[Intro Music]

**Tammy Ross:** Welcome to Long Overdue, Libraries and Technology. A podcast for librarians where we explore important trends and topics in the library industry. You are listening to episode two in our series called Cultivating Your Libraries Entrepreneurial Ecosystem, hosted by Duncan Smith, founder of NoveList and EBSCO's chief strategist for public libraries.

**Duncan Smith:** Thanks Tammy. According to a PLA survey, 98% of public libraries were closed at some point during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even with their physical doors closed, libraries continued to serve their communities by leveraging the digital collections to support moms and dads sheltering in place, as well as children and teens using devices for remote learning.

Williamsburg Regional Library in Virginia is just one example of the library that innovated during this crisis. Instead of a bookmobile schedule, the library published a hotspot schedule telling patrons when mobile library service vans were in area parking lots, so that they could come and use the library's Wi-Fi to access the internet and library resources.

My guests today are no strangers to innovation and an entrepreneurial mindset. Jim Correll is the director of the Fab Lab in the center of innovation, housed at Independence Community College. And Nancy Kishpaugh is the genealogy and senior services coordinator at the Independence Public Library in Kansas, which serves a population of about 10,000.

In 2009, the Independence Public Library wasn't going to have enough money to keep its stores open. But by 2012, it had become Library Journal's Best Small Library in America. Nancy, what turned things around?

**Nancy Kishpaugh:** There was a change in directors, which facilitated also a change in directions, where it kind of kicked off our rise as the best small library in America. In addition to that, I have to say the spirit of Independence came into play here.

There's a special spirit in Independence, Kansas, that overlays everything, and a determination in the community and in the library, not to let things get us down. So that was helpful, but basically as librarians, we became determined not to let those cause us to fail. When we applied for the best small library in America, we were determined to be different and to look for creative ways of presenting our library story. And I think that was the key. I think our library application was much different than most of the others. And it has to do with the creative mindset within the library that continues to this day, even though we have now had another change in directors. So creativity, a good mix of people, a diverse staff, and a willingness to listen and to be inventive.

**Duncan Smith:** Nancy, can you give us a couple of examples of some of the things that you did during that time, some of the things that you feel like really grabbed the Library Journal's attention in your application?

**Nancy Kishpaugh:** Part of it was just the application itself. Our application was presented as a murder mystery, which isn't what you would typically expect. But we were doing things differently, I think it was our mindset. I think it was the application itself and the way it was presented, the way, it's physical look and feel, and the way the story was told.

That in itself was a really neat thing to happen at our library. Fortunately for us but unfortunately I don't think our community leaders understood what being the best small library in America meant and what a gem they had in their community. Some of them did but not necessarily everyone. So it's up to us to educate them. Creativity, determination, looking for solutions instead of being stonewalled by the problems at the time, that's what made us stand apart. We went through 15 people in a staff of eight. There was turnover of 15 people within one year. So the entire staff turned over, but it was the general attitude.

**Duncan Smith:** So Nancy that's great. I think certainly if I'd been one of the judges for Library Journal, when an application came in that was a murder mystery, that's really kind of just an indication of some of the quality of the innovative spirit and the creative energy that's going on at Independence.

We were talking about 2012 and 2009. Today in 2020, I suspect a lot of libraries are feeling very similarly to the way you felt way back then when the library was threatened to be closed, actually.

**Nancy Kishpaugh:** Right, right

**Duncan Smith:** So can you talk about how Independence is focused today on navigating this current crisis and some directions and things that you're thinking about doing?

**Nancy Kishpaugh:** Yes. The most important thing then and now was don't lose hope, be ever hopeful. That spirit of Independence, that mindset is really important. If you get bogged down in feeling hopeless, that's pretty much where you stay. So it's really important to be hopeful. And that was kind of where the entrepreneurial mindset came in. And librarians in general are entrepreneurs, they just don't know it. Because being an entrepreneur has to do with looking for solutions instead of problems, and librarians do that every day.

We have 300 people a day that come into our small library and each one of them has a different problem and it's up to us to help them solve that problem. And it may be finding a book, but it may be a computer problem. It's a wide range of probably 300 different problems every day. So look at yourselves as entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs are just people that look at things differently and see possibilities instead of obstacles. Be creative, be flexible, and don't be afraid to try new things.

