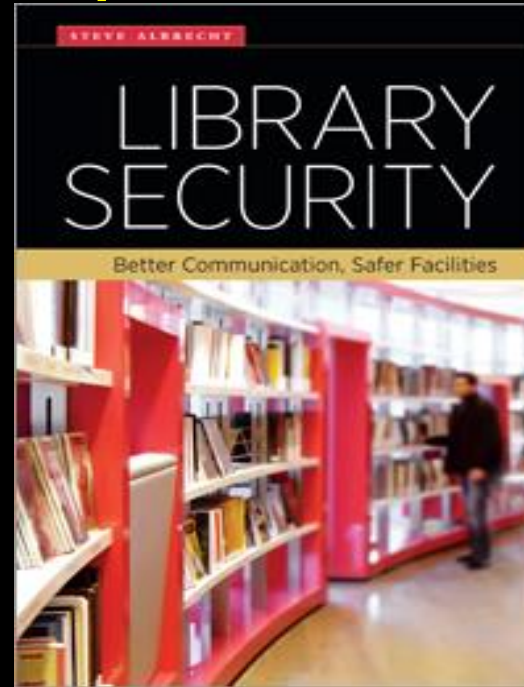


Dealing with Challenging Patrons: Safety and Security at Our Library



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What is the “New” Workplace?



Entitled or angry patrons (who miss the “old” library).

Frustrated patrons who don’t know or ignore our rules.

Uncertain times, more stress, less money, for all.

Employees who must do more, with less, and faster than ever before.

Our “72 / 7” world mirrors their world.

Keys to Library Security

Vigilant supervisors and employees (and patrons).

Regularly assessing facility security.

Updated Codes of Conduct and relevant security policies and procedures.

The use of Security Incident Reports.

Liaison relationships with law enforcement.

(* Repeat forever)

Who is Responsible for Safety and Security Here?

Every employee.

Every supervisor.

Every department head.

Even our elected officials.

Not just our law enforcement partners.

Our patrons too.

We all share in these responsibilities.

Your Secrets to a Safe Workplace

Self-Protection: You can't take care of others if you're not safe from harm.

Stress and Anger Management: You can't take care of others or yourself if you're losing it.

Working Smart: Know what to say, what to do, when to stay or go, who to call, and how to get help.

Some Themes . . .

Profiles or behaviors?

Peace or justice?

What should asking for help mean?

Chain of command or not?

How do we align with patrons?

If there are no consequences . . .

Acting skills . . .

Do your job or do your job safely?

If it's measured, it can be managed.

Tough Situations

Entitled, angry, threatening, or eccentric patrons.

Unruly children and teenagers.

Service animals versus comfort animals

Stalking behaviors by patrons.

Domestic violence comes to the library.

No security and missing police.

Door dashers, gate crashers, and thieves.

The homeless and the mentally ill.

Criminals, substance abusers, gang members.

Internet hogs and Internet creeps.

Stinkers, talkers, smokers, bathers, eaters, and sleepers.

The Need for Rules of Conduct: Business Impact

Smoking (E-cigarettes? Vaping? Marijuana?).

Soliciting for money.

Religious accommodations.

Interfering with the safe use of the library.

Misusing the Internet.

Bikes or skateboards.

Theft or vandalism.

Misuse of restrooms.

Shirts and shoes?

The Need For Rules of Conduct: Business Impact

Unattended children.

Sleeping.

Food and drink.

Electronic devices – use or noise; thumb drives?.

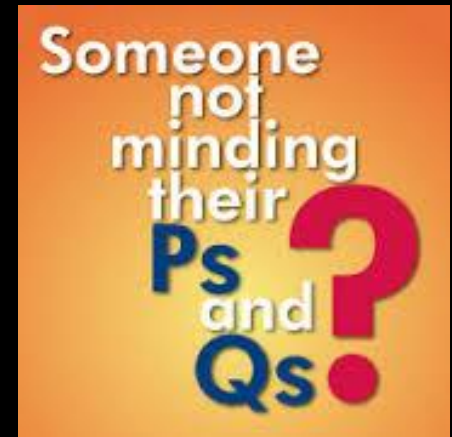
Hygiene.

