.
- Get 24-hour turnaround on paper editing on **Brainfuse**.
- Call the **Senior Listen Line** and listen to stories that are updated monthly.
- Request a **Bookmobile** stop at a local agency to check out books without having to visit a branch.
- If the Library doesn't own something you want to read, watch, or listen to, you can submit a **purchase request**. If we can get the item from our vendors for less than \$50 (or \$100 for e-content), we'll purchase it and make it available for checkout. Log in to your BiblioCommons account, go to My Library Dashboard, and click Submit a Suggestion.



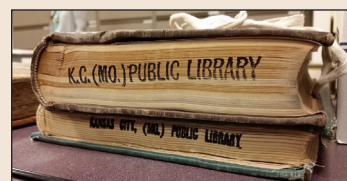
LIBRARY TIMELINE

1950

The Library introduces Kansas City's first bookmobile, a 30-foot "branch library on wheels" that circulates more than 100,000 books in its first year.

1958

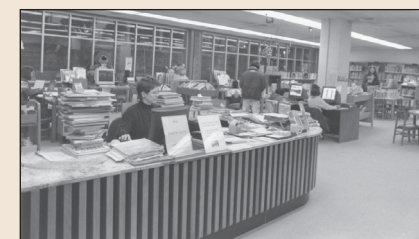
Library circulation reaches 3 million.



1960

A new \$4.5 million, "space age" Main Library opens at 12th and Oak streets, occupying seven lower floors of a building it shares with the school district. The Missouri Valley Room opens soon afterward on the third floor; it houses the Library's reference collections in local history, genealogy, and Western history.

Annual circulation now exceeds 3.8 million.



1967

The Plaza Branch opens, becoming what it is today: the busiest location in the Library system.

1977

Selected librarians are taught to use computers to access the many bibliographic indexes that are now "on-line."

1984

The Library adopts the American Library Association's Freedom to Read statement and Library Bill of Rights.

The Board of Education authorizes the formation of the Friends of the Kansas City Public Library.

1985

The Library establishes reciprocal lending agreements with other Kansas City-area library systems, allowing patrons to borrow books across multiple systems.

The first public access computers (Apple IIe models) are installed in the Main Library and six branch locations.

Signature Events



Brandeis University's Anita Hill (left), whose accusations against U.S. Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas brought nationwide attention to issues of sexual misconduct and power in the workplace, speaks to an audience of 700 at a special 2014 Library event at the downtown Folly Theater. At right, Kansas City mayor-to-be Quinton Lucas participates in a 2019 candidates forum at the Library's Plaza Branch.

LAUNCHED IN 2006, the Library's signature events series quickly became and remains a linchpin of its programming. Kansas City audiences can attend presentations by visiting authors and other notable speakers, discussions of pressing local and national issues, and musical performances and other cultural events.

Never, perhaps, has such public programming been more essential. In a time of deep political and societal division and a critical need for civil public discourse, the Library continues to facilitate the exchange of ideas on difficult issues and concerns.

The wide-ranging menu of free events has long been underwritten by the generous support of the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.

Among the featured speakers have been Supreme Court justices Stephen Breyer and Sandra Day O'Connor, attorney and Brandeis University professor Anita Hill, Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer David McCullough, and former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

The ongoing Making a Great City series, launched in 2018, brings in prominent urban planners from around the country in an effort

to facilitate the "smart growth" of Kansas City and make it a model for fiscally responsible development and financial resiliency. A new series, IDEAL Entrepreneurship, kicked off in February 2023, examining ways to make entrepreneurship in the city more inclusive, diverse, equitable, accessible, and liberating.

The Library has similarly propelled public dialogue and action on the alarming rate of home evictions in the Kansas City area and its disproportionate impact on African Americans, regularly partnered with the Urban League of Kansas City in discussing the organization's State of Black Kansas City assessment, and provided a pre-election forum for the city's mayoral candidates.

The ambitious public outreach endeavor has won a number of awards including two regional Emmys and the American Library Association's Excellence in Library Programming Award.

More people than ever – over 42,000 – engaged in the programming in 2022-23, attending in person or via livestream or subsequently viewing videos of the presentations on the Library's YouTube channel.

Art in the Library

THE KANSAS CITY Public Library's relationship with the arts runs deep. In 1897, it housed a small collection of reproductions gathered by newspaperman and civic visionary William Rockhill Nelson.

The collection remained for 36 years and grew to include original artwork, both local and international, until its move to what is now the iconic Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art building. Similarly, the forerunner of the Kansas City Museum operated out of the Library from 1897 to 1940.

Today, the Library serves as a destination for important traveling exhibitions and a showcase for up-and-coming artists seeking a foothold in Kansas City. It boasts two professionally curated galleries in its Central Library, the first-floor Genevieve Guldner Mountain Gallery and the Rocky and Gabriella Polony Mountain Gallery on the second floor.

The Plaza, Irene H. Ruiz, and Westport branches host rotating exhibitions as part of the Art Reach initiative, launched in 2022 and slated to expand to more locations.

Original exhibitions at the Central Library have ranged from 2013's *Greetings from Kansas City: Postcard Views of a Midwestern Metropolis, 1900-1950*, which displayed some 200 vintage postcards pulled from a collection of 16,000 in the Library's Missouri Valley Special Collections, to *Here Where You Wish*, a multisensory creation by Kansas City artist Ryan Wilks in 2018.

Among the notable traveling exhibitions have been a special collection of original works by renowned British artist and Hunter S. Thompson collaborator Ralph Steadman and a centennial collection of lithographs of the works of comic arts giant Will Eisner.

The Library also plays host each year to the Missouri Fifth Congressional District student art exhibition, sponsored by U.S. Rep. Emanuel Cleaver II as part of House members' nationwide A Voyage of Artistic Discovery program.

A special series of exhibitions, including works by contemporary Native American artists and selections from the archives of the Library's



Missouri Valley Special Collections, is scheduled in 2024 in conjunction with the Library's yearlong celebration of its 150th anniversary.

