



CELEBRATING
30 years of publishing
Tulsa's Award-winning
City Magazine!



SAVE THE DATE:
TULSA'S 10TH ANNUAL RESTAURANT WEEK
IS COMING SEPTEMBER 10-19TH!

View the special prix fixe menus!



TulsaPeople

[Archive](#) | [Digital edition](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Contact](#) | [About](#) | [My account](#) | [Advertise](#)



- HOME
- PEOPLE
- FOOD & WINE
- ARTS & CULTURE
- LIFE & STYLE
- HOME & GARDEN
- THINGS TO DO
- BLOGS
- PHOTO & VIDEO
- DIRECTORIES

TULSAPEOPLE / SEPTEMBER 2016 / READING AHEAD

SHARE EMAIL PRINT

Reading ahead

Central Library opens next month after a two-year renovation to catapult the destination into the 21st century.

JANE ZEMEL



The main staircase in the newly renovated Central Library.

Benjamin Franklin could never have imagined everything today's public libraries would provide when he founded the first one in 1731.

Nor could **Melvil Dewey** have known, when he introduced his classification system in 1876, that he'd need many more decimals in 2016 to cover the long list of modern library inventories.

This October, the Tulsa City-County Library completes a two-year, \$53 million renovation to its Central location. The new library offers more programs, technology, databases, meeting spaces and services than ever before. And they're all free, with a library card.

"Today's libraries give people a place to convene, collaborate and create," says **Gary Shaffer**, TCCL CEO, who has focused most of his almost six years in the

position on directing this effort.

21st-century transformation

Tulsa residents will soon see the transformation of a 50-year-old building into a 21st-century library. Mostly, existing space was reconfigured to function better and provide greater flexibility.



GET THE BEST IN ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT AND MORE STRAIGHT TO YOUR INBOX.

[Subscribe to The Insider!](#)

Most popular stories

- [1. Marking time](#)
- [2. House of cards](#)
- [3. Quite the character](#)
- [4. Volunteer spotlight: Kayla Vaughn](#)
- [5. Chris Payne](#)
- [6. Keeping the faith](#)

Featured

[ARCHIVE »](#)



Dodging storms

Frank Mitchell pulled the plug on his TV career for a

Visitors now have easier access to the building through a new main entrance at West Fifth Street and South Denver Avenue.

Convenience centers on every floor offer computers, copiers, Wi-Fi and wireless printers so guests can print from their own devices. Meeting rooms throughout the building can accommodate groups large or small. People who work independently or as freelancers can use the library for professional office or meeting space.



Approximately 400,000 local residents hold Tulsa City-County Library cards, with another 3,500 new cards being issued each month. Individuals can register for a card online at www.tulsalibrary.org/application or in person at any branch.

The redesigned Alfred Aaronson Auditorium will hold up to 200 guests in theater-style seating for public events or author talks. The former search for restrooms and drinking fountains is over because they're in the same location on each level.

Library visitors will be wowed by a floating staircase, impressed by the versatility of a number of retractable glass walls and more than buzzed about the Starbucks near the main entrance. A stylish mix of glass and thin horizontal wood slats throughout give the remodeled structure a modern vibe.

Greening up

One key reason for the building update was behind the scenes — aging heating, cooling, water, lighting and electrical systems. Although the library's facilities and maintenance department had expertly maintained and repaired the existing equipment, "one final breakdown in the heating or cooling systems could have shut down the building," says **Mike Leitch**, capital projects manager.

He compares the old mechanical arsenal to a World War II battleship. And what replaced it is nothing short of the Starship Enterprise.

For heating and cooling, the new library uses the Chilled Beam system.

move to the financial sector.

DAVID HARPER



Notebook: September 2016

Topics of interest to
Tulsans

MORGAN
PHILLIPS



Restaurant Week turns 10

Dine out at some of
the city's best
restaurants in
support of the local
food bank.

NATALIE MIKLES



“It’s a convection process that circulates water like a radiator to save energy,” Leitch says. The system can also chill and store water at non-peak times for extra savings.



Two rainwater storage tanks hold 11,400 gallons for lawn and landscaping irrigation in the Children’s Garden and surrounding landscapes. The equipment was part of a \$1 million gift from AAON Inc., a local manufacturer of HVAC systems.

The renovated building uses green technology wherever possible. Library officials hope to earn LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification, a distinction for buildings that are environmentally compatible and provide a healthy work environment.

