



Book Report

MAY 2020  VOLUME XV

Library Confronts Pandemic with Resilience, Teamwork

During his eight years as County Librarian for Johnson County, Sean Casserley had never imagined a situation like the one confronting him, with such prolonged branch closures and so much uncertainty.

But he's found that the COVID-19 pandemic has also revealed something positive about Johnson County Library: the staff's resilience, creativity and ability to proactively manage a crisis.

"I'm grateful to our staff. I cannot say that enough, for them being willing to go through this," Casserley said in an interview. "We're focused on what's possible. What can we do today and what are the possibilities for our future?"

He praises staff members for their inclination to innovate and add value to patrons' lives as much as possible. While the pandemic poses unprecedented

challenges, Casserley says the employees have in a way been well prepared, because the management mantra has always been to adapt to unforeseen circumstances.

"JCL staff thrive in complex environments," he said.

At least this crisis is hitting at a time when technology can bring many library resources to Johnson County residents. "What I'm really thankful for is the internet and this connectivity we're still able to offer," Casserley said.

That means emphasizing the 50,000 titles available through eBooks and eAudiobooks, plus access to current events through electronic sources. Collections managers were encouraged to redistribute the budget and increase e-content, and patrons have responded. So far, Casserley said, the Library is seeing 500 more downloads per day than in previous times.

After Johnson County residents were told to work from home in late March, the Library quickly mobilized to get laptops or tablets to staffers needing them. Managers meet regularly via Zoom to discuss how to make author visits and other events available virtually to the public. They are also working on how to make virtual StoryTimes, book clubs, homework help and other worthwhile programming available.

Casserley said that while the print edition of the Library's teen publication *elementia* has been delayed, a digital version has been released.

Still, the pandemic poses serious financial uncertainty to Johnson County government. The Library system has taken a hit. More than half the staff, including pages, clerks and circulation employees who can't work from home, has been furloughed. They retain their benefits and can file for unemployment.



County Librarian Sean Casserley

Casserley met virtually with affected employees. He told them how valued they are and that he is looking forward to them returning. He's working hard to try to make that happen, but no one knows yet when that will be.

"My responsibility is to not create a health hazard for our staff or our patrons," he said. "Until we can get there, I think the board and administration are going to have to struggle with what does 'Open' look like?"

A key challenge, Casserley said, is that borrowed books can be contaminated with the virus and must be quarantined for 72 hours. A team is studying how to begin circulating materials again but doesn't yet have a timetable.

For now, Casserley says patrons appreciate that the Library system closed very early on to protect public health.

Patrons, he said, "are very appreciative of us keeping them safe and they are really appreciative of having access to digital content, and that we're pulling together as a community."

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March 2020

BRANCHING OUT

Monticello's Virtual Teamwork During Closure

Like staff in all the Johnson County Library branches, the employees at Monticello are trying to figure out a "new normal" during the COVID-19 outbreak.

For a few weeks after Monticello temporarily closed to the public, some employees still went to work at the building at 22435 W. 66th St. in Shawnee, while social distancing.

But now, about two dozen full-time or part-time Monticello employees are on furlough. The remaining managers, librarians, information specialists and youth services specialists work from home. They meet regularly via Zoom and other platforms and are planning ways they can continue to serve the public.

"It's been a learning experience for everyone," says branch manager Christian Madrigal, who has been with Johnson County Library since 2009 and has led Monticello's staff since it opened in August 2018. "This is the ultimate challenge."

He still visits the building occasionally, as do the custodians and security personnel to do safety and maintenance checks.

Madrigal says this whole ordeal has revealed how tight-knit the staff members are. "I think I've learned from my staff how connected they are and how caring they are of each other," he said. "Everybody is looking out for each other."

They are also still caring for patrons, with information specialists answering emailed or texted questions and

offering online resources. Monticello youth services librarian Jennifer Reeves is part of a team working on how to provide summer reading services virtually. Another group is working to provide StoryTimes on Facebook Live.

"Johnson County Library has a very passionate and caring staff who miss the work that we do," Reeves said. "We're eager to somehow make those connections during this dark time."