Further holding to its artistic heritage, the Library system is home to its own collection of more than 700 artworks, artifacts, and objects of ephemera – from paintings and murals to maps, etchings, posters, statues, photographs, and intricately designed clocks and other furnishings.

More than 200 items are on display at the Central Library. Others are on walls, shelves, or some other means of display across the Library's nine outlying branches. Many of the pieces are accessible on the Library's website (at kclibrary.org/art-objects) with high-resolution photographs, detailed descriptions, and information ranging from condition reports to whether or where they can be found in the Library.

Former Commerce Bancshares Vice Chairman Jonathan Kemper, who joined the Library's board of trustees in 2001 and served 17 years as its president, has driven the growth of the collection over the past two decades, donating half or more of the Library's present holdings.

Visitors browse the touring exhibition *Ralph Steadman: A Retrospective* at the Central Library in 2019.

LIBRARY TIMELINE

1987
Online catalog access becomes available at all Library branches.

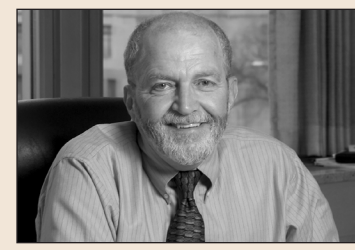


1988
The Library gains its long-sought independence, separating from the school district with two-thirds approval from district voters. Mary Arney, who'd once chaired the school board's library committee, is named president pro tem of the first independent Library board.

—
The long-awaited Lucile H. Bluford Branch, named for the noted civil rights crusader and editor of *The Kansas City Call*, opens on Kansas City's East Side. A new South (Waldo) Branch also opens.

1989
The North-East and West Independence (Trails West) branches open fewer than three weeks apart in January and February.

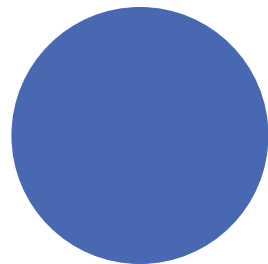
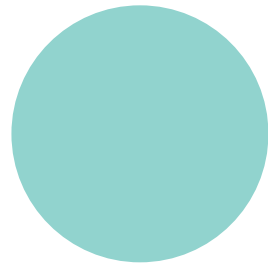
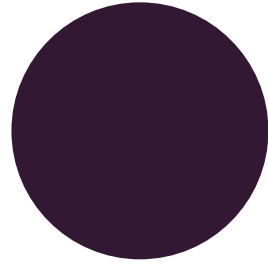
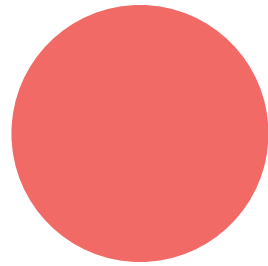
1990
With online catalog access available at all Library locations, physical card catalogs are removed from the Main Library.



1991
Library Director Dan Bradbury is named Librarian of the Year by *Library Journal*. His tenure, from 1983 to 2003, sees the Library forge a new identity independent of the school district, secure two tax levy increases, and embrace the internet age.

1995
The Southeast Branch opens. —
The Library launches its first public website.

1997
The Sugar Creek Branch opens.



Kansas City
Public Library
150

Celebrating 150 Years Of Discovery



The Main Library at Ninth and Locust streets was the Library's downtown anchor from 1897 to 1960.

THE KANSAS CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY is celebrating its 150th birthday with a full year of special programming and other sesquicentennial activities, following the theme "150 Years of Discovery."



Special speakers

Highlighting the menu is a series of quarterly speaking presentations by authors and others "who have made prominent contributions to culture." The December 5, 2023, kickoff to the anniversary celebration features an evening keynote address by Finnish-born scholar, urbanist, and innovative civic leader **Tommi Laitio**. Appointed nearly two years ago as the inaugural Fellow at the Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation at Johns Hopkins, he's exploring partnerships for parks and libraries and the need to create public spaces that facilitate conviviality.

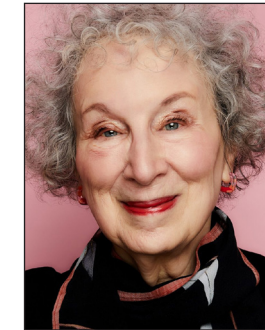
Tommi Laitio



Jacqueline Woodson



Ari Shapiro



Margaret Atwood

Speakers following him in 2024 are:

- From her National Book Award win to four Newbery Honors, **Jacqueline Woodson** talks about her consequential and far-reaching career on March 8.
 - Celebrated radio journalist and writer **Ari Shapiro**, the host of NPR's *All Things Considered*, on June 13.
 - **Margaret Atwood**, the iconic Canadian poet, novelist, and literary champion whose works include *The Handmaid's Tale* and its sequel, *The Testaments*, on September 24.
- All events are free and open to the community.

Exhibitions

Set in 2024 are solo exhibitions by local artists such as painters **Harold Smith** and **Chico Sierra** and others – including New York-based collage artist **Andrea Burgay** – from across the country. Also planned is a show featuring the works of Indigenous artists, curated from the collection of Travois, the Kansas City-based company that promotes housing and economic development for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities. Travois has been a longtime supporter of such contemporary Indigenous artists as **Wendy Red Star** and **Cannupa Hanska Luger**.

The Library's rotation of diverse exhibitions further includes a recontextualization of historic art from its Missouri Valley Special Collections and a collection of works by Library staff.

And more...

The coming year also will feature programs by notable children's authors and illustrators and a birthday-themed Summer Reading program in June, July, and August.

The Library has reached out to partners for some imaginative touches. Betty Rae's is formulating a Library ice cream flavor, and Café Ca Phe is adding a Library coffee drink to its menu in the spring. The Vine Street Brewing Co. has crafted a commemorative Library beer, "One for the Books." J. Rieger & Co. is donating a specialty cocktail. And KCPL is partnering with Charlie Hustle as part of the apparel company's popular Communi-Tees program, offering a distinctive Library-themed T-shirt.

Look, too, for an imaginative yearlong wrap on one of Kansas City's streetcars.

Coinciding with the anniversary, the Library also is rebranding: a new logo, color scheme, and typography, tweaking its visual identity and messaging to better communicate its mission, vision, and values.



