**Security of Unstaffed Library Areas**

**Compiled Responses from Michlib-L**

We are moving to location that will have those security issues and unstaffed

areas and we decided to install security cameras and monitors. We will keep

the door unlocked and just monitor through security cameras.

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We have security cameras throughout our meeting room areas. Staff can

monitor activity from any staff computer and use the cameras when we are

closing the library.  One staff member can watch the other doing rounds.

--

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Hi Jessica,

We have a few areas like the ones you noted in your email – and I will do my best to sum up what we have done to help with security.

First, we keep all exits other than our front door locked.  All patrons enter and leave through the same set of doors.

We have keypad locks on all our interior doors (to access of computer lab, meeting rooms, staff areas, etc.) so that it is easy for staff to gain entry but members of the public cannot open doors we have closed.  This is particularly helpful in our Reference Room.  That room is out of the view of our desk area and has a door that leads directly into our back workroom.  Having access for staff is very helpful, and knowing the public cannot stroll through that door is very reassuring. 

For the most part, we unlock the doors to our computer lab and meeting rooms in the morning and leave them unlocked.  The keypad lock on those doors has a deadbolt we can open or close with the code.  Our Local History Room is the located the farthest from our desk.  That room has also had issues with vandalism.   We still unlock the door in the mornings, but now we keep it closed with a sign asking patrons to check at the desk.  They aren’t actually restricted from using the room (and our emergency exit is in the back of the room so we probably can’t lock the door during open hours anyway) but the sign and closed door have taken care of the issues (for now!)

Finally, we are going to be installing security cameras this year in conjunction with our interior redesign.  One big motivator for the cameras was a new hallway that will be created with this project.  The hallway will be used to access our handicapped restrooms and a quiet study room and will have no visibility from the desk.  The quiet study room will remain locked (due to its location) unless requested for use. 

Hope that helps give you some ideas! 

Megan

Megan Buck

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During my time here, it has always been that way. We often get requests to have

access through the courtyard door - especially in the summer. We use either the

excuse of safety or the fact our people counter is only located on the front door to

help explain why we limit access. Most people are understanding, but there is

always going to be someone who wants something "special"! :)

One thing that helps us is the fact we have one parking area - so we don't have

doors that appear to be the most logical "front door" for a parking area. :)

Megan

Jessica,

Our Children's Area is in the Lower Level (read basement). Under a previous

director, the floor was frequently closed during the school day with a sign

in front of the staircase that told patrons to ask at the desk if they would

like to use it. Many people found it off-putting so I have made it a

priority to change things. Over the last 3 years, we have transitioned to

having it staffed 100% of the time the library is open. It took some

shuffling of desk time and some mental transitioning of the staff who

thought it a waste of time to sit at the desk when there may be no one down

there. Over time, the use during the school day of families with preschool

age or homeschool children has drastically increased. The staff has gotten

used to loading a cart with tasks to take with them. I'm not sure if this

helps your specific problem.

Good luck to you. The hardest for me was changing the staff mindset. We

always had had enough staff here to staff it, but they thought they should

be getting things done at their desks since there frequently was no one

there. Nowadays, almost anything they need to do can be done from any

computer with Internet access and Office. It has really helped the overall

impression of the library to not have that sign sitting out there stating

that the Children's Room is closed.

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Hi Jessica,

We have two doors at the back of out building. One leads in to our main

lobby and is open during all library hours. The other door is for the

conference room and the desk can not see who enters. We keep that door

closed unless there is a program in the conference room. People seem to

understand. No one has complained.

Most of our library is not close enough to the circ desk for us to watch. We

have not had a lot of trouble but we are getting security cameras in those

areas. It feels like teens or preteens are abusing the spaces lately. They

lay on top of one another in the chairs and love seats, go in to the

bathroom together (boy and girl in same bath room). Its time to get the

security lights. We have a strong patron behavior policy and don't put up

with anything. If we have told a group of kids to settle down then next time

they are acting out we tell them to leave. I feel that my staff has plenty

to do without having to babysit.

