



Book Report

JUNE 2020  VOLUME XVI

Library Reopening Begins

Johnson County Library is gradually starting the reopening process, following weeks of stay-home orders during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It's a balancing act, between wanting to get the Library collection back in the hands of patrons while still protecting



Staff voluntarily self-checking temperatures before their shifts at Lenexa.

public health and vulnerable populations. A Library team has developed a phased approach that began in late May, with the resumption of drive-thru service at Blue Valley, Lenexa City Center and Monticello for returns and holds pickups.

This shows the wisdom of Johnson County's forward-thinking Library design that allowed for the drive-thru windows in recent years. These convenient amenities will also be added to Central Resource and any future branches.



Temporary signage helps library users navigate services.

"We've found out we're ahead of the curve on that. A lot of Libraries don't have drive-thrus," said Jennifer Mahnken, associate director for branch services, and project sponsor on the reopening team.

The Library's survey, with over 2,200 patron responses, showed nearly 90 percent of respondents were either "very comfortable" or "comfortable" using the drive-thru locations.

That's strong support and a logical way to start, said Nancy Birmingham, project manager for the reopening team and assistant branch manager for Leawood Pioneer. Phase 1 allowed some furloughed security, materials handling, courier and interlibrary loan staffers to begin to return.

Patrons were also anxious to return their loaned materials. More than 250,000 items had been checked out before the shut down, so patrons can now do returns at the three drive-thru book drops. Items will be quarantined for 72 hours, the recommended time to avoid any virus contamination, and then can be recirculated.

The next stage of the reopening plan will begin in June. County government and the Library Board are eager to re-establish as much Library service in as many locations as possible. The reopening team is working on the quickly-changing protocols to ensure that appropriate levels of staffing, equipment and public communication are in place, to help residents access their libraries.

At this writing, it's anticipated that this next stage will allow for access to all library buildings and basic services, and the stage that follows will allow for most normal library services to resume at their pre-COVID levels. The Library board and the leadership team are working closely together to ensure staff and library users have safe and positive experiences at the reopened branches.

Mahnken praised reopening team members and said this difficult time has brought out the best in the staff.



A supply of PPE for returning staff at Blue Valley.

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May 2020

BRANCHING OUT

Central Resource Library – Coming Back from COVID-19

Jared Harper began his role as Central Resource Library's branch manager in December 2019 and knew he would have a full plate of tasks for 2020.

Then COVID-19 struck, with Johnson County Library branches all shut down and a countywide stay-at-home order.

It's all required learning on the fly and teaming with staff remotely from home. The work has continued, however, and there's progress to report on many fronts. Harper has been gratified about everyone's spirit of cooperation and willingness to overcome obstacles.

"My staff is very adaptable and they are very passionate about the services they provide to our patrons," Harper said. "They are very compassionate about each other too."

Central Resource staffers have worked to sustain remote patron services during the shutdown. And Harper has continued to collaborate with planners on the Central Staffing and Space Consolidation design that will lead to a major back-office building upgrade in 2021.

Johnson County Library was determined to be available to patrons even after the branches closed in March. That has meant answering many emailed questions. And in May, staff began responding to



A brighter day is coming for Central Resource Library.

questions by telephone.

The telephone reference service has been housed at Central for years. But Harper said the pandemic has revealed this can be farmed out to other locations, making the service even more versatile.

"That was a function that was specifically at Central, but we can do it from home," he said, adding that Central staff were the field testers for launching the Answers and Telephone Reference services during the shutdown.

"They test drove it and worked out the kinks and were able to present it to the rest of the system," he said.

Fortunately, the shutdown has not significantly impacted planning for Central's 2021 capital improvement project. Harper serves as a liaison between the core design team and branch staff. He said that's gone well, with the architects trying to be responsive to staff concerns in designing a pleasing space.

More architectural details should be unveiled in June. Most significantly, administration offices will be configured to place similar

functions closer together.

"With the Central staff, we're all kind of spread out across the building," said Harper, who manages youth services staff and assistant branch managers who aren't all in close proximity. "Having branch staff in one location for team building and collaboration will be really valuable."

Harper noted that Central's branch staffers really know their patrons and miss seeing them in the building. Central is frequently a safe harbor for the homeless and other vulnerable populations, and staff has worried about those folks during the shutdown.

"We really miss that face to face interaction," he said.

Harper says Central's staff is eager to resume branch services at some point, along with the vibrant in-person programming for which the Library headquarters is known.