THE HEARTLAND BOOK FESTIVAL

Find Your Story, we urged.

More than 2,100 people from across the region did just that at the inaugural Heartland Book Festival, which opened at Kansas City's historic downtown Folly Theater and then spilled into a bustling Central Library a few blocks away. Presented by the Kansas City Public Library, Missouri Humanities, and the Missouri affiliate of the Library of Congress' Center for the Book, the gathering on October 6 and 7, 2023, offered an array of presentations by local, regional, and nationally renowned authors; workshops; musical performances; two photography exhibitions; and other activities and attractions – all free of charge.

Jermaine Fowler, host of the history podcast *The Humanity Archive* and author of the bestselling *The Humanity Archive: Recovering the Soul of Black History From a Whitewashed American Myth*, delivered a warmly received keynote address on the festival's opening night. Bestselling author Karin Slaughter, whose works have spawned two streaming and television series (Netflix's *Pieces of Her* and the ABC police procedural *Will Trent*), headlined the next day's lineup.

Following the theme Find Your Story, the all-ages festival was a successful and welcome addition to a Kansas City cultural calendar largely lacking such an expansive celebration of the written word. "It would be nice if that void was filled and this festival ... helps more and more people recognize Kansas City for the literary presence that it has," said Glenn North, the director of inclusive learning and creative impact for the Kansas City Museum and the first poet laureate of the city's Historic 18th & Vine Entertainment District. He was among the festival's participants.

The Heartland Book Festival is envisioned as a recurring regional event in partnership with Missouri Humanities. While locations beyond 2023 are yet to be determined, the Kansas City Public Library expects to be a continuing collaborator.

LIBRARY TIMELINE

1998
The number of Library cardholders surpasses 200,000.

1999
The Library opens a technology center and begins training classes open to the public.

2001
The new West Branch, originally called the Biblioteca de las Americas (Library of the Americas), is renamed the Irene H. Ruiz Biblioteca de las Americas in response to a petition signed by more than 500 community members. It honors the longtime librarian who almost single-handedly transformed library services to the West Side's Hispanic community.



2004
A new Central Library opens at 10th and Baltimore in the former First National Bank building. The Library receives the National Preservation Honor Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation for its restoration of the almost century-old building.

2005
A new Plaza Branch opens at 48th and Main streets, across Brush Creek from the Country Club Plaza.
—
The Library begins offering downloadable e-books.

2006
The Library launches what soon becomes a nationally renowned signature events series, featuring discussions by authors and other speakers, cultural presentations, and public forums addressing civic issues and concerns.



2007
The Stanley H. Durwood Film Vault opens on the lower level of the Central Library. The old steel-and-concrete First National Bank vault was converted into a 28-seat movie theater through a \$208,777 donation from the Stanley H. Durwood Foundation.

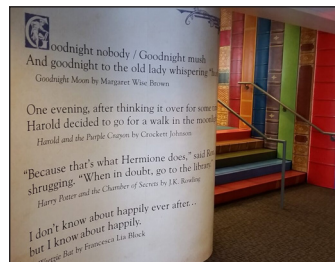
2008
The Library receives the prestigious National Medal for Museum and Library Service from the Institute for Museum and Library Services. It honors "outstanding institutions that make significant and exceptional contributions to their communities."

(Timeline continued on Page 22)

The Kansas City Public Library System



Above, the Central Library's third-floor Grand Reading Room. Right, passages from eight children's classics including *Goodnight Moon*, *Harold and the Purple Crayon*, and *Where the Wild Things Are* adorn the open-book entrance to Central's Children's Library.



Central Library

14 W. 10th St.
Building dedicated: 1906 (as the First National Bank); home to the Central Library since 2004.

THE CENTRAL LIBRARY is the cultural and administrative centerpiece of the Kansas City Public Library system. Located in the more than century-old former First National Bank building in downtown Kansas City – restored with private funds and a centerpiece of downtown revitalization – it houses the Library's administrative offices, OneNorth technology center, Missouri Valley Special Collections, two formal art galleries, and other major departments. It also is home to many of the Library's signature speaking and other special events.

Of note: Across the street is a four-story parking garage with a striking south façade depicting a giant collection of books, the renowned Community Bookshelf.



Above, a family storytime session at the Lucile H. Bluford Branch. Left, a bronze bust of revered *Kansas City Call* editor and branch namesake Lucile Bluford.

Lucile H. Bluford Branch

3050 Prospect Ave.
Opened: 1988

NAMED FOR THE beloved civil rights leader and longtime editor of *The Kansas City Call*, the Lucile H. Bluford Branch serves as a hub of community activity on the city's East Side. Public computer use here is second highest in the Library's 10-location system – only the Central Library sees more. The Bluford Branch also offers free health and wellness activities, numerous children's and youth activities including storytime sessions and teen gaming nights, notary assistance, a Black Classics Book Club focusing on notable African American titles, and winter warming and summer cooling stations. An on-site Village Post Office offers basic services and products in conjunction with the U.S. Postal Service.

Of note: In January 2023, the Library purchased additional property near the Bluford Branch with an eye toward expanding its 15,000 square-foot facility. It has not been updated since a \$1.9 million renovation in 2009.



Above, North-East Branch Manager Amanda Rodriguez shows off the branch's new digital video board in 2022. Right, voters' passage of a modest increase in the Library's operating levy made extensive renovation of the branch possible in 2021.



PHOTO BY MARK NAGEL

North-East Branch

6000 Wilson Ave.
Opened: 1989

THE NORTH-EAST BRANCH is a fixture in Kansas City's Historic Northeast neighborhood, which is home to both a sizable immigrant population and influx of young professionals. The branch dates to 1914, when it was housed in Northeast High School. It was combined with the Library's East and Blue Valley locations into the North-East Branch in 1986 and moved into its current building three years later. The facility underwent extensive renovation during the COVID-19 pandemic, reopening in 2021. In serving one of the most linguistically diverse communities in Kansas City (with an estimated 55 languages spoken among the 9,000 residents), the North-East Branch houses the Library system's primary collection of materials in Spanish and other world languages.

