From the director

We have reached a significant achievement in the 156-year history of Multnomah County Library. On March 5, the Multnomah County Library District Board voted to refer a bond measure to voters on the November 2020 ballot for funding the expansion of library space in Multnomah County. This measure would fund the building, re-building and renovation of seven public library locations, including a new East County flagship library; add an automated sorting and storage facility; and increase broadband speeds at all libraries.

Even as the library plans for the future, we certainly aren't slowing down on the present! The library's first automated materials handling system will be installed at Midland Library in April. This important upgrade will help us get library items to patrons more quickly and efficiently, and provide a simple and easy way for patrons to check in their items and get a receipt. Equally as important, it supports the wellbeing of library employees by reducing the need to check in and sort thousands of items by hand. We are excited about how this materials technology will transform library service.

Another critical effort the library is undertaking will be to provide outreach, awareness and support for the 2020 United States Census. Following the direction of Commissioner Lori Stegmann, the library will be joining other regional partners to ensure members of our community have the technology and information they need to complete the Census.

I continue to be so proud of this library system and the vital services it provides for our growing community. Thank you for all your continued support of your Multnomah County Library!

Sincerely,
Vailey Oehlke
Director of Libraries
Meet Youth Librarian Carla Davis

As Carla Davis knows well, library storytime is a playful and magical experience — a time full of singing, dancing, playing, and yes — also reading stories. Storytime programs enable Carla to introduce babies and toddlers to the library, while also connecting with parents about ways to continue to support their child’s literacy and learning.

“The library is about exploration, and I love that I get to bring that to children,” said Carla.

Carla, or even “Ms. Carla” as some of her young storytime attendees often like to call her, is a youth librarian at Midland Library, and she organizes several storytimes each week, in addition to serving as a storytime mentor teaching other library staff how to build age appropriate storytime curriculum and connect with young patrons. Carla is also part of Multnomah County Library’s Black Cultural Library Advocates (BCLA) team, which focuses on bringing culturally relevant materials, programs and services to the Black community.
Carla started her career with Multnomah County Library as a clerk. She later went on to earn her Masters in Library Science from Pratt University in New York. She’s worked with various libraries such as Atlanta Fulton Public, and Shearman and Sterling Law Library as an intern. Like many library professionals, she was drawn to a career in the library from a love of books.

Currently, Carla is working with a team of library staff on a community engagement project with the Coalition of Communities of Color aimed at helping prepare Black children ages 0-6, and their families, for kindergarten. This project is led by Multnomah County Library and made possible by gifts to The Library Foundation, including grants from Meyer Memorial Trust and The Collins Foundation. Recently, she initiated a survey at the World Arts Foundation's 2020 Martin Luther King, Jr. program in Portland. It included parents of Black children ages 0-6, and surveyed their awareness of library storytimes and services.

“It is my hope that as our Education Equity team learns more about the needs of parents and educators, that Multnomah County Library will be a major conduit through which educational gaps will be filled in even more creative ways as a result of these and other kinds of assessments.”

Carla’s reach extends beyond the Midland community — she was recently nationally recognized by the American Library Association, and awarded the Penguin Random House Young Readers Group Award for her comprehensive programming efforts at Midland Library. Beyond organizing and delivering numerous weekly storytimes, Carla has hosted a teen-led Teen Talent Showcase and organized a Black History Gospel Timeline that shows how gospel music developed from the 18th century to present day. Carla will be acknowledged for her award at the American Library Association conference in June 2020.

“Being in a library is the best kind of work,” she said. “I love to be in an environment where I can theoretically read — even though in reality I’m usually busy preparing for programs, working with community organizations, and helping youth and families navigate the library.”

After more than 20 years in library service, Carla sees the library evolving as a hub for the community, especially as people look to the library for services beyond books and traditional programs.

