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Keeping Students Safe: Using Benchmarking to Enhance Library Security

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Keeping Students Safe: Using Benchmarking to Enhance Library Security
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Why tackle security?
Over the past decade we’ve seen fewer stacks, more learning spaces, more study rooms, and more tenants and visitors to manage.

We’ve also observed a rising number of incidents in libraries, and heard students telling us our building is “creepy.” It’s not just about protecting collections, it’s about protecting people. Top concerns include theft, inappropriate behavior, and harassment using public computers.

Objectives
- Compare security policies and strategies with peers
- Analyze how large academic libraries in rural settings address security concerns
- Gather ideas on how to secure students, employees, and collections
- Create a list of recommendations to enhance and strengthen security efforts

Method
- Identified 18 academic libraries, all large public institutions in college towns
- Investigated libraries’ approaches to security and patron safety via websites; gathered policies
- Requested phone interview with primary security contacts
- Asked 12 questions, each interview approx. 30 minutes

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concerns</th>
<th>Staffing</th>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Security Cameras</td>
<td>Create a security blog for employees</td>
<td>Mandatory training for all new security staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vandalism</td>
<td>Library Staff &amp; Security Officers</td>
<td>Entry Points &amp; Exit Points</td>
<td>Discontinue walkie talkies and invest in radios for employees required to clear building during evacuations</td>
<td>Provide contract security with basic library info</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Shooter</td>
<td>No one</td>
<td>Security Gates</td>
<td>Use the Student Code of Conduct to create behavior guidelines for Libraries</td>
<td>Review &amp; update emergency procedures manual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassment</td>
<td>Campus Police</td>
<td>Card Readers</td>
<td>Write a Library Visitor Policy</td>
<td>All employees complete mandatory training in emergency procedures, conflict resolution, de-escalation, and situational awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Violence</td>
<td></td>
<td>Security Cameras throughout the building</td>
<td></td>
<td>Optional training offered in CPR and first aid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shout out to Public Services Council members who worked on this project:
Teri Alexander, Christopher Chapman, Fredda Owens, Micki Reid, Chris Vinson, Tara Weekes