Of note: The diversity of the neighborhood makes this branch an ideal home for the RISE (Refugee & Immigrant Services & Empowerment) program, which connects immigrant populations with services, resources, and lifelong learning opportunities through outreach, education, and advocacy.



Above, patrons check out artist Donald Lipski's circle-of-books installation *Good as Gold* in the lobby of the Plaza Branch. Left, the branch is home to Carol Hensley's *CowTown Plaza*, created for the citywide CowParade public art initiative in 2001.



Plaza Branch

4801 Main St.
Opened: 2005

THE PLAZA BRANCH'S floor-to-ceiling windows overlook the glittering Country Club Plaza with a view of Brush Creek wending its way east. It serves not only the immediate area but also surrounding neighborhoods in all directions, boasting a wealth of children's and youth resources and activities, books on arts and crafts, and ample business materials. The lower-level Truman Forum Auditorium, with fixed seating for more than 200 people, regularly hosts the Library's award-winning signature events series, including discussions and other presentations by locally and nationally known authors, artists, and civic leaders.

Of note: The original Plaza Branch, opened at Brookside Boulevard and Main Street in 1967, was the first branch built by Kansas City's board of education outside a high school facility. (The Library had been established by the school district and remained under its jurisdiction until 1988.) "Because the other branches are in crowded high school buildings," it was predicted, "the regional branch will attract adults from a much wider geographical area" – and indeed, today's Plaza facility is the busiest in the Library system.

The Kansas City Public Library System



The expansive Seed Library at the Irene H. Ruiz Biblioteca de las Americas.

Irene H. Ruiz Biblioteca de las Americas

2017 W. Pennway St.
Opened: 2001

THE IRENE H. RUIZ Biblioteca de las Americas is the only branch in the Kansas City Public Library system named after a former Library employee. Irene Ruiz, who died in September 2023 at age 102, was a pillar of the city's West Side as an educator, librarian, and advocate for its heavily Hispanic population. The branch dates to 1911, when it opened as the Switzer Branch Library. It moved into the new West Junior High School, becoming the West Branch Library, in 1926 and relocated twice more before reopening in its current location in 2001. Now, thanks in large part to Irene Ruiz, the branch features a wide variety of materials in Spanish and unique bibliographic and audiovisual resources related to Latin American culture in both Spanish and English.

Of note: Since 2014, the Ruiz Branch has been home to the system's Seed Library, offering vegetable, fruit, flower, tree, and other plant seeds at no cost. It also houses an expanded collection of gardening books and cookbooks, and free classes on a variety of gardening matters are conducted throughout the growing season.



PHOTO BY PAUL ANDREWS PHOTOGRAPHY



Above, the Southeast Branch's Goppert Media Center, home to the KC Digital Media Lab. Left, the 28-year-old branch has been an anchor in the neighborhoods around Kansas City's Swope Park since the mid-1990s.

Southeast Branch

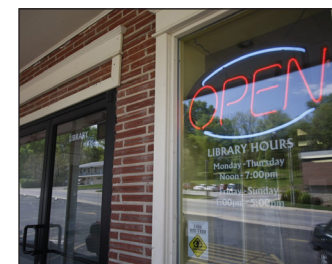
6242 Swope Pkwy.
Opened: 1995

NEXT DOOR TO SWOPE PARK and the Kansas City Zoo, the Southeast Branch boasts particularly strong collections in African American literature, urban fiction, urban Christian fiction, children's folklore, and books on animals. It's a valuable resource for area schools, including Southeast High School across 63rd Street, and seniors who live in the neighborhood. Southeast High School originally housed the collection, then Library staff operated out of a kiosk in the Landing Mall before the branch moved to its current location. Extensive renovation in 2018 brought new meeting rooms, a children's area, and thousands of additional items for checkout.

Of note: Southeast is home to the Goppert Media Center's KC Digital Media Lab, which offers experiential learning in such areas as video and audio production, animation, robotics, and design.



Above, Library Assistant Lauren Votava works at the Sugar Creek Branch's front desk with Senior Library Assistant Peggy Karnes (behind her). Right, the storefront branch was established by community demand.



Sugar Creek Branch

102 S. Sterling, Sugar Creek
Opened: 1996

THE SUGAR CREEK BRANCH is a storefront library serving residents of Sugar Creek and western Independence. Beyond its collection of books and other materials, it reaches out to seniors at nearby community centers and to area schools through book clubs and storytime gatherings. Its public computers are popular with teens and adult job seekers. A Village Post Office, operated in conjunction with the U.S. Postal Service, offers such basic products and services as package mailing, stamp sales, and post office boxes.

Of note: The branch was established by community demand: A number of residents petitioned the Library's board of trustees in 1996; a storefront library in the Fairmount shopping center had closed seven years earlier. When voters approved an 11-cent increase in the Library's property tax levy in June 1996, the board moved quickly.



Above, Library Assistant Emilee Shoff-Olson works at the passport application station at the Trails West Branch. Left, the branch sits amid local history.



Trails West Branch

11401 E. 23rd St., Independence
Opened: 1989

LOCATED A FEW blocks off the Santa Fe Trail in Independence and within two miles of the Harry S Truman Historic District, the Trails West Branch is a friendly neighborhood library serving the West Independence, Three Trails, and Englewood neighborhoods. Formerly housed in Van Horn High School, then on a temporary site on U.S. 24 in the Fairmount neighborhood, it opened in January 1989 as the West Independence Branch – the fourth new full-service branch opened by the Library in a little more than six months (with the L.H. Bluford, Waldo, and North-East locations). Weekly storytimes and monthly family programs are popular here, and teens are drawn to book clubs and tabletop gaming.

Of note: The Trails West name is derived from the Santa Fe, California, and Oregon trails, which passed through Independence in the 1800s. Shortly after the location opened, the Library conducted a public naming contest that drew more than 400 entries. Five suggested Trails West, a Library-appointed committee recommended it, and the board of trustees made it official in February 1989.