"We want to make sure we have a space that is accessible and safe to staff and patrons," he said. But he's also encouraged by all the new online offerings, which reach an even broader audience of patrons who can't make it to the buildings.



TOP E-HOLDS



JUNE 2020

- **Dear Edward** by **Ann Napolitano**
- **American Dirt** by **Jeanine Cummins**
- **The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family and Defiance During the Blitz** by **Erick Larson**
- **Untamed** by **Lennon Doyle**
- **Youth Talking to Strangers: What We Should Know About the People We Don't Know** by **Malcolm Gladwell**
- **The Giver of Stars** by **JoJo Moyes**
- **The Dutch House** by **Ann Patchett**
- **The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes** by **Suzanne Collins**
- **The Call of the Wild** by **Jack London**
- **Little Women** by **Louisa May Alcott**

PATRON SPOTLIGHT

Busy Mom Grateful for New Online Programming

Like many Johnson County Library patrons, Lindsey Opdyke has learned to appreciate all the online services being offered during the COVID-19 pandemic.

She's got the Axis 360 eBooks app. And Facebook Live programming has added a whole new dimension to her family's Library experiences.

Opdyke lives in Olathe with her husband and 2-year-old daughter Emerson. They have visited Olathe's new Indian Creek Library branch but typically patronize Johnson County's Monticello branch, where Opdyke's sister, Kari Engleman, is an adult information specialist.

"I love all the people that work at Monticello," Lindsey says, remarking on the friendliness and camaraderie of her sister's colleagues and branch staff.

During normal times, Opdyke works full-time at a bank and her mother-in-law would take Emerson every Wednesday to Storytime at Monticello. Those in-person Storytimes have introduced Emerson to wonderful books, rhymes and songs since she was about nine months old.

"My daughter enjoys the interaction with other kids. She doesn't normally have a lot of that," Opdyke said. "Listening to a teacher that's not a family member, that's really beneficial. Having to follow rules and use her inside voice."

Since Opdyke was normally busy at work, she only accompanied Emerson to Storytime on the rare Wednesday when she had a day off.

Then, after the virus struck and the Library branches all closed, Engleman alerted Opdyke that the Storytimes would start to be available online. Since Opdyke was working from home, all of a sudden she was able to follow the Storytimes herself.

"I have loved the time at home," Opdyke said. She's especially appreciated getting to watch Storytimes every

"As a working mom, I get to also experience it and know what she's learned and incorporate that into our evening activities," Opdyke said. They own many of the books that the Librarians recommend, and they read them again at home at night.

She said Emerson realizes the "virtual" Storytime is different from what she had been used to, but it still keeps her engaged and learning.

"She's a little performer," Opdyke said. "She loves going to the Library, but I think she really loves the online Storytime as well."

Opdyke herself is partial to romance novels and in the past hadn't thought of joining any of the Library's book clubs. But the new online book parties have captured her attention, and she's a fan. She said the Librarians and information specialists have great suggestions for classical literature and thrillers. She enjoys the "chat" function that allows viewers to chime in with written questions or their own recommendations. These videos remain online, so people can watch at their leisure. That's a big convenience, Opdyke said, for busy moms.

The family eagerly awaits the time when they can return to Monticello and stock up again on actual books. But Opdyke has discovered that the Library's innovations during

the pandemic are major enhancements to what was already offered.

"We love it," she said. "And we hope they continue to do the online programs."



Lindsey Opdyke and 2-year-old daughter Emerson.

weekday at 10 a.m., with different presenters, and getting to experience those lively settings with her daughter. She watches online even when Emerson is watching at her mother's or at her mother-in-law's.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

From Ebola to COVID-19

Many of us have spent the past few months getting a crash course in epidemiology and the protocols for PPE (personal protective equipment).

Yet even before the COVID-19 pandemic began, one Johnson County Library administrator already had a wealth of knowledge about dealing with highly contagious viruses and dangerous epidemics.

Ben Sunds, the Library's associate director for customer experience since 2018, had a previous 32-year career with the U.S. Army, mostly in special operations. That included command of a battalion at Fort Bliss, Texas from 2013 to 2015. During that time, Fort Bliss was the base where soldiers who had helped contain a deadly Ebola outbreak in West Africa quarantined on their return to the U.S.

"No one got sick," Sunds says, recalling that successful quarantine operation.

"We all had to go through the PPE training. I thought that was a very military term. Now it's in people's common vernacular," he said. "We all had to learn all the protocols."

He never imagined he would experience the fallout from another epidemic.

"But I'm very thankful for the training experience," he says now. "It breeds a lot of resilience and perspective."

