



ANNUAL REPORT 2020



“I just want to thank and commend all of you for the incredible job you have done during the coronavirus pandemic. It has made a huge difference in my life and in so many others’ lives to have the library make materials easily available. I always think the library is amazing, but to see what you have done during this pandemic to support the community is so inspirational. Thank you all.”

- KCLS Patron

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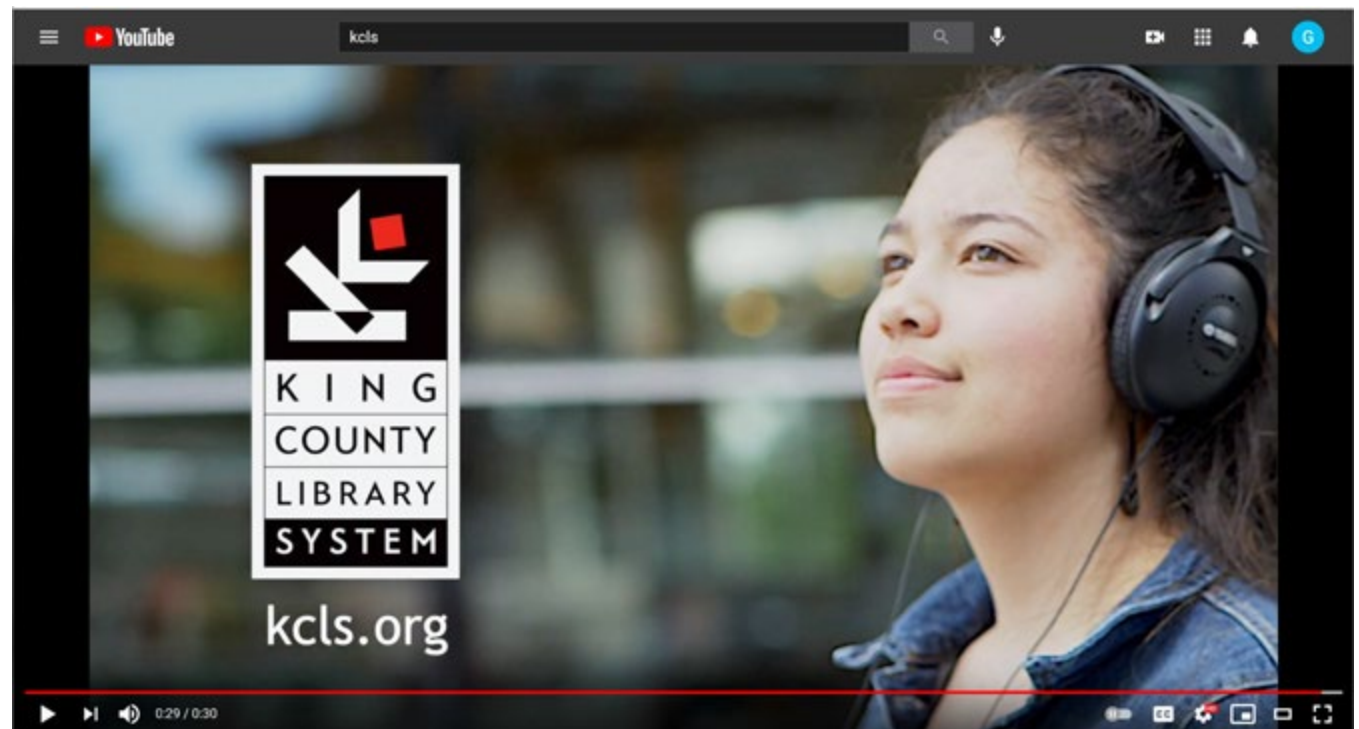
Executive Director's Message

2020: KCLS Plays an Important and Positive Role

The year 2020 was unlike any other. A global pandemic reshaped society, its impacts broadly and deeply felt.

The King County Library System was uniquely positioned to help, providing information, resources and inspiration in meaningful ways. KCLS never closed; instead, we were busier than ever as we reinvented services to address needs and create opportunities, while adhering to public health mandates and remaining focused on strong stewardship of taxpayer dollars.

When the coronavirus caused libraries to close in March 2020, there was no way anyone could have predicted its toll. Yet KCLS anticipated what loomed ahead and immediately increased digital funding for online programs and resources to ensure patrons remained connected to their libraries.



Executive Director's Message

As everyone became more reliant on the internet, KCLS transformed its services—and the response was amazing. Patron engagement increased across the board, including a rise in website and social media activity, Wi-Fi connections, and demand for other information services. By year's end, the number of library cardholders reached **1.1 million**, including a **226%** increase in eCard registrations.