The Kansas City Public Library System



Above, patrons of all ages enjoy one of the Library's busiest locations, the Waldo Branch. Right, the branch, on East 75th Street, is the Library system's southernmost location.



Waldo Branch

201 E. 75th St.
Opened: 1988

LOCATED IN THE heart of the commercial and residential neighborhood for which it is named, the Waldo Branch is a destination for residents of the surrounding area extending across the state line into Kansas. That makes it one of the busiest locations in the Kansas City Public Library system, with nearly 88,000 visits and almost 133,000 books and other items circulated in 2022-23. Demand is high for all services, programs, and facilities, from books and computers to meeting rooms and study spaces.

Of note: What's now the Library's Waldo Branch was once a small outpost – the Southwest Branch – at Kansas City's old Southwest High School on Wornall Road. The current facility was called the South Branch when it opened in December 1988, touting an electronic center with IBM PC and Apple IIE computers, electric typewriters, and printers.



Above, the 125-year-old Westport Branch is the oldest branch in the Kansas City Public Library system. Left, inside the branch in the 1950s.



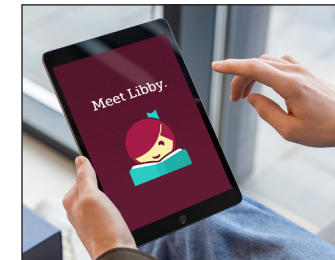
Westport Branch

118 Westport Rd.
Opened: 1898 (as the Allen Library).
Joined KCPL system in 1899.

THE OLDEST AND one of the most history-steeped branches in the Kansas City Public Library system celebrated its 125th year as an anchor of the Westport community in February 2023. Originally opened in 1898 as the Allen Library, it joined KCPL when Westport was annexed into Kansas City late the following year. It was the system's first expansion beyond downtown and the Main Library.

Today, the branch serves an area stretching well beyond its immediate neighborhood, with demand high among seniors and others needing access to computers and the internet, groups looking for public meeting space, and those in need of passport processing and connections to vital social services.

Of note: "Allen Library" remains inscribed over the front entrance, honoring the man who championed its establishment in the late 1800s: former Jackson County Presiding Judge Arthur M. Allen, who was a member of the Westport school board.



Digital Branch

Opened: 2013

BEYOND THE HUNDREDS of thousands of items in its physical collection, the Library provides a wealth of digital materials and services through its 24/7 Digital Branch – from eBooks and downloadable audio books and music to dozens of databases, including the complete *Kansas City Star* archives, and other electronic resources. Get help with homework, finding a job, or learning a new language. The Digital Branch oversees the Library's main website as well as kchistory.org, which houses nearly 26,000 historical images and other documents in the Library's Missouri Valley Special Collections.

Of note: The Library offers two award-winning websites illuminating momentous periods in Kansas City-area history. *Civil War on the Western Border* (civilwaronthewesternborder.org) spotlights the border war that shook the Missouri-Kansas region from 1854 to 1865. The *Pendergast Years: Kansas City in the Jazz Age & Great Depression* (pendergastkc.org) brings to digital life the raucous period in the 1920s and '30s when political boss Tom Pendergast ruled Kansas City's government and criminal underworld.



Above and left, inside the Central Library's stately Missouri Valley Room, which houses the Library's history department, the Missouri Valley Special Collections.

Missouri Valley Special Collections

Opened: 1960

THE MISSOURI VALLEY Special Collections is the Library's repository of local and regional history, holding thousands of books, manuscripts, photographs, maps, postcards, and other records that the MVSC makes available to researchers and others in the general public. Dating to 1960, when it was housed in the old Main Library at 12th and McGee streets, the MVSC now occupies a beautifully appointed space – the Missouri Valley Room – on the fifth floor of the downtown Central Library. More than 25,000 items, plus an extensive local history index pointing to articles in books and other publications and in other special collections, can be accessed digitally through kchistory.org.

Of note: Among the MVSC's many notable collections are the Ramos Collection of books and records on African American history and culture; the collection of more than 16,000 vintage postcards donated in 1996 by Mrs. Sam Ray; the Folly Theater Collection of vintage burlesque and other performing arts ephemera related to the 123-year-old theater in downtown Kansas City; and the Stockyards Collection of maps, photos, and blueprints documenting the all-but-vanished livestock industry in Kansas City's West Bottoms.

The Community Bookshelf



The striking Community Bookshelf, accentuating the parking garage across Baltimore Avenue from the Central Library, became a downtown landmark itself after its installation in 2004.

THE KANSAS CITY Public Library's downtown parking garage – a *parking garage!* – has been a popular landmark for the better part of two decades, its nearly 26-foot-high rendition of a bookshelf captivating visitors and regularly drawing inquiries from internet wanderers around the world. The Community Bookshelf, spanning the south façade of the garage, was designed and installed in 2004 in conjunction with the opening of the Central Library across the street. It showcases 22 book spines with 42 titles ranging from *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Charlotte's Web* to the more Kansas City-connected *Mrs. Bridge*, *Tom's Town: Kansas City and the Pendergast Legend*, and Negro Leagues baseball star Buck O'Neil's autobiography *I Was Right on Time*. Another art installation on the east side of the garage, *The Kansas City Connection* by local artist Bob Price Holloway, features notable figures in the city's history.

Of note: The garage location at Ninth Street and Baltimore Avenue was home to the Sam S. Shubert Theater from 1906-36. Among others, a young Harry S. Truman attended shows there. It was razed to make room for a parking structure.

Library Honors (Since 2008)

THE KANSAS CITY Public Library earned the nation's highest honor for libraries, the National Medal for Museum and Library Service, in 2008. Presented by the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services, it recognizes "outstanding institutions that make significant and exceptional contributions to their communities."