“We are continuing to evolve and encompass more types of learning, resources and activities. We want to meet people where they’re at and let them know, 'the library has something for you.'”
Winning Bike to Books designs installed near libraries

The 2019 Bike to Books winners are having their designs installed on streets across Portland, thanks to the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT).

Sophia, a patron at Gregory Heights Library, designed the winning entry, “Unicorn,” [pictured top left] in the 3rd-6th grade category. Her design is now in the bike lane at NE 77th and NE Sandy St. in Portland, near Gregory Heights Library.

Midland Library patron Abby designed the winning entry, “Beach Biking Jelly,” [pictured top right] in the Pre-K-2nd grade category. Her design is in the bike lane at NE 122nd Ave and NE Stark St. in Portland, near Midland Library.

In partnership with PBOT, the library will kick off the 2020 Bike to Books program bike lane design contest on May 1 to celebrate Bike Month. Youth can pick up a coloring sheet from any library location or download one from biketobooks.com. In addition to the coloring contest, some libraries will offer special bike-themed storytimes and displays. Patrons are encouraged to ride their bike to the library.
Library to support Census 2020 outreach efforts

The library is joining Multnomah County, along with hundreds of libraries across the country, to support the 2020 United States Census. Commissioner Lori Stegmann is leading the effort in convening the library along with regional partners. Census efforts are underfunded at the federal level, and for the first time, people will participate in the census mostly online. Patrons can complete their census form at the library beginning later this month.

Census counts of people across Oregon determine legislative districts, business investment, representation in Congress and federal funding of critical services (nearly $14 billion per year for things like school lunch, food assistance and health care).

The library is well aligned to leverage its work in communities to help people participate. The library is focused on providing space at the library for census efforts; providing help to patrons who are not confident with technology or who have reference questions about the census; and increasing awareness about the census.

Patron comments

“As a freelance writer, I use the library once a week as a workplace. Being at Cap Hill branch always improves my mood. Books do that for me. Today I needed help printing and scanning. Wow, customer service was excellent. Knowledgeable staff! My stressful day was improved 100%. Forget Disney — the Multnomah County Library (Cap Hill) is the happiest place on Earth! Great staff, clean, welcoming to all, safe place.” — Molly, February 2020

“I was in trouble to get my W-2 Form in the internet because I don't have enough computer skills. And Library worker her name is Karen helped me to find it very quickly. So I very appreciate her help. It's very good that you have such nice workers in your library.” — Irina, February 2020

In the news

2020 Portland-area voters could decide six different bonds, taxes, funding measures (KATU, March 3)
Voters may be asked to fund larger Capitol Hill Library branch (Southwest Connection, February 25)
Letter to the Editor: We don't need new, expanded libraries (Gresham Outlook, February 20)
Portland events honor Black History Month throughout February (KGW.com, February 13)
Multnomah County Wants to Build Your Dream Library ... in Gresham (Portland Monthly, February 7)
Book Report: Novel tackles what it means to be Native (Portland Tribune, January 22)

Upcoming events

Black Queen You are Beautiful
Saturday, March 7 and 14, 3 pm
North Portland Library

Acompañanos y aprende como hacer dulces churros / Come learn how to make churros
Thursday, March 12, 4 pm
Gresham Library

Japanese Koto Concert for Families
Saturday, March 14, 11 am
Sellwood-Moreland Library

Somatic Exercise: Learn to Move Well So You Can Live Well
Sunday, March 15, 12:30 pm
Northwest Library

Bollywood and Bhangra Dance Workshops
Tuesday, March 17, 4 pm
Gresham Library

Clackamas Tribes of the Willamette River
Tuesday, March 17, 6:30 pm
Capitol Hill Library

Babysitter Training (camp for teens)
March 21-22
St. Johns Library

Hand Block Printing from India
Monday, March 23, 2 pm
Hollywood Library

Spy and Detective Science Camp
March 24-26
Woodstock Library

Know Your Rights for People Experiencing Houselessness
Thursday, March 26, 12 pm
Central Library