The year included several national honors. Library Journal rated KCLS a five-Star Library for overall excellence. KCLS also broke its own record for digital circulation with patrons downloading a total **7.4 million** items. It was an increase of more than **2 million** over the previous year and earned KCLS a ranking of second in the U.S. and third in the world for digital lending from Rakuten/OverDrive. We ended 2020 with a total circulation of **14.6 million** physical and digital items.

Executive Director's Message



KCLS stayed connected with patrons “offline” as well. We provided contactless Curbside to Go service, as well as lockers for 24/7 holds pickup. Our mobile outreach efforts ensured that kids, older adults and those experiencing homelessness received contactless library delivery service. Demand was robust. Including those served by mobile outreach delivery, patrons borrowed **3.8 million** items from July through December. Of those, **2.6 million** holds were picked up at a Curbside to Go location.

And with a focus on leveraging resources, KCLS partnered with King County to assist in the effort to distribute **5 million** face masks and **20,000** bottles of hand sanitizer to control the pandemic's spread.



Executive Director's Message

Numbers like these, along with comments from our patrons, are strong indicators that our efforts were appreciated.

King County Library System has always played a positive role in residents' lives.

The coronavirus did not change this.

The **2020 Annual Report** highlights the ways KCLS rose to the challenges of an unprecedented year while remaining a vital part of the communities we serve.

Lisa G. Rosenblum

Lisa G. Rosenblum, Executive Director



How the Year Progressed

The King County Library System began the year with great expectations, having launched significant initiatives and programs for its 50 libraries, many of them new and remodeled thanks to a voter-approved **Capital Bond** measure.

But then, like everyone else, we faced the unexpected. Drawing on the strengths and creativity of staff, we adapted to the ever-changing demands of a global pandemic.

The following highlights show the many proactive and innovative steps KCLS took to continue serving the public throughout the entire year while adhering to health and safety guidelines.



January and February: Best-Laid Plans

KCLS began the year with budgeted projects and in-building programs that aligned with our **Strategic Initiatives**. These priorities included reducing barriers to access, promoting economic empowerment, supporting social and health services, STEM learning, and embracing diversity, racial equity and inclusion.



Strategic Initiatives

Economic Empowerment

Career counseling, small business and teen programs (21st century job skills)

Green Initiative

Public programs, vended services, and other organizational efforts focused on reducing paper and plastic waste

Social and Health Services

Community health programs; immigrant and refugee services; social work services in libraries; expanded services to people experiencing homelessness

Reducing Barriers to Library Access

Adjusted fines and fees

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Engagement

Organizational assessment; training; workforce diversification plan

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) Learning

ideaX Makerspace expansion; digital media artist-in-residence

Technology

Improve/upgrade existing systems; explore Artificial Intelligence applications

January and February: Best-Laid Plans

Welcoming Centers for new arrivals to the U.S. and King County were open at two KCLS locations. Outreach expanded to those experiencing homelessness, social and health information services were available at libraries, and economic empowerment classes supporting low-income patrons were all underway as part of our goal to build communities of inclusion and belonging.



425 total Ambassador hours

193 students helped by ESL

A second **ideaX Makerspace** was ready to open at the Federal Way Library to enhance STEM learning, the Green Initiative was in progress, and many System-wide improvements, from technology and planning to communication, were taking shape.

Then the coronavirus hit close to home, with the first U.S. case reported in the region.

March through June: A Time of Reinvention

Early on, KCLS monitored the coronavirus outbreak in King County, anticipating and proactively planning for potential impacts on our communities. When state public health mandates led to library and other countywide closures on **March 13**, KCLS was positioned to pivot quickly, providing virtual connections with patrons of all ages, implementing safety and budget measures and developing contactless services. With the coronavirus' duration unknown, the Library System planned for various scenarios to address public needs as the economic toll rose and pandemic realities set in.

With essential workers still in buildings, KCLS sanitized libraries and workspaces, installed new air filters and maintained heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, critical to healthy air quality. As the year progressed, **other upgrade projects** were completed, including installing plexiglass screens in libraries. Such measures and essential ongoing maintenance protected KCLS' buildings as outlined in KCLS' Capital Investment Program (CIP).