One of the things that we implemented shortly before our library was closed down was a system called open access. And we're one of, I think, five libraries in the United States, who's implemented open access, giving library patrons access to the library from 8:00 in the morning until 10:00 at night with no staff being present during the off hours, simply by scanning your library card and entering a pin number. They can come in, they can use the computers, they can check out books, they can use our Wi-Fi, both inside and outside the library. That was something that's very different from what most libraries have to draw on. And we're looking at ways now to use open access to give people freer access to the library, and yet to be able to keep them safe at the same time. We're actually looking at opening up slowly.

I'm not the library director. I'm just an old computer person who was a librarian at heart. So we've been having virtual meetings, we've been doing a lot of the things that other libraries are doing as far as promoting our online services, having virtual gatherings of library patrons. I'm having a virtual senior day this month and with a special speaker, trying to educate the public about what's available, gathering information about what patrons can find on the internet, how they can travel without ever leaving their home, things that they could do during the lockdown.

And being in the center of the country, it's possible that we won't see our peak until much later than the East or West Coast, and everyone is still struggling with that. But the entrepreneurial mindset is such a positive thing. And if you can keep your mind focused on possibilities, on solutions, be positive and don't give up hope, I think that's really important. And I'm so proud of Jim Correll and the Fab Lab and their role in producing on a very quick turnaround, shields for the medical professionals and working out of their homes.

We now have at our library a work-from-home policy, which you have to educate people that, yeah, librarians can work from home and be very productive. People think that libraries are all about books but they're not. They're all about people and ways in which we can serve people. So, it's just a matter of serving people differently.

**Duncan Smith:** If nothing else from today, what I'm going to walk away with is, is your statement that librarians are entrepreneurs, because that just really sums up who we are and what we really do.

**Nancy Kishpaugh:** Yes. But the bad thing is that librarians don't... we don't know what an entrepreneur means. And I asked my granddaughter this morning, she said, according to their definition in school, an entrepreneur is a person who's willing to take risks. And that does go along with it. But it's also just exploring new ways of doing things and shifting that... it's just click on the dial from looking at problems to looking for possibilities. And one is very negative and the other is very positive. So there's hope.

**Duncan Smith:** Very good. Thank you Nancy. And you sort of introduced Jim here just briefly. So Jim, tell us a little bit about who you are and how you and Nancy came together and some ideas about, well, just talk about some of the things that you're doing at the Fab Lab.

**Jim Correll:** All right. Well I'm Jim Correll. I came to Independence Community College in 2006, definitely not from an academic background. They were launching an entrepreneurship program and they wanted it to be perceived as a nonacademic program. I had a business degree but I'd done several different things in my adult life. So I think they decided that... sometimes I say a misfit like me or certainly somebody with varied background was a good person to help other people have their businesses improve and even start businesses.

Part of what I had done in my adult life was I started a couple of different businesses and then worked in manufacturing. So that's kind of where I came from in 2006. And along about the end of 2011, I discovered this thing called Ice House Entrepreneurship Program, which I think we'll talk about later. But that really started me down a path on a whole different way of thinking about doing an entrepreneurship program. And that kind of thinking and change in thinking led me to work with a small group of people to create what we call Fab Lab ICC, which opened in October of 2014.

We're a membership-based makerspace as part of the international Fab Lab network, where people, I like to say, where people from all walks of life in the community can learn to do things they didn't think were possible. So this can include learning to make things, learning to use machines that they didn't know anything about using. It can include a different way of thinking and even about starting a full or part-time business. So, a lot of the things that people just don't think they can do, we try to promote them to be able to do that in the Fab Lab.

**Duncan Smith:** So Jim, many libraries have makerspaces. And can you talk a little bit about, based on your experience with Independence and libraries in general, how can libraries make more effective use of those makerspaces and build relationships with their local entrepreneurial community?

**Jim Correll:** Well I think that subject of entrepreneurial thinking is difficult to define. Nancy talked about taking a risk, and at least in the school definition, they're not totally using financial risk. But if you start thinking about different ways to do things and you present those to the people that are doing them the way they're doing them now, there's a risk in that.