Youth services librarian Carrie Worth agrees. She's excited that Monticello will stage several "Walk & Read" events in Shawnee. Families can walk on trails and read laminated pages from wonderful children's books. One event is planned in May in Erfurt Park and another in June at West Flanders.

Worth said they would welcome other Johnson County cities to participate if they have a park that's available. "It's to encourage people to walk and read and allow for social distancing," she said.

Multiple committees have done a lot of behind-the-scenes planning to provide "virtual" programming beginning in May. Kari Engleman, adult information specialist at Monticello, said an online program committee has worked on creative ways to connect people through Facebook Live.



Monticello Library branch manager
Christian Madrigal

Instead of hosting in-person book clubs at the various branches, with a dozen or so people discussing a particular book each month, they will have a rotating list of librarian hosts discuss good reads online. It will likely be offered several times per week, and the public can watch and comment in writing. While everyone loves in-person events, Engleman said this will be a way to reach busy parents and other patrons who can't normally get to a Library branch.

"It's going to be something totally new," Engleman said. "We can reach working parents who can't come during the day. It will be something totally innovative and fun. It's really exciting we've been able to do it."



TOP E-HOLDS



MAY 2020

- **Where the Crawdads Sing** by **Delia Owens**
- **Giver of Stars** by **Jojo Moyes**
- **Such a Fun Age** by **Ann Kiley Reid**
- **Untamed** by **Glennon Doyle**
- **Open Book** by **Jessica Simpson**
- **Talking to Strangers** by **Malcolm Gladwell**
- **Outliers** by **Malcolm Gladwell**
- **Atomic Habits** by **James Clear**
- **Selection** by **Kiera Cass**
- **American Royals** by **Latherine McGee**



Monticello Library in Shawnee, Kansas

PATRON SPOTLIGHT

Dwane Wills Dearly Misses Libraries during Stay-Home Order

For longtime Johnson County Library patron and volunteer Dwane Wills, life under the stay-at-home orders during the pandemic has been an adjustment.

"I miss being able to go to my Libraries at least 2, 3, 4 times a week," Wills said in a remote interview. "I really do miss it. It was part of my daily or weekly routine."

Wills, 82, and his wife Bea live in south Overland Park and use Johnson County Library branches and the Indian Creek branch in Olathe. Wills loves biographies, nature and history documentaries, and books and music on CD and DVD. His wife is an avid mystery reader.

Wills is best known as a devoted volunteer, especially at Friends of Johnson County Library Book Sales. His association with the Library system dates back to the 1970s, when he moved his family to the Kansas City area and worked for a finance company.

At the time, the family lived in Shawnee and he remembers using the card catalog to help his three children get books at Antioch, which at the time was the Library headquarters.

Wills became a loan officer at a savings and loan company, but when the business closed he needed to find another job. He saw a posting at Corinth for a Library courier position, applied and was hired. He spent the next 13 years hauling books and other materials in big tubs on dollies throughout the branches, retiring in 2003.

He enjoyed the job, but it was a bit like working for the post office. "Through rain or sleet or snow we had to deliver," he recalled. He even hauled frozen turkeys to the Spring Hill food bank and took Christmas trees and other display items to the various branches.

Wills, a Navy veteran, took a few years off after retirement but missed his connection to the Library and wanted to contribute in new ways. Since about

2005, he has volunteered year after year with the Friends book sales, which is hard work but also a great way to make a positive difference.

