

Best Chicagoland Libraries to Visit with Kids

By [Nikki Roberts](#) February 27, 2024

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Photo credit: iStock/Brian Sevald

Gone are the days when libraries were just a place for borrowing books. Don't be alarmed, avid readers — your local library is still lined with shelves of books. But did you know that many libraries today also lend [other materials](#), from movies, magazines and ebooks to [museum tickets](#), toys and even laptops and tools?

Libraries have expanded from being quiet reading areas to go-to spots for educational playtime and family-fun events. From storytimes and craft sessions for children to life skills classes and creative workshops for tweens, teens and adults, libraries are a hub of activity and fun. The best part? They're free!

Transform the way you and your kids think about libraries with a visit to one of these Chicagoland locations. Keep in mind that just because your local library isn't on this list doesn't mean they don't offer these services. Check their website or speak to a librarian on your next visit to learn more about events, special programming and borrowing materials for kids.

Best children's libraries in Chicago



Chicago Public Library's Thomas Hughes Children's Library inside the Harold Washington Library Center (c) City of Chicago

Bucktown-Wicker Park Branch

- Address: [1701 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago](#)

Play, read and learn at the Bucktown-Wicker Park branch. This location offers Play Days and Story Time events where kids can socialize with other tots while playing with blocks, puzzles and other fun learning toys. The upper level is reserved for quiet studying and reading, which means kids on the first floor can play without fear of being shushed.

This library has some great programming for older kids and teens, too, including crafting workshops, iPhone photography classes and social hangouts with snacks in the teen room.

Chinatown Branch

- Address: [2100 S. Wentworth Ave., Chicago](#)



Chicago Public Library's Chinatown Branch (c) City of Chicago

Stop by for events like Story Time Art or LEGO in the Library; stay for the expansive city views and soft natural lighting that would make anyone want to curl up with a good book. This neighborhood branch [won several international awards](#) in architecture, sustainability and library services when it opened in 2015.

Today, it offers programming for kids of all ages; a children's play area; and children's books, [museum passports](#) to Chicago cultural destinations and a huge catalog of other children's resources. There's also a [YOUmedia center](#) that rents laptops, video games and other digital resources to high school teens. The library is located directly across from Chinatown restaurants, shopping and transit, making it a must-see destination on your next [family trip to Chinatown](#).

Little Italy Branch

- Address: [1336 W. Taylor St., Chicago](#)

Library services on the Near West Side can trace their origins back to the Hull House in 1891. From 1924, the Roosevelt branch moved to a variety of locations before finding a permanent home on Taylor Street in 1998.

In 2019, the library moved down the street and reopened as the Little Italy branch. [In partnership with the Chicago Housing Authority](#), the impressive single-floor West Side library was topped with 73 units of affordable housing for low-income residents in the community.

This library has an interesting history, but it has even more interesting opportunities for kiddos! The Early Learning Play Space is a large children's area designed to support early literacy learning through play, and the community room hosts crafting events, film screenings and fun educational events for kids and tweens.

[Thomas Hughes Children's Library](#)

- Address: [400 S. State St., Chicago](#)



Chicago Public Library's Thomas Hughes Children's Library inside the Harold Washington Library Center (c) City of Chicago

Located on the second floor of the iconic [Harold Washington Library Center](#), this children's library blends a STEAM approach with traditional library services. There's an interactive puppet stage and story nook for little ones, and plenty of STEAM-focused events and learning activities for kids. Tweens will love exploring the digital media space where they can learn how to use laptops, cameras, keyboards and virtual reality tools. During the school year, a teacher is present to answer questions and offer homework help.

Have a high school student, maybe one that thinks they're "too cool" for the library? Harold Washington Library Center is home to [YOUmedia](#), a digital media maker space only available to high school teens. In addition to borrowing laptops and playing video games while in this space, teens can explore other digital interests and become certified to use cameras, an in-house production studio, drawing tablets, lighting equipment and 3D printers.

Best children's libraries in North/Northwest Suburbs



Photo credit: Stephanie Battista/Arlington Heights Memorial Library

[Arlington Heights Memorial Library](#)

- Address: [500 N. Dunton Ave., Arlington Heights](#)

The newly revamped Kids' World at the Arlington Heights Memorial Library is your child's go-to place to play, learn, imagine and, of course, read! Families can enjoy an interactive family area, an imagination station, a baby garden, a tween space and much more. With a brand new cafe on site, you'll be able to stay at the library all day!

In addition to Kids' World, we love the dedication of the librarians at this location. If your older child is struggling to find their next read, the Arlington Heights Memorial librarians will create a customized crate filled with recommended books and goodies that will help your tween or teen learn to love curling up with a good book. While you're there, sign them up for a crafting or BYOB (Bring Your Own Book) social session.

Be sure to look out for the library's [traveling Bookmobile](#) around Arlington Heights!

Barrington Area Library

- Address: [505 N. Northwest Hwy., Barrington](#)

The Barrington Area Library is a fantastic resource for every child. Of course, it lends children's books, but this library takes it a step further with librarians who will send your child [a personalized reading list](#) based on their interests and previous reads.

There are storytime readings and activities for every interest and age group (including family and goodnight sessions), sensory play times and craft and chill sessions for middle school kids. After the event, check out an at-home activity kit filled with beginner reads, early learning toys, story time materials and board. The library even has an online homework help service from 2-11 p.m. for grades 3-12.