And so I think, we between makerspaces and libraries, or the combination of makerspaces and libraries, should be all about trying to foster this entrepreneurial thinking in our communities and show everybody that they can have a different way of thinking, and ultimately a different way of facing the problems they have in their lives, whether it's their personal lives or their professional lives or even academic lives.

In the case of student, there's just a whole different way of looking at the world and the psychologists call it self-efficacy. And the whole idea of a library and the way that that can help people solve their problems, and the same thing with makerspaces, all that can go together to just make us, our communities, our community citizens, better at solving problems all across the board. And that pretty soon leads to a community that has a different way of thinking. And Nancy touched on it a little bit, but I've seen that in Independence, Kansas, in the last few years. Much of the community just has a different way of looking.

**Duncan Smith:** If you could sum up Independence's and the Independence community different way of looking at things or how they look at things differently, what are a couple of things that you would say about that?

**Jim Correll:** We have really a pretty strong, vibrant downtown for a small town of 10,000 people. Independence has... downtown has been doing pretty well really for the last three or four years. And I certainly can't take all the credit for that, but several of the merchants downtown have gone through, I call it the entrepreneurial mindset class, but it uses the Ice House Entrepreneurship Program, which helps produce this different way of thinking. And so I think that has spread. And of course, Nancy and three or four of the other people at Independence Public Library have also been through the entrepreneurial mindset class.

So I suppose in Independence, I suppose we've had 60 or 80 people altogether go through the entrepreneurial mindset class since we started it in the fall of 2012. And that starts to spread. And Nancy certainly been a good spreader of that. She took the class maybe a year or two ago and she leans heavily on people to take it. So she's been really good to refer people to take it.

Usually every time we have the class, which we do the class at the Fab Lab, and that's kind of a good environment to have a class like that. But every time we do that class, we'll have 8 or 10 or 12 people. We'll generally have two or three traditional college students and the rest will be community members of all ages and all walks of life. Almost all of them say that it changes the way they think. And this sounds dramatic, but one or two of them each class say that it changes their life. I think after you do that for a few years and more and more people go through and experience that and start to think differently, then that kind of network community starts to grow. And that's I think what we're seeing happen in Independence.

**Duncan Smith:** Thanks. Thanks Jim. Now I'm going to ask Nancy a question here. Nancy, you a few minutes ago described librarians as entrepreneurs. Would you have said that before you took the entrepreneurial mindset training that Jim is talking about?

**Nancy Kishpaugh:** I don't think so. I never thought of myself as an entrepreneur. And it has changed my life. It changes my day-to-day life. And you can shift in and out of entrepreneurial thinking and you need to stay focused on possibilities. I've been struggling with trying to find a place to put a garden in my yard. And it seems like something that's really important nowadays. And I couldn't come up with anything. But about a week ago, I realized that I had a bed of iris that had been just kind of come with the house and had been sitting there for about 20 years. Then I took them all out and I now have a vegetable garden in front of my house and I'm thrilled with that. But that was entrepreneurial thinking and it changes the way that I do things and the way I look at problems at home and at work.

And instead of seeing another patron come through the door, another phone call, another problem, I find satisfaction in creating possibilities, helping a patron make something possible, instead of being frustrated by their problems. And it's contagious, it grows. And I've seen that in our community, on our staff. Our library director is very much a servant leader and encourages entrepreneurial thinking. And it's by nature, librarians are really entrepreneurs. They just don't think of themselves as that. And part of the challenge I think in any community is educating not only at the library, educating library leaders and library staff, but also educating community leaders. During this crisis, we found that we weren't included in the community emergency planning group because people just don't think of a library as being a resource that can help them. And we're more than just books and we have a lot to offer. And we're going to be installing a business center at our library through a grant that we won right before the crisis. And I think all of those things are going to be very important as we go forward.

**Duncan Smith:** Thank you for that Nancy. I love that idea of your repurposing your garden. And you said something as part of that, that is... and when you said you were thinking about creating a vegetable garden because it felt like something that was important to do right now. It seems to me and I'd like to hear both you and Jim's response to this, that one of the most important things that we can do right now to help all of us get beyond this current crisis is to really begin to try to think more like the entrepreneurials who adopt that entrepreneurial mindset that you both have talked so much about this program. Am I accurate with that?

