

Book Report

Central Building Upgrade, Part 2

Central Resource Library had a major facelift to its public spaces in 2014-15. Now, plans are underway for an \$8.7 million second-phase improvement project that should position the Library for continued success.



Library Project Coordinator Scott Sime

Changes to the Library headquarters building at 9875 W. 87th St. are needed to address safety, build efficiencies and increase patron convenience.

"It's exciting," said Library Project Coordinator Scott Sime. "It'll be good to reimagine the spaces for the way the library works now."

Among the planned changes:

- A new drive-thru for drop-offs and hold pickups added to the building's east side, copying a popular amenity at newer branches.
- A designated area of refuge that will normally be staff meeting space.
- Updating some of the public areas, including the children's section and teen space.
- Reconfiguring of staff offices to place similar administrative and materials-handling functions closer together.
- A traffic calming design for the dock/loading area on the building's south side.

The building that is now Central started out as a big box store in the 1970s and was renovated as a Library in the mid-1990s. Libraries have changed significantly since then, and the improvements from 2015 and now are adapting to contemporary needs. Planners will emphasize design flexibility to allow for future changes.

Jared Harper, Central's new branch manager, said he hopes the improvements will streamline work processes and benefit patrons. "We want to have spaces that are inviting for people, whether they be staff or patrons, to work and collaborate in," he said.

The design is being done by Clark Enersen Partners, which was also the lead architect on Monticello. Design work will take most of this year, with construction in 2021. This is one of Johnson County Library's biggest 2020

capital projects, along with planning for a new Merriam branch.

Sime emphasizes plans are still very preliminary and could change. But the director's office and other offices on the building's east side will likely move, opening that space up for the children's area. "There's a great opportunity to get more natural light in the building on that corner so we're excited about that," Sime said.

The teen and public computer areas might then move to the current children's zone. This is an opportunity to study patrons' computer needs and make sure the technology is put to good use. The back office staff areas will also be reconfigured to improve functionality and efficiency. Sime acknowledges the project's phasing will be a challenge.

"We know the construction is going to have to be phased because we are touching the public space and because we are not anticipating stopping service," he said. Project managers will work hard to minimize disruptions.

"We anticipate being able to provide as much service as we can. We don't want to shut it down," Sime said. "Central is home to many support departments for the system, so phasing and how we move people out to do their area and move them back in is really important."



Library Project Coordinator
Scott Sime at the Couriers Dock

WHAT'S INSIDE

- 2 Branching Out**
New Leadership at Shawnee Library
- 2 Top 10 Holds**
February
- 3 Patron Spotlight**
Caleb Lang prompts author visit
- 4 Staff Spotlight**
Melody Kinnamon, Incarcerated Services librarian
- 5 Event Spotlight**
Support for aspiring writers
Legislative coffee draws a crowd
- 6 Taking a Closer Look**
Social Media Highlights
- 7 Month in Review**
February 2020

BRANCHING OUT

New Leadership Team at Shawnee Library

The Shawnee Library branch, an attractive building at 13811 Johnson Drive, has a new leadership team that is eager to help ensure the Library's vibrant future as it enters the 2020s.

Anna Gordon was named branch manager in late October. Megan Clark became assistant branch manager this January. Mary Beth Ricks took over as Youth Librarian last September. "It's an opportunity.



Librarians Mary Beth Ricks and Anna Gordon at Shawnee Library

It's exciting to me," Gordon said. "We're kind of a new chapter for this branch and figuring that out is really interesting."

For many years after the Shawnee Library opened in 1992 it was the primary Library serving a fast-growing city. Since Monticello opened in August 2018, that facility has become a big draw for western Shawnee residents. So staffers at Shawnee are exploring how their branch can best serve their patron base.

Ricks said she's realizing how the Shawnee branch is a hub for many families living in the surrounding neighborhoods and along Johnson Drive. "It is a family branch," she said. "Families come in regularly and check out huge stacks of books. We have a lot of devoted Library users."

It also has a devoted book club, which attracts between 12 and 20 patrons every month. Participants, ranging in age from 40 to 99, enjoy each other's company and have great discussions, says information specialist and group facilitator Melody Kazmi. "It's really fun," she said. "They're all very learned, well educated."

