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### Library Security: Perceptions of Preparedness

Abby Adams

University at Albany, State University of New York, aadams5@albany.edu

Karen E. Kiorpes

University at Albany, State University of New York, kkiorpes@albany.edu

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## Library Security: Perceptions of Preparedness

Abigail Adams and Karen E. Kiorpes

### Abstract

This article details the results of two parallel surveys sent to the heads of campus security and the libraries at 54 schools within the SUNY system. We undertook this study to determine the extent of collaboration between these groups and to learn where library and security staff perceptions of safety and preparedness differ. The findings indicated that most campuses have emergency response plans in place for the possibility of a high-impact violent event or a human-caused emergency.

Libraries are less likely to have dedicated emergency plans and report an inconsistent mix of physical security measures and staff safety trainings. Overall, both campus security respondents and library staff members feel safe at work and reasonably prepared for a human-caused emergency. Additionally, campus security consistently rated the libraries as safer and more prepared than the librarians rated themselves, and a gap exists in perceptions of the frequency and usefulness of collaborations between the two. Security consistently answered that they are closely involved with library trainings and safety measures, while the librarians' responses ranged from no contact with security to praise for existing collaborations and a desire for more.

### Introduction & Literature Review

While American college campuses are generally safer than many other places we frequent in daily life with respect to violent crimes, security remains a concern (Raffensberger 2010, 9; Sanders 2012, 200; Pearson 2014, 378). Libraries on campuses, especially at public institutions, are particularly at risk as they may allow unrestricted access during long hours of operation. Additionally, mass shootings in the United States have grown more common in the last twenty years (Center for Homeland Defense and Security 2016, 7) and regular media discussions around issues such as gun control and terrorism can heighten concern. College security divisions routinely work to both prevent and prepare for high impact, violent events on campus. However, should something like an active shooter incident occur in a campus library, the staff members become immediate responders whether they have prepared for that role or not. While campus security trains for these possibilities, library staff are not always aware of their plans or of best

practices. With these considerations in mind, we created and distributed two parallel surveys, one directed to the heads of libraries and the other sent to the heads of campus security at the State University of New York (SUNY) schools (See Appendices 1 and 2). All participants were informed of the nature of the study and the distribution mechanism. We hoped to learn whether campus security and library directors generally agree in their assessments of library preparedness and safety regarding the possibility of a human-caused emergency. Our findings show that they do not.

Instead, we discovered a gap in perceptions of relative safety and feelings of readiness between library and campus security respondents. The heads of security were more likely to consider both the campuses and libraries mostly or entirely safe, and to regard their divisions as well prepared for a high impact, human-caused emergency. This is not especially surprising since their job consists of such preparation, and they have detailed knowledge of their campuses' emergency plans per their survey answers. Library deans and directors were somewhat less confident in both their levels of security and preparedness. This indicates to us that library staff members are either less aware of emergency plans or less confident in their effectiveness. While many libraries prepare for natural disasters such as floods and fires, we suspected some may have less planning or training regarding human-caused emergencies. The survey answers support that hypothesis.

Another less dramatic gap existed in how much each division felt they interacted with the other. Security respondents were more likely than librarians to indicate that they had regular contact or preparedness trainings with library staff. Based on our sample, library staff would benefit from greater transparency and closer collaboration with campus security officers. While a stronger relationship might not bring significant changes in practice, it would likely help library staff members feel both safer and more prepared to handle a human-caused emergency at work. Human-caused emergencies, also sometimes called human-made emergencies or human-caused disasters, are events where people deliberately act in ways that cause potential property destruction and/or violence. These events can be planned in advance or the result of more spontaneous events such as civil demonstrations that grow out of control (Purdue University 2019). While active shootings may command more attention than other events in this category, human-caused emergencies that could threaten a campus go beyond the possibility of a lone gunman. Many of the SUNY campuses clearly advertise their active shooter trainings and preparations, but we were interested in their preparedness plans for other types of disruptive events as well.

Over the last few decades, both academic and public libraries have expanded from buildings where books and other materials are shelved and borrowed by patrons to more dynamic, multidimensional resources. Library security researcher Charles Reed (2008) observed the following:

“No longer are libraries simply quiet places to study and to read. They have become twenty-four hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week, multimedia learning environments complete with coffee bars, refreshment stands, art galleries, meeting and conference facilities, and a virtual cornucopia of quiet rooms, lounge areas, and reading nooks designed not only to provide access to learning but to foster it as well.” (60).

Library security has consequently extended its reach to consider a broader range of risks associated with unrestricted access to various settings. Staff must balance accessibility in every sense of the word with physical security for both the workers and patrons in the buildings. This can create points of conflict in areas such as entrances to the building, private studying nooks, access to various areas of the library, and public gathering places that attract large groups of students seeking to collaborate or simply relax. Pearson (2014) notes that “even with all of the attention devoted to spatial design, services designed to cater to a broad spectrum of student needs, and expanded library hours of operation, academic libraries must provide safe environments for learning and socializing” (377). The most common crime in libraries is theft, particularly of personal belongings left unattended (Sanders 2012, 207). Vandalism and difficult patrons account for frequent problems that library staff must also address. Assessing each space to gauge vulnerabilities and implement mitigation measures is critical to managing the facility and protecting the life and safety of building occupants. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) provides directives for structuring the building and physically arranging resources in a way that enhances security. The International CPTED Association (ICA) defines CPTED as “a multi-disciplinary approach of crime prevention that uses urban and architectural design and the management of built and natural environments” (ICA 2021). These directives include clear sight lines to the degree possible both inside and outside the building, sufficient lighting throughout the building, and minimized concealed spaces or isolated routes (Henrich and Stoddart 2016). Accordingly, we addressed this in the survey and asked about which elements of CPTED libraries had adopted.

Other elements of physical security include surveillance cameras, security alarms, and metal detectors. Kahn published a useful volume with multiple checklists for evaluating space,

collections and equipment, and staff and patron safety (Kahn 2008). Physical security measures can discourage criminal activity or facilitate a faster, more effective response to a violent or criminal incident. The combination of physical security and staff training allows the greatest measure of safety for library staff and patrons without impeding daily function in the library.

In addition to these static measures, library staff can implement preventive measures and increase the safety of their buildings with physical security patrols and outreach to community members (Raffensperger 2010, 77). Dedicated security guards provide an additional measure of authority, but even staff walkthroughs can serve as a deterrent to crime and make patrons feel safe (Pearson 2014, 378). A single, controlled entrance to the building (Kahn 2008, 21) or to certain areas via swipe cards or a similar mechanism can help as well. However, people can easily circumvent swipe card systems by propping doors open or getting someone else to hold the door for them. Staff training ensures that no one accidentally compromises building security out of a misplaced sense of politeness.

Furthermore, communication devices and procedures for reporting are a vital part of security and first response in emergency situations. Rapid mass communication installations such as building intercoms or pre-established mass texting systems allow immediate transmission of information to as many people as possible (Pearson 2014, 378). While these systems are less likely to deter criminal activity or prevent a human-caused emergency, they give library staff a way to disperse information or give directions during a high impact event. Other technologies such as dedicated phones that ring directly to campus security or panic buttons allow patrons and/or staff to rapidly alert an authority to a problem (Pearson 378).

However, physical security measures alone will not be sufficient if the worst should happen. According to a 2019 FBI report, of 277 active shooter events between 2000 and 2018, 57 occurred at an educational setting with 15 at institutes of higher learning. In total, there were 171 deaths and 220 wounded (U.S. Department of Justice, FBI 2019). These are truly frightening statistics; they are sadly marked by the previous year's events at Stoneman Douglas High School (Parkland, Florida, February 2018) and Santa Fe High School (Santa Fe, California, May 2018), and a shooting that took place the following year at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (Charlotte, North Carolina, April 2019). First responders and law enforcement have also noted the vulnerability of educational environments. As reported in the Center for Homeland Defense and Security (2016) *Annual Report*:

“Between 2000 and 2013, the rate of active shooter events rose from 6.4 to 16.4 incidents per year—leading to an overall average of 11.4 per year. If one considers that 70 percent

of the incidents occurred in either commerce, business, or educational venues, it illustrates the challenge facing first responders. These types of locations are considered soft targets, and active shooter incidents exploit the extreme vulnerability of venues where members of the community traditionally feel safe” (7).

