

# Oakland Public Library



2021–2022 Annual Report

## From the Library Director

Dear Friends,

2021-22 was a period of almost continual change for the library, as improved community health conditions allowed for a return to pre-pandemic levels of service.

In April 2022, OPL resumed in-person storytimes at the Main Library and all 16 branch libraries, with offerings for babies, toddlers, preschoolers, and families. And after two years of virtual and “grab & go” summer activities, we were thrilled to plan a full calendar of in-person programs and free lunch service for children and teens in the summer of 2022.

OPL also implemented new Sunday hours at the César E. Chávez Branch in January 2022, which now joins the Main Library and 81st Avenue Branch in providing service to the public seven days each week.

As we remember this past year, it’s important to note that many individuals and families in our community are struggling with critical needs. Often, these needs—for housing, nutrition, physical and mental health care, and more—are far beyond what public libraries can meet. It’s extraordinarily challenging for library staff

to work with so many patrons in crisis. I’d like to acknowledge and thank OPL staff, who show a remarkable commitment to providing high quality service in extremely difficult circumstances.

I’m also tremendously grateful for the support the library receives from the Friends of the Oakland Public Library, the Library Advisory Commission, Branch Friends, and individual library volunteers. Your commitment to the library community is inspiring, and your efforts were crucial to securing the passage of Measure C in June 2022 with an amazing 82% “yes” vote. This vital source of revenue will ensure the long-term financial health of Oakland’s public libraries. My colleagues and I are honored by your investment in the future of OPL.

Please enjoy this annual report, which was made possible by the Friends of the OPL. I hope you’ll be inspired to take advantage of all that the library has to offer in the year ahead.

Sincerely,



Jamie Turbak  
Library Director



Maria del Carmen Cortez, clinical herbalist and permaculturist, leads OPL patrons in a plant walk through Dimond Park. (photo: Doug Zimmerman)

## Rebuilding OPL's Strong Programs

Over the past year, the library cautiously reintroduced pre-pandemic levels of service. We resumed full hours of operation in June 2021 and launched limited in-person programs in the fall. In April 2022, OPL began offering regular, onsite storytimes at all locations, with special sessions for babies, toddlers, preschoolers, and families.

Summer 2022 was an especially exciting time, as we provided 198 in-person programs for children and 124

in-person activities for teens over ten weeks. Through our Lunch at the Library program, volunteers and staff (in partnership with the City of Oakland's Department of Human Services) served 2,795 free lunches to youth ages 0-18.

We were eager to offer these critical library programs in person for the first time since 2019. Attendance at events and participation in the Kids' Summer Reading Program did not reach pre-pandemic levels, but most sites saw more young patrons return as the summer progressed. And those who did visit the library this summer were happy to reconnect with the library community.

In-person programming for adults has also resumed, with educational workshops and book clubs meeting onsite at OPL facilities. Some programs, such as a February 2022 interview with Dolores Huerta, remained online where they were accessible to a larger audience.

OPL was pleased to once again bring our library community together for engaging events and programs in 2021-22. We look forward to more in the year ahead.



Fur, Scales, and Tails at West Oakland Branch. (photo: Doug Zimmerman)



A storytime at Golden Gate Branch. (photo: Doug Zimmerman)

## Art for All

Art is important to every child's development, but arts programming does not reach every child in Oakland's schools. In its 2021 report, nonprofit Arts for Oakland Kids showed that a full 12% of Oakland Unified School District students in grades TK–5 received no regular arts education in the 2021-22 school year.

OPL's Children's Services Department developed a project to make arts education more widely available. Art for All was designed to provide weekly visual arts classes—taught by professional teaching artists with the Museum of Children's Art (MOCHA)—at library sites in neighborhoods that score lowest on Oakland's Equity Indicators Report.

In February 2020, the California State Library awarded OPL a grant to implement our Art for All program. Then the pandemic hit, so MOCHA and the library provided children with take-home art projects and online art workshops for most of the two-year grant period.

**“When I make art, I feel calm and focused. I feel like I'm at peace when I'm making my art. When I draw, it shows that I am happy.”**

**Child Participant**

In-person Art for All workshops began in November 2021 at five OPL locations. Six additional locations began offering in-person programs in December 2021 and January 2022. The demand for workshops was so great at three locations—West Oakland, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Elmhurst branch libraries—that they began hosting two workshops each week.

OPL was thrilled to ultimately receive a new grant of \$175,000 from the California State Library in the spring of 2022. This funding allows OPL to continue Art for All through 2024, bringing art to children who might otherwise go without this crucial programming.

---

Art for All is supported in part by funding provided by the State of California, administered by the California State Library.



