

# Elmhurst Public Library children's department head reflects on long career ahead of retirement

By MARY STROKA [Email](#) [Follow](#)  
© June 18, 2018



Mary Stroka - mstroka@shawmedia.com

Caption +

[ELMHURST](#) – A chapter of Elmhurst Public Library history will conclude June 22 with the retirement of

Kids' Library Head Sharon Karpel.

Karpel, who has worked in libraries since she was 15, has been a part of the Elmhurst Public Library's story since 1986, when she joined the adult services staff of the institution. In 1993, she was asked to become the head of the Kids' Library.

"That's where I've been ever since, and I've loved every minute of it," she said.

EXPLORE ELMHURST

Ride with Us  
Fridays and  
Saturdays!

LEARN MORE CONTACT

## RELATED LINKS

Elmhurst Public Library children's department head reflects on long career ahead of retirement



Elmhurst Public Library completes renovation of children's department



Elmhurst Public Library holds children's pet writing contest



Elmhurst library receives five-star status ranking



## GET THE DOWNERS GROVE CITY



Karpiel's first library job was as a student at Lake Park High School in Roselle, and she worked in libraries throughout college. She considered becoming a lawyer, majoring in political science, but she decided against it shortly before she was going to take the LSAT.

Upon reflection, she decided to attend graduate school for library science instead, calling it "the right decision."

"I can't imagine a more fulfilling career," she said.

Mary Beth Harper, director of the Elmhurst Public Library, said Gloria Walsh-Rock, assistant department head for the Kids' Library, will become the new department head.

Harper said Karpiel has a passion for the children's department of the library, and the soon-to-be retiree has hired others in the department who have the same passion.

"I think she developed a wonderful culture over there," she said.

Reflecting on the immense number of years she has spent in the field, Karpel said some of her most memorable moments involved animals, such as one time when the library had to put an ostrich that would be used in a children's program in a bathroom as a temporary holding place and hang a sign to warn people not to use the facilities.

Karpel said the best part of her work is the people, whether it be the board, the staff or the patrons. Her favorite task is to help children who think they don't like reading find a book that suits them.

"That to me – to help kids realize that reading is enjoyable – is the most important thing," she said.

Karpel hopes to spend more time at the library when she retires.

"It's kind of frustrating to see these books all the time and not have the time to read them," she said.

She also is interested in studying genealogy, traveling, spending time with friends and family, compiling photo books, golfing and learning to cook better after she retires.

"I've got a stack of books that I'm waiting to read," Karpel said.

Those books include Ron Chernow's "Washington: A Life" and "Grant," she said.

Karpel added she wants to volunteer, possibly at the library, where she is going to finish a cursive writing class she is teaching.

She said she is grateful she had a chance to work at the library.

"I never stopped learning things," Karpel said. "Every day I come to work, and there's something new. I keep thinking, I've been here for so long. ... You think you've seen it all, but every day there's something like, 'Huh! I didn't know that!' And that's been a blessing, just to work with all these wonderful people."

She hopes people will use the library and discover what it has to offer.

"That's what I love about libraries. They are for everybody – from babies to senior citizens, students, business people. It doesn't matter what your ability is. It doesn't matter what your education is, your gender, your age. Nothing matters because the library is a place that welcomes and has something of value for everybody," Karpel said.