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New CEO approved to lead Tulsa City-County Library

The system's current second-in-command will take over institution's top spot

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Posted: Wednesday, November 9, 2016 12:01 am | Updated: 2:57 pm, Wed Nov 9, 2016.



Kimberly Johnson has been promoted to CEO of

By Ginnie Graham News Columnist | 1 comment

After a two-hour executive session on Tuesday, the commission overseeing the Tulsa City-County Library unanimously approved naming the system's second-in-command to lead the public agency starting Jan. 1.

Kimberly Johnson, an 18-year employee with the Tulsa library system, will replace Chief Executive Officer Gary Shaffer, who leaves

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Tulsa City-County Library. Tulsa World file

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Johnson is the first African-American to become the library's top administrator.

Dec. 31 [to take a job at the University of Southern California.](#)

Johnson is the first African-American to become the library's top administrator.

"I have always worked to make the library valuable to the public," Johnson said. "We are known nationally as a 21st-century library, and I will work to continue for it to be the best library system. It will be an honor to serve as CEO."

Johnson grew up in the Bronx borough of New York City. After marrying native Tulsan Earl Johnson, she completed a bachelor of arts degree from the University of Tulsa. She

has a master's degree in library and information science from the University of Oklahoma.

She joined the Tulsa library system in 1998 as the first coordinator of the African-American Resource Center. She was responsible for collecting, preserving and providing access to documents critical to the center's mission.

Johnson established the library's first public tour of Oklahoma's historic all-black towns and the countywide reading initiative, "Tulsa Metro Reads."

In 2005, she was promoted to manager of the South Broken Arrow Library branch and then became the Hardesty Regional Library manager five years later. In 2012, Johnson was promoted to regional director, overseeing 11 of the system's 24 locations.

A year later, Johnson rose to become deputy director/chief innovation officer. In 2015, she was named chief operating officer.

As COO, Johnson often appeared at public hearings and events on behalf of the library and took on the CEO responsibilities when Shaffer was unavailable, including during a [three-month sabbatical he took last year](#) to finish his doctorate.

In his absence during the sabbatical, Johnson announced that a mandated nondisclosure agreement among employees would no longer be required. The forms were criticized for possible violations of the state Open Records Act. She also launched efforts to examine and make recommendations to improve the summer reading program, which hit a 30-year low in participation in 2015.

Commission Chairman Bill Peacher said the board held two meetings to discuss whether to hire a recruiter for a national search, which was the process in 2010.

"When you have a person inside your organization who is very well-trained, very well-qualified and ready to take on the role, that is the least risky course of action to take," Peacher said. "It is good for the community, and it is good for the staff to see that promotion from within is possible."

The commission's approval came after the personnel committee recommended that only Johnson be interviewed and considered as CEO.

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"If you look at her career here at the library, she is an innovator, is thorough and has done a really good job at every task she has been assigned," Peacher said. "She is constantly wanting to learn new things. And, if she makes a mistake, she takes responsibility. I cannot speak highly enough of her. There was never a hesitation by anyone in this room about her."

Johnson's annual salary last year was \$127,500. The library commission and Johnson will negotiate an employment contract with a goal for it to be in place by Dec. 25.

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






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
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Matt Cox posted at 9:07 am on Wed, Nov 9, 2016.

Congrats Mrs. Johnson. Glad they are promoting from within.

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By Jennifer Jones

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