The 15 years since then have brought many more honors for both institutional and individual achievement:

2008 – Awarded the National Medal for Museum and Library Service by the Institute of Museum and Library Services

2013 – Honored as a 5-Star library by *Library Journal*

2014 – Awarded a regional Emmy, along with Kansas City PBS, for a Meet the Past program spotlighting celebrated African American horse trainer and equestrian showman Tom Bass

2014 – Awarded the American Library Association's Excellence in Library Programming Award

2014 – The Library's historical website *Civil War on the Western Border: The Missouri-Kansas Conflict, 1854-1865* awarded the Roy Rosenzweig Prize for Innovation in Digital History by the American Historical Association

2015 – Awarded a regional Emmy, along with Kansas City PBS, for a Meet the Past program spotlighting preeminent African American writer, folklorist, and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston

2015 – April Roy, manager of the Library's L.H. Bluford Branch, given the I Love My Librarian Award by the American Library Association, Carnegie Corporation of New York, and New York Public Library, recognizing "the accomplishments of exceptional public, school, college, community college, or university librarians"

2016 – Honored as a 5-Star library by *Library Journal*

2017 – One of three recipients of the LibraryAware Community Award from *Library Journal*,

recognizing the libraries' value to their respective communities

2017 – Recipient of the American Library Association's Paul Howard Award for Courage, given biannually for "unusual courage for the benefit of library programs or services"

2017 – Steve Woolfolk, the Library's director of programming and marketing, awarded the Lemony Snicket Prize for Noble Librarians Faced with Adversity, established by the bestselling author and the American Library Association to recognize individuals who have "faced adversity with integrity and dignity intact"

2017 – Recipient of the Humanities Award for Exemplary Community Achievement from the Missouri Humanities Council

2017 – Recipient of the Consensus Civility Award, recognizing institutions and individuals working across differences to improve the Kansas City community

2017 – Honored as a 5-Star library by *Library Journal*

2018 – Kaitie Stover, director of readers' services, selected for NoveList's Margaret E. Monroe Library Adult Services Award, honoring a librarian "who has brought distinction to the profession's understanding and practice or services for adults"

2018 – Won, with public television affiliate Kansas City PBS, the 2018 Leadership in History Award from the American Association for State and Local History for the Library's Big Read initiative and related activities revolving around

Tim O'Brien's book *The Things They Carried*

2018 – Named one of the Top Innovators for 2018 (honorable mention) by the Urban Library Council for the Library's Be Smart Safe Gun Storage program

2018 – Honored as a 5-Star library by *Library Journal*

2018 – Won the Missouri Library Association's Community Partnership Award, with the regional nonprofit Consensus, "for developing a partnership that benefits members of their shared community"

2019 – The Library's historical website *The Pendergast Years: Kansas City in the Jazz Age and Great Depression* selected for the 2019 Autry Public History Prize from the Western History Association

2019 – Won an Award of Excellence from the American Association for State and Local History for the historical website *The Pendergast Years: Kansas City in the Jazz Age & Great Depression*

2019 – Won the Jackson County Historic Society's Digital History Award for the Pendergast website

2019 – Honored as a 5-Star library by *Library Journal*

2020 – Crosby Kemper, KCPL's executive director since 2005, confirmed by the U.S. Senate as executive director of the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)

2020 – The Library's Street Sheet won a Top Innovator award in the category of Race & Social Equity

from the Urban Libraries Council, recognizing it as one of 10 top library innovations of the year

2020 – Honored as a 5-Star library by *Library Journal*

2020-21 – North-East Branch Manager Amanda Rodriguez served as president of the American Library Association's Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA)

2022 – Shared the American Association for State and Local History's Award of Excellence with two institutional partners, the Local Investment Commission (LINC) and Black Archives of Mid-America, for the 2021 Kansas City Black History project

2022 – Named Community Partner of the Year by the Kansas City nonprofit Urban Community Connections, which connects underserved families and individuals with critical resources

2022 – Named Partner of the Year by the Housing Authority of Kansas City

2022 – Won a silver Philly Award from Kansas City's Nonprofit Connect for "excellence in marketing and communications"

2023 – Won the Urban Libraries Council Top Innovator Award in the Operations & Management category for a new collection development service, Request It: Collaborative Acquisitions

2023 – Cindy Hohl, the Library's director of policy analysis and operational support, elected president of the American Library Association for 2024-25

2023 – Youth Librarian Helen Li won the Missouri Library Association's Outstanding New Librarian Award for "significant contribution to the improvement and advancement of library and information services"

LIBRARY TIMELINE (Continued from page 15)

2013

The Digital Branch opens – 24 hours a day, seven days a week – overseeing the Library's public-facing digital resources including its main website, online catalog, e-book lending, and research and educational databases.



2013

The Library launches its first digital history website, *Civil War on the Western Border: The Missouri Kansas Conflict, 1854-1865* (civilwaronthewesternborder.org). It receives four national awards from historical and museum associations, most notably the 2014 Roy Rosenzweig Prize for Innovation in Digital History from the American Historical Association.

Alvin Sykes (left) is named Library's first Scholar in Residence. The self-taught human rights activist became a Library fixture in compiling research that convinced Congress to enact the Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act of 2008.

2014

The Library and partnering Kansas City PBS receive the first of two regional Emmy Awards for Meet the Past programming, this one spotlighting celebrated African American horse trainer and equestrian showman Tom Bass.

2018

Voters give 83-percent approval to an 8-cent increase the Library's property tax-based operating levy, the first in 22 years. It is earmarked to upgrade facilities and sustain the Library's collections and menu of children's, family, senior, and other services.

2019

The Library implements a new Freedom From Fines policy, becoming one of the nation's first public library systems to permanently eliminate late fees in book lending.

Crosby Kemper III, the Library's director for nearly 15 years, receives a presidential nomination to head the Institute of Museums and Library Services. He begins a four-year term in January 2020.



FRIENDS, YOUNG FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY LEND CRITICAL SUPPORT

The Friends of the Kansas City Public Library marks its 40th year of invaluable support in 2024. In that time, the group of dedicated volunteers has greatly enhanced the Library experience, raising funds, backing Library campaigns, and serving exceptionally as ambassadors in the community.

The young professionals in the Young Friends of the Library provide similarly critical support of the Library's mission to advance literacy and learning and promote civic engagement.