Unattended belongings.

Blocking aisles and exits.



Code of Conduct



In my Perfect Library World, your facility would post the Code of Conduct in many visible locations, in poster-sized versions.

Putting the Code of Conduct on a clipboard behind the Circulation Desk or only on your web site, is not enough.

Code of Conduct language needs to be written positively, and in plain English, not legalese.

Homeless, Mental Health, Social Services Support

In my Perfect Library World, we can working partnerships with public and private advocacy groups that specialize in dealing with your most challenging patrons:

County Behavioral Health Services / Hospitals or Clinics

County Social Services

Substance abuse treatment facilities

Adult and Child Protective Services

Faith-based and grant-funded homeless outreach

Law Enforcement Support: ATM

In my Perfect Library World, a police officer or sheriff's deputy would visit your facility nearly every day, at different times.

Have staff put the Dispatch numbers into their cell phones.

Have your Director(s) call the Watch Commander and ask for regular or extra patrols.

Create a hangout environment for the officers or deputies.

Write Security Incident Reports with victim, suspect, witness information.

Introduce / Explain / Ask

Introduce yourself. Try to get the person's name.

Explain:

"I noticed that . . ."

"The reason I'm here is . . ."

"I'm sure you already know this, but . . ."

Ask: "I need to ask you to . . ."

Typical Security-Related Incidents

Angry, challenging, threatening, or eccentric patrons.

Entitled, difficult, not always willing to listen or comply.

Use venting and validation.

Consider the best service "alignment."

Use space and distance – arm's length plus.

Use proxemic barriers if your safety is at risk.

Change the ratios of confrontation: get help.

"I can't help you if you yell at me or threaten me."

Call the police or use code words to alert a colleague.

Typical Security-Related Incidents

Unruly younger kids, difficult teenagers, with or without their parents.

Not always great at following The Rules.

“You can’t do that if you want to stay here.”

Separate groups of teenagers; talk to one.

Tactful conversations with the parent(s).

Age / race / gender alignment with staff?

Peer pressure and hyper-embarrassment issues?

Firm, fair, consistent; enforce consequences daily.

Patience versus “business impact.”

Typical Security-Related Incidents

Patrons with personal or sexual boundary problems with patrons or staff.

Inappropriate conversations, flirting, unwanted attention.

Using the Internet to cyberstalk or stalk patrons or staff.

Patrons who make physical or sexual contact with staff or patrons. Illegal sexual behavior is a sign of escalation.

Pedophiles: Trust your intuition and call the police.

Typical Security-Related Incidents

Domestic violence involving patrons or staff.

Victims or perpetrators who come to the library.

Staff members with domestic violence issues that crossover from home to work.

Child custody issues? The library as neutral territory?

EAP referrals? Creative HR responses? Location change?

DV advocates, social services, police intervention.

Typical Security-Related Incidents

Chronically homeless.

People with “poly-problems”: mental illness, substance abuse, poor social skills.

People who bring their pets, worldly goods, bags (and bags and bags), children, and friends.

Use space and distance and humane treatment. Set early boundaries. Meet with the group leaders. Ask for their help.

Meet regularly with homeless advocacy groups and agencies. Don't take “We can't do much” for an answer.

Typical Security-Related Incidents

Mentally ill people.

Undiagnosed, under-treated, under-medicated, wrongly-medicated, self-medicated.

Fearful, angry, confused, aggressive, delusional, psychotic.

Know the three-type criteria and get help from social services and police.

Consider restraining orders for the chronically problematic.

Typical Security-Related Incidents

Gang members.

Not just kids who sag their pants or wear hats sideways, but gangsters, who belong to a criminal organization.

High degree of hypersensitivity to being slighted, especially in front of their pals and their girls.

