



Book Report

MAY 2021  VOLUME XXVI

Trainers Appreciate Library's Emphasis on Learning

Training Specialists Julie Timmins and Shannon Tierney appreciate the premium value that Johnson County Library places on their work to enhance learning and development throughout the organization.

To that end, they are excited JCL is expanding the Learning and Development work group and assigning them to the Customer Experience Department. The L&D team has grown from two training specialists to three (including Lucas Kirkendoll) and is adding a manager as well, in recognition of the importance to overall customer service.

Tierney was hired in January 2021, coming from Johnson County's Department of Technology and Innovation.

"One thing I found so impressive was at this time (JCL) is investing in new positions in training and development," Tierney said. "I want to be a part of folks who put that time and effort and their money where their mouth is as far as wanting people to be trained."



*Julie Timmins and
Shannon Tierney, training
specialists, keep staff well trained*

Timmins started out as a Shawnee branch clerk in 2009 and served as an assistant branch manager at Corinth and Cedar Roe before she became one of two training specialists in 2015. As the Library system added the Monticello and Lenexa branches and other new staffers in recent years, she said the need for continuous training also grew.

Kirkendoll was promoted to training specialist late last year, and a new manager is also coming on board.

"One of the pleasures of this job is Library staff are voracious learners," Timmins said. "All surveys we have ever done, people want more training. They want more variety of trainings. People just learn like sponges. The way we get to provide them access to stuff and the way we get to provide opportunities, it's just so fun."

Timmins brings deep knowledge of the Library system to her role. Tierney complements that with her background in leveraging technology to improve learning outcomes.

Never was the need for training more apparent than during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We needed to move everything we did in real life online. And we had to do it superfast," Timmins recalled. "I have major props for the staff because the whole thing happened pretty flawlessly."

Timmins either trained people in new technologies or found resources, developed

curriculums and coordinated others to do the training.

Tierney was helping to do that same thing at Johnson County government before she took her Library position.

With everyone working from home, Tierney has only met Timmins in person once, at employee orientation. But she's had online meet-and-greets with many Library colleagues and is inspired by the Library's commitment to relationship building.

The key message she says she's received is, "We want you to build a career here where you are happy, where you know each other, where you can feel productive together and try to make it a really great working environment."

This year, the L&D staff will explore the best and most accessible ways to provide training, both in person and online, including new video tutorials.

"Going forward, we get to parse out how much of that change we want to keep and how much we want to move back to in person," Timmins said.

They will also concentrate on forging a cohesive work group within the Customer Experience department.

"Team building is going to be a huge one," Tierney said. "We really want to make sure we're functional as a cohesive whole and we're utilizing all of our individual strengths."

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BRANCHING OUT

A Reassuring Presence During the Pandemic

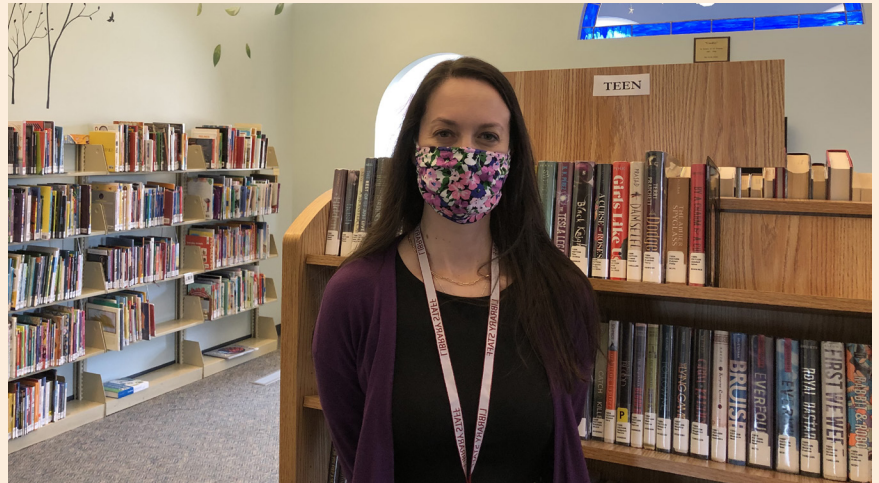
As she unlocks a door to enter the Edgerton Library, Assistant Branch Manager Nicole Schlagel says, “This is my favorite branch. It’s definitely a community Library.”

Schlagel lives in Gardner and loves working at both the Gardner and Spring Hill Libraries. But like many people, she has a special fondness for the branch at 319 E. Nelson St. in downtown Edgerton.

Located in a restored Romanesque Revival brick building dating from 1906, and emblazoned with the unforgettable signage, “Bank of Knowledge,” Edgerton Library gives patrons a nostalgic feel of an old-fashioned small-town Library. It occupies a prominent corner, in close proximity to City Hall, a museum, a post office and beauty parlor.

