

A Retreat from the Panoptic: One Public Library's Experience with Video Surveillance

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the findings of a qualitative case study examining why one public library installed video surveillance systems and then later reversed course and completely removed the previously installed systems. We found that the library initially installed the system as a response to specific incidents of crime without central administrative oversight, and that the removal was prompted by deteriorating relationships with local police departments over the library's position that the video footage was exempt from public disclosure under the state's library records privacy law. The library system subsequently removed all of their cameras in 2011, claiming the cameras were not in sync with library commitments to intellectual freedom and patron privacy, despite the fact that library staff expressed strong interest in retaining the cameras and were concerned about staff safety and crime prevention. We also found evidence of surveillance creep.

Keywords: *Privacy, Surveillance, Library, Ethics, Policy*

INTRODUCTION

According to some, modern security systems with centralized control rooms, video surveillance cameras, and privatized security guards may begin to “plagiarize” from the panopticon prison designs of Jeremy Bentham [1, 2]. Foucault stimulated new approaches to understanding and theorizing surveillance by utilizing Bentham's architectural designs as a model in his own work investigating power and discipline [3, 4]. According to Bentham, the panopticon was designed to effectuate “a new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind, in a quantity hitherto without example” [5]. Bentham's panoptic vision involved a centralized ability of those in power to monitor large numbers of others, who had no ability to watch back – and often had no idea when

they were actually being watched. Foucault demonstrated that “there is a reciprocal relationship between power and space” [6], and argued that a city can be seen as a “laboratory of power” [4, 6]. Many surveillance theorists have moved beyond a religious adherence to Foucault’s panopticism, but his theories continue to underlie much of surveillance discourse [3] and many have found parallels between surveillance-filled cities and Foucault’s ideas [6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12]. Herbert has stated that surveillance “links knowledge, power and space” [9]. Recent research suggests that the implementation of video surveillance may lead to urban “purification” and discriminatory “social sorting” [13, 14]. Other research suggests that video surveillance itself is not effective at preventing crime, and that the function of video surveillance, and the rationale behind its further implementation, has shifted away from crime prevention to matters of national security and community or workplace safety [15]. Given the adoption of video surveillance technologies by public libraries, we begin to see parallels between the modern library and Bentham’s vision.

The possibility that the modern public library could be compared to Bentham’s panoptic prison in which the few – as largely unobservable observers – watch the many in an act of power and domination, is striking. If video surveillance has the potential to change power relationships between the state and its citizens [16] and negatively affect civil liberties, its implementation and management in the public library setting should be studied rigorously. Surprisingly, there is scant literature addressing the subject, and research that does largely ignores the important civil liberties issues.

This paper presents the findings of a case study that we hope can begin to fill this void. We conducted a case study of a large county-wide library system in the Pacific Northwest of the United States that recently reversed course and removed all of its video surveillance equipment

that had been installed incrementally over the prior decade. We have chosen to focus on this single case because of its unique characteristics, in an attempt to understand 1) what factors and considerations drove the library to implement a video surveillance policy and install security cameras, and 2) why the library system ultimately reversed course and removed every camera under its control in 2011.

BACKGROUND AND PRIOR RESEARCH

Video Surveillance in Public Libraries

In 2012, the American Library Association (ALA) celebrated its third annual “Choose Privacy Week” under the moniker “Freedom from Surveillance”, and the ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom has been actively promoting the recognition of privacy in the public library setting for some time. The ALA’s position in regard to video surveillance is particularly enlightening:

“...high-resolution surveillance equipment is capable of recording patron reading and viewing habits in ways that are *as revealing as the written circulation records* libraries routinely protect.... Since any such personal information is sensitive and has the potential to be used inappropriately in the wrong hands, gathering surveillance data has serious implications for library management” [17] (emphasis added).

One library security report states that “[video surveillance] systems are quickly becoming one of the most important and economical security and safety tools available to libraries” [18], but does not even mention privacy considerations. Reports also suggest that video surveillance should only be employed to “provide a safe and secure facility for library employees, library resources

and equipment, and library patrons” [18]. Best practices also entail risk assessment prior to implementing a security system, and to prioritizing the implementation of physical (non-electronic) security measures as the first step in implementing a security system [18]. Another report – also lacking any discussion of ethical or legal issues related to video surveillance – describes the experience of Auburn University Libraries implementing a campus-wide surveillance system in 2006 [19].

