

Alliance Française

USA
CHICAGO

Chicago's French cultural and learning center dedicated to the study of French language, cultural exchange and friendship between Americans and French speaking people

DID YOU KNOW?

Le saviez-vous ?

The Alliance Française de Chicago is over 100 years old and is part of an international network of over 1,100 Alliances worldwide.

There are 115 Alliances in the US alone. We are an independently financed 501(c)(3) not for profit institution and must raise 40% of annual operating budget each year through donations.

Although we enjoy an affiliation with the Alliance Française in Paris, and good relationships with all the French speaking consulates and delegations, we receive no direct financial aid from the French government or the Alliance Française in Paris.

Our history includes a long list of prominent Chicagoans who continue to support our mission, dating from our founding in 1897.

Our Mission

Our mission is to be Chicago's center of French language and French speaking cultures—to promote exchange, understanding, and friendship between Americans and French speaking people—including those from Europe, Canada, Africa, the Caribbean and the Middle East—a world of 220 million French speakers. Through study of another language and its associated cultures, we help to develop a global view of the world.

2,000 members and 4,000 students

The Alliance Française of Chicago has about 2,000 members and 1,000 class enrollments for each of our five class sessions. We have two buildings at Chicago Avenue and Dearborn Street with 17,000 square feet, connected by a garden.

French classes at all levels, for all age groups

We offer French classes at all levels, for all age groups for children, teens and adults. Our audience ranges in age from 1 to 85 and includes those from all groups and cultures in the city of Chicago area. Classes are given in general French at all levels, from beginner to advanced, with specialty courses given in French for business, French for travelers, literature, current events and cinema.

Chez Kids Academy

Our Chez Kids Academy children's center offers classes and activities for kids from 2 years up through teens. Each year, we hold 6 weeks of Summer Camp for ages 6 to 12. Chez Kids operates all day, all week, with specially trained teachers who are experts in early childhood French as a second language.

Research has shown that those children exposed to another language at an early age, develop stronger rational skills. Our young students come from all

backgrounds, some with dual nationality parents, but most with parents strongly interested in the best all around education for their children.

A commitment to quality and an innovative approach

Our instructors are native speakers specially certified in teaching French as a second language, using the latest proven methods, so that learning outcomes are positive and measurable. This is a unique method that is not found in most universities and schools in the United States.

Classes are offered in the daytime, evening and on Saturdays. We also offer off-site corporate classes as well as private lessons.

We are one of eight Alliances in the US to develop a system of library materials that are classified by learning level. We led this project in conjunction with the New York Alliance and the Délégation Générale of the Alliance Française in Washington, D.C.

Cultural programs

Our programs range from talks by well-known authors to musical programs, current event lectures, jazz concerts, an annual symposium on the Decorative Arts, a series of events celebrating French speaking countries every March, cooking classes and demonstrations, wine tastings and classes, and our ciné-club film series. We also have conversation groups that meet regularly on a variety of topics, including literature, poetry and theatre.

Brown Médiathèque/Library

Our library holds 14,000 volumes including current DVDs as well as periodicals and books. We are the largest private French library in Illinois and have over 18,000 circulations annually. Our Médiathèque is one of the most popular spaces at the Alliance.

LE SAVIEZ-VOUS ?

Educational Outreach: Partnership with the Chicago Public Schools

Our Outreach Partnership with the Chicago Public Schools (in existence since 1998) brings students from 6 CPS high schools for immersion classes all through the school year.

Of this highly diverse group of 50 students who come each year, 90% go on to attend college, many of them are the first generation in their families to pursue higher education. (The Chicago Public Schools average for college attendance is 46% and the US national average is about 35% for graduating seniors.)

In addition, over 2,000 middle and high school students come to the Alliance each year for Discovery Day Field Trips. We host programs for young adults in Chicago on a regular basis as well.

We also hold Professional Development Seminars for teachers of French in the Chicago Public Schools system and other regional school systems. This is training that they would not otherwise receive, as the methods employed are not widely taught in the US. We bring in experts in teaching methods for these seminars.

