



# Book Report

APRIL 2021 VOLUME XXV

## elementia Magazine Highlights Youth Creativity

This year's issue of Johnson County Library's teen literary magazine, *elementia*, was put together virtually, of necessity, because of the Coronavirus pandemic.

But that didn't hinder the quality of the submissions or the experience of those producing it.

"I am just always constantly impressed by the amount of care and thought the teens put into the magazine," said Tiffany Rinne, youth information specialist with Blue Valley Library, who helped facilitate the editorial meetings. "It's an incredible amount of work, reading 500 pieces and thinking about them thoughtfully. They do an amazing job."

Olathe North High senior Neha Sridhar, who has been an *elementia* editor for several years, said it's always a great experience, and this latest issue was no exception.

"This year was a very positive process," she said. "I trust my fellow editors so much."

Sridhar, 17, regretted not being able to hold in-person editorial meetings to discuss the submissions and plan the magazine. But

having meetings via Zoom, she said, actually kept them well on track.

"It is more efficient. I'm proud of every issue," she said. "I think this one is going to be really cool."

The theme of this year's issue, XVIII, is "Bodies." It prompted some entries about the pandemic but that didn't overwhelm the magazine. Submissions explored topics including anatomy, the human experience, body image, bodies of water and even bodies of government.

The magazine had four teen design editors and 16 poetry/prose editors. Facilitators on the editorial side were Rinne and Monticello youth information specialist Emma Fernhout, while Leawood Pioneer information specialist Cassandra Gillig facilitated the visual arts side.

Because everything was virtual, the Library was able to connect the teen editors online in December with Sarah Burke, a New York-based writer, editor and producer. She offered some career guidance and talked to them about having an editor's critical eye to gauge good quality.

Submissions included 255 art pieces, 330 poems and 143 essays or short stories. This year, perhaps because stay-home orders opened up time and space for creativity, they received a greater variety of longer submissions. Fifty-seven written pieces were chosen, so it was very competitive.

"We had big debates about what to include," Sridhar said. "Our final selection meetings are pretty intense, but they are fun too."

She said she has learned a lot from the editing process and is inspired by the artistry that the magazine fosters. It's also been great preparation for college, where she hopes to study linguistics.

"I love getting to see and read and experience all these different pieces,"

she said, adding that she's created her own literary magazine for her senior project.

The magazine should be available in branches in late April and will also be online.

An online reception is planned for April 23, with keynote speaker Franny Choi, a Korean American writer and poet.

Sridhar said she's learned so much from Johnson County Library's programs for teens, including *elementia* and the young adult literary council that she's involved with at the Blue Valley branch.

And Rinne said Johnson County Library gains as much as it gives to these talented teens.

"They are so on the ball and have such fresh ideas," Rinne said. "It gives one hope for the future."

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The cover of the 2021 issue of *elementia*

# BRANCHING OUT

## Plans Proceeding for Antioch Branch Replacement

Johnson County Library is making progress in its plans to replace the Antioch Library with a new branch as part of the Merriam Community Center campus.

In 2020, the Library Board and city of Merriam approved agreements to convey property for the Library on the campus site, in the 6000 block of Slater Street, and to share parking and maintenance responsibilities.

Then in March 2021, the Library Board and Johnson County Board of County Commissioners approved selection of Kansas City-based Dake Wells Architecture to design the facility. Design for the 15,750-square-foot space is projected to begin this year, with construction in 2022 and project completion slated for 2023. The total project cost is estimated at \$13.68 million.

"To have a whole new space is very exciting," said Antioch Branch Manager Tad Twidwell.

The existing branch at the corner of Shawnee Mission Parkway and Antioch Road began as leased space in 1956. Johnson County Library purchased the building and property in 1961, and it served as Library Headquarters until Central opened in 1995. It has been expanded twice, in 1970 and 1983, and has served as a popular and heavily-used branch for decades.

But with limited parking and an aging facility, the creation of a new Library next to the new community center, close to IKEA and other businesses, is a welcome opportunity. It's similar to the synergy realized when

the new Lenexa City Center branch opened in 2019 on the civic mall next to Lenexa City Hall.