Sunds had a fascinating and fulfilling Army career that took him to 26 different countries. He did combat tours in Afghanistan and Iraq but most of his work involved civilian/military cooperation, forging good relations with diverse cultures, including remote villages in Pakistan. One United Nations mission involved helping Tajikistan, in Central Asia, to make sure it maintained a stable government.

"I liked the adventure part of



Library Associate Director Ben Sunds, R, orange shirt, on a UN mission trip to Mali with a Chinese Army unit, immediately after a suicide car bomb attack.

stumbling into something and not being able to communicate. I find that part exhilarating, not frightening," he said.

He and his wife Shannon always knew they would wind up back in the Midwest; he grew up in Iowa and she grew up in Nebraska and they met at Northwest Missouri State in Maryville. He finished his Army career as deputy director for the special operations education department at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth.

In the Army... "We all had to go through the PPE training. I thought that was a very military term. Now it's in people's common vernacular."

The family, including daughter Jessica and son Garrett, settled in Shawnee. When Sunds retired from the military in January 2018, he still craved a public service-oriented job and landed in his new position at Johnson County Library in May 2018.

He has discovered that, like with military special operations, Johnson County Library is full of "very highly educated people but very united in a common cause."

He enjoys supervising the staffs that handle internal and external communications, in-house support training, and information technology. He appreciates these employees' skills and strengths and how everyone has risen to the occasion during the pandemic.

One of the first things that attracted Sunds to Johnson County Library was the fact that the organization had a strategic plan, and he was impressed with its specific mission and vision. That was familiar to him, coming from a military background, and he's found this job to be a great fit.

He was looking for a culture that embodied community engagement, service and lifelong learning and caring.

"And I think I found all that," he says, "in JCL."

EVENTS SPOTLIGHT

Book Parties, Author Visits Highlight Online Programs

Johnson County Library is known for its vibrant programming, and 2020 was going to be no exception. The calendar was bursting with in-person events scheduled through the end of August.

Best laid plans. COVID-19 curtailed all of that.

It has taken a herculean effort, but Library staffers, led by Events Coordinator Joseph Keehn, have mobilized to provide an ambitious online programming lineup extending through this summer.

"When we temporarily closed, we realized we needed to rethink our strategy, to engaging our patrons in a digital world," Keehn said. "This is a testament to the library as a learning organization. It is a testament to us being able to be responsive."

Library staffers have moved to online platforms in an incredibly short amount of time, Keehn said. They are positioning the programming so it is sustainable and will complement in-person events when those resume. All in-person events have been canceled at least through the end of August.

Johnson County Library presents

ONLINE SUMMER PROGRAMS

June & July • check website for specific dates & times

Join us June 1-5 for our Summer Reading Virtual Launch!

End-of-Summer Celebration: an all-day virtual event on Saturday, Aug. 8!



New graphics announce new summer programs!

Keehn praised the team that identified the platforms and created the tutorials needed for staff members to present online, and the team that coordinated content. They have worked to make sure they are not oversaturating the schedule.

Storytimes are offered every weekday at 10 a.m. and at 6 p.m. Wednesdays. A bilingual Storytime airs Tuesdays at 6 p.m. Presenters share the same wonderful books, songs and rhymes as they did in the Libraries. Parents are enthusiastic and say it's a great way to engage their kids while at home.

Equally popular are the weekly Book Parties, featuring Librarians and information specialists presenting "hot picks" and personal reviews.

On May 7, Kari Engleman from Monticello revealed her

favorite psychological thrillers, including "My Lovely Wife," by Samantha Downing. On May 13, Melody Kinnamon recommended kids' books for adults to cherish, such as "When Sadness is At Your Door," by Eva Eland and "Hatchet," by Gary Paulsen.

These parties can be viewed live or later and each garner hundreds of views. Participants chime in on "chat" with their own recommendations.

On May 21, science-fiction writer Mary Robinette Kowal demonstrated how authors research their novels, as she gathered material for her Lady Astronaut series.

Kowal, who has a theater background, quizzed KU assistant astronomy professor Allison Kirkpatrick via Zoom about challenges women face in male-dominated science fields. Kirkpatrick cited examples of brilliant women scientists who have been overshadowed, and described her own adventures with telescopes in treacherous, high altitude locations.

About three dozen participants observed the dialogue and kept the conversation going with their own written questions on "chat."

Soaking up the details and anecdotes, Kowal appreciated how those insights could inform her novels. "Sometimes I can fix history," she said.