Evanston Public Library: Main Branch

- Address: [1703 Orrington Ave., Evanston](#)

The librarians at Evanston Public Library are eager to recommend [their favorite kids books](#) to young readers. Once your child has selected their next read, they can curl up in a beautiful garden-themed reading nook that has plenty of space to spread out and get lost in a book.

Check the library's [large events calendar](#) that is packed with events for kids and families, like movie-themed scavenger hunts, writing clubs, crafting workshops and even cooking classes.

Gail Borden Public Library: Main Branch

- Address: [270 N. Grove Ave. Elgin](#)

Follow the yellow brick road to this Wizard of Oz-themed children's library. Kids will love interacting with life-sized versions of characters from this classic children's tale. The children's area is filled with fun decor and Oz-themed activities, plenty of great books and helpful librarians who can guide your child to their new favorite book.

There are plenty of storytime, rhyme and play programs, an annual Battle of the Books for middle schoolers and plenty of other clubs and activities offered. [See which upcoming events interest you!](#)

Schaumburg Township District Library

- Address: [130 S. Roselle Road, Schaumburg](#)

If the [Library of Things](#) at Schaumburg Township District Library doesn't transform your view on library lending, we're not sure what will! This library allows patrons to check out puzzles and board games, digital cameras and ring lights, and even Ghost Meters, bike locks, umbrellas and ice scrapers! Better to try it at the library before you buy it, right?

Kids 12 and under can receive subscription-style Library Boxes filled with personalized reading recommendations and goodies. There are also storytimes, music sessions for tots and take-home kits so kids can keep learning at home.

Find more [children's libraries in the Northwest suburbs.](#)

Best children's libraries in Western Suburbs



Photo credit: Naperville Public Library

Downers Grove Public Library

- Address: [1050 Curtiss St., Downers Grove](#)

There is so much fun to be had at the Downers Grove Public Library! Try your hand at 3D printing, or rent a variety of equipment from the [Anything Emporium](#). Older kids can use professional-level equipment in the media lab.

Stop by for a weekend storytime or crafting session.

Elmhurst Public Library

- Address: [125 S. Prospect Ave., Elmhurst](#)

Children ages 6 and under will love Elmhurst Public Library for The Learning Garden, a bright space with comfy, colorful chairs, toys, puppets, puzzles and, of course, kids books, all designed to foster an early love for reading.

For older kiddos, the Middle School Hangout room is an ideal studying, reading, crafting and gaming spot where they can hang out with other kids and take advantage of this library's catalog, which includes graphic novels, music, movies and more. During the summer months, kids can read and attend programming in the outdoor Children's Reading Garden.

La Grange Public Library

- Address: [10 W. Cossitt Ave., La Grange](#)

Play in a pastel garden-themed play space at the La Grange Public Library. Young children will love the interactive wall puzzles and activities. Older kids can check out virtual reality sets or iPads with curated apps.

La Grange Public Library offers plenty of storytimes for babies and toddlers, but its true gem is the programming for young children and tweens. From after-school hangouts to Coding Club, Lego Club, arts and crafts and baking workshops, your child will never want to leave the library!

Naperville Public Library: Nichols Branch

- Address: [200 W. Jefferson Ave., Naperville](#)



Photo credit: Naperville Public Library

Visit the Nichols Library on your [next family trip to Naperville](#). The library is located in the heart of downtown Naperville, just steps from the historic Riverwalk.

The lower level is completely devoted to children's literature, and large glass windows look out towards the river. Kids can let their imaginations soar as they roam the stacks in search of their next favorite book. Daily storytimes occur at different times (and sometimes in different languages!) so there's sure to be a family storytime that's perfect for you and your little readers.

On your way out, be sure to climb the steps and peer into the miniature replica of the original library, or search for the Cat in the Hat statue that lies just outside the library parking lot.

Oak Park Public Library: Main Library

- Address: [834 Lake St., Oak Park](#)



Photo credit: Oak Park Public Library

The colorful kids library at the main branch of Oak Park Public Library is the perfect place to browse children's books. The entire floor is reserved for youth and teen literature, which means youth librarians are around to answer any questions and kids don't have to fear the watchful eyes of adults who are trying to quietly study or read.

Want to get out and about beyond the library? Check out a free [Museum Adventure Pass](#), your ticket to family exploration at cultural attractions around Chicagoland.

Best children's libraries in South Suburbs



Photo credit: Tinley Park Public Library

[Tinley Park Public Library](#)

- Address: [7851 Timber Drive, Tinley Park](#)

Tinley Park Public Library is one of the libraries involved in the [1,000 Books Before Kindergarten](#) reading challenge. This national initiative encourages parents to read to their little ones to increase their child's exposure to words and encourage a life-long love for books. Sign up at the Youth Services Desk to get started!

Other services at the Youth Service Desk include Books for Babies kits and Junior Reads Subscription bags for readers in grades 3-5. Kids will love the bright, wide open reading spaces and comfy chairs where they can sit and read their new books.

[Orland Park Public Library](#)

- Address: [14921 S. Ravinia Ave., Orland Park](#)

Check out a family storytime kit or a take-home crafting kit at the Orland Park Public Library. Events and social groups for all ages are offered here, including teen poetry contests, pop-up music concerts and more.