



Book Report

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Endless Possibilities with New Library Cards

Many people know that a Library card is the key to unlocking a world of education, enrichment and enlightenment.

Johnson County Library is now gearing up to provide a new generation of Library cards, expanding the reach even beyond the many thousands of patrons who already have one. It's part of a broader marketing campaign that gets going in earnest next year.

"This is about bringing in people who haven't had a Library card before or lost it throughout the years," said Elissa Andre, external communication manager for Johnson County Library.

"We just want to remind people about all the great things the Library has to offer that might pique their interest. The Library is not just about books. We have great digital resources, programming.

one card,
unlimited possibilities

JOHNSON COUNTY
Library

unlimited rewards

This is my library card.

JOHNSON COUNTY
Library

the card preferred by

JOHNSON COUNTY
Library

Johnson County Library's three new library card designs

If there's something you're interested in, the Library can help you pursue that passion."

It's clear that many people consider their Johnson County Library card a prized possession and a favorite keepsake. A Library Facebook posting in October, showing the different iteration of cards dating back decades, elicited enthusiastic memories.

"I have my mom's red card that she used many years. She left me with a love of reading," one patron said.

"My first library card was the green one (over 40 years ago). I was so impressed to see my name on it," another patron wrote.

In 2019, Johnson County Library tallied 260,671 Library card holders. That's a lot, but the county has approximately 600,000 residents, so there's lots of growth potential. And of course, the card is available to people beyond the county boundaries.

Research suggests the biggest untapped market is millennials, who grew up using the Library and know it's a vibrant place, but they're busy and haven't kept up with how much a modern Library has to offer.

"What we hope to do with this campaign is do some really targeted marketing towards them," Andre said.

Anyone who currently has a Library card can certainly keep using it. But for people who need or want a new card, there will soon be three choices. Red or blue cards are already available in the Library branches. With a sleek, simple

design like a credit card they proclaim, "one card, unlimited possibilities," or "unlimited rewards."

The black cards roll out early next year and are designed to be customized. They proclaim, "the card preferred by ____" and the patron can fill in that sentence and personalize it with something like, "the card preferred by parents," or "the card preferred by business professionals," or any identifier of their choosing. Children can personalize the new cards with fun stickers.

The Library is planning to target information to fulfill patrons' niche interests.

Johnson County Library plans to roll out a new marketing campaign early next year, working with Venice Communications and Bruhn Marketing.

The Library anticipates doing a countywide mailer sometime next spring to about 150,000 households, casting a wide net with information about the new cards and reminding the public about the Library's offerings. The campaign has been in the works for quite some time and had been scheduled for 2020, but with COVID and the national elections, the timing just wasn't right.

Andre said next spring will be a better time to get people's full attention and positive response.

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BRANCHING OUT

Study Will Explore Future for Spring Hill Library

Johnson County Library's Spring Hill branch is a small but cherished facility, an anchor for this close-knit community where patrons and staff often know each other. That's part of what branch manager John Keogh finds special.

"In a community-based branch, patrons have a very strong sense of ownership," says Keogh, who oversees the Gardner, Edgerton and Spring Hill branches. "This is their Library.....Which means we have a huge amount of support. We have a huge amount of appreciation for what we do. People love it here."

The compact brick building at 109 S. Webster Street, just a few blocks from the Johnson/Miami County line, is well maintained, with walls painted in cheerful pastel colors. It has a good children's collection, a few computers that are well-used by middle schoolers and job seekers, and a large Holds section.

But the structure is only about 2,700-square-feet and that's its biggest challenge. It has no meeting rooms and no capacity to grow. So a study is planned in late 2021 on how Spring Hill Library can continue to meet the community's needs.

This "Rural Renewal Initiative Study" will explore how both Spring Hill and De Soto Libraries, which are not scheduled for renovations in the 20-year master plan, can refresh their physical spaces and implement innovative solutions.