Remove tagged material and get graffiti repaired. Watch for vandalism, drug sales, intimidation, recruiting.

Call police and local groups related to gang suppression.

Typical Security-Related Incidents

Substance abusers.

Some people can handle their goodies; some cannot. It is illegal to be high on drugs or alcohol and not in control.

Alcohol users and drug users are erratic. Opiate and cannabis drug users tend to be more mellow (tiny pupils). Stimulant drug users are highly-problematic (huge pupils).

Ask them to leave. Use space and distance.

Call the police.

Typical Security-Related Incidents

Internet misusers.

Hogs or oddballs? Time-wasting or porn? Business impact?

Remind them of your policies each time, including personal device use policies.

Use the power of filters, time limiters, separation, and careful peer pressure.

Typical Security-Related Incidents

Rule violators: entitled, ignorers, thieves, kid-leavers.

“I pay your salary. I want to speak to your supervisor. I’ve been coming here since before you were born. I know the Mayor. You can’t tell me what to do.”

Oblivious or intentionally disregards rules and policies.

Watch for theft and shoplift behaviors. Check eBay, Craigslist, and other sites for stolen materials. Make police reports and ask for investigative follow-ups.

Recognize abandoned kids and be a mandated reporter.

Typical Security-Related Incidents

Elderly, disabled, non-English speakers,
co-workers with "issues."

Patience.

The Platinum Rule versus The Golden Rule.

EAP

Perpetrators of Workplace Violence per OSHA

Type 1: Criminals.

Type 2: Taxpayers, customers, students, patients, passengers, vendors, etc.

Type 3: Current or former employees.

Type 4: Current or former spouse/partner of an employee.

Suspicious Activities: See Something? Say Something!

Look for people:

loitering in unauthorized or restricted areas;
not wearing ID, uniforms, or safety gear;
who act like they are lost;
who seem too interested in our employees;
who scare others with threatening or irrational behavior;
who leave quickly after abandoning a package;
taking photos or videos;
who seem too interested in our activities;
who seem like “vendors,” but are in the wrong place;
who leave cars in odd locations, or overloaded cars.

The “Active Shooter or Armed Attacker” Response



Knowing the Outs:
Where?

Run (Get Out, **Evacuate**)

Hide (Lock Out, **Barricade**)

Keep Out

Spread Out

Fight (Take Out, **Protect**)

Cover vs. Concealment?

A 15-minute Drill

Filmed July 2012,
just two weeks
before the Aurora,
CO movie theater
shootings that left
12 dead.



A joint
project with
DHS and the
City of
Houston, TX.



Nearly 31 million views
on YouTube.



Face-to-Face or Over-the-Counter



Assess people. Read the body language signs of anger versus cooperation.

Think about past encounters.

Move closer to build rapport.
Stay back if they are angry.

Use space and distance and proxemic barriers.

Practice venting and validation.

Use physical movement and the Assertive Whisper.

Telephone Skills



Over the phone, body language is missing, so tone is all we have.

Neutral, friendly, polite.

Get permission to put them on hold.

Get a callback number.

Under-promise and over-perform.

Set boundaries for their bad behavior.

Phrases That Don't Work

"You need to calm down."

"That's not our policy."

"What **you** need to understand is . . ."

"I can't help you. I don't know who can."

"I'm going on my break. You'll have to call or come back later."

"You didn't read the instructions or directions."

Phrases That Don't Work

"You need to come here, go over there, or wait over there."

"That's just our policy. It's against our policy."

"You wouldn't understand . . ."

"It's none of your business why . . ."

"What do you want me to do about it?"

"I'm not going to tell you again or explain it again."

"Why can't you be reasonable?"

Phrases That May Work

"You can't do that if you want to stay here . . ."

"I can see you're upset . . ."

"I'm sorry . . ."

"I'm not trying to make you mad . . ."

"You could be right . . ."

"It's not me, it's the computer . . ."