In one relevant prior survey, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) distributed a short six-question questionnaire to library administrators (n = 55) in Great Britain in 2008 to investigate reports of increased police requests to libraries for patron information [20]. According to the survey, 75% of respondent library administrators reported that police and security agencies were requesting information (although not necessarily video footage), and 71% reported that the police followed proper procedures for legitimate purposes. Only 12% of libraries reporting incidents reported that they felt police had engaged in “fishing expeditions,” although one library reported a request for the borrowing histories of Muslim patrons. Additionally, only 62% of respondent libraries reported having a policy for dealing with police requests [20].

Indeed, it is surprising that little empirical research has been conducted to understand the role of video surveillance in the public library setting. However, some parallels can be made with studies of other public spaces. In one empirical study of video surveillance systems in British secondary schools, Taylor [21] reported that students felt that the presence of video surveillance could be balanced with privacy concerns, but that such concerns had not been satisfactorily addressed. In particular, “Surveillance undermined privacy and was regarded to be a manifestation of mistrust” [21]. Taylor also noted that, while students generally felt concerned

about the balance of surveillance and privacy, teachers did not present the same concerns [21]. This finding is interesting in light of our present research, as we were surprised by the overwhelming approval of the surveillance systems by library managers, as documented in two administrative surveys conducted by the library administration. However, as we did not interview patrons, we cannot identify a similar disconnect in our findings, although this raises interesting questions for future research.

Video Surveillance and Crime Reduction

Studies analyzing the impact of cameras on crime rates have typically involved systems installed in publicly accessible urban areas such as city streets or shopping centers. Research has been conducted in a variety of locations, including the United Kingdom [22, 23, 24], United States [25, 26, 27, 28], and Europe [14, 29]. Despite that fact that crime prevention has typically been the preferred policy basis for governmental and private installation of cameras [15], these studies generally indicate that video cameras have little or no statistical effect on incidents of crime [15, 30, 31]. Webster argues that video surveillance systems do not prevent crime and that the evidence base does not support the continued expansion and use of video surveillance on the basis of crime prevention alone [15]. Webster and others have also argued that the purposes and uses of video surveillance systems have been shifting over time, becoming a normal and widely accepted aspect of modern society, allowing unabated diffusion of video surveillance systems regardless of the evidence that their oft-promised crime prevention capabilities may be mythical in actual practice, and despite serious implications for the civil liberties of the local citizens [15]. The theory of “surveillance creep” is premised on the idea that “the policy focus of video surveillance has shifted as the technology has diffused, from crime prevention, to community safety and now also to national security” [15, 32]. According to Webster, the “net result” of the

accumulation of surveillance systems has only been increased levels and “intensities of surveillance” [15].

Discrimination, “Social Sorting”, and the “Purification” of Public Spaces

Despite limited effects on crime rates, some evidence suggests that video surveillance systems may reduce antisocial and undesirable behavior in certain cases, although more research is likely necessary to draw firm conclusions [15, 22]. However, other researchers have begun to report that surveillance may even be used to discriminate against certain groups by limiting their access to public spaces through targeted monitoring and coordinated officer interventions [29]. This phenomenon of discrimination through surveillance technologies has been referred to as the “purification” or “commercialization” of public spaces [14], or “surveillance as social sorting” [13]. This desire to “purify” public spaces and not “put customers off” means, in practice, “excluding ‘undesirables’” [14]. Similar observational research has documented that security operators more often than not “single out and target” individuals based on appearance alone, rather than behavior [14, 33, 34]. The actual or potential discriminatory effects of surveillance technologies have been documented or discussed in a variety of settings [13], including public streets, transportation centers and shopping malls [14, 29], the workplace [35, 36, 37, 38, 39], through use of electronic identity cards [40], intelligent transportation systems [41], genetic testing [42], and the “racializing” of medical research [43]. In an observational study of various video surveillance control rooms in Scandinavia, researchers have reported various patterns of discriminatory enforcement by private security firms, instituted through coordinated monitoring and officer intervention [14, 29].

Because libraries have an ethical obligation to serve everyone within their jurisdictions, including poor and under-served communities, concerns about discriminatory use of video surveillance systems are pronounced in the library setting. Some researchers have reported that libraries in the United States have not universally adopted or embraced the ALA's policy on Library Services to the Poor (ALA Policy 61) [44, 45]. Even unintended discriminatory use of surveillance systems by library security staff could raise serious ethical issues and potentially put the library at risk of legal action. Because modern libraries that implement video security systems can, at some level, be compared to Bentham's panopticon, decisions about video surveillance systems in public libraries should be based on sound evidentiary and policy grounds, not merely on the "myth" [15] that cameras alone will prevent crime.

