Moving from the Past Into the Future
Traditional Safety Concerns

• Library Safety Concerns (Pre-2001)
  • Sit ins
  • Bomb threats
  • Pre-9/11 concerns
  • Pre – Virginia Tech / Columbine Concerns
• Objectionable Content on computers
• Women’s personal safety
• Inclement Weather (ie. Hurricane, Tornadoes, Floods)
• Water Leaks
• Fires
Post 2001 Library Concerns

Library Safety Concerns (Post 2001)

• Terrorism / Terrorists
• Patron/Instructor violence against others in the library with a firearm or other weapon
• Post 9/11 or Patriot Act security concerns
• Post Columbine / Virginia Tech concerns
• Objectionable Content on computers
• Women’s personal safety
• Inclement Weather (ie. Hurricane, Tornadoes, Floods)
• Water Leaks
• Fires
Duties of the Safety Committee

- Recognizes library safety concerns, standards, and trends
- Addresses the safety and security concerns of the Staff and Users
- Advocates for library safety on the University/Community level
- Creates documents and policies to meet and anticipate safety concerns
- Facilitates safety awareness, education and training for staff
- Update safety materials regularly
- Take role seriously
Staff Leadership and Self-advocacy

Qualities that help people to be effective leaders and advocates for change:

- **Tenure** or **Staff Seniority** (means having more political capital to deal with administration)
- **Positive System Notoriety** allows a leader to advocate more effectively
- Compiled **Documentation** of bad behavior and incident reports provides suitable ammunition for advocating change
- Developing **Informal Relationships** with system conduct officials
- Having a **Plan** ready to go
- Having **Trust** from staff members
- Being the **Right Person at the Right Time** and in the **Right Place**
Pornography in Libraries

• Due to increasing availability pornography is causing increasing disturbances in libraries

• Lack of clear policies regarding its presence creates a lack of ability to act decisively by librarians

• Its existence online is not the problem, peoples utilization and observation of it in a public setting is

• Observation of pornography is not a crime, but discomfort and objections created by it in other patrons is a concern. It can also lead to objectionable behavior.
Guns and Threatened Violence

• The presence of guns in public venues like libraries increases risk to both the public and staff

• The potential for random violence in today’s society is greater than in the time of our parent’s

• Conflicts between patrons, or between patrons and librarians, potentially stand a higher risk of ending violently

• Older safety manuals may lack necessary clauses dealing with potential violence in libraries
Library Security and Cameras

- Security begins with staff awareness
- Conduct a Security Audit of the following areas:
  - Building areas (open & closed)
  - Collections (open & closed)
  - People (Users, Host Community)
  - Other Potential Security Issues
- Evaluate the findings and discuss them with staff at an open forum without admin., and then report the results to the administration
- Consider budgeting for off-duty officers, dedicated Library Security Officers, volunteers, or Student Security Cadets, as needs and budget allow
Library Security and Cameras (Cont.)

- Understand the ethical issues involved (user and staff privacy)
- Review the necessity for security personnel and/or cameras with the administration & personnel
- Survey good locations for camera placement: be practical & logical
- Create a proposal for library administration & back up with stats.
- Meet with police and the appropriate University or administration officers
- Work with officials and educate them about library ethics if need be
- Don’t allow partial failure to dissuade you from moving forward. Even new policies and awareness is progress
Coping Strategies
LIBRARY: THE MOVIE
Our video developed out of the Safety Committee and our need to address the recurring behavior problems.

Our noise and behavior problems had several years of recurrence with escalation.

The video encouraged patrons and faculty awareness, and became a required video in LS-102.

The video was cathartic for both faculty and staff, and encouraged better communication, as well as laughter.
• Utilizing opportunities like:
  • Updating a Library safety manual
  • Creating a video to reach out to patrons and students
  • Allowing students and workers to come together in a project
  • Addressing risks and concerns through better security and communication
  • And, approaching administration as well as encouraging change
• Helped us to become a better library by letting us feel safer and more in control
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