Art for All workshop with the Museum of Children's Art at West Oakland Branch. (photo: Doug Zimmerman)

# Oakland Youth Poet Laureate

On May 21, Nadia Elbgal was named the 2022 Oakland Youth Poet Laureate. Mayor Libby Schaaf announced the award at the culmination of a live event during which all seven Finalists performed in the program's first in-person award ceremony since 2019. The program also named high school senior Kaylan Black as Oakland's 2022 Vice Youth Poet Laureate.

OPL and a group of community partners launched the Oakland Youth Poet Laureate program (OYPL) in 2012 as an unprecedented citywide effort to celebrate literacy through poetry and to connect young writers to far-reaching opportunities. Each year, OPL's Teen Services Department accepts submissions from talented Oakland writers ages 13-18 years to become a part of the OYPL community and to be considered for the honor of being named Oakland Youth Poet Laureate.

“It's a blessing to be part of a program where young voices are truly heard, where youth opinions matter, where we are encouraged to represent our city and build on our art in the process.”

Nadia Elbgal, OYPL Laureate

More than a competition, this program creates a community of young poets. The Oakland Youth Poet Laureate and Finalists serve as ambassadors for literacy, arts, and youth expression with ongoing opportunities for performances, projects, and peer support. The Laureate also receives a \$5,000 educational scholarship, generously provided by the Friends of the Oakland Public Library.

In early 2022, program alumna Leila Mottley (2017 & 2018) earned widespread acclaim with the publication of her first novel, *Nightcrawling*. Other recent program participants are now active and engaged students at Brown, Columbia, Harvard, and the Rhode Island School of Design. And many recent OYPL participants who live in the Bay Area continue to support the program by returning for events and mentoring younger cohorts.

OPL is tremendously proud of all the program participants. We are grateful to the Friends of the OPL, volunteer judges, and other community partners who make this important program possible.

View performances by these talented young poets at [OaklandLibrary.org/OYPLperforms](http://OaklandLibrary.org/OYPLperforms).



Oakland Youth Poet Laureate Finalists, Nadia Elbgal, Mayor Libby Schaaf, and Friends of the OPL Vice President Ynez Arce at the Lake Merritt Amphitheater. (photo: Doug Zimmerman)

# AAMLO's Amazing Collections

In 1946, Eugene and Ruth Lasartemay and Jesse and Dr. Marcella Ford began collecting oral histories and artifacts that documented the activities of African Americans in and around Oakland, the Bay Area, and California. After decades of growth and three major organizational changes, this amazing archive became the foundational collection of African American Museum and Library at Oakland (AAMLO) in 1994.

Today, AAMLO is a unique and valuable resource for African American history and culture. It serves as a reference library with a non-circulating collection of 16,000 volumes by and/or about African Americans. The public can access AAMLO's seed library, which has

more than 200 varieties of seeds. AAMLO is also a museum, with original and visiting exhibitions. Moreover, AAMLO houses a valuable archive, rich with more than 160 collections from Black leaders in politics, arts, education, and industry, as well as records from Black churches, civic clubs, and political organizations.

Many of these rich archival resources—including photos, newspapers, pamphlets, oral histories, home movies, and more—have been digitized and are now available online. AAMLO also hosts online and in-person programs which showcase African American culture and history.

Visit AAMLO's beautiful facilities at 659 14th Street or explore the fascinating digital collection at [OaklandLibrary.org/AAMLO](http://OaklandLibrary.org/AAMLO).



(photo: Doug Zimmerman)



(photo: George Celli, Jr.)

AAMLO, located at 659 14th Street in Oakland.

# Found in a Library Book

What happens to the things that get left behind in an Oakland Public Library book? Chances are good that they might end up in OPL's online collection of found items that span the mundane (such as shopping lists) to the heartwarming (like a child's handwritten poem).

Teen Supervising Librarian Sharon McKellar started this fascinating collection years ago, and in 2022 news outlets from around the world came across her online collection and fell in love. Sharon and the Found in a Library Book collection have been featured in interviews and articles by the *Washington Post*, NBC Nightly News,

NPR, Smithsonian Online, *San Francisco Chronicle*, Irish National Radio, *The Times* (UK), Reuters, and the Agence France-Presse.

While the found items had previously been anonymous, the surge of media coverage led to several people recognizing things they had left behind. Oakland resident Marjorie reached out when she saw two images of herself from her childhood in the collection and hoped she could retrieve them. Marjorie and her childhood photos were united just a few months before her first child was born.

This unique collection is available for viewing at [OaklandLibrary.org/Found](http://OaklandLibrary.org/Found).



Marjorie collecting her childhood photos. (photo: Sharon McKellar)



Items from the Found in a Library Book collection.

# Volunteers Brighten OPL Neighborhoods

In 2012, Mary Forte and Allene Warren, library patrons who also volunteer with the Friends of Elmhurst Library (FOEL), looked at the trash on 88th Avenue and said, “We can do something about this.” And so, they did.