Barbara

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Hi, Jessica -

We have a basement area that can be made accessible to the public for

special programs. This is also the area utilized for Friends of the Library

book sales. We use the area at least once a month for patron activities,

but keep the patron access door locked when a program is not in progress.

Hope E. Nobel, M.S.L.S.

Director

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Hi Jessica,

In Dexter, we have an unsupervised lower level.  Our meeting rooms are

there and we also have rotating art exhibits in the area.  We have a

CCTV security camera system that monitors the area.  This records as

well as displays live pictures to a monitor.  Because of the use

(library programs, outside groups meeting and casual patrons viewing the

art) it is always accessible.  The camera system has been good to help

monitor behavior.  Thankfully, most of the behavior is just juvenile

antics, but it helps the staff know when that stuff is going on.  Let me

know if you have any other questions.  I'd be happy to go into more detail.

Paul

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Hi Jessica,

Unfortunately, we don't have a separate entrance to the meeting rooms.

We had difficulty finding a site that the community liked. While the one

we ended up with is great, it presented some challenges.  We have three

floors and the meeting room is on the lower level, facing out to a park

with very limited parking.  It would be nice to have this as an

entrance, but the cost of staffing is prohibitive and because of

everyday theft, we can't have an unsupervised entrance, so it is just an

emergency exit.

One of the things we run up against with the security cameras is the

Michigan Library Privacy Act and interactions with the sheriff's

department.  One day, a deputy stopped by to ask if we had exterior

cameras because a woman who lives across the street left her walker

outside and it was stolen.  We put up some dummy camera domes by the DVD

area to deter theft and the deputies are always surprised that those

aren't live.  The more surveillance you have, the more requests you will

get for footage and the police need to have a warrant to access that data.

Knock on wood...we have had very little vandalism.  Only two or three

incidents in nine years and two of those were just graffiti on the

retaining wall that faces the railroad tracks, out of view of

passersby.  But our area isn't immune to issues.  Chelsea District

Library recently had an indecent exposure incident and they produced

footage that assisted in a conviction.  My feeling is, for every person

that feels uncomfortable with unsupervised areas, there is probably

someone who feels uncomfortable being watched everywhere they go, so you

can go too far in both directions.

Keep me posted on your progress from time to time.  We may be thinking

about replacing our system in the next few years and I'll be interested

in hearing about the decisions you make.  I have a Board member who,

given his preference, would install cameras in every study room, every

reading area and around the perimeter of the entire building.  It's hard

finding that balance that suits everyone,

Thanks,

Paul

Hi Jessica:

We have a tech area and conference room that isn't staffed- unless a staff

member is providing tech help. There is an outside door out of the conference

room- this is kept locked but can be used as an emergency exit. We did have a

bell on it but it no longer works.

We don't have any other added security although we can hear if someone is

being loud or crazy in either room- there are double doors into this space,

the staff just cannot see the room from the circulation desk at all and even

from the ramp, one can only see a small portion of the room.

The space is mostly an adult area as our computers, magazines and local

history are in the space. That said, we did found a couple of our school

yearbooks cut up and we do have issues with people ripping out parts of

newspapers and magazines. We have placed signs up there asking everyone to be

respectful of library material and so far it has helped.

Good luck!

Kerry Fountain, Director

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We were able to do this project last year, and the manufacturer promoted it as a feel good story.

In practice, some of the doors mentioned are still not working right, and there is a camera out right now with a repair order in. But mostly has worked well and been popular with staff. Writing from my alumni account where I read lists; normally [Mary.Carleton@farmlib.org](mailto:Mary.Carleton@farmlib.org)  
  
<https://securitytoday.com/Articles/2018/03/01/Booking-an-Upgrade.aspx?Page=1>

Hello Jessica,

We have some security cameras in the areas that are not in our line of sight   We also have a keypad entry to our workroom. We do have signs that we have security cameras in use.

I think it all helps.

Thanks.

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