CIP Projects Completed in 2020

Bellevue Library

Elevator modernization including new motors and greater energy efficiency; two new boilers

Burien Library

Roof protective coating

Covington Library

Partial roof repair

Des Moines Library

Remodeled restrooms

Kirkland Library

Remodeled restrooms

Redmond Library

Carpet replacement

Shoreline Library

HVAC replacement

Woodinville Library

Roof replacement

Facilities Replacement of four maintenance vehicles

March through June: A Time of Reinvention



28,120 telephone calls

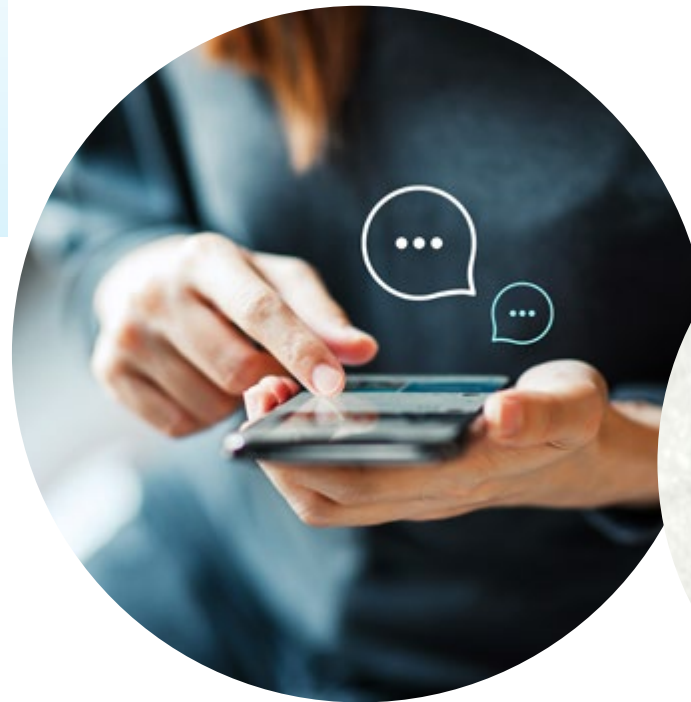
13,979 live chat sessions

10,729 email questions

48% growth in overall use

Within a week of closing libraries to indoor use, the **Ask KCLS** information service was in high demand, answering questions from the public via phone, chat and email.

Recognizing the financial hardships faced by many, KCLS announced that no late fees would be charged in 2020 during closures. We also extended the return dates for all materials currently checked out.



March through June: A Time of Reinvention

Staff worked remotely, re-tooling previously planned on-site events and programs to **virtual programming and services**, updating the website with COVID-19 information and resources, and communicating with the public about the Library System's efforts to provide support.

52,935 people of all ages attended virtual programs

KCLS brought people together to learn and share in virtual spaces through reconfigured online book groups, author visits, Story Times, favorite programs like Reading with Rover, and new ones like Space Launch.

*"At a time when the world seemed like it was falling apart, it was a way for people to connect. The (book) group was really fun, and reminded me that there's still life during a pandemic."
- KCLS Patron*



March through June: A Time of Reinvention

KCLS also created and expanded its offerings to older adults, with online programs ranging from Wisdom Cafes to caregiving. Patrons let us know in many ways how much they appreciated our efforts, including a **122%** increase in social media engagement. Users visited the KCLS **Website** over **12.9 million** times in 2020.

KCLS immediately increased its spending on **digital resources** and invested heavily over and above what was allocated, so patrons could continue to connect with their libraries online. **Instant library cards** for full digital access were offered to eligible residents and students.

"So thankful for the investment in digital content! I have read dozens of great books during this time thanks to KCLS!"
- KCLS Patron



March through June: A Time of Reinvention

KCLS also prioritized information assistance to people coping with lost jobs and wages. A new program initiative, **Invest in Yourself**, was developed to help small businesses struggling with COVID's impacts. KCLS also collaborated with other regional library systems to provide **Your Next Job**, a free, personalized job-search service, to help workers recover from COVID-related unemployment and loss of income. Offered in 11 languages, the service helped 300 people, including those living with a disability, who had limited English language or work skills, and/or who lacked digital proficiency.

KCLS also offered business, technology and digital literacy **certification programs** and resources to help people pursue career goals.



*"I'm currently working on getting Adobe InDesign certified. I also have to shout out access to Chilton online manuals, Consumer Reports and Lynda.com. I ❤️ my library!"
- KCLS Patron*

223 people accessed assistance through Invest in Yourself.

March through June: A Time of Reinvention

As the months passed and summer loomed, it was clear that we needed to transform the annual **Summer Reading Program** into an online slate of educational and literacy programs to help offset the “summer slide.” Summer Reading, which ran June through August, kept all ages engaged through classes, activities and reading challenges.

