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Facelift At Fifty

Celebration, ongoing renovation marks golden anniversary.

By *Sharon McBride* on May 21, 2015



*The Central Library in downtown Tulsa opened 50 years ago.
Photo courtesy Tulsa City-County Library.*

The Tulsa Central Library opened its doors in 1965. At the time, the war in Vietnam was escalating, the space race was in full swing, The Rolling Stones were on a world tour, the Voting Rights Act was passed and Malcolm X was assassinated.

In the summer of that year, the new, 135,000-square-foot library opened with a grand ceremony.

This month marks the Central Library's golden anniversary. There will be celebrations throughout the month of June and into July to commemorate the date, says Gary Shaffer, Tulsa City-County Library CEO.

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However, for now, its doors will remain closed due to a \$50 million renovation. Central Library closed on Aug. 30, 2013, so it could endure a multi-level makeover. The anticipated grand reopening date is summer 2016. Each floor is scheduled to be completely renovated to better serve its customers.

“Libraries are no longer book warehouses; they are more about ‘people’ space,” says Shaffer. “Today’s libraries are places where children first discover the world; where people access technology of all kinds, find resources for work and education, build job skills, seek employment, start a business or nonprofit venture, search for health information, gather for meetings, socialize and learn at all stages of life.”

Once complete, the lower level will be a place to convene, says Shaffer. It will include an outdoor children’s garden, which will be used for family movie nights as well as educational programming opportunities.

The second lower level will be a place to cultivate and will include the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation Education and Ideation Center, a place where children and teens learn as well as engage.

The main floor will be a place to create, with a café with outdoor seating, a new

1916	Carnegie Library opens in Tulsa at Third Street and Cheyenne Avenue
1930	First bookmobile rolled across Tulsa
1939	Introduced portagraph machine to photographically reproduced articles
1957	Friends of the Public Library organization is formed
1961	Tulsa County voters approve the creation of the Tulsa City-County Library System
1965	Central Library opens at Fourth Street and Denver Avenue
1971	Tulsa Library Trust established with initial deposit of \$10
1972	Computerized microfiche catalog introduced
1977	Card catalogs replaced by microfiche catalogs
1981	Computerized circulation system tracks check-ins and check-outs
1988	Telephone dial-up access allows computer users to access library catalog
1990	Microfiche catalog replaced with 64 on-line public access computers
1998	Established Web presence for online access to library services
2000	First self-check machines introduced
2002	Transitioned media collection away from VHS to DVD
2006	Downloadable audiobooks introduced
2010	Ebook collections began
2011	Introduced first mobile app
2012	Added streaming music, movies and comics
2013	Added downloadable newspapers and magazines

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materials marketplace, a children's area, a media production lab and a creation station.

*Timeline information courtesy
Tulsa City-County Library.*

The second floor is a place to collaborate. It will include eight, glass-enclosed study rooms, two conference rooms, a center for library innovation, print and electronic collections and a literacy lab, says Shaffer.

The third floor is a place for content. This floor will include a health information center, a nonprofit resource center, a business and legal center, a computer lab, a one-of-a-kind Oklahoma collection, as well as reference and government documents collections, says Shaffer.

Through the years, the Central Library has served thousands of people throughout Tulsa County. It has housed an in-depth research library, a telephone reference service, periodicals and newspapers, a large print collection and several well-used meeting rooms.

When the Central Library was opened in 1965, a dedicatory plaque with a time capsule was placed on the main stairwell. As a part of the 50-year celebration scheduled for this summer, another time capsule will be placed alongside the original one; both are to be opened in 2065.

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