

{ literature AND learning }



For over 200 years in America, libraries have served as an oasis to the public, opening up new worlds of information to those that otherwise might not be able to access it. Shelf by shelf, book by book, individuals come to glimpse future possibilities for themselves that maybe weren't there before.

Tulsa's own Central Library recently utilized a \$55 million renovation to revitalize a city icon and establish state-of-the-art technological resources to push the forefronts of imagination building that, for many, begin within a library.

"The Central Library first opened its doors in 1965," says Kim Johnson, Tulsa City-County Library's CEO. "The library was well-used by all, including school groups, businessmen and women. It was also where nationally known authors visited and where many discovered a love for reading."

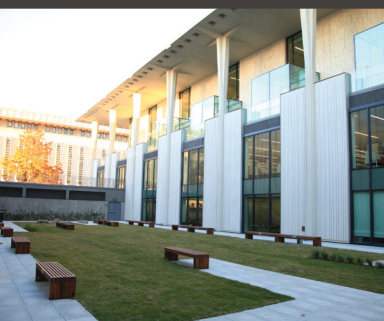
Johnson explains that after 50 years, the library's systems were at the end of their life expectancy and needed a technology infrastructure to better reflect and accommodate modern-day needs. "The end result [of the renovation] is a 21st century library with a combination of creative learning spaces, outdoor spaces, and great reading spaces where people can convene, collaborate and create. The new Central Library has something for everyone."

Just by walking through the Central Library's front doors, it can be hard to decide what to do first — do you grab a latte from the Starbucks inside and cozy up in one of the dozens of reading nooks available? Or head to the expansive DVD section and load up on movies — both new and old — to watch over the weekend? Maybe you are in search of a quiet place

to catch up on work and choose to seclude yourself in one of the eight private, glassed-in reading rooms on the second floor. There are also 149 public access computers dispersed among the three floors to work from.

And if you have a creative project to complete, the Central Library provides cutting-edge technology for you to work with, including two 3-D printers, a laser engraver, vinyl cutter, HD photographic printer, a Desktop CNC Mill, and screen-printing equipment — all located within what Central calls the Maker Space.

"The purpose of The Renée F. Neuwald Trust Maker Space is for the people of Tulsa County to help foster new ideas, work on creative projects, and share their knowledge with others through direct experimentation in a supportive community environment," Johnson states. "Also located within the Maker Space is the Audio Lab, which provides resources to create, mix, and record your own music or vocals, perform a podcast, or any other audio-related



The new Tulsa City-County Central Library is much more than a restored city icon; it's a dynamic, inspiring environment for Tulsa dreamers of all ages to connect and work together to conceptualize a better future for this generation and beyond.

BY TIFFANY DUNCAN

PHOTOS BY MARC RAINS AND JOHN FANCHER





needs using industry-standard software. The Audio Lab has a small collection of musical instruments that you can use, or you can even bring in your own equipment to perform. All resources within the Maker Space are free of charge and available to anyone who holds a current library card.”

And if you are needing a place to accommodate a large number of people for a meeting or brainstorming session, Central Library has also built an area called the Future Lab — a space designed to not only host many people but also work with the group discussion to see ideas realized.

“The Future Lab is part of the Pocahontas Greadington Learning and Creativity Center, located on the lower level,” she says. “It’s an innovative space designed for conversation, collaboration, and creation. Features include easily movable furniture for customized configurations, an integrated audio/visual system and a green room for performers. It is also ideal for small stage performances, lectures and team meetings. The Future Lab features writable surfaces and walls that can be opened for a large space, or closed to create multiple smaller spaces.”

In addition to being an advanced, dynamic place to gather as a group, Central also has unique resources available to build the individual imagination as well — like flight simulators, for example. These flight simulators are not the kind you might find in an arcade; quite the opposite, they run a professional-grade software program called XPLANE 10 and are meant to encourage those that might be considering a career path in aviation or engineering.

“Tulsa is home to a huge aviation industry at every level — manufacturing, assembly, and flight,” says Johnson. “Flight simulators are an excellent way to spark an interest in a number of STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics] fields such as physics, dexterity, and mapping.” Like all other resources available at Central Library, the use of the flight simulators is free with a current library card.

And because imagination really begins in childhood, the Play and Learn Area within Central Library is the most hands-on, kid friendly reading space in Tulsa. Every aspect — from the bright colors and geometric patterns to its totally tactile environment — is meant to help little ones learn through touch. The area includes many interactive features, like three skill building play towers that focus on early language development, science, gardening, and cooking.


“The Play and Learn Area is designed to inspire creativity and early learning through play. Each piece in this area has educational aspects built into it. For instance, the world map is made entirely of coins from around the world. The books are also displayed with children in mind, stored not on

shelves but in bins that are at a child’s height and allow for flipping through and looking at covers rather than book spines. The furniture includes gem-shaped, brightly colored seats that children can move and climb on, and seating large enough for parents to sit with a child while sharing a book,” Johnson says.

Another one of Central Library’s areas that both children and adults can enjoy together is the A.R. & Marylouise Tandy Foundation Children’s Garden. This enclosed, courtyard-like space features a jumbo screen that provides a vivid and clear picture, even in bright sunlight.

“We have a few winter movie programs scheduled for families to bundle up, drink warm coffee or hot chocolate, and enjoy a movie,” states Johnson. “Spring will bring several programs to the Children’s Garden, including more movie events, yoga in the garden, outdoor story-times with bubbles and tricycles, art activities that coincide with the First Friday events, as well as regular active outdoor games and science experiments for children.”

As if all of this weren’t enough to spark up creative energy in the Tulsa community, the new Central Library has also added The American Electric Power Foundation Digital Literacy Lab. The Digital Literacy Lab is a hub of imagination-honing tools in the form of various equipment and software, both technical and creative. Here, library patrons can access iMac computers to create digital art on programs like Adobe Creative Suite, as well as utilize digitalization tools for converting old family photo albums and home videos into digital format. Library visitors may also take classes on topics like computer coding, robotics, game design, stop-motion animation, Photoshop, and website development.

Central Library was also completely restructured to be a “green building,” which means its energy systems are efficient, clean, and sustainable. Even the sealants, adhesives, paints, and cleaners used throughout the building actually act to remove harmful chemicals from the air. 

LOCATOR

TULSA CITY-COUNTY LIBRARY

400 Civic Center | Tulsa
918-549-7323
tulsalibrary.org

Monday-Thursday: 9 a.m.-9 p.m.
Friday: 9 a.m.-6 p.m.
Saturday: 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sunday: 1-5 p.m.