In total **3.7 million** minutes were read. KCLS, helped by the KCLS Foundation, distributed books to more than **100** sites, including community centers, food banks, health centers, childcare centers and summer camps.



March through June: A Time of Reinvention

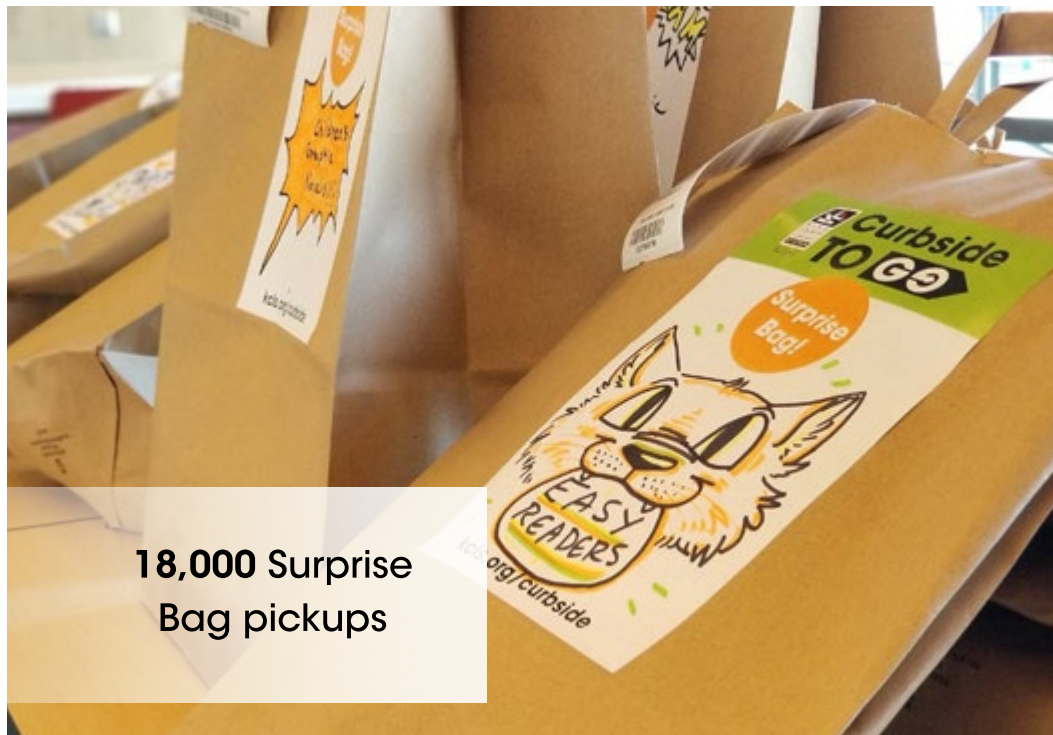
By June, after several months of planning and preparation, KCLS reached a major turning point. Staff returned to buildings to begin processing early returns, set up book quarantine areas, learn new technologies and organize library materials for the launch of a new contactless service, **Curbside to Go**.

"Have I said lately how much I ADORE my library @KCLS? They are now offering Curbside To Go pickups of holds. They have hours of operation like 10am to 7pm. During a pandemic! Such selfless, hardworking, innovative people making their patrons' lives easier."
- KCLS Patron



July through September: KCLS Delivers Essential Services

As the pandemic showed no sign of abating, KCLS continued to develop services and programs within health guidelines. Contactless Curbside to Go brought physical items back into the hands of patrons. The **Library System** also obtained grants to expand resources for Mobile Services and to help those hard hit by COVID. In the heat of summer, KCLS also created ways to nurture health and keep up civic spirits through online education, entertainment and outdoor programs.



Curbside to Go, called a “lifesaver” by many patrons, enabled residents to pick up holds in pre-packed bags outside library buildings. In the first week, patrons placed nearly **138,000** new holds. Surprise Bags were distributed and additional book drops opened. Curbside to Go continued to expand through the rest of the year, as did the gratitude from patrons. By the end of December, Curbside to Go was underway at **41** locations, with **39** of those also providing Curbside printing pickup.

July through September: KCLS Delivers Essential Services

Mobile Services outreach also restarted with contactless visits to child cares, assisted living facilities, retirement and nursing homes and homeless shelters. Providing library materials, and in some cases Wi-Fi hot spots, to vulnerable populations was an invaluable service, providing connections particularly for older adults in isolation.