"The goal is to figure out how to do better within the resource constraints that we have to meet,"

Keogh said. "If we can't make the building bigger, what can we do? If we can't increase staffing levels, what can we do?"

The Spring Hill Library, which opened in 1982, is in Johnson County but most patrons actually live in Miami County. In 2019 it recorded an average of 134 patron visits per day and 2,786 per month. It averages about 4,300 checkouts per month and over half the Spring Hill circulation comes from Holds.

Its patron base includes many long-time residents but also has many young families, so youth services are a major need.

Before the pandemic, the branch hosted popular daytime Storytimes and had started an evening Storytime. It also had a loyal book group that met at the nearby K&M Bar-B-Que (which Keogh says has really good barbecue!). The Library is also popular with young teens whom Keogh has gotten to know.

"There are a lot of middle school students in particular who

come in after school and they do homework and play games together," he said. "This is a kind of a social space for them, which is what we want."

But the building has no space for author visits or tutoring. So Keogh says the study will explore creative partnerships with other community spaces and ways to expand services.

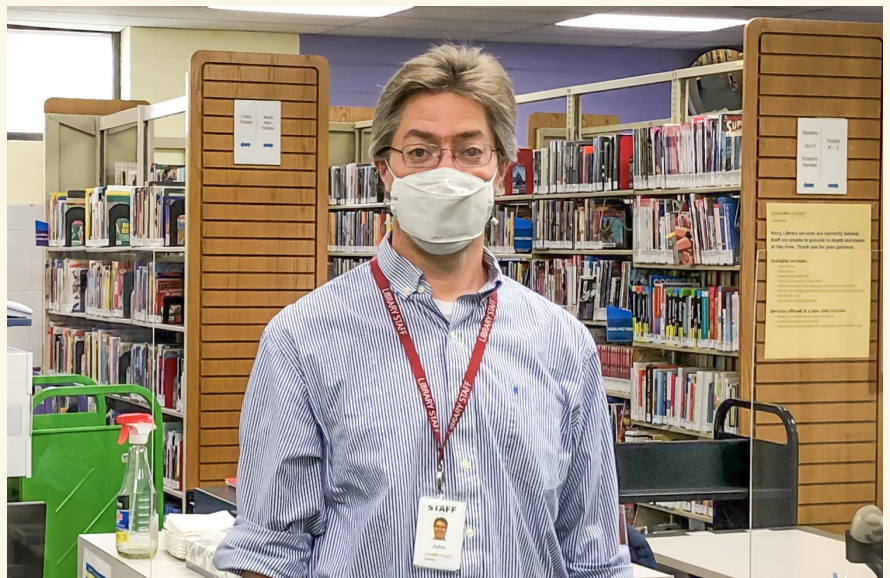
"One of the big ideas we really want to look at is whether we can offer access to the building at times when the staff aren't here," he said. "Something like a Holds pickup lobby. One or two quick self-serve computer stations in the entryway."

Implementation is several years off, but the study will pave the way for Spring Hill's Library of the future. "It's actually really exciting to me," Keogh said. "I love the fact that I'm going to get to participate in a project that gets to examine really cool ideas."

TOP HOLDS

NOVEMBER 2020

- **A Time for Mercy** - John Grisham
- **Anxious People** - Fredrik Backman
- **Leave the World Behind** - Rumaan Alam
- **The Searcher** - Tana French
- **The Guest List** - Lucy Foley
- **The Book of Two Ways** - Jodi Picoult
- **One by One** - Ruth Ware
- **Greenlights** - Matthew McConaughey
- **The Sentinel** - Lee Child, Andrew Child
- **The Return** - Nicholas Sparks



John Keogh, branch manager for Spring Hill, Gardner and Edgerton

PATRON OF THE MONTH

City Planner Enjoys JCL Podcast, Volunteering

Danielle Hollrah is a city planner in Overland Park and spends her days helping to review development proposals and navigating other crucial planning decisions as the city grows and modernizes.