"Being right next to the community center, around highly-trafficked businesses, has the potential to bring in more casual Library users," Twidwell said. "There are opportunities for some collaboration with the City of Merriam as well. All that is exciting, serving the public in a brand new building."

Planning has been in the works for years. But while completion is still several years away, Twidwell said the current branch is functioning well.

In fact, it's providing some services for staff while Central Resource Library is mostly closed for a renovation.

A large meeting room is closed to the public during the COVID pandemic, but it currently provides a quiet place for staff normally based at Central to work.

"We have work stations for them," Twidwell said, noting that Central's Librarians and information specialists can bring their laptops to docking

stations and make printouts. "It's a place where they can come and do their work."

Central's IT staffers now have space to work in a back office at Antioch. And Central's staff mail boxes are currently located near the Antioch staff entrance for easy employee access.

While there is no in-person programming, the branch is open for browsing for materials, and for people to use the computers and printers.

"Circulation is fairly busy," Twidwell said. "We've seen quite a bit of uptake due to Central being mostly unavailable. We still have quite a number of regular patrons coming and utilizing the computers on a daily basis."

As with all the branches, Antioch has dealt with a lot of changes during the pandemic but has weathered them and remained strong.

"It's a great branch to come visit for the public," Twidwell said, "and we have a great group of people that work there and it's going really well."



### TOP HOLDS



#### MARCH 2021

- **The Four Winds** - Kristin Hannah
- **The Midnight Library** - Matt Haig
- **Firefly Lane** - Kristin Hannah
- **The Sanatorium** - Sarah Pearse
- **The Paris Library** - Janet Skeslien Charles
- **A Time for Mercy** - John Grisham
- **The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue** - Victoria Schwab
- **The Wife Upstairs** - Rachel Hawkins
- **The Push** - Ashley Audrain
- **The Duke and I** - Julia Quinn



Mayor of Merriam Ken Sissom and County Librarian Sean Casserley.



# PATRON OF THE MONTH

## Patron Loves Library Services, Especially Game Nights

**F**or Anne Scott, an Overland Park mom with four young children, Johnson County Library is a big part of their family entertainment, education and fun.

On an evening in March, she attended the Library's virtual game night and got an assist from her 7-year-old daughter Eleanor with the online word game she was playing with three other competitors.

Meanwhile, her dad Stephen Redfern and her son Bradley played a different online tile game with a Library information specialist.

Scott said her family loves board games and they often attended in-person game nights at Blue Valley Library before the pandemic. So, she was delighted when the Library resumed monthly game nights in January, now via Zoom and the platform Board Game Arena.

Patrons can see and talk to each other just as if they were sitting at a table together, while Library youth specialists and information specialists walk them through the rules and technology of the online games. Scott's family has attended each month and she's helped spread the word to friends.

"Those Librarians are halfway to sainthood status," she said. "They are so kind and walk everyone through what they need to do. Everybody has been lovely, and they are picking really great games."

Anne and her husband Nathan moved to Johnson County from Seattle about eight years ago, shortly after Bradley was born. Along came Eleanor, Patrick, and Juliet giving them a lively family with children ages 9 to 2. The oldest three attend Stanley Elementary, and they are frequent patrons at Blue Valley Library.

The Scotts found Johnson County such a great place to raise a family that Anne persuaded her parents to relocate there as well from the west coast.

Pre-pandemic, Scott took her kids regularly to Storytimes and all the kid-



*Scott with her family.*

friendly events at Blue Valley. In 2020, they took advantage of online opportunities and still visited to check out books.

"In the past year, we have just been checking out a ton of books online," she said. "You are limited to 100 per account. We've been up to 97 or 98."

Eleanor and Bradley are excellent readers and their mom swears by graphic novels for young readers. "It's not comic books. They are real books with stories, and added in, great pictures," she said.

Scott personally loves to read Russian novels and got hooked on the Howl's Moving Castle fantasy series by Diana Wynne Jones.

She was particularly pleased to see on the Library's Facebook page that virtual game nights would be offered this year,

because they had so enjoyed in-person tabletop games. Her dad and Bradley often form a team.