Some statistics

- The Alliance Française de Chicago is the second oldest in the US and second largest after the Alliance Française in New York City.
- We have nearly 2,000 members, and nearly 4,000 students each year. We are constantly attracting new students—each school term brings about 10% new patrons to the Alliance.
- Our student population is diverse—4% between 25–44, 40% between 45–65 years of age, 75% female, 25% male. 87% are very or extremely likely to recommend us to friends, and 97% say they are likely to return.
- We communicate regularly with more than 7,000 individuals through mailed brochures 5 times per year and bi-monthly e-mail newsletters. Our website has an average of 5,200 individual visitors per month. We advertise throughout the year on National Public Radio, CTA buses, and count over 1,100 fans on Facebook and 1,200 followers on Twitter.
- Our audience for events and programs numbers over 4,000 people—2,000 for events held at the Alliance and another 2,000 for programs taking place with and at partner institutions. This is a highly educated, globally minded, civically and culturally active group with great interest in international relations and global understanding.
- We have a dedicated corps of over 150 active volunteers for events, enrollment weeks, summer camp and other activities. Volunteers may earn credits toward memberships and classes. We regularly take 10–20 names each week from people who have simply passed by the Alliance Française de Chicago.
- Our total gross impressions number in the tens of thousands.

Our partner institutions include:

The Art Institute of Chicago and the School of the Art Institute
Burnham Plan Centennial
The Cervantes Institute
Chicago Architectural Foundation
Chicago Botanic Garden
Chicago Council on Global Affairs
Chicago Shakespeare Theater
The Chicago Cultural Center
Chicago International Film Festival
The Chicago Symphony Orchestra
Chicago Human Rhythm Project
Chopin Theater
Columbia College — Chicago
The Consulates of Switzerland, Canada, Haiti, Romania, and
Delegations from Belgium, Quebec, Senegal, Morocco, and Cameroon
Délégation Générale de l'Alliance Française USA
DePaul University
Facets Multimedia
Forum des Images — Paris
France-Chicago Center at the University of Chicago
French Cultural Services of the Consulate General of France in Chicago
The Goethe Institute
Harris Theater
Illinois Institute of Technology
International Voices Project
Institut du Patrimoine Wallon
Le Louvre Museum
Loyola University and LUMA
Lycée Français de Chicago
Lyric Opera of Chicago
Maison de la Pub - Paris
Musée des Arts Décoratifs - Paris
Musée du Louvre
The Newberry Library
Northwestern University
Osmothèque de Versailles
Rush Hour Concerts and Make Music Chicago
The Gene Siskel Film Center
Théâtre du Rond-Point in Paris
Trap Door Theater
The Sister Cities International Programs
University of Illinois — Chicago
University of Wisconsin — Madison

Program highlights

- Festival de la Francophonie—an annual month-long celebration of all French-speaking groups in Chicago and their culture: gastronomy, film, music, literature... The Kick-Off always sells out.
- French Decorative Arts Symposium — a combined cultural and fundraising program. A series of museum-caliber lectures in April through June of each year. Featured in 2011: “Les Grandes Collections : Chez Camondo et Frick” with the Curator-in-chief of the Musée Nissim de Camondo, Sylvie Legrand-Rossi and Charlotte Vignon, Associate Curator of Decorative Arts at the Frick Collection in New York City.
- 2010–11 Film Rétrospective: Catherine Deneuve. Launched in September with a personal appearance of French actor Gérard Depardieu. The 2011–12 retrospective celebrates the 10 best French actresses with the *Femmes Fatales & Ingenués* series.
- Also in 2011–12, a seminar dedicated to the French philosopher Jacques Derrida in partnership with the University of Chicago and De Paul University; a partnership with the Harris Theater for Music and Dance during the first ever visit of the Paris Opera Ballet company to Chicago; plus architect Patrick Blanc and his “vertical gardens”, fashion, hiphop, theater and current affairs.
- “Being a Chef” cooking classes and hands-on demonstrations, offered every class session.

Past program highlights

- Last year, we welcomed the literary critic and author Pierre Assouline; philosopher and theologian Jean Luc Marion, of the *Académie Française*; Jacques Ferrier, the architect responsible for the French Pavilion at the Shanghai Exhibition; and the director of *le Théâtre du Rond-Point* in Paris, Pierre Notte.
- French ambassador Pierre Vimont for the first annual John Shedd Reed memorial lecture on current events in France, “Transatlantic Relations”, October 2009.
- “The Louvre and the Masterpiece”, a presentation by Isabelle Leroy-Jay Lemaistre, the head curator of sculpture at *Le Louvre* Museum, January 2010.
- Cirque du Soleil behind the scenes presentation with performers from “Banana Shpeel”, December 2009.
- Guadeloupe author Maryse Condé and her play “Comme deux frères” Chopin Theater, February 2008 (in collaboration with DePaul University and French Cultural Services).



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