But she has always loved to read and appreciates the role of libraries in building strong communities. So on most Thursday evenings after work, she volunteers for several hours at the Blue Valley branch, making sure materials are properly shelved and assisting patrons.

"I enjoy it," she said. "It's very busy."

She's pleased to do her part and give some relief to the hard-working staff.

"I always get a lot out of the Library," Hollrah said. "I'm always telling friends about programs I see."

Growing up in a small western Kansas farm town, Hollrah visited the Hays Library on Saturdays with her mother and had a wonderful time.

"I still remember the castle play area they had for the kids. It looked like 'Where the Wild Things Are,'" she recalled. "I have always been a reader, probably because my mom was."

When she moved to Johnson County in 2005, one of her first acts was to get a Library card.

In fall 2019, Hollrah became a fan of Johnson County Library's podcast "Did You Hear?" which gives listeners a behind-the-scenes perspective on Library activities and public interest topics.

"There was a whole episode on the MakerSpace which I have not gone and checked out but I would like to," she said. "Just hearing about everything they have, it's amazing."

She particularly liked the interplay between Host Dave Carson and Civic Engagement Librarian Melissa Horak-Hern.



Danielle Hollrah poses in front of the Blue Valley branch

"The two of them are great together," she said. "They are humorous. They are just fun to listen to."

Hollrah enjoyed an episode on the importance of the Census, which held special resonance given her city planning expertise. She was interested to learn that Horak-Hern had a similar educational background, with studies in public administration.

Through the Blue Valley clerks, Hollrah reached out to Horak-Hern, who readily agreed to meet.

"We went for coffee and had a wonderful chat," Horak-Hern recalled, saying it was nice to have a direct connection with a patron.

Hollrah appreciated Horak-Hern being accessible and talking about Library programming.

When COVID-19 hit in March, Library volunteering stopped for several months. Hollrah says Volunteer Coordinator Amber Bourek Slater kept in regular contact with everyone, even organizing some

Zoom get-togethers. Hollrah resumed volunteering at Blue Valley in July.

During the pandemic, she signed up for the Axis 360 app and started reading e-books online for the first time. She loves historical fiction but wanted to explore other genres. She discovered the Library's reading lists and appreciated recommendations for books on National Parks, the outdoors and nature. She and her husband have done some camping during the pandemic and that research came in handy.

Hollrah realizes how the pandemic has compelled Johnson County Library to get creative. "They've really adapted," she said, citing the online Storytimes and other programming that reaches people virtually while they can't attend in person.

She sees how the Holds area has grown in recent months at Blue Valley Library and is gratified the public is taking advantage of Library materials, especially now.

"It's such a great resource," she said.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Dynamic Duo Brings Passion to Graphic Design Work



Cindy Frazer (L) and Jennifer Taylor (R) in their workspace at the Central Resource Library

Johnson County Library has a dynamic duo. They work behind-the-scenes but leave an indelible mark of artistic creativity and passion on the system's educational and promotional materials.

Jennifer Taylor and Cindy Frazer are the Library's two graphics coordinators, playing an essential role in communication and outreach.

"We are part of the customer experience department," Taylor explained. "We do all of the printed materials, the bookmarks, the flyers, the newsletters, the guide magazines, all the summer reading promotions, the Writers' Conference [materials]."

The work includes posters, lobby boards, banners, signage and name badges, Frazer adds. "Anything that's printed, business cards -- everything comes through this department." They also ensure materials look good online.

It's an enormous task, but they've been working collaboratively together

for decades and love what they do.

"I like the variety. I always have something different," said Frazer, who recently designed both printed and online materials for the Writers' Conference. "There's always something new. So there are new things we get to figure out. How to make something work. A new way to get it out there."

Taylor particularly enjoys working on summer reading promotions.

"Since I started here in 1992, I've designed all of the [materials] for summer reading, for every year," she said. "Sometimes I've gotten to work directly with the artists doing the artwork for it, which is fantastic, just the creation of the overall look for summer reading. I get to take it off from there to design the posters and the bookmarks and the reading logs and the images that are going online now."

