

Library Security Cameras Responses

Original Question:

My Township is in the process of setting up a security camera system (we share the same building) and they are (heavily) recommending that the Library puts in security cameras at the same time. We are a relatively small Class 2 library with a rural, conservative community. My Board is divided on having security cameras in the Library and I would love to know how other libraries have tackled this issue.

Do you have security cameras in your library or are you planning to install them? What class size library are you? How does the public react to a library with security cameras in place? If you installed them recently, did you receive any comments/concerns from patrons regarding implications of increased surveillance? Do your security cameras deter patrons from coming to your library or do they increase the feeling of safety in the building? Is your staff comfortable with security cameras monitoring them? Are there any legal issues you have run into because of having security cameras? Issues with full or partial coverage? Any other relevant information would be greatly appreciated.

Responses:

We have cameras that cover the exterior of the building. We may put one in the foyer area, but not in the library. I would just say that you should steer clear of Verkada and their contractors. They were dishonest and did not communicate well.

Julie Censke

Library Director
Colon Township Library
(269) 432-3958 office

Good afternoon,

The Negaunee Public Library is in the middle of Negaunee City Hall. We have motion-activated security cameras in both meeting rooms. They do not record sound.

The first was installed shortly after a vandalism incident. (A middle school student stuck pieces of banana to the ceiling after school, and no one present confessed to it.) They are a deterrent for bad behavior; there have been only a few instances where young people have left and not returned upon learning they were on camera. To my knowledge there have not been any complaints about the presence of the cameras.

Jessica Holman
Director
Negaunee Public Library

Hi Kelsey,

We are a small Class II library, and we have two cameras in our building. One is set up to see the cash register and the other I move around from place to place depending on where I feel the best place is for it. We didn't go through a security company. I just picked them up at Best Buy and they can be viewed either online or through an app on my phone which is perfect for when I'm on vacation. We felt it was far more cost effective to do it this way with our budget. I do pay a yearly fee in order to have 30 days of video clips saved, but I can download them at any time. If you go this route, just be sure to get ones that have good sensitivity levels.

Our patrons have never had an issue with the cameras, but we didn't make a big announcement of it. We placed a sign in the window by the front door say that the building was protected by security cameras, and that was it. We've had them for 7 years and have never had anyone complain.

Thank you,

Danielle Reid, Director
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We are a Class 4 library and we have security cameras. Several years ago, we were able to turn over critical evidence in an indecent exposure incident at the library and the person was convicted. There was no way the person could deny the incident since we had video of it happening.

Hope this helps!

Maggie

Greetings Kelsey,

We have security cameras, and we are a Class III library in a rural area. The patrons know they are in the library and it doesn't bother them. The staff are well aware of the cameras and the fact they can be seen on them. The cameras are for their safety as well as the library. We also have them on the outside of our building. They keep the local teenagers from vandalizing our building. The police have used the camera footage several times to help make their case against different people. When we installed the cameras I thought why? But now that we have the cameras I am happy that we do. The only legal things that have happened are positive for us or the properties surrounding the library.

Cheryl

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Cheryl Smith, Director

Timothy C. Hauenstein Reynolds Township Library

Hi Kelsey,

Here in Mackinaw (class 2) we have had cameras for two years. There were absolutely no comments when we put them in. We have had them strictly for monitoring with the option to record if needed. It gives us the ability to see what is happening without physically walking to check the situation out. We are just getting to the point we are considering having them always on record. We have had a few issues where it would have been good to see the "before" events to a situation.

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Tanya Procknow, Director

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Hi Kelsey,

I'm the director at the Hamburg Township Library. We are a Class 4 library and we have security cameras installed both inside and outside the building. We are in conservative Livingston County, with one of the lowest crime rates within the state. That being said, however, we have used the cameras in several ways:

1. They allow the staff to view the meeting room (which is out of sight of the front desk) to know when meetings are breaking up and the room is ready to be cleaned.
2. They allow the staff to view other areas around the building that are not visible from the front desk. This is for security of the staff.
3. We have had shenanigans go on and have used the security camera recordings to facilitate discussions with the parents.

We do not constantly monitor the cameras; we use them only when we have a need. Our system keeps recordings for approximately 3 weeks, then records over itself. The patrons do not even notice the cameras and the staff feel more secure. Please note: we do not have cameras in staff offices, breakrooms, or any restrooms (this would be illegal). If your township is installing them, I would recommend you do the same. And don't make a big deal out of it. Most people don't notice them, and the ones who are more criminally minded will look for them and usually choose to not engage in illegal activity.