"My dad will come over and my son will sit by him and they cuddle up and play games together," she said. Meanwhile, Eleanor enjoys cooperative games.

Scott eagerly awaits the end of the Coronavirus outbreak when life and Library services can return to normal. But during this time of caution and social distancing, they've found the Library a rich source of materials.

"The Library has definitely been a bright spot for us during the pandemic. We are able to still get books and do events," she said. "It has been very much appreciated and has made a big difference for us, for sure."

# STAFF SPOTLIGHT

## Clerk Has Deep Family Ties to Libraries, De Soto History

When Lori Ross was in high school in De Soto, she loved singing and musical theater and played the part of Marian the Librarian in the school's "Music Man" performance.

Later, when she was pondering differing professions, high school friends reminded her of that role and how much she enjoyed reading and research. They suggested Library work would be a good fit.

They were right. Ross has turned her affinity for reading, genealogy and archive research into a rewarding career. It's also a great vocation as she helps her mother run the De Soto Historical Society.

From earliest childhood, Ross has fond memories of going to the existing De Soto Library, 33145 W. 83rd St. She grew up not far from there and spent hours at the Library as a child. She appreciates that the facility hasn't changed much and still feels very familiar.

While working full time after high school at a business magazine company, Ross earned her bachelor's degree in information resource studies and her master's in Library science, both at Emporia State University.

She was hired as a Central Library clerk in May 2018 and then chosen as system-wide materials handling clerk in November 2020.

"It's a challenge and I love challenges," she said. "It's a brand-new position, so new things are coming up constantly."

She's part of the materials handling team that gets items to patrons throughout the system. They are working temporarily at the Northeast Office Building while Central is being renovated.

Among her duties is getting materials ready for Home Connect deliveries (to homebound patrons), assisting with materials for incarcerated services clients and putting new books in tubs for branch deliveries. She also handles hundreds of mismatched materials each week, locating items when DVDs or game parts are mismatched or missing altogether.

She cherishes the sense of being part of a close-knit family unit among her co-workers. "That's always been something nice to have," she said. "We're there for each other."

Lori Ross certainly knows family. She's part of an extended family of 80 or so Ross relatives with deep ties to the De Soto area.

Her great-grandfather helped lay the first water pipes in De Soto and owned the Ross Electric and Plumbing shop on Main Street. After he died, his wife Edna took over. She also created De Soto's first lending library in the mid-1950s, with books on a shelf in the store. That lending library lasted until book mobiles took over.



Materials Handling Clerk Lori Ross.

"She was a savvy businesswoman," Lori Ross says of her great-grandmother, who thrived in business for decades, until she died at age 90 in 1995. The building remains, including its original hardwood floor, and is now owned by Lori Ross' parents, Michael and Kathy. The building's upper floor now houses the De Soto Historical Society, run by Lori Ross and her mother.

"She loves history and pulled me into it," Lori Ross said of the historical society. They both do genealogy research for family members and others, as well as research key elements of the town's history.

The De Soto Historical Society is open to the public on Thursdays. It serves as a great community resource and is a wonderful way for Ross to put her Library skills to work in the town she loves.



# EVENTS SPOTLIGHT

## Virtual Tabletop Game Night Provides Family Fun

Johnson County Library has hosted tabletop game events in person for years, but the pandemic curtailed those gatherings in 2020.

Fortunately, in January 2021, the Library began hosting virtual monthly game nights, through a platform called Board Game Arena. They've grown in popularity each month, and March 3 saw a full house of 11 adults and seven children join Library staffers for an evening of entertainment and family-friendly competition.



*Library staff lead a Tabletop Gaming Session via Zoom.*

"It's a way for people to connect that aren't in their family group, getting people together during this tough time," said youth information specialist Katy Whim, who helped start game nights at the Lackman branch in 2013.

Using Zoom, people gathered March 3 in virtual breakout rooms where they could see and talk to each other. They accessed user-friendly games online and Library staff helped with instructions and tech support.

In one room, a father and his twin 5-year-olds played Kingdomino, an innovative tile game, with Information Specialist Courtney Sammis. In another room, Information Specialist Tami Thomas introduced participants to Tokaido, where players

traverse a magnificent road in Japan, scoring points for the most interesting experiences. They also played the word game Letter Tycoon.