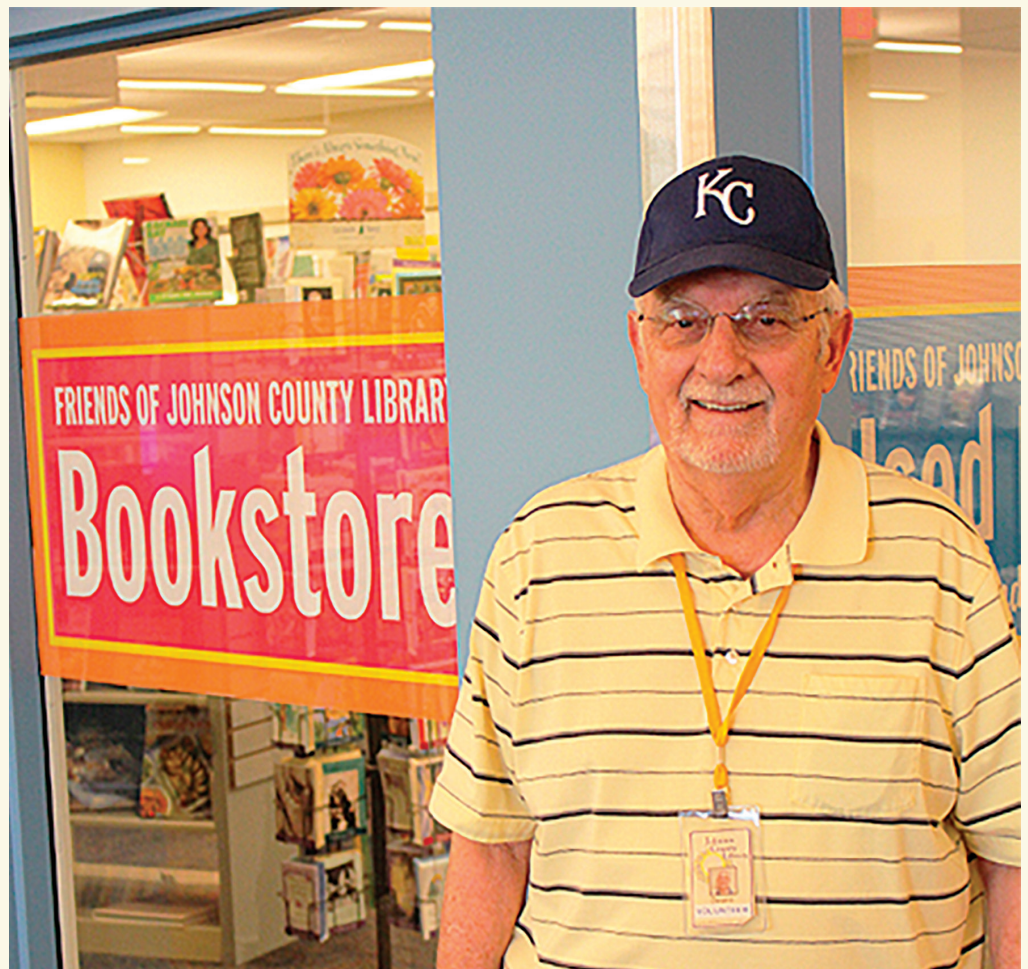
"It's also a way to help our community to be able to purchase these books at a very low price," he said. "Oh yes, we have good crowds. Everybody wants to get there the first day and it is like a mob situation."

During the stay-home order, Wills has appreciated regular emailed communications from Amber Bourek Slater, Johnson County Library volunteer coordinator. She has also sent out jigsaw and crossword puzzle activities to keep volunteers mentally active. "She is doing a fantastic job of keeping in touch with

us furloughed volunteers," he said. "She always wants to know how you're doing and just checking up on us."

In normal times, Wills is a volunteer extraordinaire. In addition to helping with Johnson County and Olathe Library book sales, he provides AARP tax assistance at Central Library. He volunteers regularly with Olathe Hospice House, greeting families and answering phone calls. He also had signed up to be a 2020 Census worker, although that is on hold right now.

It's all a good way to stay engaged in the community he loves, and he hopes those days return soon.



Library user and volunteer extraordinaire, Dwane Wills

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

MakerSpace Staffers Create Vital Products to Help in Pandemic

Johnson County Library's MakerSpace facilitators normally spend their time helping patrons learn how to make things with the sewing machines, 3D printers and other equipment at the Black & Veatch-supported facility at Central Library.