Good luck!

Holly Hentz

Director
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Kelsey,

Here in Charlevoix and at two of my previous libraries we have had and do have security cameras, and I would strongly encourage them. More than anything else, they are there for your protection.

While Charlevoix is a little larger than Indian River, it is still a small and rural library and it is the fourth small and rural library I have worked at over the last 15 years. Despite being small and rural, I have dealt with countless small and not so small incidents in which the truth was in question until we turned to the camera footage. Further, I have dealt with a few instances where our cameras have helped us quickly identify unsafe situations and react before the situation gets further out of hand.

Regarding your other questions

- Public rarely notices or asks about the security cameras except for the occasional instance when someone loses their cell phone or has their bike stolen and have asked to review our camera footage (which we don't permit).
- I have never had a patron state that they didn't come to the library due to the cameras nor do patrons ever mention that they feel safer however staff members have noted this.
- Additionally, staff has never stated that they are concerned about being monitored although in all my libraries, the cameras have been in public spaces only, never in staff work or office spaces.
- I have also never experienced any legal issues although I have had multiple requests from the police to review our footage and our response is that it either needs to be a matter of someone's safety or they need a warrant.

Finally, I would say that the key to managing cameras is to have a good policy in place. I have attached ours as an example although to be honest I think ours is a bit over the top.

You are asking great questions though! Good luck!

Ryan Deery
Director, Charlevoix Public Library

Hi Kelsey-

We are a Class 5 District Library, but we were a Township library when security cameras were installed in the library building, which is separate from town hall, DPW, etc. It was an advantage to us, in terms of cost, because our small project was included as a portion of the Township's much bigger one, but we were given the opportunity to provide input regarding how many, where, etc. I guess the question you need to ask is what the cameras in the library space would be intended to do. We have cameras that are specifically placed to assist with safety and theft detection. For example, we have a camera on the bike rack, at the back delivery door, in the museum...these are areas that are not as easily monitored by staff, or that might be prone to vandalism, theft, break-ins, etc. We don't have cameras that I would classify as general surveillance. While there is a screen that displays what each camera is "seeing," it is not visually monitored by staff. That's in the server room. The cameras are on motion sensors, so if nothing is moving, no footage is being captured. The footage is saved electronically and is overwritten about every 7-14 days depending on how much footage that camera captures (obviously some cameras capture a lot more motion than others). If there is an incident, we need to go in and download the footage to be saved elsewhere within a few days or it's gone. We have only done so a handful of times over the years.

Patron privacy is a concern so you would want to assure that cameras are not capturing footage from any of your computer screens that could potentially include personal information.

Hope that's helpful.

Julie

Hi –

We have security cameras and have had them for a while without issues. We are a Class 6 library, but I have worked in small rural libraries in different states, so I can relate a bit. If the township is installing them, they cannot have access to them due to Michigan Privacy Laws. Here is a link to our policy, which may help: <https://ropl.org/1212/360---Digital-Video-Security-Cameras>

Let me know if you have any questions,

Sandy Irwin (she/her/hers)

Director

Royal Oak Public Library

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We are a class III library and put in a 16-camera system about 6 years ago. The cameras are all in the public areas of the library (not the staff areas) and the exterior entrance zones and the parking lot. We put stickers on the entrance doors that security cameras are in use, and adopted a security camera policy.

We've had no complaints from the public. The staff and I have grown to love the cameras – they've answered so many "what happened?" questions for us. As long

as they are used in accordance with the library's policy and current laws, security cameras are a very helpful tool in maintaining a safe facility.

Best wishes,
Teresa

Teresa L. Stannard, Library Director

Kelsey,

We installed cameras 2 years ago. We're a Class 5 library, in a suburban area about 15 minutes south of Detroit. The upfront cost was high, but after that it's just a few hundred a year for licenses to keep software current. A big part of why we got them is because we are in the same complex as City Hall, police and fire stations, the senior and recreation centers, almost all of which you have to drive past the library to reach. So, we have almost as many exterior cameras as we do interior, to help monitor everything.

How does the public react to a library with security cameras in place?

We haven't really had any reaction. They're not exactly hidden, but they're also not glaringly obvious, being up on the ceiling. I imagine lots of patrons don't really notice them. We did put out warning signs at the entrances to let people know that this area is under surveillance, but how many even notice those, I can't say.

If you installed them recently, did you receive any comments/concerns from patrons regarding implications of increased surveillance?