Edgerton had been without a Library for years, but the community was clamoring for one. So, in 1999 the city acquired the vacant bank building and Johnson County Library agreed to a partnership. A plaque on one wall commemorates donors to the project. Many volunteers pitched in to gut the building and help turn it into a comfortable, cozy Library space, which opened July 29, 2000.

“Part of the reason it’s my favorite branch is just because of the history of the space,” Schlagel says, gesturing to the exposed brick interior walls, the gracefully-etched arch glass windows, and high ceiling.



Assistant Branch Manager Nicole Schlagel cherishes the Edgerton branch.

“It’s right in the middle of Edgerton’s downtown,” she said. “I just like the feel of the building too. Patrons seem very appreciative.”

Other walls are adorned with colorful artwork, and there are inviting areas for children and teens, plus several computer work stations. There are about 4,200 items in its collection, including a good selection of cookbooks, best-sellers, mysteries and DVDs.

Even during the Coronavirus pandemic, when hours were reduced and the community room couldn’t be used for public gatherings, the Edgerton branch remained a vital community mainstay. It served 4,588 visitors in 2020. It also served as a spillover space for people to wait, socially distanced, before giving public testimony at City Council meetings across the street.

The branch got a self-serve checkout machine in 2020 that gave patrons contactless service, an added precaution against the Coronavirus.

“It was really good to get that in, and people love using it here,” Schlagel said. “That’s something that came about because of the

pandemic, and now we get to keep it moving forward as well.”

As virus numbers have gone down, Edgerton resumed normal hours of operation April 19. The branch is now open with varied hours Tuesdays through Saturdays and closed Sundays and Mondays.

Edgerton government officials are aware of the value the Library provides.

“We love the library. It’s such a beautiful space,” said Kara Banks, city communications manager. “Not many people petition to put a Library in their town. When our residents did that, it showed this was obviously important to them.”

Before the pandemic struck, the city had set aside \$4 million for a new community building just down the street from the Library. Officials had hoped to open it in May 2021.

Banks said the pandemic stalled those plans, but the city hopes to resurrect the project and move forward with it later this year. Once that building opens and draws more people to downtown, it’s expected to increase patronage at the Library and be another positive addition to the town’s civic hub.



TOP HOLDS



APRIL 2021

- o **The Four Winds** - Kristin Hannah
- o **The Midnight Library** - Matt Haig
- o **The Paris Library** - Janet Skeslien Charles
- o **The Good Sister** - Sally Hepworth
- o **The Sanatorium** - Sarah Pearse
- o **Firefly Lane** - Kristin Hannah
- o **We Begin at the End** - Chris Whitaker
- o **Win** - Harlan Coben
- o **The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue** - Victoria Schwab
- o **The Lost Apothecary** - Sarah Penner

PATRON OF THE MONTH

From Corinth Page to NASA/JPL Mars Engineer

Nagin Cox grew up in Johnson County and has gone on to become one of NASA/JPL's top operations engineers operating the Perseverance rover that recently landed in spectacular fashion on Mars.

When Cox was 14, Meadowbrook Junior High friends introduced her to "Star Trek," which furthered her fascination with space exploration. She regularly watched Cornell astronomer Carl Sagan's television series "Cosmos," which fueled her desire to attend Cornell and unlock the mysteries of the universe.

And that's exactly what she's done.

Cox traces the roots of her fabulous career in part to her first job in 1980 as a Corinth Library page, when she was a Shawnee Mission East High student.

That job gave her the money for college applications and set her on a path studying engineering at Cornell in 1982. Corinth was a nurturing work environment that taught

essential skills and gave her a lifelong love of Libraries.

"I was welcomed there," says Cox, who still has the August 1980 hire letter from County Librarian Roy Fox. She has very fond memories of then-Branch Manager Inge Dugan and of shelving books with fellow pages and high school friends Darren Sextro and Holly Cochran.

Dugan, retired and still living in Johnson County, remembered Cox as one of her most dependable pages. "I remember Nagin going to NASA," Dugan said. "There was never any doubt that she would be a success."

She was born Z. Nagin Ahmed in India in 1965 and came to the U.S. about a year later. Her home life was sometimes complicated, but Cox says her mother was very supportive and the Corinth job was a haven.

"Hard work was rewarded," she recalls. "The front room staff, the desk staff, were encouraging and supportive." She learned the importance of being on time and how to professionally assist patrons.

Before high school, she and her siblings eagerly participated in Corinth's *Reading Is Fun* summer challenge. "We used to walk or ride our bikes and get our pile of reading books," she said.

