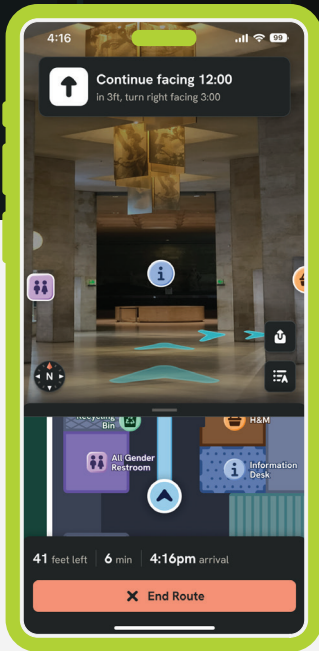


# GoodMaps at Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library



*"Every time I've explained this tool to a patron, whether they have a disability or not, it has been received with wonder and excitement. The MLK Memorial Library is an amazing building filled with so much to serve our diverse communities, and this tool gives our customers another way to engage with it."*

- **Shelby Singleton,**  
Assistive Technology  
Coordinator,  
Martin Luther King Jr.  
Memorial Library





The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library in Washington, D.C., serves as the flagship of the District of Columbia Public Library system. Designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and recently renovated by Mecanoo, the library is a modern architectural landmark that attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. With its extensive resources, vibrant programming, and diverse community spaces such as an auditorium, dance studio, recording studios, and a rooftop garden, the library is a hub for learning and engagement. However, its sprawling layout presented challenges for navigation – especially for visitors who were blind or had low vision – prompting the need for an innovative solution.

## Navigational Challenges in a Modernized Space

The library's recent renovation introduced new departments, expanded services, and modern facilities. While these changes enhanced the library's offerings, they also created a steep learning curve for visitors unfamiliar with the new layout. Departments such as the Archives and Adult Learning were relocated, while new elevators and staircases added complexity to wayfinding. Visitors frequently asked staff for directions, underscoring the need for a tool that could simplify navigation in this dynamic space. For customers who were blind or had low vision, navigating independently became even more challenging.





## MLK Memorial Library Facts & Figures

- Established: **1972**;  
renovated in 2020.
- Annual Visits: **Over 650,000**.
- Collection Size: More  
than **1.3 million volumes**.
- Key Features: Auditorium,  
rooftop garden,  
recording studios.
- Accessibility Hub: Home  
to D.C.'s **Center for  
Accessibility**.
- Website: [dclibrary.org/  
plan-visit/martin-luther-  
king-jr-memorial-library](https://dclibrary.org/plan-visit/martin-luther-king-jr-memorial-library)

## Discovering GoodMaps: A Fluid Solution

Shelby Singleton, the library's Assistive Technology Coordinator, sought a wayfinding tool that could address these challenges while prioritizing accessibility. After research, GoodMaps emerged as the solution due to its ability to provide real-time updates and adapt to frequent changes in the library's layout. GoodMaps' infrastructure-free design made it easy to implement without requiring physical modifications to the space – a critical factor for a building like the MLK Library.

The collaboration began with a demonstration of GoodMaps' capabilities. The team was particularly impressed by how quickly updates could be made using GoodMaps Studio. For example, when staff noticed that the children's slide – a popular feature – was missing from the initial map scan, engineers promptly located it in the original scan and added it to the map.

## Building Accessibility Together

The partnership between DC Public Library and GoodMaps has been marked by responsiveness and collaboration. GoodMaps worked closely with library staff to ensure the accuracy of maps and address any issues promptly. This collaborative approach ensured that customers could rely on up-to-date navigation tools tailored to their needs.

GoodMaps has transformed how visitors interact with the library. Customers who are blind or have low vision can now navigate independently without needing constant assistance from staff or volunteers. The tool has also proven popular among sighted visitors who appreciate its ease of use and ability to guide them through the library's extensive resources.

## Impact on Visitors and Staff

The introduction of GoodMaps has been met with widespread enthusiasm from customers. Visitors who previously required guidance are now able to navigate...





## Institute of Museum & Library Services

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- Photographs © Elvert Barnes (pg. 1), William Nyikuli (pg. 2), and RealVirginian (pg. 3).

... independently using GoodMaps. This shift not only enhances their experience but also frees up staff time to focus on other responsibilities.

“This is a premier library, and it’s so large, it can be easy to get lost,” said Janice Samuel, a frequent patron. “For people who are blind or have low vision, they can easily navigate without assistance. And everyone wants to be independent.”

GoodMaps has also enriched how visitors engage with the library’s offerings. Whether attending events in the auditorium or exploring exhibitions in newly added spaces, customers can now do so confidently and independently.

## Looking Ahead: A Commitment to Accessibility

The success of GoodMaps at Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library underscores its potential as a model for other public spaces seeking to enhance accessibility. As part of its mission to serve all members of its community, the DC Public Library continues to invest in innovative technologies.

With hundreds of unique destinations mapped across multiple floors – including reading rooms, meeting spaces, and specialized departments – the library is now more accessible than ever before. The tool’s ability to adapt quickly ensures that it remains relevant as new events and exhibits are introduced.

Singleton reflects on the impact of this partnership: “Having this tool available where you don’t have to come in and do a new scan every time something changes – it’s just worked out really well.” By embracing cutting-edge solutions like GoodMaps, MLK Library sets a standard for accessibility that other institutions can follow.

As libraries evolve into multi-functional community hubs, tools like GoodMaps play an essential role in ensuring that these spaces remain accessible and welcoming for all. The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library exemplifies how technology can bridge gaps in accessibility while enriching user experiences – a true testament to its mission of serving D.C.

