



Search for the President and Librarian  
Newberry Library  
Chicago, Illinois

## THE SEARCH

The Newberry Library seeks a leader, institution builder, and a compelling champion for the humanities to serve as its next President and Librarian. Founded in 1887, the Newberry is one of Chicago's treasured cultural institutions and an increasingly global destination for both online and in-person learning. The next President will articulate and drive a strategy for the future that builds upon the distinguished legacy of the institution and solidifies the library's position among the city's, and nation's, most important cultural institutions.

For 135 years the Newberry has proudly offered learning opportunities that are free and open to all. Today, the library's world-renowned collection extends across 27.5 miles of shelf space and spans 600 years of human history. The collection includes strengths in 11 subject areas: American History and Culture; American Indian and Indigenous Studies; Chicago and the Midwest; Genealogy and Local History; History of the Book; Modern Manuscripts and Archives; Maps, Travel, and Exploration; Medieval, Renaissance, and Early Modern Studies; Performing Arts; Postcards; and Religion. The Newberry continues to acquire and to preserve a range of materials – from pre-1500 European manuscripts to images of the Great Migration and 21<sup>st</sup> century works by indigenous artists. These enable today's and tomorrow's researchers, including both distinguished academics and everyday users, to deepen their understanding of the broad range of human experiences, especially those of people who have historically been marginalized, misrepresented, or silenced. The Newberry is dedicated to putting the extraordinary resources of the current collection in service to today's conversations and communities, and to continue collecting contemporary materials that document today's history for tomorrow's users.

Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the President will oversee an operating budget of approximately \$13.7 million and a dedicated and expert staff of roughly 100. The Newberry is supported by an endowment of \$79 million. The President will bring the strategic, intellectual, and administrative talent and experience to lead a complex organization, a deep-rooted conviction that the humanities are essential, a commitment to the role of primary source research in understanding human experiences, and a record of keen financial management, including success in enhancing and broadening philanthropic and corporate support.

Isaacson, Miller, the national executive search firm, has been retained to support the Newberry in this consequential search. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

## THE NEWBERRY LIBRARY

*The Newberry Library—free and open to the public—fosters a deeper understanding of our world by inspiring research and learning in the humanities and encouraging conversations about ideas that matter to diverse audiences. Our mission is rooted in a growing and accessible collection of rare and historical materials that spans more than six centuries of human experience.*

Mission statement, revised and approved by the Board in 2022.

The Newberry Library, founded in 1887 through a bequest from Walter L. Newberry, one of Chicago's earliest philanthropists and cultural leaders, is a world-renowned independent research library serving scholars and the general public alike. The Newberry shares its vast collections of rare books, maps, personal papers, and other objects to stimulate both intellectual research and public engagement. The Newberry makes its collections freely available to anyone over 14 years old – a level of access that is unique among its peer institutions. Early in its history, the Newberry purchased collections that set the template for future acquisitions: comprehensive collections of primary sources that would offer opportunities for study and in-depth research in designated areas. After an 1897 cooperative agreement with the John Crerar Library in Chicago and the Chicago Public Library to avoid duplication, the Newberry began to concentrate on the humanities. Today, the Newberry's activities are all guided by its institutional values: Curiosity, Knowledge, Service, Relevance, and Belonging.

The library, which currently houses more than 1.6 million books, 5 million manuscript pages, and 500,000 historic maps, is renowned for its collections. The Newberry cares for and makes accessible its collection through dedicated conservation, cataloging, and reader services staff that assist researchers. An extensive array of fellowships and scholarly programs contribute to the vibrant intellectual community of the Newberry, particularly in the fields of its research centers: Renaissance Studies, the History of Cartography, and American Indian and Indigenous Studies.

In addition to supporting and encouraging research, the library is committed to sharing its resources with the greater Chicago community and beyond and facilitating moments of discovery for users not only in its reading rooms but also in its lecture halls, exhibition galleries, adult education classes, and digital platforms. The Newberry recognizes its work must focus on bridging divides among many audiences – spanning academic disciplines; creating opportunities for interaction between scholars and the public; connecting past, present, and future; bringing diverse communities into shared conversations; and facilitating multiple modes of learning both on site and online. The Newberry's free public programming has grown to include lectures, panel discussions, historical reenactments, debates, music, and dance performances. All of these draw upon its collections and attract more than 100,000 visitors to the library building each year. The Newberry has served as a laboratory for [undergraduate humanities research](#) by

supporting students through interdisciplinary seminars and independent projects. The Newberry also serves area K-12 teachers and students via a variety of content-based education programs.