In another room, Stephen Redfern and his grandson Bradley joined Information Specialist Andrew Erickson for Carcassonne: Hunters and Gatherers, in which players create a landscape with tiles.

"I really like that there's a lot of strategy involved," Redfern said.

"I helped my grandpa," Bradley said. "He helped me a lot," Redfern agreed.

These virtual game nights are accessible for people who have small children or can't drive to a branch, Whim said. She hopes to provide these fun events both online and in person once the pandemic ends.

## Tips for a Successful Networking Strategy

Many people think of career networking as an intimidating, formalized chore that gets them out of their comfort zone and doesn't seem to work anyway.

But Karen Silins, an experienced career and business coach, shared a different perspective March 11 with 20 participants in an online seminar, offered through Johnson County Library's Career and Finance programming.

Silins, owner of A+ Career & Resume, said networking has a simple mission: to develop positive relationships. She offered ideas on where to network, how to cultivate people skills, how to make contact online or in person and the benefits of social networking.

It's about the Golden Rule, Silins emphasized. The first rule of networking

is to help others. In doing so, you often help yourself.

She acknowledged the COVID pandemic has profoundly affected networking opportunities, but she doesn't let her clients use that as an excuse.

Networking occurs in grocery stores, in church, on elevators and in volunteering Silins said. It's anywhere you strike up a conversation and share valuable information. Concentrating on helping the other person reduces the pressure.

Networking is part of the hidden job market and involves making connections that can be key to getting the job interview that's right for you.

Silins also advised going beyond Indeed or Career Builder, seeking out specific company websites that may be avenues to a new opportunity.

She cautioned everyone about their social media. "Keep it professional," she urged, noting that job seekers can be torpedoed by inappropriate social media posts.

Silins' advice is archived at the Library's website for anyone to view.

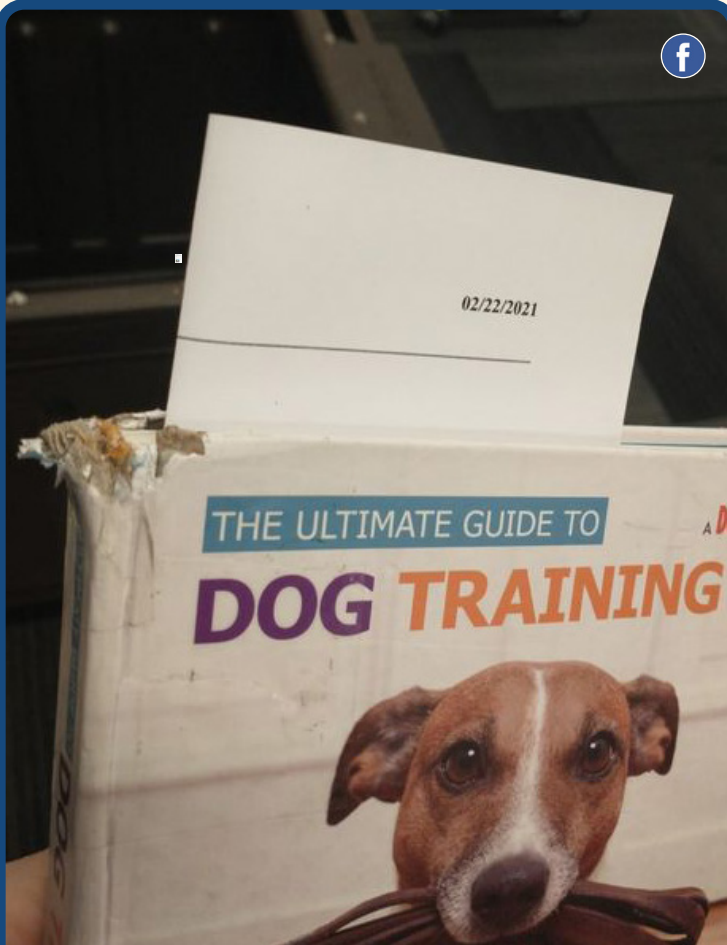


*Karen Silins*

# 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!**



*A patron returned a dog training book that her dog chewed on, saying "Yeah, he clearly failed" and engaging almost 1,200 people on Facebook.*



