The Knoxville History Project is seeking community support to fund research and production of a new engaging “Downtown Literary Guide” to increase awareness for the city’s rich literary heritage.

“A city’s literary history often forms a big part of a city’s public persona. In America as in much of the world, the cities that matter are the ones that have attracted authors to use them as settings. Dozens of major cities offer guidebooks to newcomers interested in exploring that heritage. In some cases, visitors may already be familiar with the author’s work, or, at least, have heard the author’s name. That in of itself can offer a point of access to an otherwise unfamiliar city.” - Jack Neely

Researched and published by the Knoxville History Project, using images, quotations, and brief bios, the Knoxville literary guide will offer a gateway to Knoxville’s literary heritage and to the city’s appeal. The guide will highlight works by important Knoxville authors, including James Agee, Frances Hodgson Burnett, Nikki Giovanni, Cormac McCarthy, George Washington Harris, David Madden, and others.

This signature project will be designed by the award-winning team at Robin Easter Design to complement KHP partner Knox Heritage’s highly popular “Historic Downtown Walking Tour” of historic buildings.

The format will be a tall 4.24” x 11” 28-page two-tone booklet with a print run of 10,000 booklets.

Sponsorship contributions help fund the total project of $12,000 including research, writing, design and printing.

Sponsors will be recognized on the guide, KHP’s website, social media, and promotions.
James Agee (1909-1955), journalist, critic, novelist, screenwriter, won the Pulitzer posthumously for his autobiographical novel, *A Death in the Family*. The book describes downtown Knoxville as it was in 1916 in some detail, with scenes on Gay Street and Market Square especially, with brief descriptions of the L&N and what's now the LMU law school building. Agee personally had strong associations with St. John's Episcopal church (now cathedral). Agee grew up in Fort Sanders close to where Agee Park is today.

Frances Hodgson Burnett (1849-1924), internationally popular English-born novelist (*The Secret Garden, Little Lord Fauntleroy*), lived in and near downtown Knoxville between 1865 and 1875, during which time she began her career as a successful author. None of her downtown homes survive, including the legendary “Vagabondia,” but she did have some associations with Market Square and the Custom House. A new publication of her little-known memoir describes her life here as if it were a fairy tale.

Cormac McCarthy (1933- ), bestselling and Pulitzer-winning novelist, lived in Knoxville from early childhood to middle age. He lived mostly in South Knoxville, but was familiar with Immaculate Conception Church, attended downtown Catholic schools and UT in the 1950s. His first novel, *The Orchard Keeper*, includes a rich description of Market Square; his fourth novel, *Suttree*, features vivid descriptions of downtown Knoxville circa 1951, including descriptions of the riverfront, Gay Street, Market Square, and the Old City.

Nikki Giovanni (1943- ), free-verse poet strongly associated with the Black Power movement, was born in Knoxville and spent much of her childhood at the home of her grandmother on Mulvaney (now Hall of Fame Drive). She recalls black Knoxville in the 1940s and '50s in mostly positive terms in a memoir, a couple of short essays, and a well-known poem, which has since been made into a popular children’s book, *Knoxville, Tennessee*. Most of her world was focused on East Vine, which has been almost erased, but some of her memories concern existing Cal Johnson Park which now houses a new state historical marker in her honor.
George Washington Harris (1814-1869), who created the Sut Lovingood character for a series of nationally published short stories, is considered one of the most influential American humorists before Mark Twain, who admired his work. He spent most of his life in downtown Knoxville, and began his literary career here, and he happened to be here at the time of his mysterious death in 1869. No buildings associated with him survive, but we know the locations of several, including the site of his death. Two of his children are buried at First Presbyterian churchyard.

David Madden (1933- ), critic, novelist, grew up in Knoxville. His 1974 book Bijou, which got national attention, is set primarily in a slightly re-imagined downtown in which sites like the Bijou Theatre and Market Square are presented exactly as they were at the time of the ca. 1946 setting of the book.

Others to be included, at least in passing: W.G. "Parson" Brownlow, a major civilian figure of the Civil War era, who as governor had major influence on civil rights, had a national following as an essayist; poet Sidney Lanier, who had associations with the Lamar House, which makes a brief appearance in his only novel; Anne Armstrong, whose controversial 1915 novel The Seas of God deals with a lightly disguised Knoxville, and whose 1880s memoir of the city is soon to be published; Alex Haley, author of Roots, who lived here later in life, and the impressive statue of whom can be found in Morningside Park; some songwriters, like Charlie Oaks, the circa. 1900 railroad-station busker who has been called the first professional country-music songwriter, and Arthur Q. Smith, who lived downtown and whose recent box set was nominated for a Grammy; Richard Marius, biographer and novelist associated with UT, whose work occasionally deals with Knoxville; Rick Yancey, nationally popular young-adult author, whose Highly Effective Detective series of four adult murder mysteries is set mostly in downtown Knoxville.

The guide will also highlight buildings and sites of related interest as well as several themed self-directed walks, including “The Life Saver Walk” based on Agee’s A Death in the Family, the “Cat Fish Walk” based on McCarthy's Suttree, and a literary walk along Volunteer Landing incorporating interpretive inscribed stones on the bank of the Tennessee River.
The campus of the University of Tennessee also incorporates several places worthy of a visit.

The John C. Hodges Library's modernist Ziggurat building on Volunteer Boulevard, named for the UT English scholar famous to students everywhere for his Hodges Harbrace Handbook of English, contains multiple collections of papers on James Agee, Alex Haley, who lectured at UT in his later years, and film Director, Clarence Brown. The Special Collections Department organizes constantly changing displays of letters, books, photographs, film posters, and other highlights.

The first floor of the library features the Elaine Evans Exhibition Area and UT's academic Hall of Fame which "honors those alumni and alumnae who have achieved the highest national or international distinction in the arts, letters, sciences, and learned professions." Notable here is an original head bust of Alex Haley by Jim Gray, and commemorative displays for inductees such as UT graduate Bernadotte Schmitt who won the 1931 Pulitzer Prize for history for The Coming of the War, 1914, Joseph Wood Krutch winner of the 1955 National Book Award for The Measure of Man: On Freedom, Human Values, Survival, and the Modern Temper, and Cormac McCarthy, winner of numerous national awards, including the 1992 National Book Award, for All the Pretty Horses.

Over in the Communications Building on Circle Park Drive the Tennessee Newspaper Hall of Fame honors those who have made an impact on newspaper journalism in Tennessee. A large interactive digital exhibition covers individuals of note including George Roulstone, who published the first issue of the Knoxville Gazette (both the city's and the state of Tennessee's first newspaper), political essayist, William “Parson” Brownlow, Knoxville historian and newspaper editor, William Rule, and many others.