



Laurie Brown of the Seattle Public Library involved her entire staff to assess the library's security concerns and implement solutions, such as a rules-of-conduct code for patrons.

Ensure Safety and Security in the Law Library

Employee Awareness, Early Interventions are Critical Safety Components

by Amy Hale-Janeke

There are times, when dealing with irate patrons, that I wish I had a stun gun with my library's logo neatly embossed on the side stashed in the drawer at the front reference desk. I have also assumed that if my library had a video camera recording system, my workplace would be safer and I wouldn't need to worry about workplace violence. However, according to the 2003 AALL Annual Meeting program

"Secure Connections: Safety and Security in the Law Library," video cameras and stun guns aren't going to make the workplace safer.

George Pike, director and assistant professor of law at the University of Pittsburgh's Barco Law Library, coordinated and moderated this program, acknowledging that there is no one answer to the problem of library security. But Pike put together a knowledgeable panel of experts that discussed various security solutions and how to implement them.

Speaker John J. Posey, a retired police officer and owner of Corporate Security Services (<http://www.corpsecure.com>), a security consulting firm in the Seattle area, explained that workplaces are more dangerous now than in the past. Technology has become inexpensive and accessible to those who wish to harm others. People are feeling more disconnected from others and thus don't mind hurting those around them, he said. In an effort to protect their employees and their property, institutions have tried three traditional quick fixes: hardware such as video cameras, security personnel and employee emergency handbooks — but "these don't work," Posey said.

"Video systems are useless," Posey continued, "because no one watches them after the first week." Emergency handbooks are ineffective because no one is going to stop and look at a three-ring binder when emergencies arise. And firms with security personnel in place can have a false sense of safety, presuming that security is someone else's responsibility.

"Where the rubber meets the road, the security of the organization will depend on the employees," Posey said.

Posey pointed out that the best early warning and detection of problems is employee awareness — what he referred to as the "radar screen." He explained that

awareness is developed through training and drilling employees on how to handle emergencies. "When something happens, employees will do something, and if they haven't been trained otherwise, the employer probably won't like the outcome," Posey said.

Laurie Brown of the Seattle Public Library spoke about how her workplace handles security issues. "Staff has a right to work in a safe place and it is important to 'own' your environment," Brown said.

When her library began seriously evaluating its security issues, they first hired an independent consultant (not a sales representative from a security hardware firm) to conduct a study and create a report. Brown then included the whole library in assessing its security concerns. She circulated the results of the report to all employees and then conferred with them about possible solutions. One suggestion to come out of the report is a rules-of-conduct code for patron behavior. Brown provided a copy of the guidelines and said employee consensus on the rules was important. "We use rules of conduct as tools that allow staff to take care of problems early," Brown said. The report also prompted Brown to add a security manager and a security staff of six for the library.

In addition, Brown addressed problems of perception of library security. The library staff often deals with the homeless and mentally ill patrons who do not conform to the rules of the library and such patrons are usually asked to leave either for the day or for a longer period of time. Last year her library asked 308 people to leave the library for limited amounts of time. This can cause some unpleasant public relations consequences and accusations of targeting underprivileged patrons if not handled properly. "Some people perceive [the library] as being unfair to homeless and mentally ill people, but partnering with stakeholders, such as employees and media personnel, can temper media responses," Brown added.

An outsider's perspective on the vulnerability of libraries certainly held my attention. With an outside expert like Posey on the panel, this program was a refreshing change from most programs that feature only law librarians. The program also seamlessly meshed the

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theoretical and practical aspects of security with Posey's discussion of the problems of organizational security and solutions followed by Brown's examination of how those solutions have worked in her library environment.

It would have been helpful for attendees to receive a bibliography either at the program or in the AALL handout book. When I asked Posey after the presentation which books he would recommend for further reading on the topic, he suggested *The Gift of Fear: Survival Signals That Protect Us from*

Violence, by Gavin De Becker, a security consultant to Hollywood celebrities.

The program did include two good handouts from the Seattle Public Library: "Guidelines for Excluding Individuals from the Seattle Public Library" and "Operations Services Division Update on Maintaining Safety in the Seattle Public Library — Effective Rules of Conduct Enforcement May 2002." The program also featured a printout of Posey's presentation which was useful for note taking.

Overall, this was an insightful program that was worth my time and attention. I left with a resolution to use the speakers' suggestions to make my workplace safer and some documents to help me figure out where to start.

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