Since organizing in 1984, the Friends of the Library have left an indelible mark on the Library system. The organization donated to new and renovating branches, including a \$100,000 contribution to the campaign to transform the historic former First National Bank building into the downtown Central Library in the early 2000s. It originated the popular Off the Wall summer film series, which offers outdoor screenings on the Central Library's Rooftop Terrace, and supports the Library's Books to Give program, putting free books in the hands of children through community and school events or social service agencies. The Friends have been active in the Library's Freedom to Read campaign, pushing back against bans or challenges of books and other materials in libraries and schools. And they lent essential support to the successful 2018 levy campaign.

Every year since 1984, the Friends have collected and organized thousands of discarded Library books and other items for sale to the community.

Among other places, you'll find Young Friends of the Library assisting in Off the Wall screenings every summer. The group partnered with KC Streetcar in conducting "Dear KC: A Locally Inspired Poetry Contest" in celebration of National Poetry Month in March and April 2023.

Want to be a part of the Friends or Young Friends? Go to kclibraryfriends.org/join.

Members of both the Friends and Young Friends of the Kansas City Public Library enjoy a 2017 fundraising event.



Philanthropy

150 Years of the Kansas City Public Library: A Philanthropic Legacy

SINCE ITS INCEPTION, the Kansas City Public Library has stood as a symbol of Kansas Citians' unwavering philanthropic spirit, as a beacon of knowledge and testament to community collaboration. Founded by a small group of advocates who pooled their resources to purchase the initial set of encyclopedias that laid its foundation, the Library boasts a century and a half of remarkable growth and transformation.

That growth has been – and remains – deeply intertwined with the generosity of its patrons. Two pivotal moments in recent history are indicative.

In the early 2000s, amid an effort to revitalize Kansas City's urban core, a visionary alliance of civic and philanthropic leaders came together to establish a new home for the Library's downtown location. Without them, the magnificent Central Library at 10th and Main streets would not exist.

A few years later, through the creation of a public affairs department and its signature events series, funded by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, the Library deepened its commitment to providing engaging, accessible content to the community. For the first time, Kansas Citians could listen to and interact with leading authors, scholars, and visionaries. All, without charge, at their public library.

The Library's philanthropic journey is long and varied. The challenging days of the COVID-19 pandemic drew all manner of support from many sources. Contributions large and small, from stalwart supporters and new friends, poured in. During the COVID-related shutdown, that support enabled the Library to serve as a lifeline to digitally disconnected patrons through the provision of Wi-Fi signals outside all 10 of its locations, the availability of wireless hot spots, and three mobile services vehicles.

In the most uncertain of times, Kansas Citians could rely on the Library as a source of stability.

As we celebrate the 150-year history of the Kansas City Public Library, we salute the enduring philanthropic spirit that has made it the civic and community anchor it is today, a trusted and accessible source of information, technology, and critical day-to-day support.

Preserving Your Freedom to Read

EVEN AS THE Kansas City Public Library celebrates the 150th anniversary of its founding, as we take pride in the vital services we provide and the indispensability of all libraries to the communities they serve, challenges to what we hold most dear – the freedom to read – continue to mount.

We have been one of the most vocal libraries in Missouri in responding: Efforts to ban or restrict access to books and other literary resources are misguided, unhealthy, and harmful to a free society.

Organized factions are targeting titles they deem objectionable, the subject matter often involving racial and sexual (particularly LGBTQ) identity. States are backing them with legislation and other measures, including a new administrative rule enacted by Missouri's secretary of state.

Those behind the challenges cite a need for parental engagement and oversight. For libraries, that's already a central tenet. The Kansas City Public Library encourages parents and guardians to be interested and involved, to serve as arbiters of what their children — *their own children* — read, see, and hear.

They shouldn't be empowered to impose their personal preferences on others, much less on an entire community.

Libraries are unequivocally inclusive, their buildings, resources, and services offered to everyone without charge. Their collections should, and do, mirror that wide representation, understanding that what one person might see as objectionable in the pages of a book, others see as a reflection of themselves and their experiences and a reason to feel less alone.

A broad collection serves broad interests. Narrowed choices promote exclusion.