Nope, I can't recall anyone worrying about that. Certainly no more than I worried about the implications of increased surveillance. The policy I wrote restricting when and who can access them is attached.

Do your security cameras deter patrons from coming to your library or do they increase the feeling of safety in the building?

I've never heard of someone avoiding us because of the cameras. I would hope they make people feel safer, if they did not before; I would think most people feel fairly safe anyway, if only because the police station is a literal stone throw away.

Is your staff comfortable with security cameras monitoring them?

No one has told me they're not. We also don't have cameras in the staff work area, so they're not being recorded all the time.

Are there any legal issues you have run into because of having security cameras?

Not yet!

Issues with full or partial coverage?

We definitely have a lot of blind spots. Thankfully the cameras, which are the kind in plastic domes, don't make it at all clear what their field of view is, so it's a bit harder to purposefully stay out of view. Still, there are areas inside that are clearly not under observation. Tall shelves, weird angles, lots of little rooms and spaces. To cover

everything, we would need more than twice as many interior cameras, and that's just too much. We have the major areas like the circulation desk and entrances, and then more scattered throughout to cover additional angles and areas. I'd say the most important ones are the exterior camera overlooking the parking lot, so we can see everyone coming and going, and the one behind the circulation desk.

Any other relevant information would be greatly appreciated.

Put together a policy governing the cameras before you get them. Crib from mine as much as you like, but I would also recommend making sure an attorney looks over it. Our city attorney reviewed it when we amended our overall policy to include this, as he does before any policy updates go to City Council. I've never had an issue with police, but a few times patrons have asked to see the feed, and I've had to tell them no (and then I viewed footage on their behalf, if needed).

Get a couple of large flash drives as well. If there is an event that you need to pull recordings from, and give to the police, they can take up a lot of space. Having a flash drive on hand that you can just copy everything over to and leave with them is better than scrambling in the moment.

Prepare to actually *use* the cameras. Ours had just finished installation, I hadn't even been taught how to use the console for the feeds yet, and someone stole a bike from right out in front of the building. I've needed them multiple times since then, and have been glad to have them.

If you have any other questions, I'm happy to help. We used D/A Central for our project, they did good work, and have been helpful with follow up questions and needs (a few cameras needed to be moved or refocused, and we recently installed another in a big blank spot).

Donald Priest
Director
Southgate Veterans Memorial Library
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Hello, We are also a class 2 library and our board members are the ones that approved our library get cameras inside the building. We were having some issues with stealing but also the board members concern was safety for the employees. Due to our limited staff in the building, if anything were to happen it would be in our interest to make sure the incident was recorded and given to police. Many of the libraries in our cooperative have cameras as well and considering we are a public building it's not too outside the normal for cameras to be present. We have not had any patron

push back and actually it makes them feel more comfortable as cameras often deter bad or suspicious behavior.

Katherine Francis, Director

Utica Public Library

Hi Kelsey,

I don't know if our IT Director will reach out to you or not (he handles the cameras), but from my perspective I don't know how we could function without them in some instances. We are a class 6 library and have 12 locations. I believe even if we only had one location it would still be immensely important given the array of patrons served in any community.

We've used our cameras to verify so many things over the years. Here are some real examples:

- Did the doors get locked last night? Who was the last person to leave?
- Is that person trying to watch porn on the computer? (if yes, we can remotely turn off any terminal immediately)
- Did (coworker name) seriously read a book/ sleep for 8 hours at the desk?
- Has that man been following someone else's child around every storytime?
- Who stole the books from the LGBTQ display?
- Did the guy replacing the lights fall and break the bookshelf?
- Did the lady who broke her wrist really do it on our property?
- Who stole the kid's bikes?
- Did that guy go into the bathroom with a beard and come out cleanly shaved?
- Here's a yucky one – we even caught a guy trying to pleasure himself behind a bookcase once, when a librarian asked us to check the camera.

The thing to remember is that the cameras are not there so that some member of the management team can sit there and watch them all day like a guard in a window box. That's not realistic. They are used for safety and security only. (Okay, and also for when I run into the door and need to make a colleague laugh by sharing the replay). Nobody has ever complained about them, staff, or patrons. Hopefully, you would not need to login and verify anything very often, but you will have peace of mind knowing you can.

Good luck with your decision!

MarieL

Hi, Kelsey!

BPL is also a class 2 library and we do have security cameras. We actually upgraded them from analog to digital right after I began as the director here. I think they are a good idea. I find that they help prevent theft and misbehavior. Our patrons have no issues with them since most public places have security cameras now.