Service Central

Beyond the new physical features are the remarkable services now available within the building.

“Libraries are no longer quiet spaces. They’re hubs of activity,” Shaffer says. Gone are the days of shushing librarians.



Tulsa City-County Library CEO Gary Shaffer and Central Library Deputy Director Suanne Wymer

One new space generating excitement is the Greadington Learning and Creativity Center, a facilitator-led space designed to spark creativity. It supports and offers flexible space in a comfortable environment that fosters inspiration and ingenuity for people of all ages with a variety of learning styles and needs. Here, educators at all levels, entrepreneurs, creators, researchers, nonprofit professionals and others will experience collaborative learning. Superintendents, administrators, principals and teachers are invited to gather to discuss big issues or small — anything from a new curriculum to changing the way cars line up in the parking lot.

“It’s a place to solve problems, comfortably and casually,” says **Suanne Wymer**, deputy director of Central Library and a library employee of more than 20 years.

Students can use the space, too. Wymer sees the center as an ideal venue for student council meetings.

“It’s not quite home, not quite school,” she says, describing the area as a neutral venue.

“It’s a place for free thinking about diverse issues: How can we get classmates to eat more vegetables? Or how do we solve world hunger?” Wymer says.

The Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation sponsored the space, which can be divided or blocked off in several different ways.

When asking teens what they wanted in a renovated library location the answer was unexpected.

“They wanted a place to be unplugged,” Wymer says. “If they want technology, they’ll bring their own laptops or tablets. They can choose if they want to work together in the center of the room or alone in a quiet corner.”

All the teens wanted was a strong Wi-Fi signal and outlets to plug in their own devices. Public computers also are available for those of all ages throughout the library.

In the Maker Space, another innovative area, do-it-yourselfers will find sewing machines, 3D printers and an audio lab. Ideally, those using this space can coordinate with other areas of the library for integrated learning.

For instance, rather than just learning how to operate a sewing machine, library guests can sign up for a “Make Your Own Prom Dress” class that ends with a fashion show. Staff members determine the best instructional fit, whether it’s a library staff member or a local professional or hobbyist. Or someone developing a new product on the 3D printer might consult the research department about trademark information or open sourcing.

The American Electric Power Foundation sponsors The Digital Literacy Lab. Visitors can participate in challenges that engage them through STEM-based project and problem solving using a flight simulator, new computer software or a green screen for shooting short films. The lab also offers coding and programming classes for students and adults. The library is currently looking at a national program called Girls Who Code to help develop a semester-long series designed to teach teenage girls to code.

New additions

The library footprint remains basically unchanged, with the exception of two new spaces that add square footage.

First, eight all-glass study rooms on the balcony create scenic enclosures for small group studies or tutoring sessions. Shaffer calls these glass rooms “jewel boxes” and says they are trending in modern libraries.

Second, when Tulsans were asked for input during the renovation planning stage, their No. 1 request was parking. In response, planners added a 143-space garage with eight spaces reserved for fuel-efficient cars, and infrastructure for the later addition of plug-in stations for electric vehicles.

“People come to the library using all different forms of transportation,” Wymer says, so cyclists can now find bike racks outside near the coffee shop and outside the parking garage. Other branch libraries also provide “parking” for bicycles as well as for skateboards.

The area between the main library and garage is the new A.R. and MaryLouise Tandy Children’s Garden. This “outside room,” as Shaffer calls it, includes special temperature controls that keep it 10 percent cooler in the summer and 10 percent warmer in the winter. Guests can come for storytelling, family-focused activities, poetry slams, lectures or Friday night family movies.

Inside, the new children’s area features interactive play-and-learn towers as the main attractions. These artistic structures — designed by an Arizona firm that specializes in features only for public libraries — use shapes and color to invite children to touch and play, while emphasizing pre-literacy skills and activities for parents and caregivers.

Also in the children’s area, shorter shelving units allow more natural light to pour in and make it easier for kids to reach the books they want. Cantilevered lighting throughout the library allows even books on the bottom shelf to be seen. The library staff often displays the books so children see the full covers, not just the spines. That way, young readers can respond to cover art that screams, “Pick me.”

Fewer books, more tech

Reference librarian **Mary Moore** has been a library employee since 1986, when PCs first appeared on the library landscape.

“The growth of computers has broadened the resources we can use — databases, authoritative websites and professional sites — to complement our print resources, making us more well-rounded,” she says.