Mary signed up with the Oakland Public Works Adopt-a-Spot program, which provides community volunteers with cleaning equipment and other support. Then FOEL organized twice-monthly “Litter Walks,” which last about an hour and leave the library and surrounding neighborhood clean and litter-free. This year, the FOEL Litter Walk marked its ten-year anniversary!

This type of dedicated service is inspiring and can be found throughout the library community. Monthly clean-ups are organized by the Friends-Stewards of the African American Museum and Library at Oakland. Individual volunteers pick up trash weekly outside the Main Library. And Branch Friends at Dimond, Piedmont Avenue, and Temescal branch libraries regularly organize community clean-up events.

OPL’s 12 library gardens are possible because of steadfast volunteers who weed, water, mulch, and plant. Individuals, community groups, and Branch Friends take care of these garden spaces, which provide so much joy to library patrons and staff.

The library is grateful to all friends and volunteers, everywhere, who support OPL in so many special ways.

Branch Friends and volunteer groups throughout Oakland are looking to recruit more help for a wide variety of projects. To learn about getting involved with a group of community volunteers who love their libraries, visit [OaklandLibrary.org/Volunteer](http://OaklandLibrary.org/Volunteer).

“Volunteers contribute so much to OPL! I am grateful for the help and I am inspired by the enthusiasm that volunteers show for Oakland’s public libraries.”

Jamie Turbak, Library Director



Mary Forte at the Friends of Elmhurst Library’s Litter Walk. (photo: Sara DuBois)

# The Bookmark Bookstore Turns 30!

Another volunteer effort that reached a major milestone in 2022 was The Bookmark Bookstore, run by the Friends of the Oakland Public Library. This beloved institution, which opened in 1992 as a source of revenue to fund library programs, celebrated its 30th anniversary all year long.

40 active volunteers and two paid part-time managers staff The Bookmark. Located at 721 Washington Street, the store is currently open Wednesday to Sunday, 11:00 am to 4:00 pm.

The Bookmark receives donated books which are quickly sorted, priced, and resold. Items in good condition that can't be sold at the store are donated to other organizations, including the Prisoners Literature Project, Community Education Partners, Oakland Leaf, and Roots Community Health Center.

All proceeds support OPL programs, projects, and services. In its 30 years of operation, the store has generated a total \$3 million in sales!

As was true for most small businesses, the COVID-19 pandemic presented existential challenges to The Bookmark. The store weathered this difficult time



Volunteers help shoppers at The Bookmark. (photo: Doug Zimmerman)

thanks to the efforts of former manager Phyllis Couillard, dedicated volunteers, and Friends of the OPL board members who expanded online book sales and secured grants to cover rent while the store was closed.

A virtual bookstore (at FOPL.org) and the ability to sell new books online (at Bookshop.org) are two of the lasting changes to the store brought by the pandemic.

OPL celebrates The Bookmark Bookstore and the hundreds of dedicated and inspiring volunteers who have contributed to its success over the past 30 years. To learn more about donating, shopping, or volunteering, visit FOPL.org.



The Friends of the OPL Bookmark Bookstore at 721 Washington Street in Oakland. (photo: Doug Zimmerman)

# A New Website

Like many things, a well-functioning website is often taken for granted. For OPL, however, the November 2021 launch of the current version of OaklandLibrary.org was—and continues to be—a very big deal.

The new website offers enhanced searching capabilities, allowing users to selectively search the catalog, website, FAQs, and events. And events can now be filtered by location, date range, event type, intended audience, and key words. This makes it a snap to find the nearest and next Baby Bounce event, Spanish-language book club meeting, bike repair clinic, or teen craft workshop.

The new catalog also has some amazing features, including the ability for all users to rate and review items. Everyone can make lists—for their own use or to share—and set up custom shelves to keep track of their reading.

The Oakland History Center, the African American Museum and Library at Oakland, and the Oakland Tool Lending Library all have expanded sections on the new website, with digital resources that include photos and videos.

“How wonderful to see the webpage resemble our communities and celebrate the library’s wide range of services and activities for people of all ages and ethnicities.”

Library Patron

The new website is mobile-friendly and easy to use on any device. It still features favorite online services, including Book Me (which connects patrons with library staff to create customized reading recommendations) and Discover & Go (which provides free and discounted admissions to local attractions). And expanded sections for digital and streaming media contain almost endless options for all ages and tastes.

From any place and at any time, you can enjoy Your Library at OaklandLibrary.org.

## Sign Up for Our Newsletter

Subscribe to get monthly updates on what's going on at the Oakland Public Library.

## Special Collections

Our special collections include the Oakland History Center, African American Museum and Library at Oakland, and the Oakland Tool Lending Library.