Kind regards,
Sarah Skinner, MLIS
Executive Director (she/her)

Hello! We've had a limited number of cameras for the last 10-15 years, but they became defunct and the system needed to be modernized for several years now. In 2023, we moved forward with a new, 4-part security system, including updating our burglary prevention and fire systems, and added a key-card system to replace our (far too many) physical key and lock doors and then updated and expanded our security cameras. I've pushed for this for years, but can definitely understand why some folks outside the field might be concerned, especially about patron privacy. Our new key card system includes tracking for when doors are armed/disarmed or locked/unlocked, and could, with one keystroke, either unlock all the doors in the building to clear it in case of fire emergency, or lock every door in the building in case of lost child or active shooter.

For background, ADL is a Class III library in a modified 1919 Carnegie building, with an addition from 1975, which tripled the space of the original library. However, the final plan resulted in a strange layout with four "half" floors (1st above the lower level, 3rd floor above the 1st on the opposite side). This means that 3 of 4 sections are physically isolated and not within eyesight of staff in other areas. This has led, over the years, to a need for remote doorbells to call for additional staff when patron traffic is unexpectedly high or misbehaved, or with us wishing we could figure out who was smoking in the lower level restroom, who put all the paper towel in the upstairs toilet and caused it to overflow (again!), or who opened the door so hard to the 3rd floor meeting room that the handle punched a hole in the wall (all true).

Frankly, unless there is an accident, injury, or misbehavior by patrons (or staff), we don't need to check the camera footage. But, the best part of public libraries is that everyone is welcome, and sometimes it's the worst part, too. Stuff happens. Kids, and sometimes adults, jump down the last few stairs, and hurt themselves. Sometimes I remote in to check the status of the street and sidewalks outside the library to see if the library can open after a winter storm. Sometimes you have to figure out the when/how/who of the carpet in the meeting room being chemically melted (fill-in janitor used toilet bowl cleaner instead of stain remover). Sometimes patrons or staff lose something (especially small technology bits these days, like bluetooth earbuds or cell phones), or someone makes a bad decision to take something that isn't theirs. Sometimes people play pranks that aren't remotely funny (<https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2020/03/09/noose-michigan-hillsdale-community-library-5002132002/> or https://www.reddit.com/r/Libraries/comments/3yq24j/weirdest_item_to_come_through_the_book_drop/?rdt=45160). Sometimes you need to figure out when the power pole came down on the library or a brownout fried a rooftop HVAC unit for the insurance claim or to realize that Consumers was the one responsible for most of

the damage (see photos), or when exactly the ceiling in the meeting room started raining (see video - yup, that's me reacting to my day going pear-shaped).

To answer a few of your other questions specifically - No one, either patron or staff, has expressed concerns to me or my department heads with concerns about the cameras. Frankly, they're so common in every other type of business now, that I'm not sure people notice them anymore. Except when something's happened and they asked for footage and were told our cameras didn't work. My staff understand that the cameras are there, and that they are being filmed, but seem more reassured that it's protecting them from potential misbehavior or accusations of misbehavior about them.

We were told by our alarm company that, due to state law, our cameras wouldn't have sound recording. They were capable, but it was disabled, for the privacy concern. Yes, the camera footage records staff and patrons. Other than one screen at our main floor desk that also shows the isolated 2nd and 3rd floor, back parking lot & drop box, and the front entry and sidewalk out of immediate line of sight from the main floor desk, for safety reasons stated above, I don't actively review footage. That screen showing them all is in our server room. I hope to never need to access the recordings. But I'm greatly reassured by knowing that, if we needed to, it would be there, for all the same reasons mentioned above. It wasn't inexpensive, especially the multi-part system we installed, but it all works together to improve safety. And it would be worth checking with your insurance company about potential risk-reduction grants and/or discounts on your property and liability insurance rates if you add cameras and/or other safety features.

Good luck, and please feel free to reach out with any questions. Truly.

Cynthia Stanczak, MLS (she/her)
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Hello Kelsey,

We have had security cameras the whole time that we have been in our current location and have made use of them several times. One time the police were able to identify a person who had been stealing our videogames. More often, if our staff has interactions with someone whom we want the rest of the staff to be aware of, we will grab a picture of the person from the security camera to show other staff so they are aware and prepared.

