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HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY'S HARTFORD HISTORY CENTER REOPENS AT DOWNTOWN LIBRARY WITH EXPANDED TEAM

[HARTFORD, CT] — Hartford Public Library (HPL) is happy to announce that the Hartford History Center (HHC) at the Downtown Library has reopened to the public after nearly three years of closure caused by severe water damage from a burst pipe. The HHC reopened on June 1 as part of the Downtown Library's opening week celebrations and joins other newly launched spaces such as HPL Studios, the Business Resource Center, Garmany Hall, and more.

Following Brenda Miller's retirement as HPL's Executive Director of Culture and Communications at the end of June, HPL has appointed Leon Ha as Manager of the Hartford History Center. In this expanded role, Leon will oversee the HHC while continuing to lead the Library's Digital Library Lab (DLL@HPL). Drawing on his experience in digitization, archival imaging, project management, and public-facing service, Leon will work with HHC staff to continue preserving and stewarding the Center's collections while expanding their visibility and access.

In July, the HHC welcomed a new Archivist to the team, Katherine Bushman, who has a background in university archives and special collections. Previously, Katherine was a graduate assistant at North Carolina State University Special Collections working in archival processing and public services, and interned at Duke University's Rubenstein Library, where she worked in public services and digitization. Katherine recently graduated with her MSLS in Archives and Records Management, as well as an MA in Public History.

Katherine joins Maureen Heher, HHC's Historical Research Information Librarian, who supports researchers and customers in exploring Hartford's history. With extensive knowledge of the collections and a longstanding commitment to the study of Hartford's history, Maureen has been integral to HHC's research and public service work since 2019.

"The Hartford History Center is a vital public resource, and we're delighted to welcome the community into the beautiful new space. The talented staff leading the HHC will shape its exciting next chapter," said Bridget E. Quinn, HPL's President and CEO. "Leon Ha and Katherine Bushman bring the experience and dedication that will strengthen our preservation work, expand access to Hartford's history, and deepen the connection between the Hartford History Center, Digital Library Lab, and the people we serve every day"

The newly reimagined HHC is a welcoming 3,000-square-foot hub for urban history. It preserves Hartford's public heritage from the 1630s to the present while creating inviting, interactive spaces



for scholars, students, and community members to explore, learn, and connect. The space includes a secure research room, an area for new materials, a flexible classroom and program space, and digital and physical displays to highlight collection materials.

“I believe the services provided by public libraries are more important than ever,” said Leon Ha, Hartford History Center and Digital Library Lab Manager. “I’m grateful for the opportunity to step into this role and to support the Hartford History Center alongside the Digital Library Lab. The two departments have been closely connected since the DLL@HPL launched in 2019, and this is an exciting opportunity to further the important work of expanding access to the HHC’s collections and resources while strengthening our connection to the community.”

“Coming from a background in public history, I’m thrilled about the opportunity to work with local communities in the Hartford History Center,” said Katie Bushman, HHC’s Archivist. “I believe that archives are for everyone, and it’s so great to have such an incredible collection available in a public library. This is a dream job for me, and I could not be more excited to be joining the team!”

The HHC Research Room is open to the public by appointment. Appointments can be made by calling (860) 695-6297 or by emailing hhc@hplct.org.

To learn more about the Digital Library Lab at Hartford Public Library, visit dll.hplct.org, email dll@hplct.org, or call 860-965-6293.

About Hartford Public Library:

Founded as the Library Company in 1774, Hartford Public Library has remained at the forefront of redefining the urban library experience for over 250 years. The Library has seven full-service locations, two Boundless Library locations, and multiple outreach services, including the Library on Wheels and Story Stash, a 24/7 pickup locker. HPL provides education, intellectual enrichment, and cultural development for thousands of children, youth, and adults. HPL has gained local and national recognition for its wide range of new initiatives and partnerships designed to meet the needs of a diverse and dynamic city and region, including immigration services, employment assistance, and youth leadership training. For more information, visit hplct.org

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