The Library is an appealing building with tall windows and natural light on the north side. Comfortable orange booths, donated from a restaurant, line one wall of windows with good views. "It's a really bright spot of color," Kazmi said. "It's a favorite spot for people to sit and study." Shawnee has a constant flow of patrons and last year counted nearly 172,500 visits, with a daily average of about 580 visits.

Gordon worked for Mid-Continent Public

Library in Missouri before she was hired as an assistant branch manager for Johnson County's new Monticello branch in May 2018. She relished that unusual experience of helping to open a Library branch from scratch before she was appointed branch manager of both Shawnee and Cedar Roe. She said Shawnee and Monticello staffs collaborate to make sure they offer complimentary, not duplicating, programming.

Ricks was a fifth-grade teacher before she joined the Johnson County Library system in 2014. She worked at Cedar Roe, Corinth and Leawood before becoming Youth Librarian for Cedar Roe and Shawnee. Clark was at Oak Park before she joined the Shawnee/Cedar Roe team.

Shawnee Library shares a campus with the Civic Centre and aquatic center. That proximity is a big plus. The Library schedules a kids' craft program for summer mornings, which families use before the pool opens at noon. Gordon wants to further take advantage of that civic campus location.

"That's definitely on my list as a priority, to explore that relationship with the city," she said. "Being a partner in that way is something we want to pursue."



The spacious entry at Shawnee Library



TOP HOLDS



JANUARY 2020

- **American Dirt** by Jojo Moyes
- **Such a Fun Age** by Kiley Reid
- **The Dutch House** by Ann Patchett
- **Dear Edward** by Ann Napolitano
- **The Giver of Stars** by Jojo Moyes
- **A Very Stable Genius: Donald J. Trump's Testing of America** by Philip Rucker
- **Open Book** by Jessica Simpson
- **Unfollow: A Memoir of Loving and Leaving the Westboro Baptist Church** by Megan Phelps-Roper
- **Maybe You Should Talk to Someone: A Therapist, Her Therapist, and Our Lives Revealed** by Lori Gottlieb
- **Catch and Kill: Lies, Spies, and A Conspiracy to Protect Predators** by Ronan Farrow

PATRON SPOTLIGHT

Patron Prompts Author Visit

Caleb Lang and his wife Morgan have seven children whom they home school. He works for the Lenexa Police Department after a long career as a Lenexa firefighter.



Patron Caleb Lang at Lenexa City Center Library

He has a busy family life but still loves to read. One of his favorite authors is Nebraska-based novelist Tosca Lee, whom he has followed through her email list for years. Lang saw where Lee made author visits to various locales, and she told her fans to pass her name along to their library systems.

Lang did just that, and lo and behold Johnson County Library booked Tosca Lee for a visit February 21 and 22, with discussions at Antioch, Lenexa, Leawood and Central Resource Library.

"I was like, I'll suggest it and it would be great if they get her," Lang said. "I was very shocked when they said they were going to have her for multiple days, multiple locations."

Lang is pleased Johnson County Library is so responsive to patron recommendations. He said he's read most of Lee's books by checking them out of the Library. He's recommended other authors and books to Johnson County Library and has later found many of those

selections on the shelves.

The Lang family lives in Shawnee and makes constant use of Lenexa City Center Library, frequently filling two big bags with books and DVDs.

"We're here at least once per week if not more often," Caleb Lang said. "They have a great selection of DVDs for both kids and adults and we definitely utilize that. It's a great resource."

Lang was a Lenexa firefighter for 15 years before he injured his back on the job in 2017. Now he works a desk job at Lenexa Police headquarters.

In his spare time, he is refining a novel he penned several years ago. He's also starting to write up the amusing and interesting anecdotes from his firefighting days, and says he may explore Johnson County Library's many resources for aspiring writers.

