



Olbrich Botanical Gardens supporters,

Whether it be as a volunteer, donor, member, or garden guest, we thank you for your support of Olbrich Botanical Gardens. It remains a special place for so many people and Olbrich's supporters like you are a big part of what makes that possible every day.

We are always evaluating the most impactful ways to meet the needs of all guests and be a place where all people can learn, explore, and feel a sense of belonging. Over the past few years, we have been evaluating how Schumacher Library is used and the current demands for various services. Schumacher Library and its impact over the past 30 years has a lot to celebrate including serving well over 120,000 library visitors. As we look towards the next 30 years at Olbrich Botanical Gardens, we will continue to build on the legacy of learning at the gardens made possible by Schumacher Library.

After a thorough analysis of the data collected during our program review, it is with compassion and mixed feelings of grieving and optimism that we share with you **Schumacher Library in its physical and current form will be retired this spring**. The physical space will be restructured as a Guest Resource Center and will include some service offerings of the current Schumacher Library. Through our assessment we learned that Schumacher Library is a special place for many and at the same time has remained a niche service at Olbrich throughout its 30+ year history. Regarding visitation alone, 1.5-2.6% of general garden guests visit the library. While this is an important user base, the library is located within a visitor center that was built to accommodate half the number of visitors we currently have in 2024.

With limited space in our visitor center and with inclusion in mind, we are looking for ways to integrate more niche services for guests into Olbrich's offerings as well as unify hours of all services offered within Olbrich's visitor center. In addition to portions of the library's collection, the new Guest Resource Center will allow Olbrich to offer more services including audio tour guides, plant ID guides, translation services, general answer services, and more. The popular family activities and youth collection will be moved to other areas and have more consistent availability. Checking out books was found to be a service used by a very small group. While much of the collection will stay at Olbrich, circulation services will end, and members will no longer be able to check out books. That said, we are always looking towards new programming at the gardens and can develop specialized programming related to Olbrich's non-circulating collection if the need is expressed in the future.

While we feel this is a needed change for the Gardens, we recognize that change is hard. You are an active contributor to Olbrich Botanical Gardens and member of our shared community. As such, we welcome and acknowledge your feelings. We also hope you join us in celebrating the opportunities ahead related to growing learning and engagement services at Olbrich Botanical Gardens for all guests. To share constructive comments, concerns, questions or thoughts about these upcoming changes please email Director of Education Kim North at [KNorth@cityofmadison.com](mailto:KNorth@cityofmadison.com) or Garden Director Tanya Zastrow at [TZastrow@cityofmadison.com](mailto:TZastrow@cityofmadison.com). *If you would like your feedback shared with Olbrich's board of directors please email your feedback to Kim North by Saturday, February 10.*

Thank you,

**Kim North**

Director of Education

she/her/hers

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