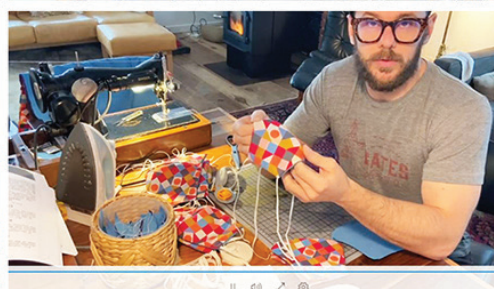
But after COVID-19 shut down the Library to the public, the Makers pivoted and began using their ingenuity and problem-solving skills in a different way to help the community. They've collaborated with various partners to create masks and face shields that are in high demand by health care workers and others on the pandemic's front lines.

It's been a labor of love and a project that brings out the best from MakerSpace staff.

"We troubleshoot projects when people come in every day. We teach people how to make things from scratch every day, so this is in our wheelhouse, having a problem and trying to find a solution," said Nick Ward-Bopp, who has been with MakerSpace since late 2015. "We don't often get to work on something that could save someone's life. It's pretty exciting and meaningful for us."

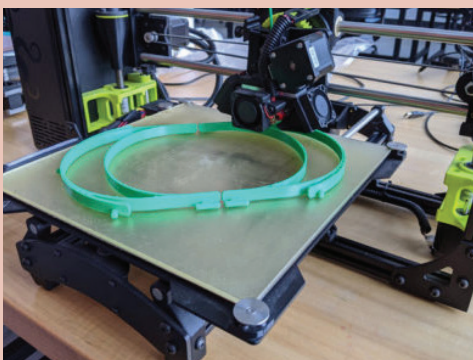
In late March, Ward-Bopp and MakerSpace colleague Angelica Sandoval began leading an effort to help other Library staffers make cloth face masks with their home sewing machines. The Library secured a generous donation of 150 yards of fabric from a company called Twirl Connect. The Makers used two CDC-approved patterns: a form-fitting Fu face mask in different sizes and a one-size-fits-all pleated mask.

Ward-Bopp and Sandoval assembled kits with fabric, patterns and thread. They had help from Adult Services manager Kinsley Riggs and her mother, who spent a weekend cutting up the fabric. The Library sent out instructions,



and then about 40 pages, clerks and others got busy sewing. Ward-Bopp also hosted a YouTube informational video. His wife, a nurse, modeled the mask.

By the week of April 6, Library staffers had produced more than 500 masks, which Johnson County emergency management officials planned to distribute where they were most needed. More production was underway. "This is a library-wide effort," Ward-Bopp said.



A 3D printer at work on face shield headbands in the Black & Veatch MakerSpace at Johnson County Library

Sandoval also helped with another partnership to make face shields, using the MakerSpace 3D printers and three others loaned by the MakerLab at

Johnson County Community College while the college is closed.

MakerSpace facilitators Thomas Maillioux and Brian Oertel researched prototypes, working with Johnson County emergency management officials to create face shields that would be safe and comfortable for front-line workers. Black & Veatch purchased the materials.

The MakerSpace facilitators rotate through shifts overseeing six 3D printers running day and night to make headbands. Each print job completes 3 headbands per machine in about 7 hours. Staff attach the headbands to visors and elastic straps. They had produced about 180 shields by April 17.

Sandoval, who has been with MakerSpace for 18 months and also teaches sculpture at JCCC, said these projects have been very rewarding.

"It just shows that artists are valuable in the community," she said. "We jump in during a crisis, and find a resourceful way to solve a problem."

Maillioux, a MakerSpace facilitator for about four years, agreed. "These are tough times for everybody but this is also the kind of scenario where Makers can serve as much as possible."

EVENTS SPOTLIGHT

Book Report

Library Couriers Pivot to Distribute Meals on Wheels

In normal times, Johnson County Library Couriers Joshua Adkins and Bryan Perkins stay busy hauling books and other materials throughout the 14-location system.

But since no materials are currently circulating, Adkins and Perkins now spend part of their time delivering Meals on Wheels for the Johnson County Department of Human Services.