Mobile Services served a total **38,502** patrons at **2,220** sites.
There were **304** Wi-Fi hot spots loaned, serving **4,560** people.



*"Thank you
for the work you
and your staff do in
keeping KCLS running
and relevant. If this was a
Yelp review, I'd give you all
★★★★★"
- KCLS Patron*



July through September: KCLS Delivers Essential Services

As summer progressed, face masks, social distancing and other safety measures were still mandated by the state. KCLS partnered with the King County Executive's Office (KCEO) and other local organizations to be part of a countywide effort to ensure wide distribution of **Personal Protective Equipment** (PPE). Eight KCLS libraries took receipt of **5 million** masks and **20,000** bottles of hand sanitizer and made them available to representatives from 650 faith- and community-based organizations.

*"The people we see have really been impacted by COVID. Many are just overwhelmed, so we're trying to focus on making connections to help them. Making PPE more widely available is one way to do that, while also helping to stop the virus from spreading. It's really great that the county and library are doing this."
- KCLS Patron*

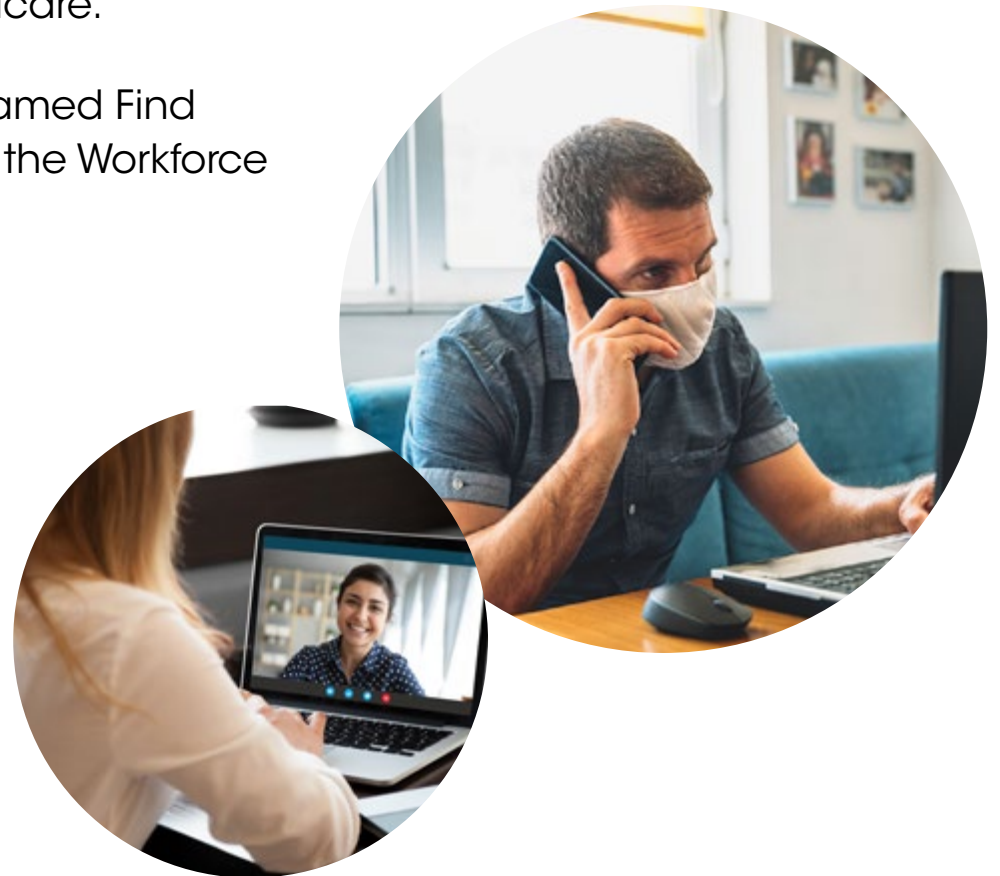


July through September: KCLS Delivers Essential Services

As county unemployment and business losses mounted, KCLS unveiled **Find Financial Assistance**, a grant program that helped 253 people cope with the economic impacts of the pandemic.

The service, offered in English and Spanish, connected patrons with KCLS staff “navigators,” who provided information and resources to address issues ranging from unemployment, rental assistance and job-hunting to food and childcare.

The national Urban Libraries Council (ULC) named Find Financial Assistance a 2020 **Top Innovator** in the Workforce and Economic Development category.



July through September: KCLS Delivers Essential Services

September began not with back-to-school excitement, but with ongoing school closures.