Frazer was hired to do layout and manual paste-up in the pre-digital

days of 1985 and started the graphic arts department in 1988. Taylor joined her in 1992 and the two have been a great team ever since, sharing life's milestones.

"We've been through weddings, marriages, babies....kids graduating the same time," said Taylor, who has two sons, ages 25 and 21. Frazer also has two sons, ages 33 and 25.

Early on, they worked on MacIntosh SE personal computers, and they've gradually upgraded and added new equipment, like the Epson Pro 9890 large format printer.

They primarily work in a back office at Central Resource Library but also have a laminator at the Support Services Building on the Antioch campus. After Central is renovated next year, their offices and all their equipment will be consolidated at Central.

The Library's writers and other content providers take great pride in their work. Taylor and Frazer see their role as enhancing communication and giving Library materials the right "look" through an attractive palette of colors, fonts, and other design decisions.

It's been especially important during the pandemic, as they designed such materials as the curbside pickup signage, lobby boards and online programming presentation.

"We know what works," Frazer said, adding that it comes from experience. "We have institutional experience. We know what has worked in the past -- not that we're not ready to try something new."

It's also true for printed materials like *elementia* and the seasonal guides. "We want to make sure we're making it look the best we possibly can," Taylor said, "to honor the work that's been put into it."

EVENTS SPOTLIGHT

Acclaimed Poets Launch Writers Conference

Johnson County Library's sixth annual Writers Conference, Nov. 12-15, kicked off with an all-star panel: poetry slam champion Rudy Francisco; Randall Horton, ex-felon and famed poet and memoirist; and Megan Kaminski, University of Kansas associate professor and poet and essayist.

Each panelist described a unique writing journey.

Francisco, author of "Helium," made a name for himself performing before crowds, but is now a YouTube sensation.

"I'm still sort of figuring all of that out. I came into this as a performer," he said. But he noted that social media has "exposed a whole generation to poetry in ways that weren't accessible before." So, he said, it has shown that poetry can be a viable profession.

Horton, author of "Hook: A Memoir," was incarcerated but is now a renowned writer and University of New Haven tenured professor. He began writing in prison, and became a mentor and advocate for other incarcerated persons.

"I had to stumble into poetry. I was writing fiction when I was incarcerated," he recalled. He wrote a short story whose protagonist was a young poet. "That sent me on a whole journey into figuring out what a poem was," Horton said, adding that influences included Gwendolyn Brooks and Eldridge Knight.

Kaminski, author of "Gentlewomen," started a poetry reading series about 10 years ago in a Lawrence dive bar. "It was really fun but it was a bunch of people getting drunk in the basement listening to poetry," she said.

Wanting more, she launched the Ad Astra Writing Project, free workshops dedicated to the creative process and promoting individual and community healing.

This was the Library's first virtual writers' conference, necessitated by the pandemic. It featured workshops to build connections and inspire writers in their craft.



The first 200 registrants were mailed a gift box containing Library publications and swag.

Programming Helps Parents Communicate about Race

As the U.S. undergoes a reckoning about systemic racism, Johnson County Library is offering programming to promote positive change and racial justice.

To that end, on Nov. 4 and Nov. 18, the Library hosted online workshops entitled "Talking to Preschoolers About Race."

"Heading into programming for fall, we wanted to have some open dialogue about talking about race and racism," said Michelle Ranney, youth information specialist for Shawnee and Cedar Roe Libraries. "We wanted to build some programming to give caretakers language to use with kids."

The facilitators were Sachi Feris and Myra Hernandez of the New York-based organization Raising Race Conscious Children. On November 4, they offered strategies, research, books and other resources for 24 participants to get comfortable talking about race in age-appropriate ways. They pointed out that very young children notice skin color differences, and avoiding discussions can have negative consequences.

"Many of us in this country were raised to believe that a color-blind society is what we should strive for. But what color blindness does is leave people without the language to


discuss race and examine their own biases," Hernandez told participants. "One of the worst things people can do is pretend that race doesn't matter or that racism doesn't exist."