Surveillance in the Workplace

Research has also begun to investigate the psychological effects of employer mandated surveillance on employees, and the potential for surveillance driven discrimination in the workplace [35, 36, 37, 38, 39]. Research suggests that "employees have strong feelings of disliking [email and internet] monitoring, as they perceive privacy violations and unfairness of the practice" [37]. One study also found that "Disclosure of policies does little to alleviate the lack of support for monitoring" amongst employees [37]. Other studies have found evidence that employer monitoring systems "produce fear, resentment, and elevate stress levels" of employees, resulting in lower employee satisfaction a more competitive workplace environment [39]. Against this backdrop, the ALA has provided the following guidance:

“...library employers who use electronic or video surveillance... must carefully evaluate these practices in light of both legal requirements and the profession's ethical commitment to upholding rights of privacy and confidentiality” [17].

Privacy and the Legal Basis for Governmental Surveillance

A number of recent federal court cases in the United States have reaffirmed the right of government to monitor publicly owned spaces, as long the surveillance does not capture areas where a reasonable expectation of privacy (measured both subjectively and objectively) exists. In these cases, however, federal courts found that video surveillance violated Fourth Amendment guarantees against unreasonable searches in middle school and police station locker rooms [46, 47], as well as a shared physical education teachers office adjacent to a school locker room [48], because the respective plaintiffs maintained reasonable expectations of privacy in those spaces. However, the stronger legal basis for governmental surveillance in the public areas of a library, compared to the obviously more private nature of locker rooms and personal office space, is based on the premise that individuals do not maintain any objective expectation of privacy in their conduct in these public spaces, and that these surveillance systems represent a valid use of state power to protect public safety [49]. As a result, video surveillance in these areas is generally permissible [49, 50, 51].

Some opponents to this dominant view, however, claim that citizens should maintain a right to anonymity in public spaces that would prohibit government from engaging in pervasive video surveillance and tracking without proper justification [52, 53]. However, it appears these arguments have thus far fallen on deaf ears. In addition to these Constitutional concerns, state privacy laws also generally permit public employers to monitor employees after appropriate

disclosure [54]; although, as stated above, this disclosure may not do much to alleviate employee concerns.

Despite the fairly clear legal basis for video surveillance in libraries in the United States, legal scholars have also noted the potential chilling effects that such systems may have on speech in public spaces [49, 51, 52]. Some commentators have argued that, because video surveillance raises the problem of the “unobservable observer”, where the watched do not – or cannot – know who is watching or for what purpose, national or local policy ought to require more overt surveillance practices, public disclosure, and independent oversight of control rooms [55].

METHODOLOGY

Location

We investigated the surveillance activities of a large county-wide library system located in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. The system is comprised of 46 separate library locations spread throughout a 2000-square-mile area, and has approximately 1200 employees. In 2010, the library circulated over 22.4 million books, movies and CDs, more than any other library in the country serving over 1 million borrowers. In 2011, the library circulated 21.8 million items, just slightly behind its banner year in 2010. Also, in 2011, the library system had nearly one million patrons who regularly used a library card at one of the library’s physical locations, and the library’s website was accessed over 40 million times. The library was specifically chosen as the case for this research project because of its decision in May 2011 to remove all of its existing video surveillance cameras.

Procedure

We conducted a semi-structured interview with two library administrators and analyzed documents and emails available publicly or by request under state freedom of information laws. We used these methods to gather as much detailed information as possible about the library system's video surveillance policies and the reasons behind the implementation and changes made to those policies in succeeding years. We interviewed the director of the library system and another senior administrator who had been actively involved in the decision-making processes relating to the cameras. Both participants were fully aware of the library policies concerning video surveillance and were actively involved in the decision making processes involved in their operation and ultimate removal. Following the interview, we requested additional library documents and emails related to the installation, use, and removal of the surveillance cameras under state freedom of information law. We analyzed these documents thematically, comparing the data with our interview transcripts in an effort to help ensure trustworthiness and validity, and to attempt to triangulate our findings and conclusions.

FINDINGS

The Current State of Surveillance

Prior to May of 2011, 10 of the library's 46 branch locations had camera systems installed. In May of that year, the administration simultaneously removed all of the cameras under their control. The library system no longer manages or operates any video surveillance cameras at any of its locations. However, one location, which maintained a video security system prior to its annexation into the county-wide library system, continues to have cameras installed on the exterior of its building, although these cameras are now run by the city government directly.