Cox says she got an excellent education at Shawnee Mission East High. She is particularly thankful for mentoring from math teachers Ray Runyan and Rick Royer as well as Spanish teacher Maralin Noble. She graduated in 1982, obtained

a BS in operations research and industrial engineering and a BA in psychology from Cornell in 1986, then got a master's in space operations systems engineering from the Air Force Institute of Technology. She married fellow engineer Earl Cox in 1992.

She attended a Shawnee Mission East High reunion in 1992, and through a high school contact landed her dream job in 1993 at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California.

She wasn't interested in being an astronaut but wanted to work with the robots that do the heavy lifting in space exploration. She's been a systems engineer and manager on multiple interplanetary missions, including Galileo to Jupiter and four Mars rovers. In 2016 she gave a TED Talk about Mars that's been viewed more than two million times worldwide.

She is the Engineering Operations Deputy Team Chief with Perseverance, which is just embarking on a two-year mission seeking signs of ancient life on Mars.

It's exactly what a teenaged Nagin Cox dreamed for her life when she was at Corinth and Shawnee Mission East High. She says the Library played an incredible role in her past and set her on a wonderful path.

"I'm doing what my 14-year-old self wanted to do," she said. "I'm having a great life. There's not a thing I would change."



NASA/JPL Engineer Nagin Cox got her first job at Corinth Library.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Reflections on 40 Years of Serving JCL



Kevin Chacey is nearing 40 years of service with JCL.

In August, Kevin Chacey celebrates 40 years with Johnson County Library, and he continues to be a vital part of the organization.

For decades, he has been a technology team member, helping the Library function well, assisting staff to serve the public and adapting to changing times.

He has no imminent plans to retire and in fact got a new title and job duties in February. He is now the Information Technology Customer Service Supervisor, managing the Help Desk and reporting to Information Technology Team Manager Michelle Beesley.

"I have always enjoyed being around informational materials," Chacey says. "It's been a very friendly place to work. They've been very good to me. I feel like I've grown up as the Library has also grown up."

Chacey has seen the transformation of Johnson County Library from the old card catalog days to the contemporary

digital platforms. He experienced the headquarters move from Antioch to Central Resource Library and has seen the addition of new branches, the remodeling of others, and the technological advances of the entire system, from a rudimentary intranet system to web-based communication.

"We've come a long way," he observes.

Chacey, who now lives in western Shawnee, grew up in Merriam, where the Antioch branch was his family's Library. While in high school at Shawnee Mission North, he got a part-time job as a page at Antioch. Later, he was a clerk and then did a short stint in acquisitions, just as Libraries were entering the computer age. He took computer classes at a technical school and got in on the ground floor of that transformation.

Eventually, Chacey began working full-time in technical services. He started out in the Support Services Building on the Antioch campus and then made the

move to the new Central branch in the 1990s.

"I can remember touring Central when they had ripped the front off," Chacey recalled. It had been a Dolgin's, then a Best Products retail store. JCL extended the building's front section and it became the new Library headquarters.

For about the past 10 years, Chacey has been an IT analyst and then lead IT analyst, installing computers and software, and troubleshooting all sorts of information technology problems and challenges.

"If somebody breaks it, we fix it," he explained. "We support the staff who support the public."

During the pandemic, the IT analysts swiftly worked to get employees the tablets or laptops they needed to work from home. Chacey praises the team and says he's always been lucky to work with a great group of people.

EVENTS SPOTLIGHT

Poetry's Power to Explore Trauma and Resilience

Kansas City poet Bridget Lowe is known for lyrical and profoundly empathetic poems that illuminate trauma, family dynamics, struggle and resilience.

Jenny Molberg, associate creative writing professor at the University of Central Missouri, also explores trauma and oppression in her work.

Lowe and Molberg are good friends and have been having intimate conversations about those themes for several years. Shortly before the pandemic struck

last year, they each launched a second poetry collection. Lowe released *My Second Work* and Molberg released *Refusal*.

On April 13, Johnson County Library brought these two highly-acclaimed Kansas City area writers together for a powerful, thought-provoking hour-long conversation and poetry reading entitled “Myth, Trauma and Transformation.”

The speakers offered insights and inspiration and received enthusiastic affirmation from patrons via “chat.” They didn’t reveal specifics of their trauma but spoke eloquently about how poetry helps them confront and transcend those experiences.

“We talk a lot about the monster and the moment when psychic suffering becomes so great that the self splits,” Lowe said. “The self

is confronting the monstrous and traumatic situation.”

She said the myth of Persephone, the child goddess pulled into the underworld, was a life-changing story that helped her process her own trauma. She also said she felt from an early age that writing “was my only true voice.”

Molberg agreed myths and poetry can help in understanding real monsters.

“We transport ourselves through imagination into other worlds,” she said. “I think it allows us to cross a threshold wherein we are safer.”

Lowe shared that writing poems gives her a deeper understanding in her own life. “It does reinforce for me,” she said, “the capability of this medium or this art form to reimagine or use creative work to find out where the self still is with all that.”