While the frequency of mass shootings at schools and colleges remains low, their impact is high, far-reaching, and pervasive. College campuses and libraries must take steps to prepare for these unlikely but devastating events. Although active shooters are the most obvious concern, other possible events can disrupt the library as well. If a human-caused emergency begins in or spills over into the campus library, library staff will be on the metaphorical front lines. Training and preparation can make a significant difference in how safe the staff feel and in the appropriateness of their responses.

Therefore, our survey asked both library and campus security respondents about active shooter training, and if response to this type of high-impact event is part of their emergency plans. A staff that has training and/or knows how to react in various situations increases the safety of both staff and patrons (Pearson 2014, 378). Active shooter or similar training can increase the likelihood of containing an emergency with the proper response. While some physical measures can largely be put in place and then left alone, staff preparedness requires continuous updates and reminders. Staff turnover, new policies, changes in best practices, and emerging new threats require regular training of various types. In recent years, active shooter training for staff and students on most campuses in the U.S. included in-person and online programs such as ALICE (ALICE Training 2020) and the Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events (CRASE) course (ALERRT 2019), often delivered through campus security or police.

The importance of training and preparation for immediate responders, those on site before first responders or paramedics arrive, was reported by doctors in Connecticut following the Sandy Hook shooting (Sandy Hook, Connecticut, December 2012). While their report was focused on controlling blood loss, they recommended developing specific educational content for immediate responders. They suggested that these programs cover both actions to ensure personal safety as well as appropriate interactions with law enforcement, EMS/fire/rescue, and medical personnel (Jacobs 2015). By extension, if a mass shooting were to occur in the library at an institution of higher learning, library staff will need appropriate training to save lives, limit injuries, and prevent loss of life.

Many excellent resources examine library security assessments and active shooter event mitigation planning focused on protecting library patrons. LaBanc and Hemphill provide one of

the most comprehensive texts for managing gun violence on campus, which, by extension, can be adopted by libraries specifically to reduce the probability and impact of a mass shooting (2015). Harris and DiMarco provide a case study of lockdown protocols and procedures at Mansfield University of Pennsylvania, stressing the importance of planning and especially communication (2010).

Written emergency plans addressing both staff training and the specifics of how to respond during a human-caused emergency can be immensely helpful in ensuring that library staff members feel adequately prepared. Such plans generally consist of preventative measures, a communication strategy, actions for first response, assignment of roles and responsibilities, lists of priorities and procedures for recovery, and contact information for resources to assist with successful rehabilitation (Dorge and Jones 1999; NEDCC 2020). An emergency plan should address those events that are most likely to occur and those that would have the highest impact on operations. Ideally, that plan is developed with participation across the libraries in coordination with the larger organization and first responders (Dorge and Jones 1999, 101). This is where collaboration with campus security would be especially beneficial for the library.

While many resources exist to assist librarians with developing building security and response plans for human-caused emergencies, not all libraries have fully made use of this information. Our research gathered data on whether SUNY libraries have an emergency plan, and if so, if it includes procedures for human-caused emergencies such as an active shooter incident. We also asked about the degree to which campus security participated in plan development, and the degree to which library staff and campus security personnel both feel safe and are prepared for potential emergencies during the average workday. While research and resources exist for both campus security and academic library security, we did not find any significant sources that looked directly at the overlap of the two. Our findings indicate that the leaders of these important elements of campus life do not communicate as often or effectively as they could. This can leave library staff feeling more vulnerable and less safe despite the efforts of campus security to create a safer environment for faculty, staff, and students.

## Survey Design

We began creating the surveys after reviewing the literature above regarding campus safety, security in both public and academic libraries, and grey literature pertaining to human-caused emergencies. We sought to acquire information about libraries' written emergency plans, physical security measures, security training, collaboration between libraries and campus security personnel, and ultimately perceptions of safety in the library. During the process, we solicited

suggestions and feedback from other library staff, the head of Campus Security at our university, and the Emergency Management Coordinator. We chose to limit the surveys to the heads of security and the library or their designated representatives for a few reasons. First, they are the most likely to have knowledge of and access to detailed plans regarding safety and security. They are also the ones who ultimately plan or approve of any trainings, cooperative activities, or changes to existing safety plans. While other staff may have different experiences and perceptions, they do not make final decisions regarding plans, protocols, or environmental considerations.

While the surveys sent to the campus security and library departments were not identical, they were very similar. We asked specific questions particular to each division, as well as several comparable or identical questions to both. The surveys were distributed online via Qualtrics software. All questions were skippable, so respondents can choose whether to disclose identifying information, and they could pass over any question they did not wish to answer. More librarians than security personnel responded to the survey, but the sample size for both was sufficient. Given the nature of the survey, it is possible that campus security personnel who chose to answer were also those more likely to be involved with the libraries. Four schools had responses from both campus security and the libraries, but much of the data comes from colleges in which only one of the two divisions responded. All participants were aware that we distributed surveys to both departments.

Originally, we strove to invite all 66 SUNY schools, but we removed some of these from the process as they do not have a physical library or do not publish contact information for the relevant departments. Of the 54 SUNY campuses ultimately invited to participate in this study, 13 campus security representatives completed it in full, which is a 24 percent response rate. Respondents included nine community colleges, two technology colleges, one university college, and one university center. Among the deans or directors of the libraries at the same 54 SUNY schools, twenty-one completed the survey, which is a 39 percent response rate, and three more completed it in part.

## Results and Discussion

The results of the survey displayed an interesting gap in the perceptions of safety between the security and library respondents. Overall, their answers largely aligned when it came to elements such as the existence of written safety plans and whether the library staff had ever done dedicated trainings for human-caused emergencies. However, in overall trends, security workers rated the campus and library buildings as somewhat safer than the librarians rated them. One of



the most notable discrepancies regarded the frequency of building walkthroughs by campus security officers. The security respondents all agreed they performed this task regularly, while many librarians answered that such walkthroughs were not common. The following section details the responses to all our survey questions and discusses both the levels of preparedness within the SUNY libraries and the perception gap we discovered.

For the librarians' survey, all the answering institutions replied to the first questions (L1, L2) about demographics. These included seven urban, eleven suburban, and seven rural locations. Our respondents were also evenly divided in terms of campus size, with six having more than 10,000 students and six having 5,000 to 10,000 students. These included two university centers, three university colleges, five community colleges, and two technical colleges based on their official SUNY designations. Our data included eleven smaller campuses with 1,000 to 5,000 students as well. These included five community colleges, three university colleges, and two technical colleges, with one participant not responding to this element of the question. While the overall sample size was sufficient, we felt we did not have enough information to draw reliable conclusions about subcategories such as whether community colleges answered differently from university centers. However, the responses overall represent a cross-section of college campuses where safety issues can vary based on population density, crime rates, median incomes, etc. (see Table 1).

|                                | <b>Security Respondents</b> | <b>Library Respondents</b> |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Urban</b>                   | <b>5</b>                    | <b>7</b>                   |
| <b>Suburban</b>                | <b>3</b>                    | <b>11</b>                  |
| <b>Rural</b>                   | <b>5</b>                    | <b>7</b>                   |
| <b>&gt;10,000 students</b>     | <b>1</b>                    | <b>6</b>                   |
| <b>5,000 – 10,000 students</b> | <b>3</b>                    | <b>6</b>                   |
| <b>1,000 – 5,000 students</b>  | <b>9</b>                    | <b>11</b>                  |
| <b>&lt; 1,000 students</b>     | <b>0</b>                    | <b>0</b>                   |
| <b>Community College</b>       | <b>9</b>                    | <b>11</b>                  |
| <b>Technical College</b>       | <b>2</b>                    | <b>4</b>                   |
| <b>University College</b>      | <b>1</b>                    | <b>5</b>                   |
| <b>University Center</b>       | <b>1</b>                    | <b>3</b>                   |

Table 1: CAMPUS DESCRIPTIONS

While we did not request as detailed of demographic and environmental data in the survey sent to security representatives, none chose to take the survey anonymously (S1). This allowed us to gather additional demographic details based on publicly available information about campus locations, SUNY classifications, and enrollment rates (SUNY 2020). The responding colleges included five urban campuses, three suburban, and five rural campuses. There were a range of sizes represented as well, including nine campuses with full time enrollment under 5,000 students, three schools with enrollment between 5,000 and 10,000, and one with over 10,000 full time students.