"Please help me do my job for you . . ."

"I can take your name and cell number . . ."

"I can get my supervisor if you'd like . . ."

"Our insurance won't allow that . . ."

George Thompson's Verbal Judo:

The L.E.A.P.S.[™] Model



Listen actively: Introduce yourself; get his or her name if possible.

Empathize: "I can see you're upset . . ."

Ask questions: "What can I do . . .?"

Paraphrase: "If I hear you, you said . . ."

Seek solutions: "Why don't we . . .?" or "What if you and I go over and . . .?"

Typical Emergency Situations

Medical or first-aid situations.

Major events: **A B C – Airway – Breathing – Circulation**

Heart attacks, strokes, choking, serious cuts, compound breaks from falls.

Update all first-aid kits, CPR classes, AED classes.

Don't assume people know or someone has called 911.

Document all incidents and near-misses.

Typical Emergency Situations

Fires.

Update your floor warden procedures.

Monitor for early-warning signs: wiring, chemicals, brush fires in the city.

Pull the alarms and yell for help and to get staff and patron attention.

Evacuate all staff and patrons through the best exits.

Typical Emergency Situations

Earthquakes.

Schedule a yearly drill.

Make an evacuation decision.

Have the building checked for damage before re-entering.

Typical Emergency Situations

Gas leaks or chemical spills.

Follow your nose.

Evacuate and call 911.

Follow instructions.

Assess for medical issues or claims.

Typical Emergency Situations

Tornadoes, weather incidents.

Follow the weather updates carefully.

Know and follow your shelter-in-place and evacuation procedures.

Make good decisions as to whether to close the facility.

Typical Emergency Situations

Flooding – plumbing or natural.

Old pipes + system stress = big problems

Pay attention to early-warning signs.

Monitor the weather.

Follow first-responder advice.

Closing Themes

We can't pick our customers, but we can enforce our policies and create safe and secure culture.

Every employee is in charge of safety and security.

Certain employees align with certain patrons better than their colleagues. Encourage "acting skills" on the floor.

Train employees in "high-risk" customer service skills (a/k/a "Verbal Judo"), face-to-face, and over the phone.

Use role-plays during staff meetings to create better responses to common security situations.

Closing Themes

Always assess the Business Impact.

Update and post your Code of Conduct.

Stay firm, fair, consistent, and assertive.

Change your vocabulary about patrons from “difficult” to “challenging.”

Create on-going working relationships with police, mental health, homeless, social services, and security agencies in the public and private sector.

Closing Themes

Develop creative answers to common patron questions, behavior problems, or complaints.

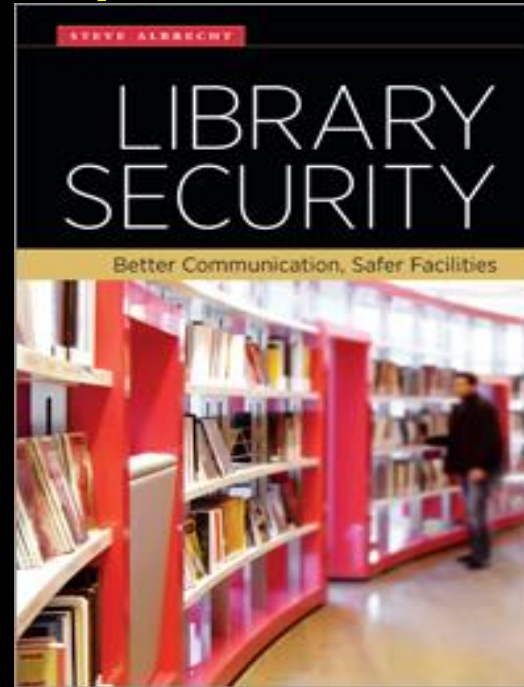
Document new, on-going, or chronic problems with Security Incident Reports.

Use more civil stay-away orders, both verbal and served.

Try a lighter touch first; you can always get tougher.

Have courage.

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