Bringing Poetry to the Community

April 5 dawned as a gorgeous spring morning, with redbud and pear trees bursting into bloom. Scores of people were out enjoying the walking path around Franklin Park, 8706 Roe Ave. in Prairie Village.

The weather could not have been more perfect as Leawood Information Specialist Cassandra Gillig checked out Johnson County Library’s newest program to share poetry with

the masses, as part of National Poetry Month.

“It’s bringing poetry out in the community,” Gillig explained.

This was Poetry Walk, with three dozen signs spaced along the half-mile footpath around the popular park. One side of each sign featured a poem from the Library’s *elementia* teen literary magazine collection. The other side featured work from the Library’s adult writing contest winners. The signs also included visual art from teen *elementia* contributors.

For an added innovation, the signs had QR codes that allowed smartphone users to hear authors share the spoken cadence of their poetry.

“It helps the poem come alive when you can hear them read it,” Gillig said.

Poetry Walk, geared for teens and adults, was the brainchild of Leawood staff member Catherine Strayhall. It was an outgrowth of the Library’s popular *Walk and Read* programs geared to young readers. Creative Services Coordinator Jen Taylor designed the signs.

The exhibit started April 1 and by April 5 Gillig was already receiving positive public feedback. It ran through April 11 at Franklin Park before moving to South Lake Park April 16-25.

On April 5, Prairie Village Public Information Officer Ashley Freburg was photographing the signs and preparing to share information on social media. She said past partnerships with *Walk and Read* went so well that the city was delighted to partner again on *Poetry Walk*.



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!*




Johnson Co. Library
@jocolibrary


It's no secret why our librarians love to work in our drive-thrus...



The library really is for everyone.



The Library's Poetry Walk program celebrating National Poetry Month got 35 likes and reached 602 people.



Johnson County Library - KS
April 11 at 6:52 PM · 🌐

What are you reading this weekend, friends?

👍 11

👍 Like 💬 Comment

View 2 more comments

Need a good reading recommendation? Patrons submitted 60 of them on our April "What are you reading?" Facebook post.



The Library reach more than 5,600 patrons on Facebook with the announcement that all branches would return to regular hours on May 3.



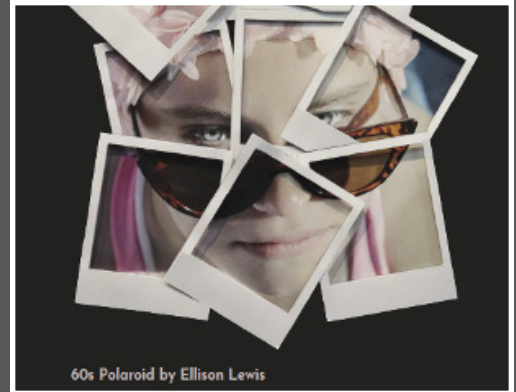
Month in Review April 2021



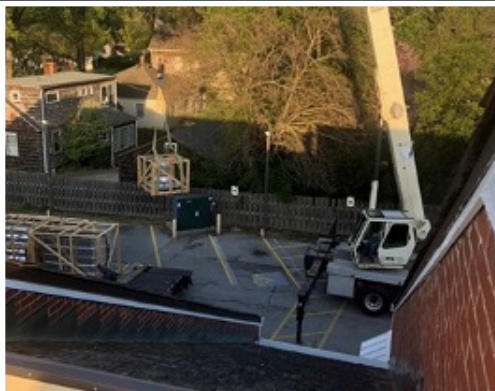
A shipment of Summer Reading books arrived at the Cedar Roe library, where staff were ready to sort them for distribution to community partners.



Our Summer 2021 Guide arrived at branches in April and features information on our upcoming programs and Comprehensive Library Master Plan.



The reception for *elementia* issue xxviii was a success, with 140 people attending to hear readings from published teens and a keynote performance by Poet Franny Choi.



Contractor SGI uses a crane to move an exhaust fan onto the roof at Cedar Roe Library. Cedar Roe closed April 19 to install a new HVAC system and make other needed improvements.







Save the date: Saturday, September 18, 2021 — for our Johnson County Library Foundation's signature fundraising event *Library Lets Loose!* Register at jocolibraryfoundation.org.



Crews cut and reinstalled slab for underground utilities in the former Administration offices as part of the Central Building Upgrade, Part 2.

NEXT ISSUE

-  **Cover Story:** Library Connects Songwriter to Global Music Initiative
-  **Branching Out:** Cedar Roe Library Gets an Upgrade
-  **Patron Of The Month:** Helping the Foundation Pro Bono
-  **Staff Spotlight:** Dedicated Custodial Supervisor Chay Her



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BOOK REPORT

A monthly publication for government officials and residents of Johnson County

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