After the demographic inquiry, question two to the security personnel (S2) asked if the campus or campuses have an emergency plan that outlined responses for potential human-caused emergencies and/or violent events. Twelve of the 13 (92 percent) security representatives reported having such a plan in place. It was surprising that one institution did not report having such a plan. However, all respondents later answered that their campus plan addressed active shooter responses. This can reflect different interpretations of terminology or even clicking the wrong response by mistake. Still, the overall pattern of answers indicates that most campuses have written emergency response plans in preparation for a potential human-caused emergency. While such a document is not mandated by law, both the federal government (Ready.gov) and state government of New York (DHSES) highly encourage them and provide resources to help campuses and institutions craft detailed plans.

Following the demographics inquiry for the librarians, we asked them to describe their patron access policies (L3). Almost all responded that they are “open to the public” (22/23, 95 percent) rather than restricting access to the campus community. This can potentially increase the risk to campus libraries, allowing anyone to enter the facility without checks at entry. However, in cases such as an active shooter, a single violent actor is more likely to have personal ties to the campus community in some capacity already (O’Neill et al 6). Only one school, located in New York City, responded that access was restricted to the campus community. This suggests that most libraries would have similar security concerns as the rest of campus if also unrestricted, which makes it more notable to see some of the discrepancies in perceptions of preparedness. If the campus faces a generalized risk, then a library with unrestricted access also takes on that same degree of risk. Accordingly, it would be helpful for library staff to have a better understanding of security procedures and response plans.

As in the question we posed to campus security, we then asked the libraries if the campus or campuses have an emergency plan that describes responses for potential human-caused

emergencies and/or violent events (L4). Out of the 23 libraries answering, 16 replied yes (70 percent), eight percent said no, and five reported “I don’t know” (22 percent). It is surprising that library deans or directors who we asked to complete the survey would not be familiar with the details of their campus emergency plans, especially in this regard. All but one of the security respondents indicated they had a plan, and even that person later described details of that campus’s response plan for active shooter incidents. For only two thirds of the library deans and directors to reply with a “yes” suggests that these plans may not be as well publicized or understood as campus security might think (see Fig. 1).

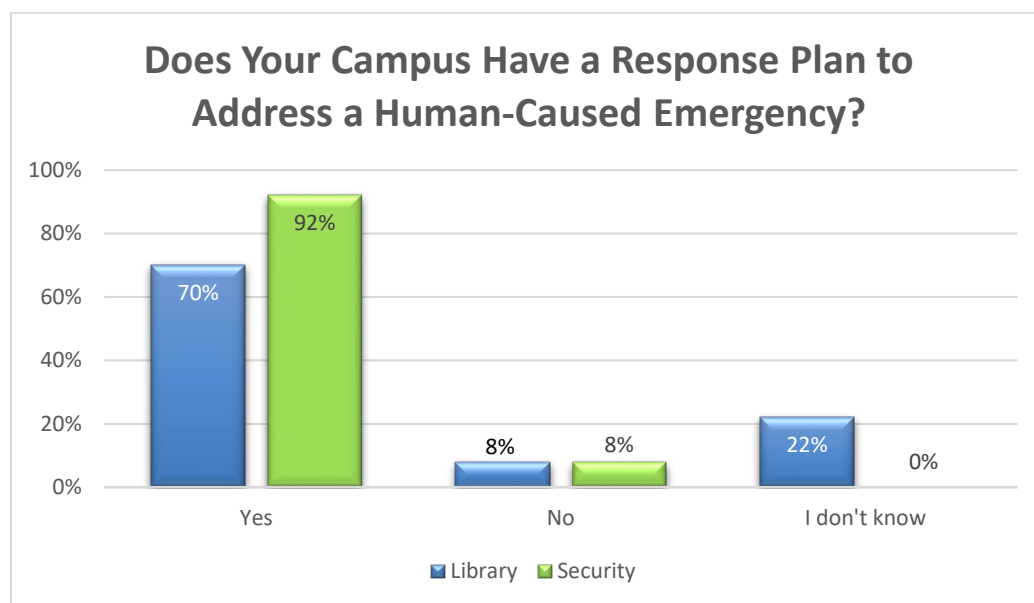


Fig. 1 HUMAN-CAUSED EMERGENCY IN CAMPUS RESPONSE PLAN

Next, we asked security respondents if the campus plan had information specific to the library/libraries (S2). Only four (33 percent) of the 12 institutions answered in the affirmative. We also asked the libraries if they had their own emergency plan detailing responses for potential human-caused emergencies and/or violent events (L5). Of the 23 respondents, only six replied “yes” (26 percent), and 17 said they did not (74 percent). Thus, our sample indicates that almost all campuses have written emergency plans, but less than a third of SUNY schools have detailed plans for the libraries, with even fewer plans created by library personnel directly. Of those six libraries with emergency response plans, four were updated within the last two years, and two reported that the last update was two to five years ago. It is recommended that institutions update or at least review an emergency plan annually (NEDCC 2015), although none of these six plans is alarmingly out of date.

For those libraries who answered that they had a dedicated emergency response plan, we then provided a list of possible human-caused emergencies and/or violent events and asked which ones were addressed in their plan (L6). All six included response to an active shooter, four included response to medical emergencies, four included assault in progress, and four had protocols for bullying or menacing. Write-in comments from two respondents included “shelter in place,” “dangerous person,” and “pandemic”. While it is difficult to extrapolate too much from a small sample size, preparation for high impact events like active shooters seems to be a standard inclusion for those with emergency response plans. Other eventualities are somewhat less likely to be included (see Table 2).

| Answer                  | Count |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Active shooter          | 6     |
| Arson in progress       | 1     |
| Assault in progress     | 4     |
| Bomb threat             | 2     |
| Bullying / Menacing     | 4     |
| Burglary in progress    | 0     |
| Civil unrest            | 1     |
| Medical emergency       | 4     |
| Security breach         | 0     |
| Sexual assault          | 2     |
| Vandalism in progress   | 1     |
| Other, please describe: | 2     |

Table 2. HUMAN-CAUSED OR VIOLENT EVENTS IN LIBRARY RESPONSE PLANS

Returning to the campus security survey, our next question asked whether they coordinated with the library to develop their specific emergency response procedures (S2B). Eleven out of 13 campuses responded to this question. In total, five coordinated development of the library’s emergency response plans between campus security and library personnel, and eight had conducted training for library staff in coordination with campus security. One institution reported having managed a “full-scale active shooter exercise.” Interestingly, seven of the

respondents who reported coordinating with the libraries here indicated that their campus emergency plan did not include elements specific to the library. That suggests some of these training exercises and efforts are happening outside the structures and mandates put in place by the formal emergency response plan. For example, a library may have an emergency response plan that only speaks to the physical collection and materials in the building, but the staff might also participate in any trainings suggested or initiated by campus security. This can also be a case where parties interpret the same terminology in different ways. Is regular, live training part of the emergency response plan? The survey answers suggest that some disagreement might exist, especially if a written plan does not explicitly call for training events. Looking at written plans alone is therefore insufficient to determine whether library staff members at a given college take measures to improve physical security or participate in any kind of safety or preparedness training.