The Tulsa library system makes available 1.4 million physical books, CDs and movies.

However, “Today’s libraries have fewer books, but more technology,” Shaffer explains.

Digitally, the library offers roughly 44,600 e-books and e-audiobooks, with new titles being added all the time.

Technology is a big draw for the new library.

“There’s a big digital divide in Tulsa,” Wymer says. “Not everyone has access to internet ... to smartphones, computers or Wi-Fi.

“Others who are considering upgrading can come and practice with new technology before buying,” she adds. “Borrowers can test drive new software or (a) CAD program before investing.”

The renovated library is designed to meet changes ahead. Raised floors in computer areas mean the technology is located in a place that can be reconfigured quickly and inexpensively.

“This makes it easy for the library to be maneuverable, strategic and agile,” Wymer says.

Although library guests will continue to use desktop computers, the trend is away from stationary to more mobile options.

“People are bringing their own laptops and tablets to connect to the library’s free Wi-Fi,” she says. “Most take their device to a more comfy space — that quiet away space.” Additionally, patrons can check out mobile devices from the library to use anywhere in the building.

Wymer looks forward to opening day.

“I’ll be wearing sneakers and running all over, watching people being awed by the new surroundings,” she says. “I want to see little kids run to the kids’ area ... to help people discover the perfect vehicle or resource to fulfill their needs, and the perfect spot to do so at Central Library. It’s going to be like nothing else in Tulsa.”



Reference librarian Mary Moore

The library does *that*?

Beyond lending books, CDs and movies, the Tulsa City-County Library is host to a wide selection of services and loanable goods — all for free.

1. Download music with Freegal Music, a database that allows five free song downloads a week and streaming.

2. Get help with homework when school is back in session.

3. Start a vegetable garden — the library will loan seeds. If seeds checked out grow and produce seed, they can be dried and returned for growers next season.

4. Find tools to help with tax preparation.

5. Ask about book delivery service or books by mail for homebound readers.

6. Use Tulsa County Land Records to find out who owns a piece of property.

7. Search your family tree in the genealogy center.

8. Take an online class. The Universal Class database offers online classes for career or leisure time, including crafts, entrepreneurship, accounting, real estate, pet care, mathematics, cooking, writing and more.

9. Use the business center guide for patents, trademarks and copyrights.





Legus Perryman: Beryl Ford Collection/Rotary Club of Tulsa, Tulsa City-County Library and Tulsa Historical Society

10. Need a legal form? The library has them.

11. Read newspapers and magazines from all over the world with PressReader.

12. Teach yourself to speak one of over 60 languages — from Mandarin to Cherokee — with Mango Languages.

13. Prepare for the GED test.

14. Keep track of holds, due dates and more with Library Elf.

15. Need cake pans? The Nathan Hale branch lends them.

One book, one Tulsa

One Book, One Tulsa is a community-wide reading initiative presented by the Tulsa City-County Library in conjunction with the Mental Health Association Oklahoma's 2016 National Zarrow Mental Health Symposium. Steve Lopez's nonfiction book "The Soloist: A Lost Dream, an Unlikely Friendship and the Redemptive Power of Music" discusses the themes of homelessness and mental illness.

Readers can expand their One Book, One Tulsa experience by attending a presentation

by Lopez from 7-8:30 p.m., Sept. 28, at Central Library, providing a sneak peek of the renovated structure. At 7 p.m., Sept. 29, the library will host a screening of the movie “The Soloist” in the new A.R. and MaryLouise Tandy Foundation Children’s Garden.

On Oct. 1, an opening ceremony with featured speakers, a ribbon cutting and the official grand opening of Central Library will commence at 10 a.m., featuring fun for the whole family.

Visit www.tulsalibrary.org for more information.

*This article appears in the [September 2016 issue of TulsaPeople](#)
Did you like what you read here? [Subscribe to TulsaPeople](#) »*

0 Comments

Sort by



 Facebook Comments Plugin

[Home](#) | [People](#) | [Food & Wine](#) | [Arts & Culture](#) | [Life & Style](#) | [Home & Garden](#) | [Things To Do](#) | [Blogs](#) | [Photo & Video](#) | [Directories](#)

[Archive](#) | [Digital edition](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Contact](#) | [About](#) | [My account](#) | [Advertise](#)

Copyright 2016 Langdon Publishing. All rights reserved.

powered by  | [A Godengo Technology](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)