KCLS stepped up to support the educational needs of students, parents and teachers still relying on distance learning. The Library System promoted its **extensive online resources** and research aids, offering homework help, test preparation, career coaching and virtual programs.

Student eCard accounts, in partnership with school districts and colleges, provided full access to our digital collections. The popular Study Zone program was refashioned into **Study Zone Plus**, offering students one-on-one online tutoring using Zoom and other technologies. Opportunities to connect with other students were offered through Reading Buddies, Teen Talk Time, Recharge Rooms and other activities.

**STUDY
ZONE
PLUS**

Connect to homework help
and resources online!

Student resources used
127,315 times

1,100 students served by
Study Zone Plus



July through September: KCLS Delivers Essential Services



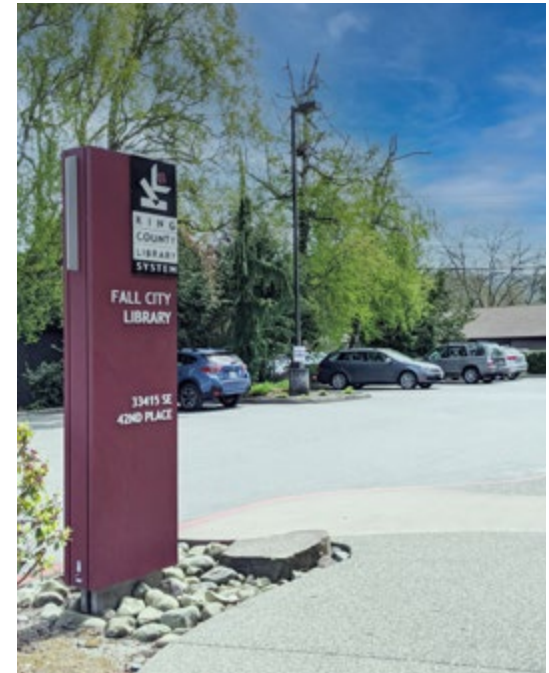
Essential as online connections were, KCLS also recognized that health and well-being were important during the pandemic. A partnership with the local Pop-Up **StoryWalks**[®] nonprofit ensured a break from computers, inspiring families and people of all ages to read while strolling outdoors in their own communities, following trails with posted pages from children's picture books. StoryWalks were featured at seven sites, with more planned in 2021.

"The coronavirus has created a challenge for everyone, especially educating at home. We love the library and are constantly checking out books for the boys (ages 4 and 6). With StoryWalks, we are taking our time; it teaches them patience. We've also discovered things, like the sculpture garden at Redmond Library."
- KCLS Patron

October through December: KCLS Keeps Patrons Informed and Connected

As the year came to a close, the Library System explored, found and created solutions to expand resources and digital access, while continuing contactless services.

To increase digital access for patrons, KCLS secured a grant from the Washington State Broadband Office and NoaNet to install booster antennas to **extend public Wi-Fi** signals beyond KCLS buildings to library parking lots. Subsequently through a federal CARES Act grant, KCLS expanded the installation to a total of **44** locations.



In total, **1,238,991** wireless connections were made using KCLS' Wi-Fi.

October through December: KCLS Keeps Patrons Informed and Connected



216,047 total ballots were returned to 21 KCLS Ballot Drop Box Locations—23% of all ballots returned (909,916).

KCLS' role as a trustworthy information provider took on new meaning during an election year.

For years, KCLS has hosted election ballot drop boxes at libraries, and this year was no exception. With an eye to the November general election, our partnership with King County Elections expanded the number of drop box locations to **21** libraries, providing greater access and convenience to voters.

The **Library System** also offered non-partisan, voter-education materials in multiple languages, as well as online programs about candidates, ballot measures, election integrity and protecting democracy from misinformation.



October through December: KCLS Keeps Patrons Informed and Connected



For KCLS, broader access and inclusion also meant acting on a chief strategic objective and commitment to diversity. The Library System created a new department of **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion** (DEI). KCLS strives to ensure that public libraries are places for community and belonging, welcoming all people.

The new department will provide a check and balance, making sure all forms of accessibility are honored, and that all voices are heard, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, ability or socioeconomic situation.



October through December: KCLS Keeps Patrons Informed and Connected



By late in the year, KCLS' innovative spirit was strong.

Thanks to a grant from the KCLS Foundation, KCLS became one of the first large library systems in the U.S. to install state-of-the-art **outdoor lockers** for contactless pickup of library materials.

Installed at Bothell and Covington Libraries, they provide 24/7 access and yet another safe way for patrons to pick up holds.



