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Library Collections Conservation Discussion Group 2003: Library Security

ABSTRACT

The Library Collections Conservation Discussion Group (LCCDG) focused on issues relating to the much-requested topic of library security. Presentations and discussion touched on day-to-day security of library collections as well as security during periods of construction; the use of a radio frequency identification (RFID) system at the University of Connecticut; and the four-level security system used at the Library of Congress.

The Library Collections Conservation Discussion Group (LCCDG) focused on issues relating to the much-requested topic of library security. Several people offered prepared presentations and discussion was lively throughout the session.

The discussion began with a brief summary of a survey reported in the Association of Research Libraries' SPEC Kit on management of library security. Common challenges identified by libraries included unsupervised areas, unsecured doors, too wide a distribution of keys and access cards, unaffiliated users, poor cooperation from campus security, and clearing buildings during emergencies and at closing.

Successful elements of security programs identified by respondents included surveillance and videotaping at entrances and exits, continuous police patrols, panic devices at staff desks, two-way radios for staff, developing

good working relationships with campus security, and working with the campus legal counsel.

Ethel Hellman, collections conservator for Widener Library at Harvard University, shared information gleaned from an interview with security personnel regarding collections security. At Widener Library attention is focused on two areas: preventing damage and deterring theft. Routine procedures for damage prevention included leak protection on all sinks (required by code) in the stacks and on all pipes that supply the sinks: "intelligent" cable alarms to pinpoint the location of any leak, limited outflow at each sink, and no hose connections at any sink.

Security during periods of construction includes relocating items during the construction period, sealing off the construction area, and constant monitoring of the stack areas by security personnel.

Routine procedures to deter theft include card access to the library building and also to all stack areas. The access cards activate pop-up photos at the guard desk and immediate ID validation. All bags are checked at all exits. Camera surveillance, motion-activated lighting in the stacks, motion detectors, alarms, and emergency phones in the stacks are also employed. Security personnel continuously patrol the stack areas. All library items are provided with security strips and are edge stamped. The discovery of theft activates crime scene procedures: staff members are instructed to refrain from touching or moving anything and to immediately report the situation to security personnel. Materials particularly vulnerable to damage and/or to theft are used in secure supervised reading rooms, where all ducts are grated and motion detectors, alarms, and glass-break monitors are all in place.

Carol Dyal, library conservator at the University of Connecticut, Storrs, offered information on the radio frequency identification (RFID) system at Babbidge Library. In a collection that has few users from outside the institution, her library chose a system that incorporated security and inventory control. This system allows information capture without opening a book, permits self-checkout,

and triggers a surveillance camera when an uncharged book is taken through an exit, tagging the photograph with the bar code number of the uncharged book. On the inventory control side, the system permits shelf reading with a wand. Location of the radio chip in/on individual volumes generated much discussion among group participants.

A customer service representative from a major security system vendor described a number of security devices sold by her company and responded, in relatively good humor, to questions, observations, and suggestions from the members of the group.

Debra McKern, chief of the Binding and Collections Care Division, Library of Congress (LC), described the sorting system that is used in implementing the security plan at LC. Items are sorted into four value levels and the level of security is tailored to the value of the materials being secured. LC also divides the concept of collection security into four subgroups: physical security, inventory management, preservation, and computer security. Materials are also subdivided into five "life cycle" stages: in process, in storage, in use, in transit, and on exhibit—with security measures tailored to the needs of the materials at each stage of the life cycle. Debra also discussed LC's stamping, marking, and labeling practices and the preservation division's goal of reducing the number and variety of owner marks an item might acquire as it proceeds through its life cycle. One item of particular interest was a laser engraver that, from a scanned bar code, generates an engraved date of receipt, source of acquisition, and bar code onto the hub of a CD in eye-legible characters. Debra also described the design and use of secure trucks for transporting items from department to department.

Topics generated during group discussion touched on a number of areas, including:

- The use of a micro-dot embossing tool to place an identifying mark on an item (paper, plastic, or metal).
- Use of a commercially available plastic tube designed to enable quick and proper placement of CD tattle tape patches.
- Actinic ink for marking library items. Actinic ink, which is a pure carbon suspension, contains no solvents and therefore does not bleed through. Negative experience has been that it requires an intricate application process, a long drying time, and a more involved clean-up procedure than a rubber stamp and office stamp pad.
- Solutions for securing accompanying materials. One suggestion is to construct a pocket for the materials. Another suggestion is to construct an enclosure to house the main item and accompanying item(s). In both cases there is a concern about charging the accompanying material when the main item is charged to a patron. One participant described the "control Z stop" command in the cataloging system in her library that adds to the catalog record an instruction that will not permit the

completion of the charge of a multi-part item until all parts of the item are charged. Another solution for securing accompanying materials is separating the items, with the accompanying material shelved separately from the main item in a designated location in the library.

The 2003 session of LCCDG marked the end of the co-chairship of Meg Brown and Ethel Hellman. Beth Doyle, Collections Conservator, Duke University Libraries, and Heather Caldwell-Kaufman, Preservation Services Librarian/Collections Conservator, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, were warmly welcomed as the new co-chairs of the discussion group.

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