*Patron Maria Tamayo Gonzalez' story about utilizing the Johnson County Library after moving to the United States from Mexico in 2012 reached more than 5,500 people on Facebook.*



**Johnson County Library - KS**

March 19 at 8:34 PM · 🌐



**What was your favorite assigned reading in school? What about your least favorite?**



5

44 Comments



Like



Comment



Share

*When asked what their favorite and least favorite assigned reads in high school were, 44 people chimed in with titles like *To Kill a Mockingbird* (favorite), *Grapes of Wrath* (least favorite), *The Outsiders* (favorite) and *The Lord of the Flies* (favorite and least favorite)*

## Meet the Staff



Library staff on this committee work closely with the Johnson County Department of Corrections to invest in the outcomes of incarcerated patrons' stories by connecting people, tools, resources and content.

We collaborate with corrections staff at the Adult Residential Center, the Therapeutic Center and the Juvenile Detention Center of Johnson County to bring authors, writers and activities out to the facilities.



*A post highlighting the amazing work of the Incarcerated Services Committee got 95 likes on Instagram.*





# Book Report

APRIL 2021  VOLUME XXV

## Month in Review March 2021



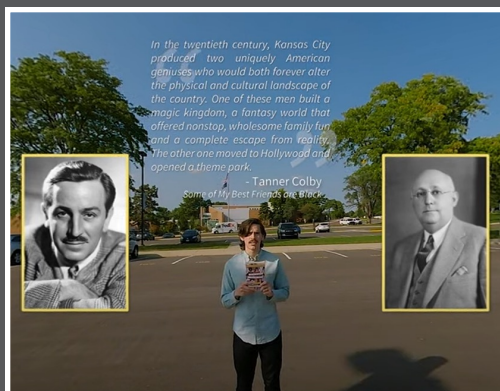
Our Early Literacy Committee recently posted its 50th video to Storytime On Demand! In addition to providing these videos for our regular patron base, we are also using these videos for virtual outreach to Growing Futures Early Education Center.



The MakerSpace is now circulating two kits related to coding and creative computing. The first is the micro:bit kit that includes a versatile, beginner friendly programmable electronics board, everything you need to get started and a book. The other kit is a slightly more advanced version of the micro:bit called the Circuit Playground Express.



The Friends of Johnson County Library invite you to visit their new website: [friendsofjcl.org](http://friendsofjcl.org). The Friends have created a fresh new digital presence where you can help patrons learn Friends history, become a Member, and find volunteer opportunities.



Programs, Outreach, and Information Services brought its Dividing Lines Tour to the internet with a series of 360 degree videos posted on Johnson County Library's YouTube channel. In the videos, you can tour of the history of segregation in the Kansas City area, primarily through its real estate. [dividinglines.jocolibrary.org](http://dividinglines.jocolibrary.org)

### \*Investment Statements

#### \*Four things every investor should know:

- \*Is the investment strategy recommended in line with the Buffet recommendation?
- \*What is the total amount I am paying for all of this investment management (dollars and percentage of investment balance)?
- \*What has been my average annual rate of return since the current investment strategy was put into place?
- \*What has been the "benchmark" rate of return over that same time period?





Financial Advisor Emerson Hartzler presented Part 3 in the series Exposing the Myths of Retirement. See all the videos in this series on the Library's YouTube channel.



The Virtual Book Display In Memory of Six Million on the Library's YouTube channel informs patrons about the Holocaust and provides recommended reads on the topic.

## NEXT ISSUE



-  **Cover Story:** Change is ahead for the Learning and Development Department
-  **Branching Out:** What's new at Edgerton?
-  **Patron Of The Month:** Nagin Cox: From Corinth Page to NASA/JPL Mars engineer
-  **Staff Spotlight:** Meet Kevin Chacey, our new IT Supervisor

## JOHNSON COUNTY KANSAS Library

### BOOK REPORT

A monthly publication for government officials and residents of Johnson County

9875 W. 87th Street  
Overland Park, KS 66212  
913.826.4600