October through December: KCLS Keeps Patrons Informed and Connected

By the end of a busy and unprecedented year, the Library System was named a **five-Star Library** by Library Journal. The honor recognizes overall excellence and is based on several measures including overall circulation, digital circulation, library visits, programs and attendance, public computer use, Wi-Fi sessions and more. The ranking is based on 2018 survey data, with KCLS in the category of libraries with annual expenditures of \$30,000,000 or more.

KCLS also broke its own record for patron checkouts of digital titles—**7,408,428**—ranking it second in the U.S. and third in the world for **digital circulation**, according to Rakuten OverDrive, which compiles the data. The number of checkouts was an increase of **30.5%** over 2019.

*"We'd like to thank @kingcountylibrary for how they have stepped up during quarantine to provide online resources to students and families while we all #stayhomestayhealthy. Thank you!"
- Instagram Post*

The number of checkouts increased **30.5%** over 2019.



Financial Information

In 2020, revenue decreased 1.0% over the prior year primarily due to the system-wide library closure in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Prudent financial management held spending to 84.2% of **budget** and allowed KCLS to maintain a strong financial position while continuing to invest in the services and resources that have the greatest impact on our communities.

Within the Finance Department, the implementation of a new Human Capital Management system in 2020 improved payroll automation and integrated the payroll process with other financial and human resources tasks.

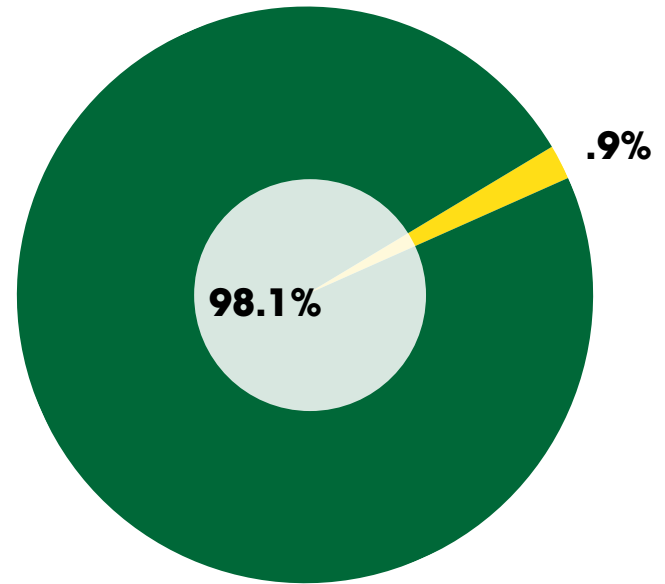
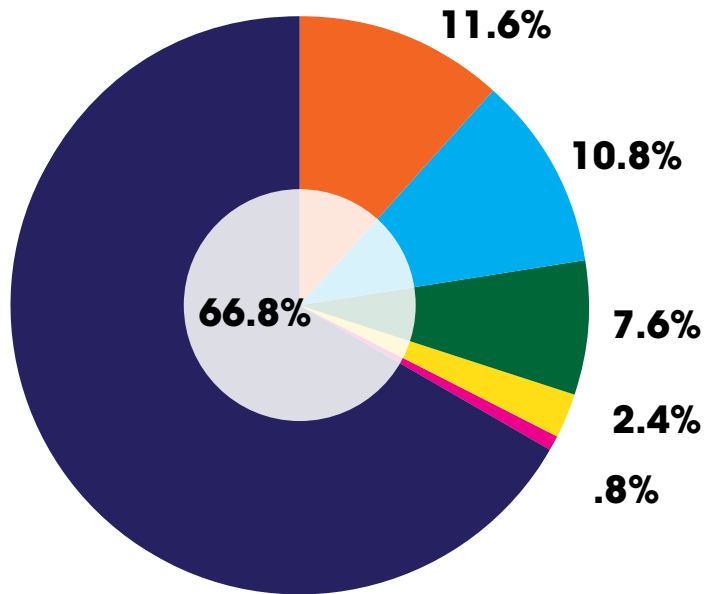
As events in 2020 progressed, KCLS leadership implemented controlled hiring and elimination of substitute shifts when it became clear that the pandemic was escalating and that it was not safe to reopen to the public. This resulted in personnel savings of approximately 10.1% from the original budgeted amount.

Restrictions on travel, training, and other discretionary expenditures further reduced actual costs in non-personnel spending by approximately 24.8%, and in the **Capital Investment Program** by 30.6%.