The library version of this same question asked how the development of their emergency plans were coordinated with campus security (L13). Only 15 of 21 respondents that continued to work through our survey completed this question. Thirteen selected “training for library staff in coordination with campus security” (13/15, 87 percent). Seven reported coordinated development of the library response plan (7/15, 47 percent). One library commented that their written plan is based on a campus template. This institution is the one reporting on the shelter-in-place drill they conducted with campus police, including a debriefing held for all participants. One institution stated that they had not developed their emergency plan in coordination with campus security.

Next, we provided a list of activities that campus security might have managed in coordination with library staff (S3). This question allowed us to gather details about campuses where they may not have a formal library emergency plan but have still taken precautionary measures. In concert with a similar question posed to the librarians, it provides additional insight into how these two departments have worked together. All 13 reported conducting regular security walkthroughs in the library/libraries, and 12 had conducted active shooter or high-impact trainings. Most (9, or 69 percent) coordinated efforts with the library on physical security and threat assessments of the library, and 9 (69 percent) had coordinated emergency drills

In a parallel question, we asked the librarians to select which of the same set of activities they had conducted in coordination with campus security (L14). The majority (14/21, 67 percent) had held active shooter or other high impact event training sessions. More than half (12/21, 57 percent) had conducted emergency drills, and 8/21 (38 percent) reported regular security walkthroughs in the library/libraries. Only 6/21 (28 percent) had worked with campus security to evaluate physical security or threat assessments in the library/libraries. (see Fig. 2).

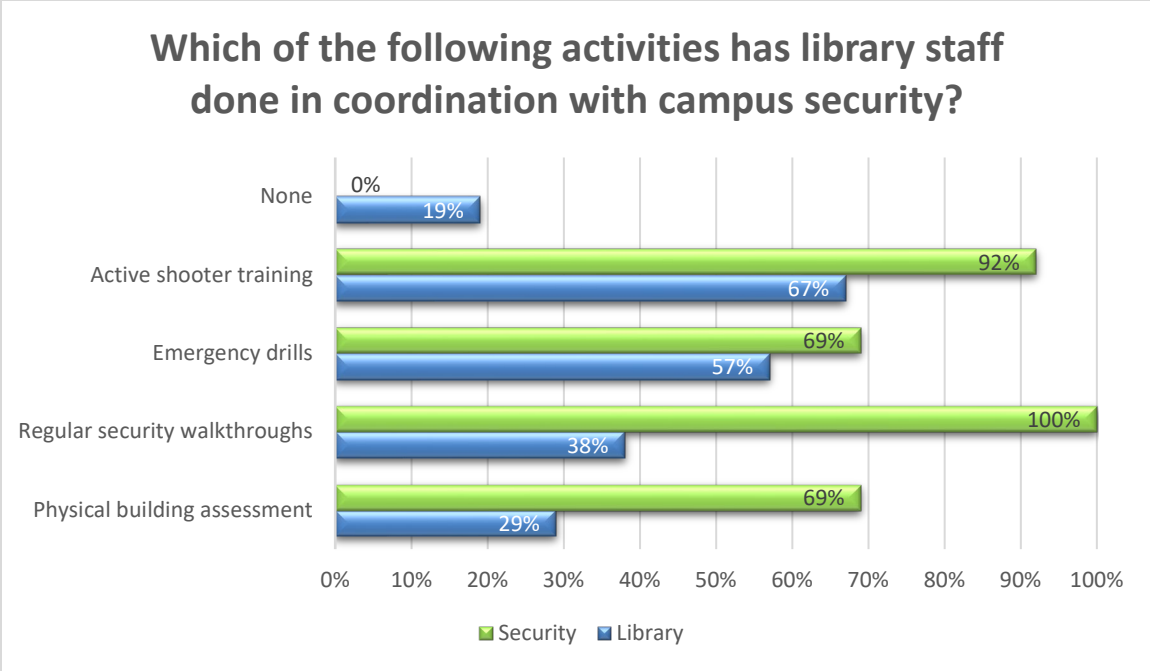


Fig 2. COORDINATION BETWEEN LIBRARY STAFF AND CAMPUS SECURITY

These two questions show a noteworthy discrepancy between security and library answers. While every security respondent indicated they perform regular walkthroughs in the library, only 38 percent of librarians agreed. Again, this may indicate differences in interpretation. We did not provide definitions for either “regular” or “walkthroughs” in the survey, and thus respondents may have defined those terms differently. Given the sample size, it is also possible that the answering schools simply take different measures. Alternately, librarians may be unaware of security officers performing walkthroughs. Closer coordination here can be helpful for both parties as it would ensure librarians are more familiar with their regular security employees. They can also communicate times of day in which walkthroughs would be most useful; knowing the security routine can provide a greater sense of security for the library staff. Additional study is needed here to determine whether this discrepancy exists on a larger scale, but the answers here suggest at least a partial reason for the differences in feelings of safety between the two departments. Librarians are not always aware of the measures taken by campus security officers.

Next, we provided security respondents with a list of possible human-caused emergencies and/or violent events and asked what was addressed in their campus’s plan (S4). All those answering reported that their plans included response to an active shooter event. Most (12/13) had plans that included response to a bomb threat, and to medical emergencies. Sexual assault was part of 11/13 campus plans, 9/13 had a section for assault in progress, 8/13 had information

for managing civil unrest, and less than half (6/13) had a portion of their plan dedicated to arson, burglary, or vandalism in progress. Only five listed plans specific to bullying, and again, only five had a plan for security breach. One institution reported having a “flip-chart” for plans addressing all the possible events listed in the survey. Thus, our sample indicates that overall campus emergency plans have language specific to disruptive, high-impact events even if those plans do not specifically focus on the library buildings.

For the libraries, we wanted to gather additional information about their specific physical security measures. These are relevant when considering how to deter or contain high impact, violent incidents. Twenty-two participants answered the questions on physical security (L7). The majority indicated they have surveillance cameras (19/22, 86 percent), and most (55 percent) have security alarms and panic buttons (55 percent). Only one, an urban community college, reported having metal detectors. Write-in comments included one that identified its library as being part of a larger building in which “the larger facility has protections, not the library itself.” In addition, one reported being “wide open, with many security cameras.” This library also has a dedicated library security plan. One institution noted that it has a security office on the ground floor of the library (see Table 3).

| Answer  | Count |
|---|-------|
| Surveillance cameras                                    | 19    |
| Security alarms   | 12    |
| Metal detectors   | 1     |
| Panic button  | 10    |
| Controlled entrance to the building - e.g., swipe cards | 4     |
| Controlled access to certain areas                      | 7     |
| Security guards at building public entry and exit       | 3     |
| Other, please describe:                                 | 3     |

Table 3. PHYSICAL SECURITY IN THE LIBRARY

We then asked about elements of environmental design used by the libraries to enhance safety and security (L8). Only 14 libraries responded to this question. Most (11/14, 79 percent)

reported “lighting” used strategically as a safety measure. Half (7, 50 percent) reported “minimized concealed spaces or isolated routes.” Five responded that they had “clear interior sightlines” (36 percent), and four had “clear exterior sight lines” (29 percent). The low response rate to this question perhaps indicates a lack of awareness by some libraries about low or no-cost features that can enhance safety and security in a public space. Alternately, some may use those measures without recognizing the formal name “Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design” (CPTED). Again, this may demonstrate a need for better education and communication from security divisions on elements of preparedness and physical safety measures.

The survey also asked the library participants for details about security patrols in the library/libraries (L9). Of the 19 people answering to this question, 14 had walkthroughs by campus security or police (74 percent). Fourteen schools also reported walkthroughs by staff or student workers. Only two (almost 11 percent) reported walkthroughs by security guards assigned specifically to the library. We did not ask if there were no walkthroughs, so it is difficult to determine if those who did not answer this question at all simply skipped it, or whether that is an indication that the other seven respondents do not believe there are regular security walkthroughs.