In 2018, the Newberry completed a \$12.7 million renovation of its first floor and lower level. The remodeled area represents a continuation of the Newberry ethos – fostering a welcoming atmosphere and opportunities for visitors to engage with library staff and collections in new ways. The renovations included over 2,500 square feet of exhibition space in which the library mounts multiple engaging and relevant exhibitions throughout the year, as well as classroom spaces featuring state-of-the-art climate control and video equipment that allow presentations and educational experiences on site and virtually.

In recent years, the library’s digital collections have grown substantially. They have garnered more than one million page views annually and include interactive digital resources that engage users at all levels. In 2022, a new website was launched, along with a new digital asset management system; together these provide visitors with an inviting and seamless experience to engage with the Newberry online and in-person. Additionally, new technology improvements to meeting spaces and classrooms allow livestreaming of public programs in the building and hybrid seminars with participants locally and globally.

For more information, visit <https://www.newberry.org/>.

### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and an Equitable Workplace**

The Newberry’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is an essential part of its mission and is securely woven into the values of the organization. In June 2021 the Board of Trustees adopted an official DEI statement that reads in part: “It is the Newberry’s duty to ensure that attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion informs all that we do, internally and externally. This is an urgent priority for the staff and Board of Trustees as we shape our institution and outreach to everyone who engages with the Newberry. We are dedicated to this essential work, the investment of resources, and the process of learning and growth necessary to evolve as an institution.” Though the work is ongoing, the Newberry has taken significant action at all levels toward furthering DEI goals. Staff developed an instruction toolkit that provides guidelines for incorporating DEI topics into pedagogical activities, and updated signage for inclusivity and accessibility throughout the library building. A project was piloted to address offensive language in catalog records and a wide range of efforts are underway to diversify programmatic offerings and collections, and to engage more diverse audiences. Additionally, the Board of Trustees’ standing DEI Committee completed a Board demographic survey that identified gaps in the Board’s makeup and will guide recruitment efforts to further diversify the composition of the Board. There is also a standing DEI Committee of staff members, whose ongoing work furthers these values through project-based work and institution-wide communications.

The staff of the Newberry, like those of many cultural institutions, have recently voted for union representation, and negotiations for a first contract are expected to begin soon. The library’s leadership, both Board and staff, are committed to a cooperative effort to ensure a fair and inclusive workplace.

## **OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE NEXT PRESIDENT**

Reporting to an engaged Board of Trustees composed of 35 members, the President and Librarian is responsible for guiding and executing overall strategy and operations at the Newberry. The President is supported by a leadership team of six including Vice Presidents in the areas of Finance & Administration, Research & Education, Collections & Library Services, Development, and Public Engagement, and the Director of Governance & Strategic Initiatives.

The President is expected to provide leadership in the following areas:

### **Refine the Newberry's strategic direction and lead the achievement of organizational goals**

In June 2022 the Board of Trustees approved a new strategic plan, [Our Collection Is Your Collection](#), which will serve as a guide for the Newberry over the next several years. The plan identifies four pillars upon which all of the library's activities are built:

- Advance and Disseminate Knowledge
- Build, Diversify, and Sustain Communities of Learning
- Grow, Preserve, and Increase Access to the Collection
- Strengthen Institutional Health

The strategic plan provides a broad framework for the Newberry's direction in the coming years. The next President is expected to influence that direction with their own leadership vision while more fully articulating action steps and goals to guide the organization's operations. The President will bring a process of continuous innovation that looks toward the future and maintains the Newberry's role at the leading edge of independent research institutions and places the library at the center of cultural and civic life in Chicago.

### **Champion the humanities, increase community engagement, and grow audiences**

The humanities are essential to understanding the breadth of human experiences across time and place. Engaging with the humanities—by critically examining ideas and sources from the past and participating in conversations in the present—helps curious learners think broadly and deeply about what it means to be human. The Newberry Library inspires and sustains these inquiries through its collections and programs that span a diverse range of people and cultures. The Newberry President must be a passionate and convincing champion for the humanities and their enduring importance for understanding our past, our present, and our future.