They have taken over the work normally done by volunteers, who were ordered to stay home during the pandemic. Adkins and Perkins are approved drivers, so Johnson County government officials realized they could fulfill that vital meal delivery. They use their personal vehicles, which fortunately are large enough to hold multiple food boxes.

They generally deliver frozen or shelf stable meals to designated households once per week. One of Adkins' routes even took him to his grandmother's apartment in Olathe. He hadn't been able to see her in person for weeks, so that was wonderful.

They just have time for a quick greeting with each delivery, but it's gratifying work. "They are very thankful that we are still continuing the service," Perkins said. "Everyone is always very sweet and happy."

They have also delivered personal protective equipment to fire stations, hospitals and other providers. Those recipients are also profoundly grateful.

"They've been using us in very positive ways that I'm happy to be part of and to be a help," Adkins said.



A Library courier truck being loaded with PPE for distribution by JCL couriers

Adventurer "Zooms" in for Foundation Event

The Johnson County Library Foundation had planned to gather April 19 at Central Library to thank members of the 1952 Society, who make planned bequests, and the Readers Circle, the Library's most generous donors. Featured speaker was to be Dr. Schuyler Jones, a renowned explorer and retired Oxford professor who is said to be the inspiration for Hollywood hero Indiana Jones.

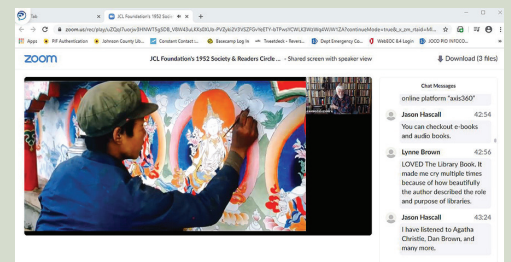
With the pandemic, it looked as if the appreciation event would have to be canceled. But the Foundation was undaunted and created a virtual gathering, with Jones present via "Zoom" from his Sedgwick County home. "He's an adventurer," said Foundation Executive Director Stephanie Stollsteimer, adding that Jones, 90, was eager to try something new.

Jones described growing up on a Kansas farm without electricity or indoor plumbing but with wonderful parents and a love of reading. At age 20 he began his travels which took him to Africa, Afghanistan and countless exotic ports of call.

"I've been extraordinarily lucky," he told participants. Travel in the 1950s and 1960s was cheap and safe. Even in the remotest villages he was treated as an honored guest. He learned multiple languages and had amazing escapades, including tiger hunting with the King of Nepal. He eventually ran one of Britain's most esteemed museums, the Pitt Rivers Museum at Oxford.

The "Zoom" presentation also featured

Jones' stunning photographs of the people, architecture and scenery he encountered. For anyone wanting more about his story, Jones' most recent book is "A Stranger Abroad: A Memoir."



A screenshot of the Foundation's Readers Circle virtual event

Library Staffer Reassigned to Critical Needs

Tad Twidwell has been Antioch's branch manager since February 2018 and was an assistant branch manager for several years before that.

But with Library branches closed, some staffers have been reassigned to other urgent duties. Twidwell had prior project manager experience, so he's putting those skills to good use with Johnson County government, reporting to emergency management's deputy director.

When he was first reassigned in mid-March, Twidwell met with other staff at the Emergency Operations Center in Olathe. Now most employees are working from home so Twidwell does the same. He coordinates Zoom meetings, creates power point presentations and facilitates information-sharing with community stakeholder groups, including public safety, education and health care organizations.

"The purpose is to maintain ongoing dialogue with the various partner groups coordinating the County COVID response," he said. "We identify needs and follow up action items."