**Jim Correll:** Oh yes, yes. Duncan, I'll take a shot at that first and then give Nancy a chance. As she was saying that about librarians, I think I would say it's not just librarians, humans were made to think like entrepreneurs and we don't think of it that way. And as adults, we have varying amounts of things that kind of drive that creativity and that entrepreneurial mindset down inside us. But one thing I've learned with the makerspace, our Fab Lab and the mindset class is that everybody has that entrepreneurial mindset down inside them, and it's just waiting to come out and we get to see it come out all the time. And it happens with kids and it happens with young adults and older adults and everybody. And recently I've been thinking, you know, in the state of Kansas before the civil war, there was kind of a spirit in Kansas and everybody thought Kansas was going to be a slave state and Iowa was going to maintain the balance.

And then in the end, the Kansans came up with this thing and they said, no, we're going to be a free state. And that kind of really precipitated the civil war. But I look at all this as kind of getting us back to that. The industrial revolution came along and it did a good thing in a lot of ways as far as making goods and services available to people in a way that it hadn't ever been the case before. But along with that kind of came this dependency on jobs and employment and all that. And that just kind of took away that entrepreneurial mindset for a lot of people. And I think what we're going to find in this pandemic has echoed or actually emphasized the fact that we do need to be more entrepreneurial and self-sufficient and self-reliant.

And that's a way I would describe Kansans leading up to the civil war. So, I've been saying that we need to get back to that, and this kind of thinking and, like Nancy finally coming up with the solution of finding the place for the vegetable garden, that's kind of what we're talking about. A guy named David Kelley, who started what they call the d.school at Stanford University, he calls that creative confidence. When people start having creative confidence, they really do start taking charge of their personal lives. And if we all have that, really, if we all have that, it would be a very different nation.

**Nancy Kishpaugh:** I agree with Jim totally. It seems like in the schools, we do a really good job of squishing children's creativity in a lot of respects. And this is like watering your creative garden, so to speak, encouraging entrepreneurship. And the worst thing entrepreneurship has going for it is the name entrepreneur, because it really doesn't mean anything to anyone. I wish someone could come up with a name that everybody would understand. And that's probably a... that's the hardest thing about being an entrepreneur is figuring out what the heck that is.

Independence, I think has always had that entrepreneurial spirit. That's where the... we used to be called Hay Town. And we changed it from Hay Town to Independence. And that's the spirit that we have here in this town and that's what keeps us going. I'm fortunate to have a library director who recognizes the creative spirit in each of her employees and allows that to develop. So if you were a library director, I would encourage you to water your entrepreneurial garden at the library and encourage staff members to develop and to be able to help library patrons and community members adopt that mindset. It is just a mindset. You don't have to have lots of money or education or resources. It's a way of thinking and anybody can do that.

**Duncan Smith:** Nancy, I really appreciate that statement. I'm going to go back to something Jim said. I kind of like rather than naming ourselves entrepreneurs maybe we can just become people who embrace the creative spirit.

**Jim Correll:** Creative confidence, you can say self-efficacy, but nobody knows what that means either. So I think the creative thing is good. And part of the problem is that the entrepreneurial mindset is kind of a tacit concept, and it's really hard to define in itself. And it's just one of those things that you have to experience or you have to just help people experience it. It's really kind of hard to define no matter what. But probably using the word creative and it would help a little bit.

**Duncan Smith:** Well, I want to thank Jim, both you and Nancy for being part of our podcast today. And I think that my one significant takeaway is that really what we need moving forward through this crisis is we need both to embrace creativity and we also need to have confidence in that creativity to get to the world that will be a better place for us on the other side of that. So again, thank you Jim. Thank you Nancy. And thank you for joining us today. I'm going to turn it back over to Tammy.

**Tammy Ross:** If you'd like to learn more about how EBSCO's new entrepreneurial mindset training course can help your library support entrepreneurial thinking in your community, please click the link that we've shared in the episode description. Thanks for checking out Long Overdue: Libraries and Technology. Be sure to tune in for the next episode in our series.