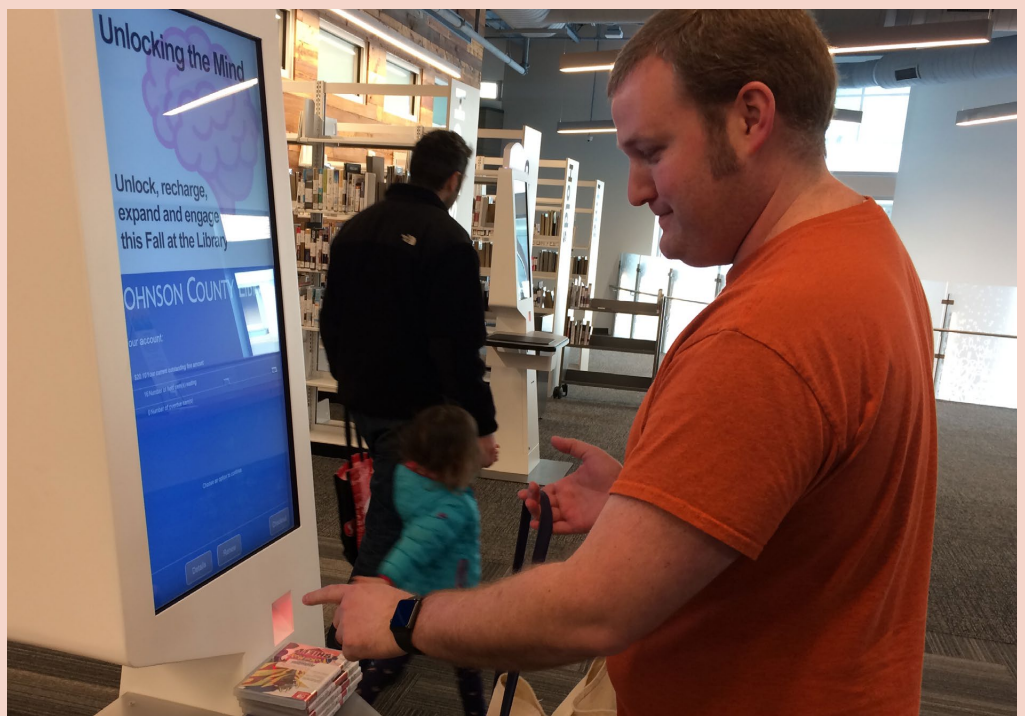
Morgan Lang grew up in Johnson County and has used the branch Libraries all her life. The couple married in 2001 and initially

lived in Gardner, where they made heavy use of the Gardner branch as they started their family. They moved to Shawnee and began using Lackman a lot before the switch to the new Lenexa branch.

The family now includes five boys and two girls, ages 16 to 1. The oldest five are avid readers and devoured the Harry Potter series among many other books. Lang says when they were younger they flocked to puppet shows and other Library events for kids.

Their oldest son, 16-year-old Zion, is a freshman at Johnson County Community College. Morgan Lang recalls that Zion started reading at a very young age, and Librarians helped her find challenging material that was still age appropriate.

She frequently finds library books to enhance her home schooling lessons. "I've had good success with asking to have things ordered," Morgan Lang said. "The Librarians have always been great."



Patron Caleb Lang uses the self-check at Lenexa City Center Library

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Connecting Incarcerated Citizens to the Library

For many years, Johnson County Library has provided outreach services for some teens and adults in the Johnson County corrections system. Now, those programs are expanding under the leadership of Incarcerated Services Librarian Melody Kinnamon.

Kinnamon chairs a core team of staffers helping to connect incarcerated citizens to the Library, and she praises the entire group's efforts. She's especially grateful to long-term team members Kate McNair, Scott Stone and Debbie Frizzell for their commitment to this mission.

Kinnamon has held several positions since she came to Johnson County Library in 2002, including as a reference librarian and community branch manager. But the book "Just Mercy," about justice and redemption, galvanized her.

"I just kind of had a heart for the social justice issues that surround our criminal justice system," she said, noting that Bryan Stevenson's 2014 best seller "planted a seed" and sparked her passion to work with this population.

Kinnamon co-chaired the incarcerated services team with McNair in 2018 and took the lead in 2019.

Last year brought more Library office hours and programs to the Adult Residential Center, where clients serve 6-month alternative sentences, doing work-release or getting substance abuse treatment. And for the first time, incarcerated individuals were able to attend Library events: specifically, the Writers Conference and Women & Money Day.

Participants praised the opportunities. In 2019, the attendance count for adult incarcerated services programming was over 1,000.

"Melody is a visionary," says Erin Moeder, volunteers and programs coordinator with Johnson County Corrections. "She's had all these visions for really coming in and doing more for us, being on site more often."

Office hours went from once a month to once per week, with 30-50 clients helped each time with books, library cards and other services. Kinnamon and Stone also hold a book club discussion twice per month.

"They love her energy," Moeder said. "Our clients love the Library. A lot of our clients are readers."

Kinnamon in turn loves book club.



Librarian Melody Kinnamon at her busy Central Resource Library Desk

"I've had the most fantastic conversations in book group with some of our clients, and they can talk me under the table," she said.