It is noteworthy that a majority indicate at least occasional patrols by campus security, although not everyone answered this question. If we assume those who skipped the question but continued with the survey do not have regular patrols by security, then it comes out to 14 of 21, or 67 percent. However, that is still higher than the 38 percent of respondents who said they had regular security patrols as part of Question #15, “Which of the following activities has library staff done in coordination with campus security?” Given the gaps here, this area merits further study. Again, this may be an issue of terminology interpretation, or a lack of long-term communication between departments.

Next, we asked about mass or rapid communication options available to the library/libraries for use in the event of an emergency (L10). Of those who answered, most (13, 76 percent) had mass electronic alerts for staff and students such as text, email, or app alerts. Just under half had intercoms (8/17, 47 percent), and another 8/17 (47 percent) had “blue-light” phones or the equivalent. We were somewhat surprised by these responses and had expected the libraries to have additional emergency communication protocols in place, or at least widespread intercom capabilities. Overall, the data indicates that many libraries use various physical safety measures, but they are far from universal. There may be many reasons for this, but promoting some of the easier-to-implement elements of crime prevention through environmental design and other physical safety measures can be a cost-effective way to both increase the actual safety of buildings and help staff and patrons feel safer while in the library.



We then asked about library staff training during the past four years with respect to safety and security (L12). Twenty-one libraries replied to this question, selecting all that applied from a list of opportunities. Nineteen reported having conducted active shooter training (19/21, 90 percent), which is excellent. Eighteen conducted evacuation drills (18/21, 86 percent), with 16/21 (76 percent) having conducted workplace violence signs and prevention training. Nine libraries have held medical response training such as CPR, First Aid, and AED (9/21, 43 percent). Seven libraries (7/21, 33 percent) provided access to individual, digital training courses such as those provided by Skillsoft. Another seven have provided training in response to verbal threats and/or difficult patrons training (7/21, 33 percent). Only one library has held training in response to bomb threats. All librarians answering this question reported some type of safety and security training, averaging three per institution. In the “Other” category, one library reported holding training in sexual harassment, and another described Narcan training for their staff. Interestingly, one library held a shelter-in-place drill simulating an active shooter elsewhere on campus, while the campus police swept the building. Before the drill, campus police walked through the building with library staff and discussed possible hiding places plus where and how to shelter-in-place.

We were particularly interested in first response activities for high-impact human events that can be initiated by the library/libraries before the arrival of campus security (L15). From a list of training opportunities, the majority (16/21, 76 percent) reported “contacting first responders by a variety of means.” Just less than half (10/21, 47 percent) had training in locating and accessing a first aid kit. Nine libraries trained their staff to know when to initiate a lockdown or evacuation procedures as necessary (9/21, 43 percent), and eight libraries had procedures for physically securing a building to prevent entry or exit (8/21, 38 percent). Only two libraries trained staff to perform basic medical interventions to stop bleeding (2/21, 10 percent). One institution reported that their staff have been trained to call 911 in the event of an emergency (see Table 4).

| Answer   | Count |
|--|-------|
| Contacting first responders by a variety of means                    | 16    |
| Know to meet first responders when they arrive on site               | 7     |
| Know when to initiate lockdown or evacuation procedures as necessary | 9     |
| Physically securing the building to prevent entry / exit             | 8     |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Taking steps to ensure the safety of staff and patrons with limited mobility, language barriers, etc.  | 8  |
| Locating and accessing a first aid kit   | 10 |
| Performing basic medical intervention to stop bleeding   | 2  |
| Communicating with campus / students / the public via predetermined channels during or immediately after a human-caused emergency or violent event | 3  |
| Other, please describe:  | 1  |

Table 4. LIBRARY STAFF TRAINING

After the section on physical security measures, we asked both the librarians and security personnel to rate various features of the security of their campuses and libraries on a scale of 1 to 4. To begin, we asked campus security to rate the robustness of both campus and library security overall (S5). Regarding the campus, five respondents characterized their physical security at the highest, or “robust,” seven selected “sufficient with one or two concerning areas”, and only one rated their campus at a level 2, or “physical security measures are present but insufficient.”

These answers compared interestingly with the follow up question: On a scale of 1 – 4, with 4 as the highest, how would campus security rate their library’s physical security? (S6). Overwhelmingly, 77 percent reported a level 3 or “sufficient with one of two concerning areas.” Two answered with a “4” or “robust,” which is excellent. Only one campus security department replied with a 2 or “insufficient;” this is the same unit that reported that security on their campus was also insufficient. While the differential is not huge, some participants considered the overall campus more physically secure than the library or libraries. All 13 answered both questions, so the comparison between answers includes an identical group of respondents (see Fig. 3).

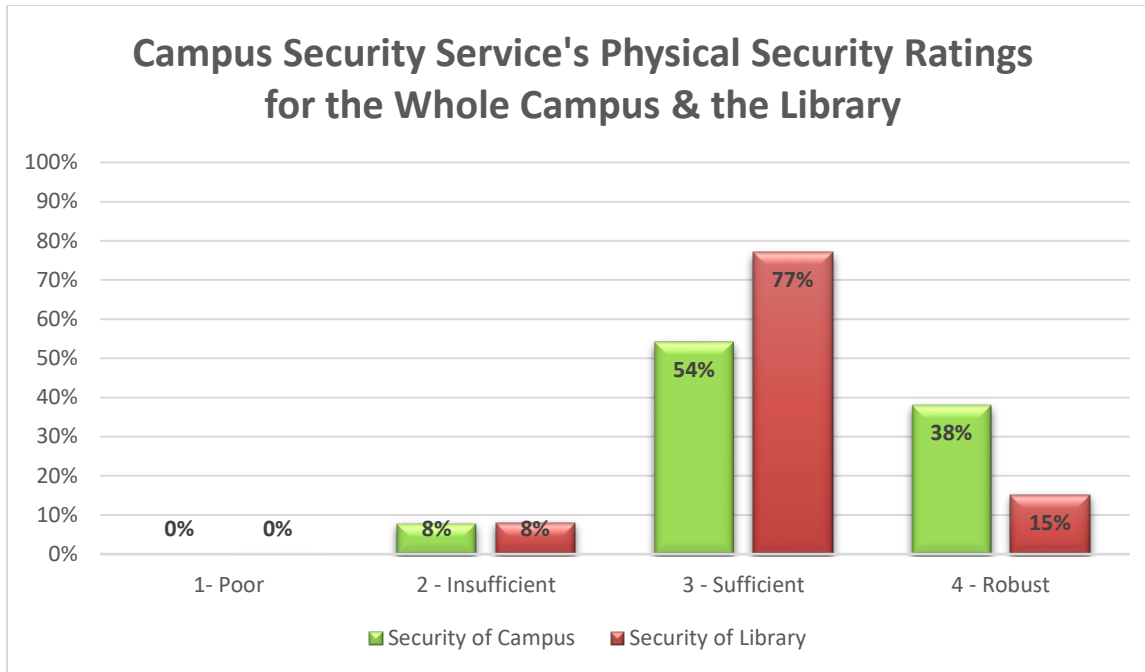


Fig 3. PHYSICAL SECURITY RATINGS BY CAMPUS SECURITY

We then asked, on a scale of 1 – 4, with 4 as the highest, how the libraries would rate their own physical security (L11). We had 21 responses to this question. Only three described their security as “robust: students and staff feel safe during normal usage.” Almost 24 percent (5/21) describe security as “sufficient with one or two concerning areas.” Surprisingly, eight respondents (8/21, or 38 percent) describe their physical security as “present but insufficient.” Another five reported that their physical security was “non-existent to poor” (5/21, or 24 percent). More than half of respondents (13/21, or 62 percent) scored their library security as either poor or insufficient. In the chart below, it becomes strikingly clear that security officers considered the library building(s) to be safer than did the librarians (see Fig. 4).

