

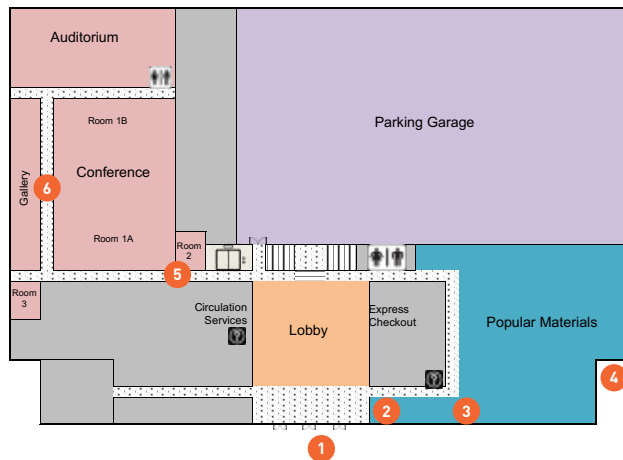
Nashville Public Library

# Main Library Self-Guided Tour



# Welcome!

## Main Library: 1st Floor



## As you enter from Church Street

- 1 The cast bronze front doors, a part of our public art project, were designed and cast by Nashville artist Alan LeQuire, sculptor of Athena in Nashville's Parthenon. The artwork on the doors depicts native plants and animals of Tennessee, as well as scenes of people reading and learning.

**Inside the Ingram Hall Lobby**, the floor of Georgian marble is laid in a classical diamond pattern as depicted

in works of art from centuries past. As you face the staircase, the Express Checkout stations are to the right, and the Return Desk is to your left.

- 2 Just inside the doorway to your right** is one of the New Americans Corners. New Americans Corners have information which can help New Americans in Nashville move along the path of citizenship. At these information booths, located at several NPL and Metro Parks locations, people can get free information about English language learning, immigration, naturalization, and citizenship. NPL and Parks also partner with local nonprofits to host English and citizenship skills classes.

**Continue into the Popular Materials Department**, where you will find DVDs and audio books, as well as the large print collection and over 50,000 fiction titles. Don't see the title you seek? You may request materials from another NPL location for checkout. Patrons retrieve requested materials from the self-service holds shelves near the service desk. If you prefer reading books on your device, explore our vast collection of electronic resources.

- 3** Have you heard about our **Seed Exchange** program? The **vintage card catalog next to the windows contains seeds** you can borrow. This is one of many benefits of being a Nashville Public Library cardholder.



- 4 **Looking through the west windows of Popular Materials**, you'll see a 20-foot tower of stone books, *La Storia della Terra, The Story of the Earth*. This sculpture was created near Mainz, Germany, by the Kubach-Wilmsen Team. There are 26 books, one for each letter of the alphabet, and the stones, which are granite, marble, and quartz, come from all over the world.

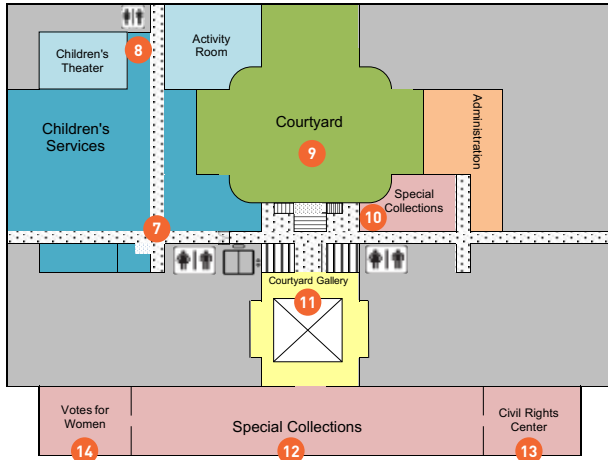
Follow the wood floor around to the lobby and continue going straight, passing the elevators.

- 5 Upon reaching the carpet, notice the **portraits of Nashville Public Library Literary Award Winners** on the wall to your left. Each year, the award recognizes a distinguished author or other individual for their contributions to the world of books and reading. Exclusive portrait painter Michael Shane Neal captures the character, feeling and personality of each of the winners with his traditional technique.

- 6 **In front of you is the 16,000 square foot Bridgestone-Firestone Conference Center.** The conference center includes three multi-purpose rooms, a gallery and an auditorium. Conference center spaces may be booked through the Facilities Coordinator for a fee.



## Main Library: 2nd Floor



## Proceed to the second floor

- 7 The **Children's Department** houses over 100,000 books and movies for children. Notice the Nashville-inspired play areas. Children are encouraged to explore the Richards Reading Fort or to burn some energy climbing the Crawl Wall. Studies show play is vital to healthy brain development. We invite tweens (ages 8-13) to participate in STEM activities while hanging-out in The Alley; a space created especially for them.
- 8 There are **puppets from library puppet shows on display just outside the Children's Theater**. Nashville Public Library's tradition of providing weekly marionette and hand puppet shows began in 1938 with a teen volunteer named Tom Tichenor. Today, eight performing artists, known collectively as Wishing Chair Productions Puppet Troupe, carry on the tradition started by Tichenor. There are free story times and puppet shows every week. Everyone is welcome.