Holly Kirsten

Head of Information and Outreach Services
Chesterfield Township Library

Hello,

We are also a class 2 library in a small rural town. We installed security cameras in the last year mainly to deter some teenagers from some outside destructive activity. There are five cameras outside of the building. We only have one camera inside that points at the main desk area. I think the only people bothered by the camera are the staff because of the bright lights that shine into our eyes whenever it detects motion. (and maybe a little bit of self-consciousness knowing there is a camera pointed at us!) Other than that, no other problems and I don't think patrons even notice it.

Hope this helps!

Marla Dobski

Ovid Public Library

Hello Kelsey,

Our library installed security cameras for the first time this last fall.

From a standpoint of safety for patrons and staff, as well as to be covered in case of a legal incident, our Library Board decided it was a good idea to set up cameras on the premises.

We happily were able to cover most of the funding for equipment and installation through a technology grant available through our library cooperative.

The project actually came about as we had this grant money available, and needed a sizable project on which to expend the funds.

Currently, we have eight cameras set up that monitor the public spaces of the library, particularly entries, exits and the parking lot.

Our system allows for more cameras to be added to the same monitoring system as needed.

Two cover portions of the staff workroom and office space simply due to placement, and the fact that those areas are visible through windows or doors, but the goal is never to have staff members constantly under observation.

The only staff area we were keen to have under constant observation was the circulation desk, where the petty cash is kept in the fine drawer.

I would recommend reviewing what resources Library of Michigan and State of Michigan have available for camera usage to ensure the library is in accord with those laws.

While we haven't had any patrons complain or ask many questions since the computers were installed, I would still highly recommend having a Board-approved policy for the surveillance cameras in place before they are "officially" activated and recording, and not recording until the signs are appropriately posted.

If you are unable to have the library's lawyer review the policy, I would suggest borrowing or adopting a really solid one from another library, as there are many samples available online.

Hope this helps!

Mariele Busch

Library Director

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Hi!

We're a class III and have had our cameras about a year and love them. I have attached our policy. We have received no negative comments or concerns from patrons. Staff like them as well. We are currently looking at getting more to cover some blind spots.

Cierra Bakovka, MLIS

She/Her
Director
Henika District Library

Do you have security cameras in your library or are you planning to install them?

We have had security cameras since we opened our expanded building over 20 years ago.

What class size library are you?

Class V

How does the public react to a library with security cameras in place?

We get very little feedback about having security cameras.

If you installed them recently, did you receive any comments/concerns from patrons regarding implications of increased surveillance?

n/a

Do your security cameras deter patrons from coming to your library or do they increase the feeling of safety in the building?

I do not believe it deters people from coming here. Our cameras do not have sound. Our camera system will only retain 30 days of footage. If the video is not needed within 30 days, it is not needed.

Is your staff comfortable with security cameras monitoring them?

In a word, yes. We worked with staff when planning placement of cameras. Staff computers at our library have access to view the camera system, which I feel is important.

Are there any legal issues you have run into because of having security cameras?

Camera footage can be FOIA'ed in many circumstances. It is labor intensive to pull footage together, and according to the law you may charge a FOIA requestee for that staff time. The Library Privacy Act also comes into play when you release footage. We have a security cameras policy. Part of that policy facilitates releasing video to police to aid investigations, but without breaking the Library Privacy Act. It's a fine line to walk at

times, a policy is important. Insert full disclaimer: I am not a lawyer, consult your lawyer for any advice you need.

Issues with full or partial coverage?

I would never attempt to cover the entire building, it's just not possible for us. We monitor all the low-hanging fruit of spaces that we have experienced problems in.

Any other relevant information would be greatly appreciated.

Our camera system has solved many more problems than it has created. It has helped resolve situations involving property damage, theft, personal injuries, unruly patrons, and others. If you install a limited number of cameras because of privacy concerns in your community, just having good images of people entering / leaving your building can be extremely valuable to identify people who cause problems off camera. If you start with a smaller system, leave room for expansion.

Bruce MacDonald

Head of Technology / Assistant Director

[Peter White Public Library](#)

Hi Kelsey,

1. I have 22 security cameras, and I'm a mid-sized class III, about 10k SQft.
2. The rare comments we do get is more/less people feel OK/safe that they're here.
3. I don't think the cameras have effected anyone negatively from coming to the library.
4. Staff like the cameras because of the occasional incidents we've had with teens and the irate patron, they feel a lot safer and mention it on passing occasionally.
5. My staff don't monitor the cameras. They ask somewhat frequently to check on something that happened and we've been able to discover/double check things with having them available.
6. The only coverage we don't have is in the stacks which would be a lot more cameras. But all the main angles, rooms, walkways, and sides of exterior buildings are covered.