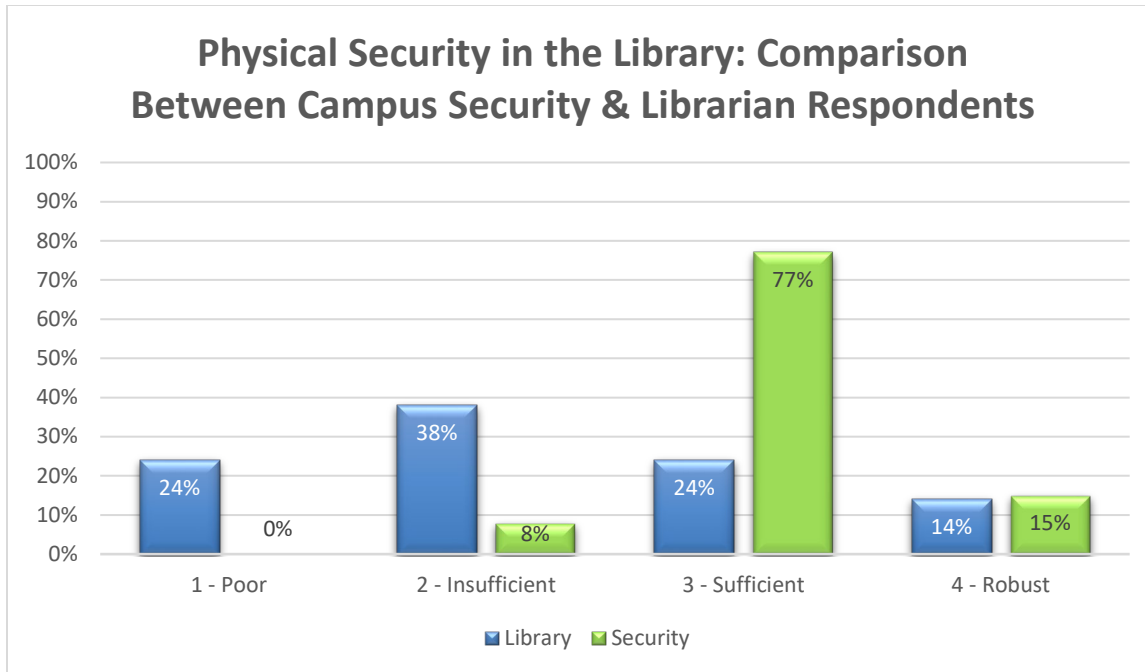


Fig. 4. PHYSICAL SECURITY RATINGS IN THE LIBRARY COMPARISON

Next, we asked campus security, on a scale of 1 – 4 with 4 as the highest, how they would rate their campus’ preparedness to respond to a human-caused emergency or violent event (S7). Of 13 respondents, nine rated their campus at a 3 or “sufficient with areas that could be improved”. Only two reported their preparedness was “robust”, and two reported that they have some training with procedural measures in place, but that they were otherwise insufficient.

We then asked campus security, on a scale of 1 – 4 with 4 as the highest, how they would rate their library/libraries’ preparedness to respond to a human-caused emergency or violent event (S8). Here, 10 campus security units reported a 3 or “mostly sufficient but there are areas that could be improved.” Only one reported that the library/libraries’ ability to respond was a 4 or “robust”, and one other rated their library/libraries’ ability as a 2 or “insufficient.” One respondent did not answer this question. Again, this aligns with the pattern of previous questions in which security rated their overall campus preparedness as slightly higher than the library’s preparedness. Interestingly, none of the security respondents rated anything as “poor.” As shown in the section below, not all the librarians agreed with that assessment.

Corresponding to the question asked of campus security, we asked the libraries to rate their staff’s preparedness to respond to a human-caused emergency or violent event (L16). Of 21 respondents, only one rated their preparedness as “robust” or able to adequately respond. However, almost half (10/21) selected a 3, rated as “sufficient, but there are areas that could be

improved.” Six libraries rated themselves as a 2, or “some training and procedural measures are in place, but they are insufficient” (6/21, 29 percent). Four libraries gave themselves a 1, “non-existent to poor” (4/21, 19 percent). Nearly twenty percent of library respondents felt fully unprepared for a human-caused emergency. The discrepancy between security and library respondents is clearly shown here. While both groups largely agree that the libraries are not robustly prepared for a violent event, the librarians indicated that they feel considerably more unprepared than security deems them (see Fig. 5).

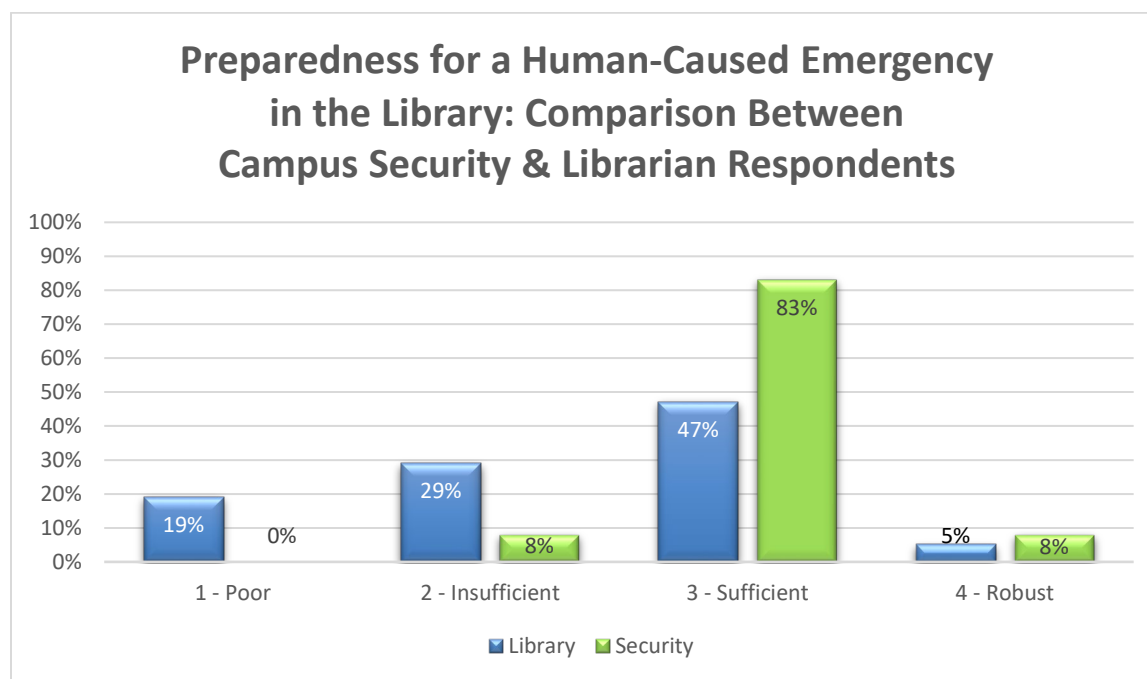


Fig. 5. HUMAN-CAUSED EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMPARISON

Additionally, we asked the libraries to rate themselves on the same scale regarding how safe and secure students and staff feel in the library building during normal usage (L17). Two of our respondents rated themselves as a 4, or “yes, always” (10 percent), but most (15/21) rated themselves at a 3, or “yes, most of the time” (71 percent). The remaining four libraries selected 2, or “yes, but with some notable exceptions” (19 percent). No libraries selected a rating of 1, or “no, there are always security issues and challenges to be managed”. While we looked at the gaps in perception between librarians and campus security, this question was intended to capture the librarians’ overall feelings of safety in their building. The answers here largely correlate with those given for previous questions, indicating that most feel reasonably confident in their security

measures, but some gaps still exist. A larger percentage feel unsafe sometimes compared to the percentage of those who feel safe all the time (see Fig. 6).