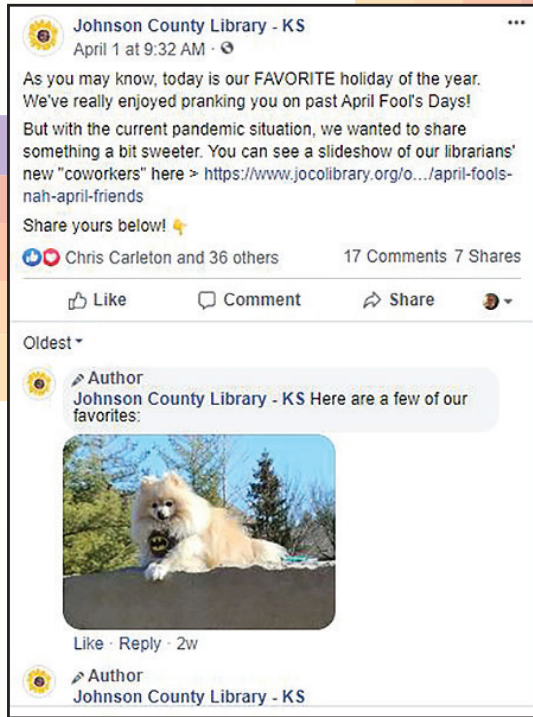
He's been impressed with how everyone is responding to the crisis and adapting to new information every day. He's glad to be a part of that, saying, "I love public service and helping out in any capacity I can."



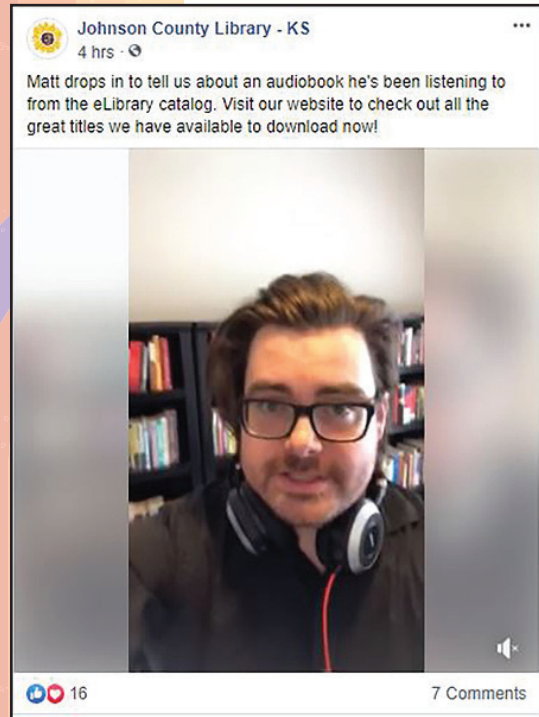
Antioch Library branch manager Tad Twidwell

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

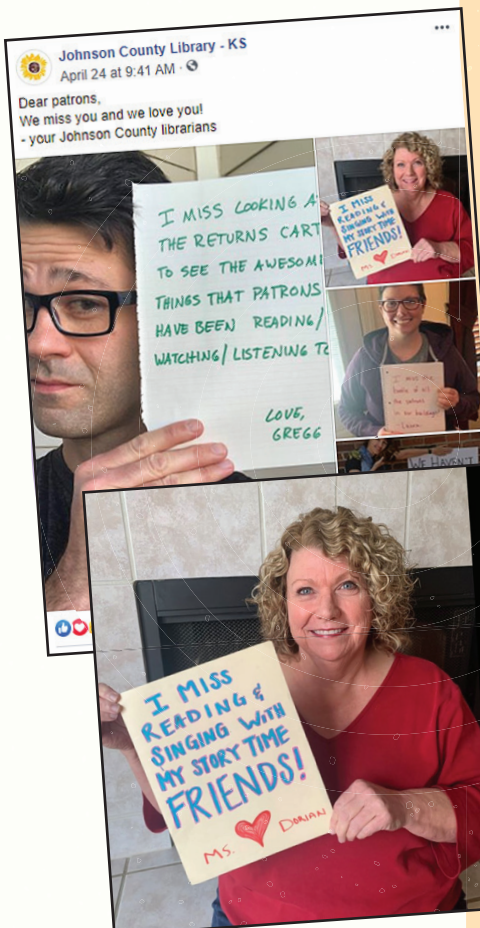
Social Media Highlights



Instead of April Fools, we played April Pets!



A Librarian can recommend a good book!