Recently, staffers took a Library event, a "Gather At The Table" discussion, to the residential center. Clients eagerly engaged in a civil, thought-provoking conversation about how to improve county mental health services. Kinnamon hopes to schedule future roundtable conversations.

At the adolescent treatment center, the Library provides active programming, with writing workshops and training on such skills as 3D printing and sound board recording.

Clients come from all walks of life. "It's not us and them," Kinnamon said. "It's just we."

She hopes eventually to take programs to the Johnson County Jail, but many logistical details must be resolved with the sheriff.

The main goal is to keep breaking down walls between the Library and incarcerated residents. "Where whatever the public enjoys, they can take part in," Kinnamon said. "They are Johnson county citizens and they are going to be back out in our community, and we need to be inclusive."



Librarian Melody Kinnamon on her way to deliver incarcerated services

EVENT SPOTLIGHT

Support for Aspiring Writers

The most frequent request that Johnson County Reference Librarian Helen Hokanson gets from aspiring writers is for an organized writers' group.

That's not part of Johnson County Library's mission. But Hokanson has set up a monthly Writers United event where patrons can find a supportive space to write. They can get advice from established writers and share works in progress for peer feedback.

Patrons taking advantage of these events say it's greatly appreciated.

At the January event, a small group of writers worked diligently at their laptops in the Carmack Community

Room at Central Resource Library. They also consulted with experts in poetry, story writing and line editing.

"It's a place for community. That's what writers are hungry for," said Hokanson, who helps organize Johnson County Library's annual Writers' Conference.

Julie Honn of Overland Park, a busy mother of three children, said she cherishes the quiet space to think and polish her poetry. At the January event, she consulted with Jason Prue, a published writer who organizes a local poetry festival.

"This was very valuable," Honn said of Prue's suggestions to maximize the emotional

impact of her writing.

Prue said the Kansas City area lacks sufficient places for writers to connect so the Library program is needed.

Trish Miller, who writes poetry and personal essays,

enjoyed her discussion with line editor Diana Richards. "It's a tremendously good social outlet," she said of the gatherings.

Future events are scheduled March 4 and April 1 at Central.



Local authors take advantage of working space at Writers United

Legislative Coffee Draws Crowd

As the Kansas state legislative session heats up, Johnson County Library has resumed its popular series of Legislative Coffees, in partnership with the League of Women Voters of Johnson County.

About 75 people turned out Jan. 25 at Corinth to enjoy Lamar's donuts and coffee and to hear updates from 6th District Sen. Pat Pettey, 19th District Rep. Stephanie Clayton, 21st District Rep. Jerry Stogsdill, 24th District Rep. Jarrod Ousley, and 25th District Rep. Rui Xu.

More sessions with other legislators are scheduled: March 14 at Monticello, March 28 at Gardner, and April 11 at Central Resource Library.

"We want to enable patrons to be connected with their legislators," said Civic Engagement Librarian Ashley Fick.

Becky White, LWV co-chair of voter services, said it's a great opportunity for

Johnson County residents to hear about important government issues and get their questions answered.

"It's not set up as a debate," she said. "It's set up as an information session."

The panel discussed a Medicaid expansion proposal; a proposed Constitutional amendment affecting abortion; challenges to funding state pensions and transportation projects; medical cannabis; and Kansas' changing demographics, including a severe decline in rural populations.

Legislators emphasized they want to hear from constituents, both supporters and opponents, to help them craft good legislation.

Laura Steele, of Westwood, said this was the first time she's attended a Legislative Coffee. She enjoyed the polite question and answer format and



Librarian Ashley Fick and the panel of elected officials



legislators' responsiveness.

"I thought it was great," she said. "They were very candid and open."