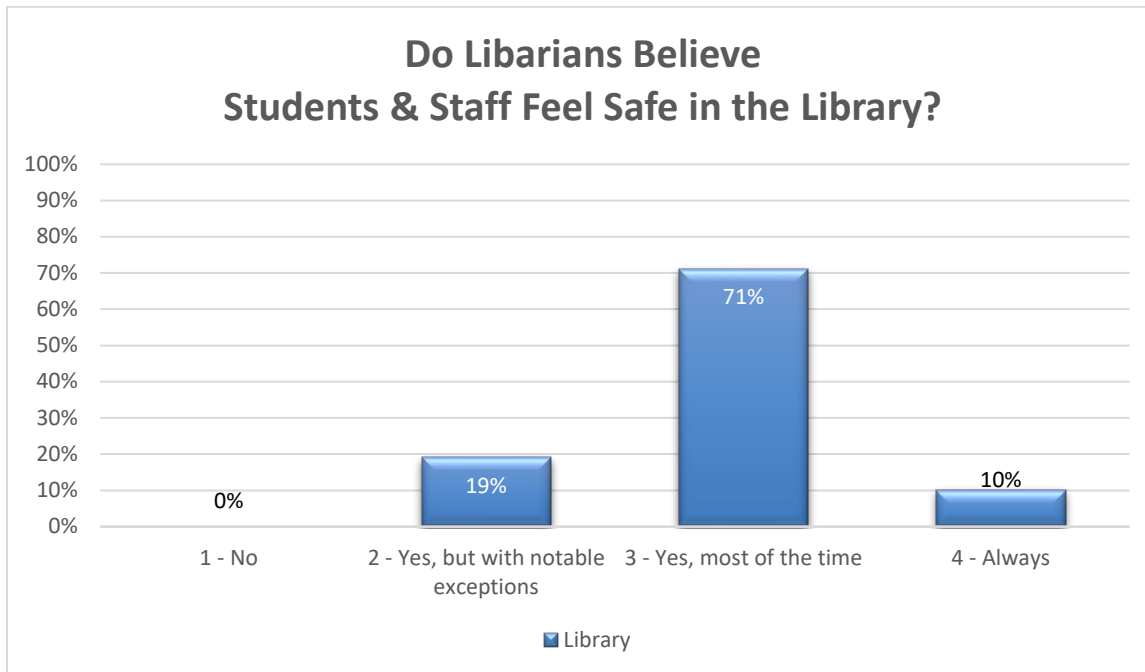


Fig. 6. STAFF AND PATRON SAFETY

Toward the end of the survey, we asked campus security personnel what steps they can realistically take to improve security on their campus (S9). We presented four options as well as the space to write in additional thoughts. The majority (77 percent, 10 /13) reported “improved communication and coordination with other divisions on campus.” Given that most felt their library security and preparedness was less than robust, this is not surprising. Six out of 13 recommended additional training for campus first responders, and six suggested additional coordination, communication, or training with local first responders in preparation for human-caused emergencies or violent events happening on campus. Two selected “improved access to emergency supplies and equipment.” One respondent did not select any of the possible improvements. This campus security unit characterized overall physical security on campus as “robust”.

Finally, we asked which steps campus security can take to realistically improve the safety of their library/libraries (S10). This was a write-in question only, and six campus security respondents provided additional information. Three campuses recommended more training with or for library staff, or continued training of library staff, including repeated active-shooter training.

Further, one campus security unit recommended to “engage library staff to coordinate response protocols.” Coordination is key, and another suggested training with local law enforcement. With respect to physical security, only one campus security unit addressed this, recommending more closed-circuit television (CCTV) coverage, and a redesign of the physical layout of the library to create a more secure environment.

As we did with campus security, we asked library respondents to tell us what steps they would realistically take to improve security in their libraries (L18). This was a write-in question as well, and 14 respondents provided answers (L19). The most frequent comments expressed a need for more support from campus police, including consistent walk-through procedures, having them present at closing time and providing escorts for staff to parking lots, increasing their presence in the library/libraries, and having dedicated security or police presence. One respondent expressed a need for increased communication with campus security.

Another cluster of responses concerned collaboration or coordination of efforts with campus security. These include having them conduct a threat assessment in the library/libraries, improving control of evacuations (specifically in response to an active shooter event), wanting specific instructions for staff in the event of an active shooter event, and a desire for more detailed emergency plans for both the library/libraries and the campus that are well distributed. One library recommended increased coordination with other department locations in the building.

Lastly, a third group of responses focused on physical security measures with several participants wanting swipe access and more cameras, others wishing for panic buttons, and a desire for a public address system. One mentioned a problem with sight lines but did not feel that there was much they can do to make improvements. Of the 14 institutions that provided answers to these questions, only one pushed for increased or even mandatory participation of library staff in live training in first aid, workplace violence, response to active shooter events, and Title IX.

### **Conclusions and Further Study**

Thus, the results of the survey sent to campus security personnel indicated that most respondents in the SUNY system feel their campus security is sufficient to robust, and that their library security is largely sufficient. Most indicated that they feel prepared for a high impact, human-caused emergency, although the libraries may be somewhat less prepared than the campus as a whole. Nonetheless, every security respondent indicated that they have worked with the libraries in some capacity to ensure both physical security and preparedness, whether via collaborating on a written emergency response plan, joint active shooter training, and/or regular security walkthroughs. However, the librarians responding to their survey did not always have the

same perceptions. While most felt safe in their buildings and a majority felt sufficiently prepared, librarians were more likely than campus security to feel that their physical security measures and preparedness were insufficient or poor. Several librarians also felt their communications and collaborations with campus security were insufficient. It is possible that the security personnel who chose to respond to the survey were more likely to have stronger campus security, although that is speculation.

Regardless, the replies to our surveys indicate a gap between security and librarians in their perceptions of readiness that merits further exploration. Additional surveys distributed to a larger pool would be one possible avenue for this. It can be helpful to narrow the focus specifically to these gaps and why those differences in perceptions exist. Reviewing disparities in literature and language around safety issues between both librarians and security may help explore the causes for this gap and begin to suggest solutions. It also seems evident that collaboration is a key issue, and both sides would benefit from more of it. Finding and promoting further opportunities for collaboration would benefit everyone.

Most security divisions have put considerable work into their emergency response plans and training. Library staff on campus need to be aware of these plans, training opportunities, and other security measures to best protect themselves and feel safer at work. This requires greater communication and collaboration between both departments. A sustained effort to actively engage campus security in issues specifically related to library safety can improve communication and collaboration. Based on our research and the findings of this study, a starting point is to conduct a security survey in the library in coordination with campus security, work together to identify priority areas of concern in the libraries, and consider options for mitigating risks. If they have not already done so, library directors should create or delegate creation of an emergency response plan specific to the library, engage campus security in its development, and ensure they have copies of the plan. They should also work together to ensure the library's plan is part of the larger campus response. Whenever possible, collaborate with campus security to develop and deliver regular training of library staff on topics related to high-impact events on campus. Finally, increase visibility of campus security in the libraries, including routine walkthroughs.

We began this study prior to the Covid-19 shutdown in New York. Our questions were written assuming normal, in-person library usage, and the respondents answered in that spirit. Our conclusions and suggestions for further study also assume that in-person education and library usage will resume in the future without major structural changes.



