



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 15, 2018

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**MAYOR EMANUEL AND CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY CUT THE RIBBON ON THE NEWLY  
RENOVATED WOODSON REGIONAL LIBRARY**

*Nearly \$9 million investment will serve as a community anchor for south side residents, housing the largest collection of African American history and literature in the Midwest*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today joined Chicago Public Library Commissioner Brian Bannon, Secretary of State Jesse White, local leaders and south side community members to cut the ribbon at the grand re-opening of the Woodson Regional Library. The newly renovated 65,000 square-foot two-floor regional library will serve as a cultural and information center for Washington Heights and all Chicago residents.

“The renovation of the historic Woodson Regional Library in Washington Heights is a major step towards its future and a brighter future for the city of Chicago,” said Mayor Emanuel. “With passionate community engagement, this neighborhood anchor will maintain its history and legacy while offering patrons 21st century learning opportunities, services and technology that will benefit Chicagoans for generations to come.”

The Woodson Regional Library will now offer programs and services that meet the needs of the residents they serve. Interior renovations included the construction of two study rooms to conduct small meetings and engage in workforce development or for community collaboration, and the reading areas were reconfigured in areas with natural light. Children and families will have access a built-out Early Learning Play Space, the Teacher in the Library program and the YOUmedia program, which provides teens with access to technology, resources, and classes that inspire exploration, creativity and learning. Traditional library programs, such as book clubs for seniors, intergenerational educational and cultural programming and story times and other programming for kids and tweens will also be available.

“These renovations, thanks to the support of our city and Secretary of State Jesse White, ensure this community has a dynamic, 21st century library,” said Commissioner Brian Bannon. “I’d also like to thank Woodson Director Lynda Schoop and the entire Woodson and Harsh staff for their dedication to the branch and community.”

Extensive renovations were made to the interior and exterior façade of the Woodson Regional Library. Building improvements include a renovated 180-seat auditorium with new upholstery; new energy-efficient and insulated roof, exterior walls and windows; updated guardrails and

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handrails on the monumental stairway; additional parking for people with disabilities; and upgrades to flooring, lighting and paint in lobby and the Harsh Collection Reading Room.

“I have long envisioned what Woodson Regional Library could be for the community, and I am proud that this vision has become a reality,” said Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White. “This was built out of a resilient partnership between the City of Chicago, the Chicago Public Library and the state, and will be well-served by the community for many years.”

The branch was closed to the public in November 2016, and was renovated with capital grant funding through Secretary of State Jesse White and through city funds. The Architect of Record is EXP and the contractor for the façade replacement is Ujaama.

“The revitalization of a critical neighborhood anchors like Woodson is paramount for residents on the south side of Chicago,” said Alderman Howard B. Brookins Jr., 21st Ward. “This is a proud example of how city officials come together with residents and partners to work together toward a common goal and bring positive changes to our city.”

The branch was named for Dr. Carter G. Woodson, considered the father of African American historiography and founder of what has grown into what is now widely celebrated as African American History Month. Woodson is home to the Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection, the largest African American history and literature collection in the Midwest. The Harsh Collection is a resource for researchers from around the country and the world. In tribute to Woodson and Harsh, the first Black librarian in the Chicago Public Library system, film with digital images of Carter G. Woodson and Vivian Harsh were applied to glass on south and southeast elevations of the building.

“Libraries afford resourceful anchors in strong neighborhoods, providing places for life-long learners to discover and explore,” said Alderman Carrie M. Austin, 34th Ward. “Through the committed partnership between the city, CPL and our community, we have an opportunity to read, learn and develop at every level of life.”

“Woodson Library provides our patrons with safe learning and gathering spaces for the children and families of the entire south side community,” said Anthony A. Beale, 9th Ward. “Libraries serve as community anchors, and today we celebrate the new opportunities that will come from this vital investment.”

The Harsh Collection contains a wealth of documentation of the Black experience, focused on Illinois. Its holdings include 70,000 books, many of them rare; 500 periodical titles, current and retrospective; more than 100 microfilm research collections, bringing together the most significant primary source materials from other Black Studies research collections across the country. Among the most significant and unique materials at the Harsh Research Collection are its manuscript holdings including The Illinois Writers Project / "Negro in Illinois" Papers; original manuscripts by Richard Wright, Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps; and the Abbott-Sengstacke Family Papers, 1890-1997.

New collections include Milton O. Davis Papers, AMF Midway Postal Retirement Organization Archives, Coalition to Save the South Shore Country Club Archives, People for Community Recovery

Archives, and the Philip Sang Papers. During the closure, the Philip Sang Papers, manuscript materials and memorabilia on slavery and abolitionism, were completely digitized.

“The reopening of the Carter G. Woodson library is testament to the power of faith based and civic organizing designed to empower the local community,” said Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III, Pastor, Trinity United Church of Christ. “Trinity United Church of Christ and the Endeleo Institute for community development strategized with Washington Heights residents to place the renovation of the Woodson library as a civic priority for the city of Chicago. This is community organizing, democracy and faith based commitment at work in the city of big shoulders called Chicago.”

Woodson, in partnership with The Endeleo Institute of Trinity United Church of Christ, is also focused on creating a culture of health in the Washington Heights community. Woodson will become the city's first Dementia-friendly library, providing culturally relevant programming and education around Alzheimer's disease and memory loss. Through grant funding received from the Center for Community Health at Northwestern University, Endeleo expanded its brain health focus to lead a newly formed library health advisory board comprised of academics, researchers, health professionals, clergy, and caregivers aimed to create awareness about Alzheimer's disease, which adversely affects African-Americans 2:1. This unique partnership meshes community development and health to foster a culture of health in Washington Heights and surrounding communities.

Woodson is one of three Comcast-funded Experience Labs in the CPL system. In October 2017, Mayor Emanuel and Comcast Senior Executive Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer David L. Cohen announced that Comcast's \$250,000 Internet Essentials investment with the Chicago Public Library Foundation, bringing together three CPL programs into unique Experience Labs powered by Internet Essentials. Current programming includes YOUmedia for teens, CyberNavigator digital skills tutoring for adults, and Maker Lab workshops. Woodson will be the first CPL location outside of Harold Washington to offer patrons Maker Lab technology like 3D printing and advanced manufacturing tools and programs. The additional Experience Lab locations will be Whitney M. Young Jr and Altgeld branches.

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