Each year, the Washington State Auditor conducts both a Financial Statements Audit and Accountability Audit. The Financial Statements Audit examines whether KCLS has properly presented its financial statements with no material misstatements. The Accountability Audit assesses areas of risk specific to KCLS or topic areas identified for all state agencies.

KCLS has received clean audits (“no findings”) every year since 1994.

2020 Expenditures and Revenues



EXPENDITURES	\$111,445,750
● Salaries & Benefits	\$74,488,008
● Building Related	\$12,932,312
● Books & Other Materials	\$12,047,628
● Other Operating Expenditures	\$8,471,298
● Facilities-CIP	\$2,653,485
● ITS-CIP	\$853,019

REVENUES	\$126,566,741
● Local Property Taxes	\$124,174,801
● All Other Sources	\$2,391,939
Investment Interest	\$625,293
Federal (eRate)	\$500,905
Other Taxes	\$398,676
Miscellaneous	\$335,714
Fines & Fees	\$239,832
Contracts	\$176,799
KCLS Foundation	\$114,719

King County Library System Foundation

Ken Ryals, Executive Director, KCLS Foundation



As KCLS' nonprofit, 501(c)(3) fundraising organization, the **King County Library System Foundation** (KCLSF) obtains grants and donations to supplement public funding, making possible additional and vital programs, services, outreach and innovations.

The Foundation's mission is to advance literacy, learning and libraries for everyone. Yet, during the pandemic, its financial support also helped address challenges such as isolation, online learning, financial insecurity and homelessness. In 2020, the generosity of donors, private foundations, companies and public grants provided more than **\$1.5 million** to fund social impact and outreach programs.



Foundation Funded: Extending Services to People Experiencing Homelessness

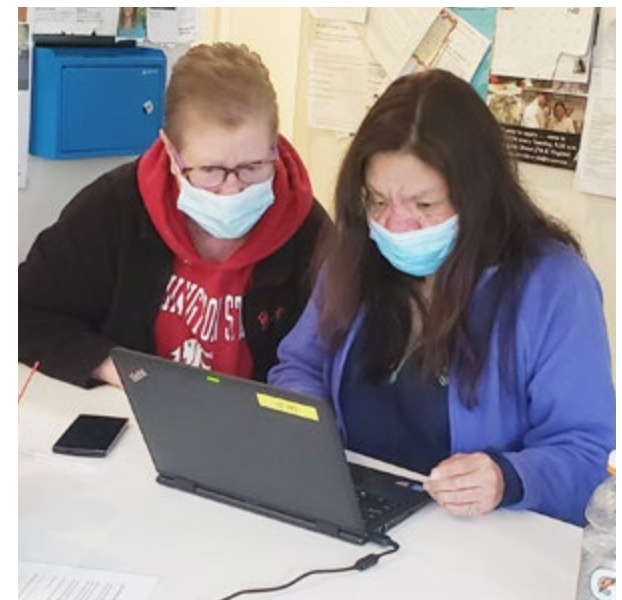
King County Library System Foundation

The Foundation funded economic empowerment programs to help adults experiencing joblessness, underemployment and financial insecurity, as well as outreach services delivering library resources to transitional housing programs and those experiencing homelessness.

Donor funding also enabled critical online literacy and STEM learning programs for students, and community partnerships that enabled outreach to at-risk youth, including at food banks and the King County Children and Family Justice Center.

Because nearly one in seven King County households lack broadband internet access, the Foundation also focused on digital inclusion, providing internet hot spots and computers to vulnerable populations.

Lastly, the Foundation funded library innovation. In October, KCLS began piloting contactless locker systems at two library locations that provide patrons a safe means to obtain materials. We hope to scale this program to more locations in 2021. Also, the Foundation funded the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) that will allow KCLS to deliver improved digital experiences.



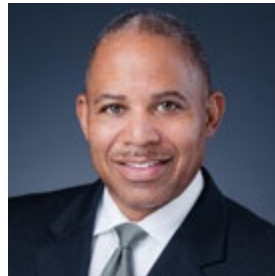
Governance

The King County Library System (KCLS) is governed by the seven-member **Board of Trustees** in accordance with **RCW 27.12.192**. Board members are appointed by the King County Executive and confirmed by the King County Council. Trustees serve for no more than two consecutive five-year terms. In 2020, the Board welcomed two new members, Harish Kulkarni and Srini Raghavan.

Board of Trustees



Pamela Grad
President



Ron Higgs



Harish Kulkarni



Robin McClelland



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Dominica Myers
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Danielle Perry
Director of Human Resources

Greg Smith
Director of Facilities Management Services



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