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## Appendix 1

### *Questions for library staff:*

#### Introductory

1. Which SUNY campus do you represent?

(Select one from dropdown list of 64 SUNY campuses)

2. Please describe your campus

a.  Urban /  Suburban /  Rural

b.  > 10,000 students /  5,000 – 10,000 students /  1,000 - 5,000 students /  <1,000 students

c.  Public /  Private

d.  Community College /  University

3. Is your library:

Open to the public

Access restricted to the campus community

4. Does your **campus** have an emergency / disaster plan detailing responses for potential human-caused emergencies and/or violent events?

a. Yes

b. No

c. I don't know

5. Does your **library** have an emergency / disaster plan detailing responses for potential human-caused emergencies and/or violent events?

a. Yes / No

(Continues to 3b and 4 if 'Yes')

b. When was it last updated?

i. Within the last two years / 2 – 5 years ago / more than 5 years ago

6. Which of the following potential human-caused emergencies and/or violent events does your library's plan address? Select all that apply.
- a. Active shooter
  - b. Arson in progress
  - c. Assault in progress
  - d. Bomb threat
  - e. Bullying / Menacing
  - f. Burglary in progress
  - g. Civil unrest
  - h. Medical emergency
  - i. Security breach
  - j. Sexual assault
  - k. Vandalism in progress
  - l. Other, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

### Physical Security

7. Which of the following elements of physical security does your library have? Select all that apply.
- a. Surveillance cameras
    - i.  Continuously monitored
    - ii.  Provide auto alerts
  - b. Security alarms, e.g. perimeter alarms
  - c. Metal detectors
  - d. Panic button
  - e. Controlled entrance to the building - e.g. swipe cards
  - f. Controlled access to certain areas
  - g. Security guards at building public entry and exit
  - h. Other, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Which of the following elements of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design does your library use? Select all that apply.
- a. Clear interior sight lines
  - b. Clear exterior sight lines

- c. Lighting
  - d. Minimized concealed spaces or isolated routes
9. Which of the following security patrols does your library use? Select all that apply.
- a. Walkthroughs by security guards assigned to the library
  - b. Walkthroughs by campus security / police
  - c. Walkthroughs by staff or student workers
10. Which rapid / mass communication capacities does the library staff have access to for use in the event of a human-caused emergency or violent event? Select all that apply.
- a. Building intercoms
  - b. Mass electronic alerts for staff and students, e.g. text, email, app alerts
  - c. Emergency Blue Light Phones or equivalent
11. On a scale of 1-4, how would you rate the physical security at your library?
- a. 1 – Nonexistent to poor
  - b. 2 – Physical security measures are present but insufficient
  - c. 3 – Sufficient, but there are one or two concerning areas
  - d. 4 – Robust: students and staff feel safe and secure during normal usage

### **Training and Prevention**

12. Which of the following staff training opportunities have been offered to library staff in the last four years? Select all that apply.
- a. Individual, digital training courses such as those provided by Skillsoft
  - b. Active shooter training
  - c. Emergency medical response training, e.g. CPR, First aid, AED
  - d. Workplace violence signs and prevention training
  - e. Response to verbal threats and/or difficult patrons training
  - f. Response to bomb threats training
  - g. Evacuation drills
  - h. Other, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

13. In which of the following ways has the library coordinated with campus security to develop the library's emergency response procedures? Select all that apply.
- a. Coordinated development of the library's emergency response plans between campus security and library personnel
  - b. Training for library staff in coordination with campus security
  - c. Other, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_
14. Which of the following activities has library staff done in coordination with campus security? Select all that apply.
- a. Physical security / threat assessment of the library
  - b. Regular security walkthroughs in the library
  - c. Emergency drills
  - d. Active shooter or other high impact event training
  - e. Other, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

### **First Response**

15. Which of the following first response actions have library staff received training or instruction on? Select all that apply.
- a. Contacting first responders by a variety of means
  - b. Know to meet first responders when they arrive on site
  - c. Know when to initiate lockdown or evacuation procedures as necessary
  - d. Physically securing the building to prevent entry / exit
  - e. Taking steps to ensure the safety of staff and patrons with limited mobility, language barriers, etc.
  - f. Locating and accessing a first aid kit
  - g. Performing basic medical intervention to stop bleeding
  - h. Communicating with campus / students / the public via predetermined channels during or immediately after a human-caused emergency or violent event
  - i. Other, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_
16. On a scale of 1 – 4, how would you rate your library staff's preparedness to respond to a human-caused emergency or violent event?
- a. 1 – Nonexistent to poor

- b. 2 – Some training and procedural measures are in place, but they are insufficient
  - c. 3 – Mostly sufficient, but there are areas that could be improved
  - d. 4 – Robust: a majority of staff members feel able to adequately respond in the event of a human-caused emergency
17. On a scale of 1 – 4, do students and staff feel safe and secure in your library during normal usage?
- a. 1 – No, there are always security issues and challenges to be managed
  - b. 2 – Yes, but with some notable exceptions
  - c. 3 – Yes, most of the time
  - d. 4 – Yes, always

### **Next Steps**

18. What steps, if any, would you realistically take to improve the security of your library?  
Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_
19. May we contact you for further discussion to gain a better understanding of your responses?
- a. No
  - b. Yes
    - i. Name
    - ii. Institution
    - iii .Email

### **Appendix 2**

#### ***To Campus Police / Security:***

1. Which SUNY campus do you represent?  
(Select one from dropdown list of 64 SUNY campuses)
  
2. Does your campus have an emergency plan detailing responses for potential human-caused emergencies and/or violent events?
  - a. Yes / No

- b. Does that plan have information specific to the library?

(if yes & yes)

2B. In which of the following ways have you coordinated with the library to develop their specific emergency response procedures? Select all that apply.

- c. Coordinated development of the library's emergency response plans between campus security and library personnel
- d. Training for library staff in coordination with campus security
- e. Other, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Which of the following activities has campus security done for or in coordination with library staff? Select all that apply.

- a. Physical security / threat assessment of the library
- b. Regular security walkthroughs in the library
- c. Emergency drills
- d. Active shooter or other high impact event training
- e. Other, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Which of the following potential human-caused emergencies and/or violent events does your campus's plan address? Select all that apply.

- a. Active shooter
- b. Arson in progress
- c. Assault in progress
- d. Bomb threat
- e. Bullying / Menacing
- f. Burglary in progress
- g. Civil unrest
- h. Medical emergency
- i. Security breach
- j. Sexual assault
- k. Vandalism in progress
- l. Other, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

5. On a scale on 1 – 4, how would you rate your **campus's** physical security?



- a. 1 – Nonexistent to poor
  - b. 2 – Physical security measures are present but insufficient
  - c. 3 – Sufficient, but there are one or two concerning areas
  - d. 4 – Robust: students and staff feel safe and secure during normal usage
6. On a scale on 1 – 4, how would you rate your **library's** physical security?
- a. 1 – Nonexistent to poor
  - b. 2 – Physical security measures are present but insufficient
  - c. 3 – Sufficient, but there are one or two concerning areas
  - d. 4 – Robust: students and staff feel safe and secure during normal usage
7. On a scale of 1 – 4, how would you rate your **campus's** preparedness to respond to a human-caused emergency or violent event?
- a. 1 – Nonexistent to poor
  - b. 2 – Some training and procedural measures are in place, but they are insufficient
  - c. 3 – Mostly sufficient, but there are areas that could be improved
  - d. 4 – Robust: Campus security and staff members feel able to adequately respond in the event of a human-caused emergency
8. On a scale of 1 – 4, how would you rate your **library's** preparedness to respond to a human-caused emergency or violent event?
- a. 1 – Nonexistent to poor
  - b. 2 – Some training and procedural measures are in place, but they are insufficient
  - c. 3 – Mostly sufficient, but there are areas that could be improved
  - d. 4 – Robust: Campus security and staff members feel able to adequately respond in the event of a human-caused emergency
9. What steps, if any, would you realistically take to improve the security of your campus?
- a. Additional training for campus first responders
  - b. Additional coordination, communication, or training with local first responders in preparation for human-caused emergencies or violent events happening on campus
  - c. Improved communication and coordination with other divisions on campus
  - d. Improved access to emergency supplies and equipment

e. Other, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

10. What steps, if any, would you realistically take to improve the security of your library?

Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

11. May we contact you for further discussion to gain a better understanding of your responses?

a. No

b. Yes

i. Name

ii. Institution

iii. Email

**Abigail D. Adams** ([aadams5@albany.edu](mailto:aadams5@albany.edu)) is Subject Librarian for Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security, Cybersecurity, Informatics, Information and Library Science & Criminal Justice at the University at Albany

**Karen E. Kiorpes** ([kkiorpes@albany.edu](mailto:kkiorpes@albany.edu)) is Head, Preservation Department at the University at Albany

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