Participants were prompted by images and stories to initiate conversations. Some said it felt awkward but Feris responded it gets easier with practice. She offered specific advice for how parents can answer children's questions and build understanding about identity, fairness, inclusiveness and respect.

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

Social Media Highlights


As you can see by the posts below, the Johnson County library system continues to thrive even in these difficult times! **Thank you for your support!** *Click the captions to view full posts online!*



The Good Place, Season One
DVD - 2017

The show follows Eleanor Shellstrop, an ordinary woman who enters the afterlife and, thanks to some kind of error, is sent to the Good Place instead of the Bad Place, which is definitely where she belongs.


Available in some locations [Place a Hold](#)



Parks and Recreation, Season One
DVD - 2009

This mockumentary-style series looks at the exciting world of local government. Examines the mundane but necessary ways that people interact with their go...[Show more](#)


Available in some locations [Place a Hold](#)



Best in Show
DVD - 2001

If you love Eugene Levy and Catherine O'Hara, you'll love this mockumentary-style comedy about what goes on behind the scenes at dog shows.

All copies in use [Availability details](#) [Place a Hold](#)
Holds: 10 on 5 copies




The IT Crowd, the Complete First Season
DVD - 2009

In this hilarious British comedy series, we meet Roy and Moss, two IT guys who work in a dark, dingy basement of a...


 **This booklist inspired by a popular TV show got lots of clicks from social media back to our website!**

I have a
Secret Library.
I got inspired
Be cause of you


I Like Your
Library. thak
You For ~~NAH~~ Letting
us come
here.

 **These letters from our youngest patrons got the highest number of likes on Instagram**



 **Another set of television-inspired recommendations reached over 4k people on Facebook**



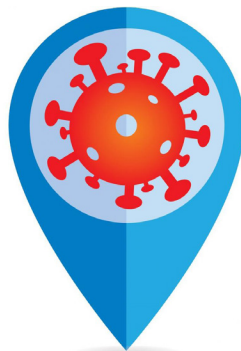
 **Twitter users appreciated our Day of the Dead ofrendas from years past**



Month in Review November 2020



Blue Valley, Central Resource and Oak Park branches were polling places for the Nov. 3 election. Though the polls didn't officially open until 7 am, there was a line outside of Central by 6 am!



The Library launched their Digital Navigators program in early Nov. to help those with limited digital access or skills navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. The program is supported by Federal CARES Act funding.



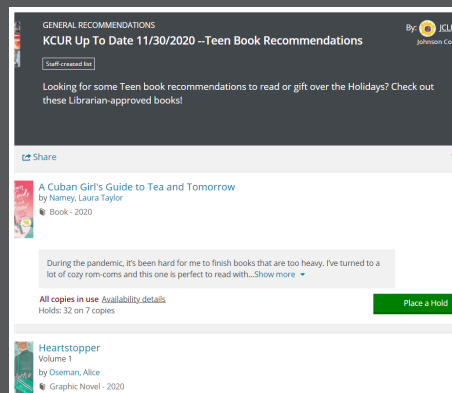
Fans of Pete the Cat were excited to participate in a virtual singalong and storytime with author Eric Litwin on Nov. 10.



Winners of the Teen Sticker Design contest were announced on Nov. 19. Alyssa McHugh won the Teen Choice category and Alyson Zeller won for Librarian's Choice.





Author and World Poetry Slam Champion Rudy Francisco held a virtual slam poetry workshop on Nov. 21.



Youth Information Specialists Emma Fernhout and Heather Miller were interviewed on KCUR 89.3's Up to Date program Nov. 30, sharing teen book recommendations for the holidays.

NEXT ISSUE



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-  **Branching Out:** Central Resource Library Gets Upgrades in 2021
-  **Patron Of The Month:** Lauren Gladish, local educator
-  **Staff Spotlight:** Megan Mascorro-Jackson, Assistant Branch Manager

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