We miss you, and can't wait to see you again!



Month in Review

APRIL 2020

The Library closed for public service on March 15, and several days later staff were asked to work from home. To help Library work get done, the JCL CX-IT team has set up, deployed, advised, supported software on and monitored performance of portable workstations in the form of iPads and laptops for nearly every library staff member.

The CX-IT team is managed by Michelle Beesley and comprises Information Technology Analysts Brian Berrens, Chris Carleton, Kevin Chacey, Ryan Dolan and Brandon Hosey; Network and Systems Administrator Tom Erdman; System Administrator Spencer Zelle; Lead Programmer Bruce Alderman;

Web Interface Designer Cheryl Sickels; coordinator of the Integrated Library System, Pat Beers.

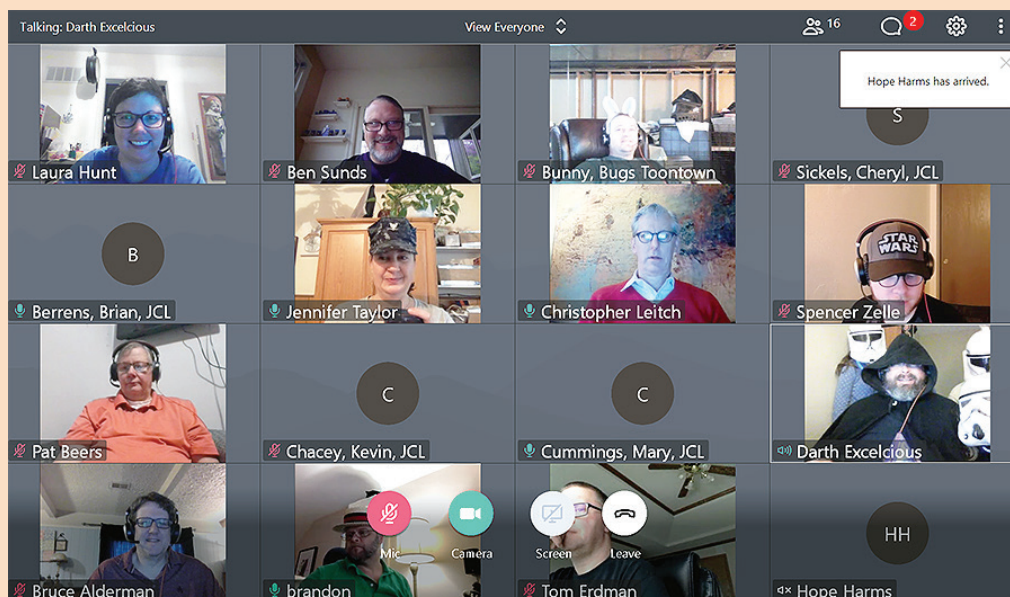
While the System Administrators monitored the stresses on the systems of hundreds of daily remote staff connections, the IT Analysts got to work readying the roughly 297 units going to staff not already equipped with a laptop or iPad. "We procured them from anywhere possible," says analyst Ryan Dolan. "Shared laptop pools, public lending laptops, older laptops that were scheduled for surplus due to warranty coverage, new laptops we were about

ready to deploy to replace old laptops... Laptops were at a premium [because] the shipping dates [for new units looked like arrival by] the end of April to early May."

About 4 hours' set-up time were needed for each machine, in addition to prepping them for appropriately distanced staff delivery and software coaching so each staff member could connect to the Library systems remotely. Dolan says that "...we were putting together a new technology package for people that we would normally do over the course of at least a year, in the time frame of a week and half."



Johnson County Library IT manager
Michelle Beesley



Screen shot of a now-normal digital staff meeting of the CX team

NEXT ISSUE

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-  **Branching Out:** Central Library After COVID
-  **Patron Spotlight:** Messages from Patrons During Closure
-  **Staff Spotlight:** Ben Sunds, Associate Director for CX
-  **Events:** Online Programming Goes Live

COVID-19 UPDATE

JOHNSON COUNTY
KANSAS

Library

BOOK REPORT

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