## Exit the Children's Department and step outside into the Robinson Courtyard.

- 9 With Hornbeams, a Japanese Maple and a variety of perennials, the courtyard is an oasis for downtown workers and a center of enrichment for children and adults.



- 10** **Reenter the building onto the marble floor.** You will see the **Special Collections Center** to your left. The Special Collections Division hosts thousands of students and adults every year for programs and educational experiences in this space.
- 11** Looking toward the front of the building, you will notice a balcony overlooking the lobby. This is the **Courtyard Gallery**; it is home to rotating literary art exhibits.

## Follow the balcony around to Special Collections.

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*“I am going to be thinking about my experience with you yesterday for a long time to come. I was powerfully moved....”*  
—*Civil Rights & A Civil Society* participant

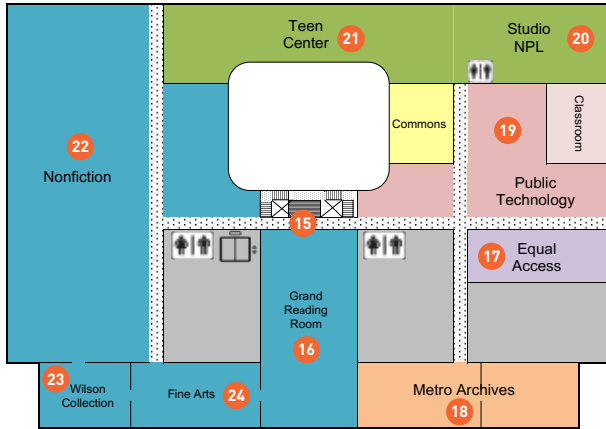
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- 12** **Special Collections** pays tribute to Nashville history from the books on the shelves to the carpet on the floor. The materials housed here are non-circulating and must be used *within* Special Collections.

**Proceed left, to the west end of Special Collections to experience the Civil Rights Room.**

- 13** The **Civil Rights Room** is dedicated to sharing the story of the Civil Rights Movement in Nashville. The images on the wall narrate the movement as you make your way around the room’s centerpiece: A replica of a lunch counter where

## Main Library: 3rd Floor



students practiced civil disobedience throughout the city, including the land on which the library sits today.

- 14** At the opposite end of the Nashville Room is the **Votes for Women Center**. The Votes for Women Center tells the story of Nashville's role in granting women the right to vote.

Exit Special Collections and take the elevator or the stairs to the third floor.

- 15** As you catch your breath at the top of the stairs, explore the eight mural maps painted by Richard Haas depicting the urban development of Nashville. These fascinating murals were accomplished on canvas and applied to the walls like wallpaper.





- 16 The stately room facing the stairs is one of NPL's quiet spaces, **The Grand Reading Room**. Please do not speak loudly in this room.

Endowed by a gift from the Memorial Foundation, The Grand Reading Room houses most of the library's reference materials. **Eighty hand-sculpted copper panels** mounted above the book shelves illustrate great moments in Nashville's history.

Above each Ionic column is the name of an important urban library in the United States.

**Looking out the front windows**, you will notice this building is on axis with the state capitol emphasizing the relationship between the government and the library as a public building.



Exit the Grand Reading Room, turn right and continue down the **walkway** to the Equal Access Division.

- 17 The **Equal Access Division** provides accessibility services to Nashville Public Library users with any type of disability. It houses three major programs:

- **Accommodation** for any type of disability—hearing or vision loss, for example—to utilize the library's programs or services. We have a variety of computer



hardware and software to make our collections and computers accessible.

- The **Library Services for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing**, a statewide service, houses one of the largest collections of materials relating to hearing loss in a United States public library. Assistive devices, like videophones, are available for patron use, as well as an events calendar for people with hearing loss and an online statewide directory of services.
- The Nashville Talking Library is a 24/7 radio reading service for people certified with a visual or print disability. The service works in conjunction with WPLN radio station to broadcast live readings of The Tennessean newspaper Monday – Friday and newly released books and magazines. Volunteers read the programs that are broadcast.

## Exiting Equal Access, make a left into the hallway leading to Metro Archives

- 18** As you proceed down the hall to **Metro Archives**, interact with the touch screens that display documents and images related to the growth of Nashville. The first screen provides insights into our built environment, and on the second screen, visitors can view wills, deeds, and



court records. The mission of Metro Archives is to collect and preserve the Metro government, the old City of Nashville and the Davidson County government records of historical, enduring value. Combining the materials housed here with two off-site storage locations, Archives holds over 5 million documents and nearly 100,000 images. From 1780 to the 1960s, the collective memory of Nashville lives here.

