Tennis legend opens new city library

Billie Jean King helps celebrate new $48M state-of-the-art facility that carries her name

By Josh Rosen
Correspondent

The Billie Jean King Main Library in Long Beach opened to the public Saturday with tremendous fanfare, its namesake in attendance, and no shortage of people to fill it.

The $48 million information center—a genuine 21st century library, as King put it—is the flagship of the new Long Beach Civic Center redevelopment and the culmination of a lifetime of courage and achievement from one of Long Beach’s most admired residents.

“Today, I’ve come full circle in my return to Long Beach,” King said. “Without the people of Long Beach, I never, ever would have had the opportunity to launch my tennis career and travel the world and have a platform to hopefully make a difference in the lives of others.”

King grew up on 36th Street, long before going on to win 39 Grand Slam titles and, of course, that legendary triumph over Bobby Riggs and male chauvinism in 1973.

A fiery and tireless player, King used her tennis fame throughout her life as a platform to ad...

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"This is much more meaningful and much more emotional because I'm born and raised here, as you can see how many people helped me on my journey, I feel so connected to Long Beach. I thought at 75, wow, just amazing, it's like the circle of life."

— Billy Jean King

Not your parents’ library

The new Billy Jean King Main Library at the corner of Broadway and Pacific Avenue, is by far, the most public component of the Civic Center project. This 23,000 square-foot structure is equipped with an extensive learning section for children, tech labs, video and sound studios for hands-on learning, resources for the handicapped and even assistance in immigration services. It also has books.

The new facility also offers a Family Learning Center, the Center for Adaptive Technology, and a Veterans Resource Center, study rooms, meeting rooms, a special collections area.