LIBRARY TIMELINE

2020

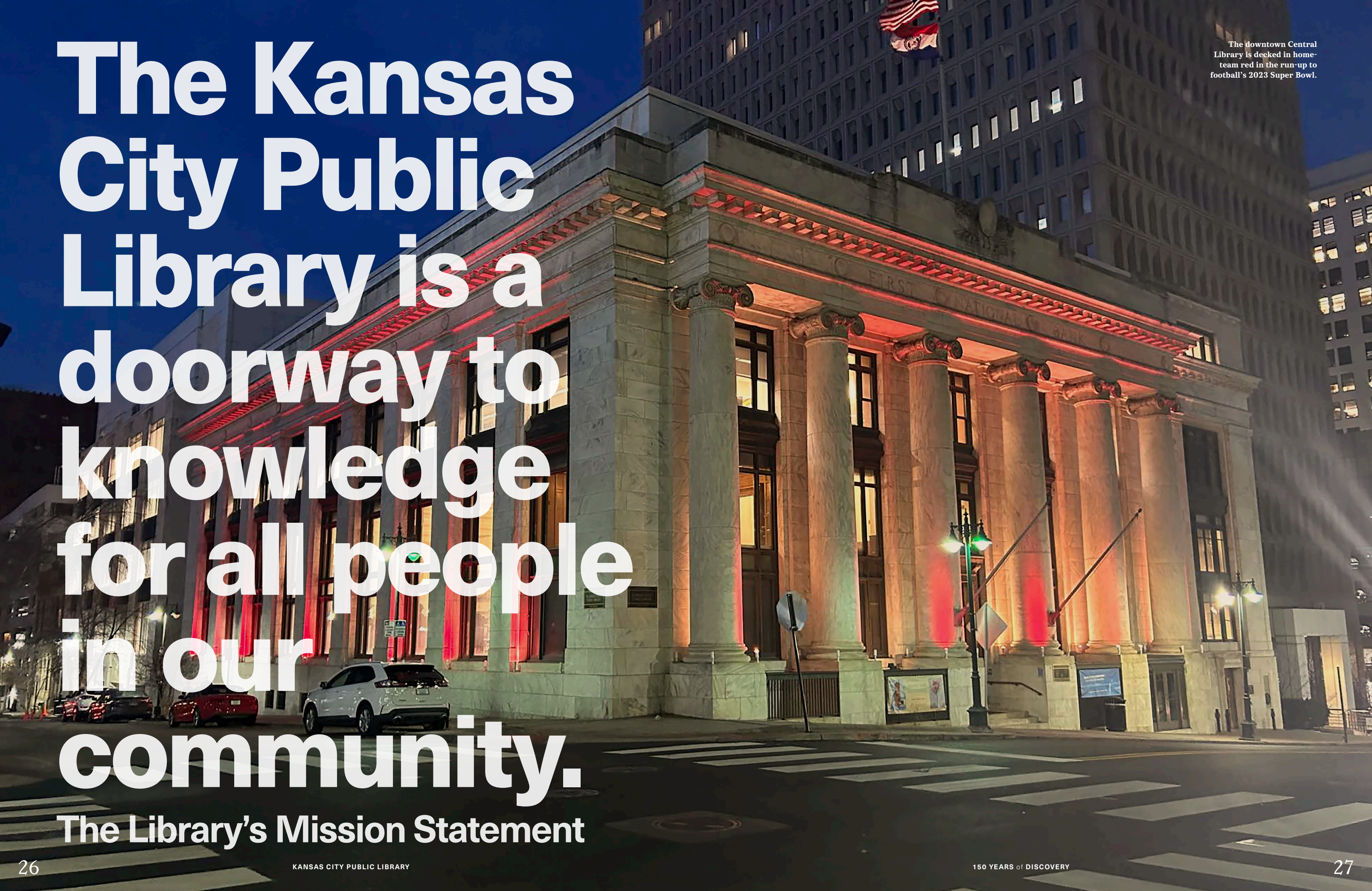
Amid the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and a citywide stay-at-home order, the Library closes its physical locations in March. It joins libraries across the country in buttressing digital resources and devising and employing other innovations to deliver services and resources. A phased-in reopening of physical locations begins in May.

2021

The Library, the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and five other Missouri universities present the inaugural Maya Angelou Book Award to poet Threa Almontaser for her collection *The Wild Fox of Yemen*. The annual national honor recognizes notable new releases of American fiction and poetry focusing on social justice and inclusion.

2023

Cindy Hohl, the Library's director of policy analysis and operational support, is elected president of the American Library Association for 2024-25.



The downtown Central Library is decked in home-team red in the run-up to football's 2023 Super Bowl.

The Kansas City Public Library is a doorway to knowledge for all people in our community.

The Library's Mission Statement



Cindy Hohl



Crosby Kemper III

HOHL, KEMPER STEP INTO NATIONAL LEADERSHIP ROLES

The scope of the Kansas City Public Library's influence is underscored by the ascension of two members of its family to current positions of national leadership.

Cindy Hohl, the Library's director of policy analysis and operational support, assumes the presidency of the American Library Association in July 2024. Elected by the membership of the national organization in April 2023, she's serving now as president-elect.

Hohl will be the first ALA president ever from a Kansas City-area library and the first from Missouri in 90 years.

A member of the Santee Sioux Nation of Nebraska, she is the second Native American to hold the office, following the University of Texas' Loriene Roy in 2007-08. Hohl served as president of the American Indian Library Association in 2020-21.

She joined KCPL in 2017 as director of branch operations.

Crosby Kemper III, who served nearly 15 years as executive director of the Kansas City Public Library, is in his fourth and final year as director of the Washington, D.C.-based Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Nominated for the position by President Donald Trump, he was confirmed by the U.S. Senate in January 2020.

IMLS, an independent federal agency, is the primary source of federal support for the nation's libraries and museums through grant making, research, and policy development.

Kemper oversaw the Library from 2005 to the end of 2019. He orchestrated a renaissance, making special events programming a nationally renowned signature and establishing KCPL as a local and national leader in the promotion of digital literacy and access. His tenure brought KCPL an array of awards including the IMLS' National Medal for Museum and Library Service.

Library Leadership

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- Claudia Oñate Greim** *Vice President*
- Laura Dominik** *Secretary-Treasurer*
- Billie Howard Barnes**
- Jonathan Kemper**
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Library Management

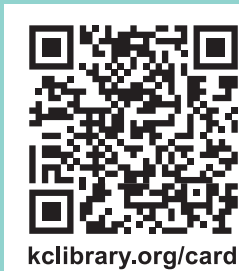
- John Herron** *Director and Chief Executive*
- Debbie Siragusa** *Assistant Director*
- Carrie Coogan** *Deputy Director for Public Affairs and Community Engagement*
- Crystal Faris** *Deputy Director of Youth and Family Engagement*
- Joel Jones** *Deputy Director of Library Services*
- Margaret Perkins-McGuinness** *Deputy Director of Philanthropy*
- Teresa Bolton** *Director of Central Library Operations*
- Melissa Carle** *Director of Information Systems*
- Jeremy Drouin** *Manager of Missouri Valley Special Collections*
- Angela Fencl** *Director of Finance*
- Kim Gile** *Director of Branch Services and Engagement*
- Cindy Hohl** *Director of Policy Analysis and Operational Support*
- Mary Olive Joyce** *Director of Library Outreach*
- Michael Murphy** *Human Relations Manager*
- April Roy** *Director of Employee Success*
- Deborah Stoppello** *Director of Library Collections*
- Kaite Mediatore Stover** *Director of Readers' Services*
- Karen Weitzel** *Director of Human Resources*
- Steven Woolfolk** *Director of Programming and Marketing*
- Heather Pedersen** *Manager of Executive Services*



Join the Journey To Discovery: Get a Library Card

If you're already one of the more than 200,000 card-carrying patrons of the Kansas City Public Library, thank you. We love serving you. If not, we're here for you, too – and can help you get a card of your own.

Scan this code, visit our website, kclibrary.org, or come to any of the Library's 10 locations. Your pass to information, education, entertainment, and opportunity awaits.



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