Discover More



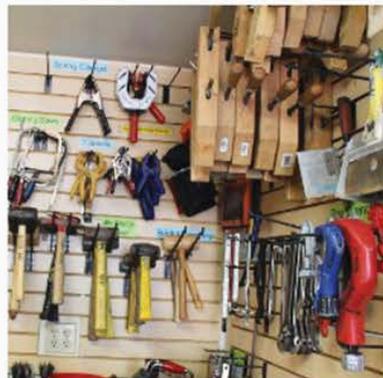
Oakland History Center

Learn about the history of Oakland by visiting the Oakland History Center in person or online.



African American Museum and Library at Oakland

Dedicated to the discovery, preservation, interpretation and sharing of historical and cultural experiences of African Americans in CA.



Oakland Tool Lending Library

The Oakland Tool Lending Library has over 5,000 tools for you to borrow.

OPL's new website provides expanded space for digital collections.

## 2021-22 Financial Stats\*

### Expenditures by Fund Source

General Purpose Fund	\$ 12,412,622
Measure Q	16,546,531
Measure D	10,525,390
Local/State/Federal Grants	162,700
Trust Fund & Others	178,005
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 39,825,248</b>

### Expenditures by Category

Personnel	\$ 29,755,438
Operations & Maintenance	7,447,093
Books & Other Materials	2,622,717
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 39,825,248</b>

### Library Service Area Population Estimates, July 1, 2021

From the United States Census Bureau

Oakland: 433,823 Emeryville: 12,870 Piedmont: 11,107

**Total OPL Service Area: 457,800**

**\$86.99**

is the average investment per capita

\*Numbers subject to audit by Oakland City Auditor



(photos: Doug Zimmerman)

## 2021-22 Supporters

The Oakland Public Library is pleased to acknowledge the following private and government institutions that provided financial support for specific library programs. We are also deeply grateful to the hundreds of individual donors who supported the library through the Friends of the Oakland Public Library and Branch Friends groups.

Amigos of the César E. Chávez Branch Library	Friends of Rockridge Library
Herman Auerbach Memorial Fund Trust II*	Friends-Stewards of the African American Museum and Library at Oakland
California State Library	William G. Gilmore Foundation*
First 5 Alameda County*	Harnly/Roeper Fund at the East Bay Community Foundation
Friends of the Asian Library	Hellman Foundation Fund*
Friends of Dimond Library	Matson Foundation*
Friends of Elmhurst Library	National Trust for Historic Preservation
Friends of Lakeview Library	The Bernard Osher Foundation*
Friends of Montclair Library	Pacific Library Partnership*
Friends of the Oakland History Center	Kenneth Rainin Foundation*
Friends of the Oakland Tool Lending Library	Sunlight Giving*
Friends of the Oakland Public Library	West Oakland Library Friends
Friends of the Piedmont Avenue Library	

\* Provided support through the Friends of the Oakland Public Library

## Friends of the Oakland Public Library Board of Directors, 2021-22

Ynez Arce	Elizabeth Falkner	Ronile Lahti	Kathryn Sterbenc
Jennifer Chan	Colleen Haikes	Nick Marble	Valerie Villanueva
Stephen Cole	Corey Hatcher	Charu Mehra	Julie Waldman
Michael J. Dalton	Sara Jewell	Sanam Nassirpour	Winifred Walters
Erica Dennings	Pooneh Koohyar	Rebecca Pffner	



(photos: Doug Zimmerman)

## Library Advisory Commission, 2021-22

Ada Chan

Alternier Baker Cook

Mary Jo Cook

Nathaniel Dumas

Mary Forte

Mary Going

Jessica Jung

Joseph Karwat

Carolyn Moskovitz

Ayushi Roy

Karen Roye

Caleb Smith

Cathy Smith

Cristina Tostado

Angelica Valentine

## 2021–22 Management Team

Jamie Turbak  
*Library Director*

Nina Lindsay  
*Associate Director*

Bamidele Agbasegbe-Demerson  
*Chief Curator, AAMLO*

Derrick DeMay  
*Supervising Librarian, Branches*

Diane Tannenwald  
*Project Manager*

Janelle Montu Veresa  
*Fiscal Manager*

Jenera Burton  
*Supervising Librarian, Branches*

Jiao Han  
*Library IT and Technical Services Manager*

Kere Gonzales  
*Executive Assistant to the Director*

Laura Liang  
*Supervising Librarian, Children's Services*

Mana Tominaga  
*Supervising Librarian, Main Library*

Matt Berson  
*Public Information Officer*

Sharon McKellar  
*Supervising Librarian, Teen Services*

Tabitha Pulliam  
*Human Resources Manager*

This report was made possible by a grant from the Friends of the Oakland Public Library.

Graphic design by Elaine Joe.

Cover photo: Kids' Summer Reading at Dimond Branch. (Doug Zimmerman)