There are a million types and brands. You can go very cheap for installation, but then pay for it with poor reliability, depends on how much tech wants to fiddle with things. We got an AXIS system (with keyless door entry integration that's amazing to have), that's backed up on our server instead of a separate piece of expensive hardware, which has reduced the cost significantly. Their backend playback/recording is amazing though.

Christian Dunham | Director
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Hi Kelsey,

Hope things are going well in Indian River! Here are some answers to your questions:

Do you have security cameras in your library or are you planning to install them? [Yes, we have security cameras.](#)

What class size library are you? [Class 5](#)

How does the public react to a library with security cameras in place? [We have not had any complaints or comments on it either way. I think most people are used to security cameras and see them as a good thing. We have had a couple of patrons say, I returned my books, check the security cameras! As if we can see the patron and the book titles which we cannot.](#)

If you installed them recently, did you receive any comments/concerns from patrons regarding implications of increased surveillance? [No](#)

Do your security cameras deter patrons from coming to your library or do they increase the feeling of safety in the building? [Increase the feeling of safety.](#)

Is your staff comfortable with security cameras monitoring them? [The staff is not being monitored. We only have two cameras \(our building is all on one floor\) and they point toward the outside doors to monitor those coming into the library, not the staff working.](#)

Are there any legal issues you have run into because of having security cameras? Issues with full or partial coverage? [To remain in compliance with the Library Privacy Act, cameras cannot be in view of public computers or staff computers where patron records can be seen. I recommend contacting Claire Membiela at the Library of Michigan, your attorney, and/or your city officials to be sure you are in compliance with federal, state, and local laws/ordinances.](#)

Any other relevant information would be greatly appreciated. [Cameras were installed in all city buildings several years ago as a safety measure. I am able to monitor what the cameras see from my computer in my office. It's a live feed. However, I rarely login in and look at it because frankly I have no reason to. The recordings are mainly for law enforcement to review if needed. Other libraries may use the information differently.](#)

Hope that helps!
Patty

Patty Braden, Director
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Hi Kelsey,

It sounds like our library/community is very similar to yours. We are a class size 3 and also in a rural, conservative area.

We just put in security cameras last year. There were a few comments the first week or so, along the lines of "Oh" or "What do you need those for?" So some people were a little surprised; but really, that blew over quite quickly and no one pays them much attention anymore. As staff we sometimes joke about ourselves getting caught on camera doing something "silly" because we often forget they're there.

No legal issues. Our big concern and focus is on liability and safety for all. And no one is going to argue that they don't want to be safe. Plus, cameras are also a great witness to any (legal) claims being made.

If you do get cameras, you'll want to make sure you have a good policy in place - one that lays everything out so the patrons know what the cameras are used, and not used, for and who has access to the records. Once patrons understand that we aren't actively watching them and what they're doing in the library, and that recordings aren't shared - unless by law, no one's really paying attention to them. If they even paid attention in the first place. Most pry don't even realize we have them.

Hope this helps!

Lisa Vande Bunte
Director
616-896-8170

Hi Kelsey,

Our Board just approved the purchase of security cameras, but they haven't been installed yet. We are a small class IV library in our own building. The first company we spoke with submitted a quote for 10-12 cameras (both interior and exterior), and a software suite with all the bells and whistles. The Board felt that was too much (in terms of cameras and cost), and ended up going with a smaller company that we also use for our technology needs. The Board was looking at cameras from a safety standpoint, not to deter theft and things like that, and since we have a pretty open floor plan, we went with 5 cameras to cover our main entrance and each emergency exit. The company we went with also offers a software package that allows us to search footage, but it's pretty basic.

Each company we spoke with toured the building, and pointed out where they thought we needed a camera. The only guidance we gave was for the camera that would capture the entrance and circ desk; we asked that the camera be positioned in a way that the patrons' backs are to the camera. That way we eliminate the risk of identifying patrons and the items they are checking out -- figuring that the footage may need to be turned over to law enforcement or other agencies outside the library -- and the cameras would not capture the staff circulation computer screens -- again, to eliminate the possibility of unrelated patron records being turned over to outside groups.

They haven't had to work with them yet, but our staff hasn't reacted negatively in our discussions so far. I think the fact that our project is fairly limited helps, and in our discussions we were clear that the purpose wasn't to catch staff (or patrons) breaking the rules, it was a safety precaution so in case something goes wrong, we have a record of who has entered or left the building.

I hope this helps, and if you have any further questions, don't hesitate to reach out.

Brett

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