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

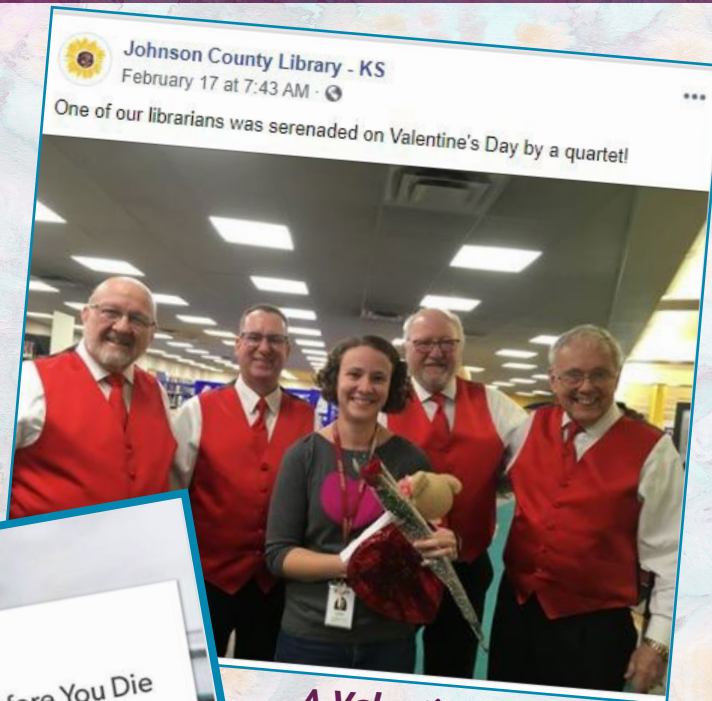
Social Media Highlights



What are you reading? - 519 engagements!



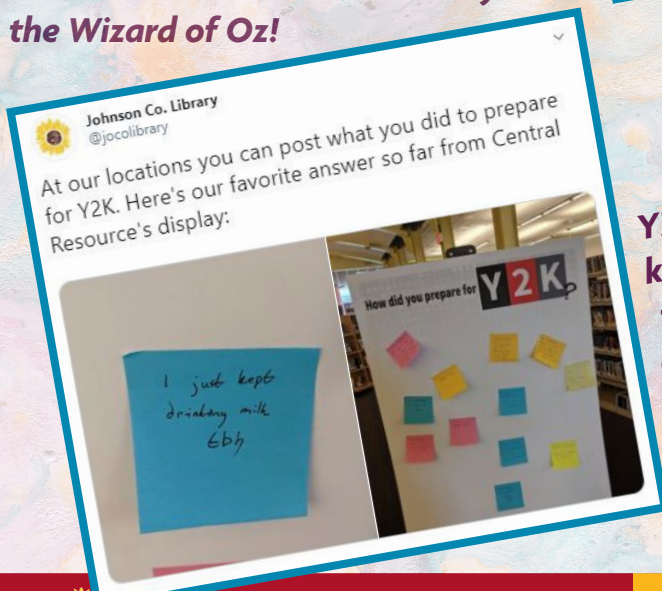
Gardner celebrated KS' birthday with the Wizard of Oz!



A Valentine's serenade! Lucky girl!



Reading advice - 3500 reactions!



Y2K display - "I just kept drinking milk tbh" - 86 engagements!



Custom mug made in the MakerSpace - 130 engagements!



Book Report

MAR 2020 VOLUME XIII

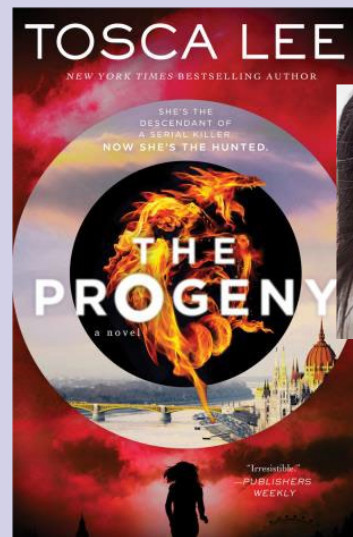
Month in Review FEBRUARY 2020



A young patron with one of the Reading Education Assistance Dogs at Corinth's Read to a Dog



Reading with one of the very relaxed Reading Education Assistance Dogs at Corinth's Read to a Dog



Author Tosca Lee, featured in numerous events at libraries across the system

Author Tosca Lee's best-selling book "The Progeny"



Library clerk Jamal Lang, right, with teens at the February 19 Maker Drop In at Central Resource Library



MakerSpace facilitator Angelica Sandoval, front right, at the February 19 Maker Drop In at Central Resource Library



Homeschool Meetup work time at Monticello Library

NEXT ISSUE

- Cover Story:** "New Letters on the Air"
- Branching Out:** Lenexa City Center Library
- Patron Spotlight**
- Staff Spotlight:** Melanie Fuemmeler, Education Coordinator
- Events:** National Genealogy Day, Book Groups



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