Other online offerings include career and finance advice and MakerSpace classes. In early June, the Library launches its summer reading program. Other online events will appeal to families, teens and adults. Workshops for young writers are also scheduled.

It's all becoming a "virtual" branch, engaging the Library audience in exciting new ways. Keehn says this will be both an opportunity and a challenge going forward, to maximize the strengths of both online and in-person appearances.


"We'll have to rethink programming in general, our approach," he said. "We'll have to think of both worlds."



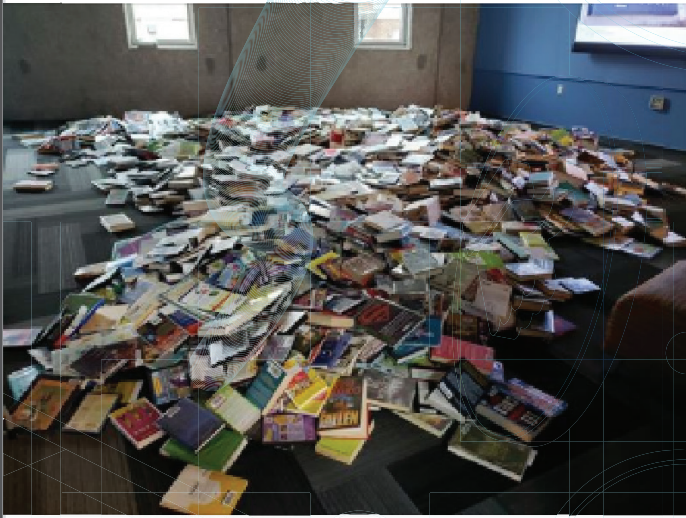
Summer readers can be summer writers, too!

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

Social Media Highlights

 **Johnson County Library - KS**
May 21 at 2:39 PM · 🌐

While our meeting rooms are closed to the public, we're putting them to use as a storage space for materials that patrons have returned to us, observing the 72 hours of quarantine time before they get discharged.




👍👎❤️ 331 59 Comments 30 Shares


 **Johnson Co. Library**
@jocolibrary

Yesterday Blue Valley, Monticello, and Lenexa City Center Library drive-thrus checked out 1,424 items to a total of 544 patrons!

Here's a picture of the drive-thru line at Blue Valley, and a picture of the Holds list at Lenexa - definitely a record-setter!




10:09 AM · May 27, 2020 · Twitter Web App

 **Johnson Co. Library**
@jocolibrary

We're excited to announce that our drive-thrus at Blue Valley, Monticello, and Lenexa City Center Libraries will reopen soon.

Got questions? We've got answers. See more information in our Drive-Thru FAQ »
jocolibrary.org/covid-19-reopen...



2:48 PM · May 8, 2020 · Twitter Web App

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

 **Johnson County Library - KS**
May 23 at 7:06 AM · 🌐

We're live on FOX4 News Kansas City this morning from Lenexa City Center! Tune in at 7:05, 7:35, 8:05 and 8:35 to hear all about our drive-thru reopening this Tuesday.



👍👎❤️ 43 1 Comment 10 Shares



Book Report

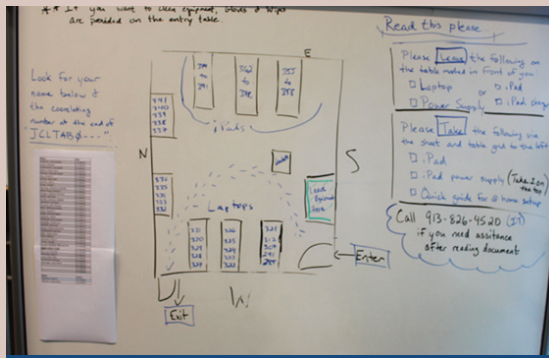
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Month in Review

MAY 2020



The Tech Services staff plowing through a 2-month backlog in new circulating materials.



Tech planning whiteboard.



Technology waiting staff pickup in the Learning Lab.



Friends staffer Karin Dembinski and volunteer Larry Leighton process re-opened online sales.



A new fixture in many public places, including libraries.








Friends Ops Manager Shanta Dickerson safely distanced for a webinar.

Volunteer-made masks to be allocated to library staff.



NEXT ISSUE

-  **Cover Story:** Communicating in Crisis: Andre/Hunt on the Post-COVID Beat!
-  **Branching Out:** Blue Valley Bounces Back
-  **Patron Point of View:** KatherineFeng
-  **Staff Spotlight:** From JCL to Furlough and Back Again
-  **Events:** How LLL Goes Viral



JOHNSON COUNTY KANSAS

Library

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