The Newberry has long been a premiere and valued hub for humanities research and discovery in scholarly communities around the globe. As part of their role as a champion of the humanities, the next President should sustain its scholarly commitment and reputation while increasing community engagement and growing the audiences who view the Newberry as a world-class cultural institution in Chicago and beyond. The President will work closely with staff to develop a strategic approach to better understand its current

audiences, and to target new diverse audiences and foster the development of deeper relationships to instill connection. To fulfill the Newberry's mission and align with its core values, the audience must be grown in a way that is broad and inclusive. Additionally, the Newberry is part of multiple ecosystems—from cultural institutions in Chicago to research libraries across the globe; increased collaboration with various peer organizations will increase the awareness and appreciation of the Newberry's wide-ranging resources and help the library learn more about how to best serve new audiences.

### **Enthusiastically increase fundraising to build capacity and raise the institutional profile**

In a competitive nonprofit landscape, the President will bring their fundraising aptitude to increase the Newberry's financial resources. The President will be a talented and persuasive storyteller on behalf of the library's achievements and the power of its mission. They will be unrelenting in their pursuit of relationship-building with donors and external partners. In addition to individual support, particular attention will be given to identifying and cultivating corporate and institutional relationships in Chicago and elsewhere, and to working with potential donors to communicate the power and impact of collaborating with the library and supporting its initiatives. The President will leverage existing and new sources of contributed revenue to increase monetary resources to support all functions of the organization including staff, facilities and technology infrastructure improvements, programming, care and enhancement of the collections, and investment growth.

### **Lead, develop, and support a high-performing team**

The Newberry is home to a team of collaborative and motivated professionals and an engaged Board of Trustees. The President will be a values-driven leader who maintains clear communications, including through delegation of specific responsibilities and appropriate authority, while maintaining transparency in decision-making and regular supportive engagement with staff. In addition, the President will create opportunities for professional growth and leadership among the staff. In alignment with the Newberry's values, and with awareness of the greater field and nature of contemporary work cultures, there will be a priority on equity and providing support for staff to feel valued and enabled in their roles. The President will also be a skilled communicator and motivator of Trustees, keeping them engaged and leveraging their skills and connections in support of the library's activities.

## **QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

The successful candidate will exemplify many of the following qualifications and attributes:

- Passion for and a record of championing the humanities, and an understanding of and commitment to the importance of collections-based scholarly research;
- Executive-level leadership experience, including the management of a highly skilled staff, complex programming and budgeting, strategic planning, and building a strong and inclusive organizational culture with best practices and a high level of staff morale;

- Demonstrated experience aligning organizational mission, vision, and strategy with operational priorities, even when that requires making difficult decisions;
- Experience with financial management and best practices in budgeting for long-term organizational planning and sustainability;
- Ability to engage and inspire a wide range of people including scholars, donors, students, and the general public;
- Demonstrated experience in comprehensively implementing organization-wide strategies to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility both internally within an organization and externally with audiences and communities;
- Success in cultivating and maintaining organizational partnerships to advance programs and missions;
- Skill in fundraising and relationship building with individuals, corporations, government, and other grant-making organizations;
- Conversant in the use of technology and digital media to promote an institution and its collections, and reaching audiences in innovative ways;
- Familiarity with research library operations including reader services, collections management, and digital assets;
- Successful strategic leadership in the development of engaging programs, events, and exhibitions that enhance an organization's signature brand and reputation;
- Warmth and a sense of perspective and balance, evidenced in a blend of gravity and wit;
- Unquestioned integrity and sound judgment.

## **INQUIRIES, NOMINATIONS, AND APPLICATIONS**

Confidential inquiries, nominations, referrals, and applications (including resumes and brief letters of interest) should be sent electronically to the following:

Jeff Kessner, Partner  
Lisa Savereid, Partner  
Ryan Leichenauer, Managing Associate  
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/newberry-library/president-and-librarian>

*The Newberry Library is committed to diversity and inclusion. As an equal opportunity employer, the library does not discriminate in hiring or employment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, age, disability, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local law.*