## Exit Archives and follow the walkway to the Public Technology area

**19** Public computers are on the right; a television viewing area is on the left: You have entered the **Public Technology Division**. Reflecting the changing role of technology in society, NPL designed the Public Technology space to accommodate patrons who may need access to a Computer, a printer or the Internet. Staff are excited to assist patrons with email, building résumés, completing job applications and other computer-related tasks. We hold technology trainings for patrons and staff in the Computer Classroom.

**20** **Follow the walkway** to reach **Studio NPL and the Teen Center**. Studio NPL is a comprehensive, educational program for students ages 12-18 to engage in interactive and technologically advanced learning pathways driven by their interests and goals. Programs are designed to advance academic and life skills and increase



employability. Teens can use their library card to check out equipment or to book recording studio time. The Studio at Main is our flagship and one of nine sites where teens can attend mentor-led workshops focused on tech and digital skills.

**21** **Exit the Studio and enter the Teen Center next door.** The **Teen Center** is open to teens in grades 7-12 and all programs are free. This space supports online library services and encourages teen collaboration and participation. Teens have access to study rooms, computers, Young Adult fiction and non-fiction books, teen magazines and audiobooks. Staff strive to follow the

principles of HOMAGO (Hanging Out, Messing Around, Geeking Out) and connected learning. One-third of all Teen Center programming happens offsite; an example is the music and video production program hosted at a youth corrections facility. The Teen Center also offers tutoring twice a week while school is in session.

## Exit the Teen Center on the east side

- 22 Welcome to the **Nonfiction area**. This area is the length of a football field and currently holds about 150,000 books. The collection is organized according to the Dewey Decimal system, which groups books by subject. Catalog



computers are conveniently located throughout this section. The information desk is down the hall on your right, as well as three study rooms for individual or group work. The Interlibrary Loan office is adjacent to the study rooms. ILL staff will gladly request print materials not owned by NPL from designated libraries across the United States.

- 23 At the northeast corner of the third floor is the East Reading Room, or **Wilson Room**, which contains a book collection donated by local art collector Sadye Tune Wilson. The **Wilson Collection** includes over 800 limited edition books, dating from 1929 to the present, published by the **Limited Editions Club** and **Arion Press**.
- 24 Adjacent to the Wilson Room is the **Fine Arts collection**, an abundance of titles on visual art forms. Whether your interest lies in landscape gardening, graphic novels, stamp collecting, or quilting, this collection will inspire you.

Thank you for visiting us today. We hope you enjoyed this introduction to the Main Library. Are you interested in volunteering or becoming a Friend of Nashville Public Library? Any staff member would be happy to tell you how. We hope you visit us again in-person or at [library.nashville.org](http://library.nashville.org).

## A Brief History of Nashville Public Library

People living in Nashville haven't always had free access to the information found in books and other materials. Before the formation of the public library system, only small private libraries were available. One of these private libraries was the Howard Library, funded with private donations and staffed entirely by volunteers.

In 1901 the Howard Library hired Mary Hannah Johnson to be Nashville's first professional librarian. She encouraged the Library Board to apply for a Carnegie grant. Andrew Carnegie agreed to give \$175,000 to build a main library





and three branches, if the city of Nashville would provide funding to run and maintain the buildings. The city's first Carnegie library opened in September 1904. This classic building was the beginning of Nashville's public library system.

As Nashville grew, so did the library's role in the community. During the 1930s, the library established innovative programs for children and young adults, developed resources for businesses, opened a music department, and began running a bookmobile service.

Then in 1963, city and county governments were consolidated to form the new Metropolitan Government

of Nashville and Davidson County. Under the leadership of Mayor Beverly Briley, the library system was given greater funding to serve a growing population. A new Main Library was erected in 1966 at a cost of \$1.9 million. This new building, plus seven branch libraries, served all areas of Nashville-Davidson County.

By the mid-1990s Nashville's public library system had grown to 18 branches and was serving a public expecting up-to-date technology and facilities with modern amenities. Public library users launched a campaign to gain funding for a new Main Library and additional branches. Due to citizen efforts, careful planning by library staff, the Library Board and Library Foundation, and the support of Mayor Phil Bredesen, the Metro Council approved \$98 million for buildings and opening day collections.

Funding included five new branch libraries and a new 300,000 square foot headquarters for Nashville Public Library. Robert A.M. Stern Architects of New York designed the new Main Library of Nashville Public Library which opened its doors for the first time on June 9, 2001.

The overall design of the building pays homage to the other permanent architecture of downtown Nashville, as well as to the original Carnegie Library.

Stern felt strongly that the new library should form a vital link with Nashville's civic structure, both aesthetically and

functionally. On axis with the capitol, you can see that this site was chosen to make a dramatic statement regarding the library and its place in an urban center. The pediment topping the center portion of the building is a classical element you will see several times throughout the building. Its overall design takes some visual cues from the Neues Museum in Berlin.