Additionally, in early 2012, another city government independently installed cameras at a building that the library shares with that municipality's City Hall.

Implementation, Management, and Use of the Video Security Systems

The original purpose of the cameras was to deal with repeated incidents of crime occurring in and around the library. Cameras were installed in the first branches in the late 1990s, as branch managers responded to specific incidents of criminal activity or safety concerns. In a survey conducted prior to the removal of the cameras, branch managers were asked to provide the specific reasons for the installations of the cameras at their locations. Each branch gave specific reasons, with theft being the most commonly cited (six of nine branches reporting) and loitering/undesirable youth activity being the other reason (three of nine). Other reasons included prostitution, car break-ins, graffiti, vandalism, and gang presence. Part of the original intention for the installation of the cameras was also staff safety. For instance, cameras were “used in some of the libraries before [staff] left the building to see if there was anybody around the building, so [a staff member] could get to their car.”

Although the cameras were originally installed primarily in reaction to incidents of crime, over time the cameras became used mostly for staff safety, as they checked the parking lots prior to leaving the buildings and monitored incidents occurring outside the libraries. Most of the libraries that had cameras installed were located in high-crime and deprived areas, although not all libraries with high altercation rates had installed cameras. The installation of the cameras was never part of a system-wide security plan, but rather originated at the individual library level when individual branch managers submitted requests to the system's facilities services division. Although over time the administration became involved with overseeing certain aspects of

camera management, such as fielding and responding to law enforcement requests for footage, the administration largely left decisions about the installation and management of the cameras up to the individual discretion of the branches. This haphazard process of installation and management, not overseen centrally, led a library security coordinator to state that, “I’m not sure if we’ve done a good job of identifying locations and... positioning the cameras” because some of the library locations with “high altercation rates... do not have cameras at all or in areas where the altercations occur.” These findings suggest that the ad hoc implementation may have caused the library to respond to “individual incidents rather than thinking strategically,” which may have had an impact on the library administration’s decision to remove the systems entirely because it diminished the effectiveness of the systems overall.

The cameras were only installed at less than a quarter of the library’s facilities, and the library never used the cameras as their primary security strategy, instead opting for human measures and more “positive” community involvement, from teen librarians to other programs targeted at fostering community and alleviating undesirable activity. However, for the branches that did use the cameras as part of their security strategy, deterrence, monitoring, reviewing incidents, and ensuring staff safety all became important functions of the cameras. Eight of nine¹ branches reported that deterring unwanted and criminal behavior was a primary function served by the video surveillance systems, while six of nine reported monitoring activity in and around the library buildings despite the fact that most branches did not continuously monitor the feeds. Additionally, three of the nine branches specifically reported staff and employee safety as one of the principal reasons for the continued use of the systems, even though this was not specifically asked in the survey. Two branches reported monitoring the camera feeds at the

¹ One pre-2009 survey of library managers conducted by the library administration contained responses from only nine managers.

reference or circulation desks, six others reported that staff reviewed tapes after incidents, at least two reported regularly reviewing camera feeds prior to staff leaving in the evenings, and one reported monitoring individuals who had previously been expelled from the library.

Managing Relationships with Local Police Departments

Although the library did not have a written general video surveillance policy, they did have a written policy for dealing with law enforcement requests for footage. This policy required library staff to direct all footage requests to the library administration. The policy also stated that all requests for footage must be accompanied by a court order or subpoena. In our interview, the administrator noted, “We did give the video if it were after hours and there was no one in the parking lot... But if there was somebody in the parking lot, they could be using our Wi-Fi... then we would still require the subpoena.”

The library maintained this policy because their interpretation of the library records exemption to the state public records act held that video footage was part of the patron record – a position backed by a legal opinion from the library’s attorney. However, this policy became a point of contention with multiple law enforcement departments. As the administrator in charge of handling requests stated:

“What [the police departments] would do is they would, you know, basically try to get the front line people to turn it over to them by making them feel bad that they weren’t helping them... solve this crime and so they put a lot of pressure on them.... It really is bullying behavior.”

The library had an especially bad relationship with a couple of police departments in particular. Generally these exchanges would involve legal counsel on both sides. A library administrator told us that “they were trying to change our culture, trying to get us to change our overall response so that they would never have to [get court orders to obtain footage].” Further tension between the library and local law enforcement occurred when one city police department removed all the computers from a library branch as part of a child pornography investigation. Records disclosed during our investigation also indicated that another nearby library system in the same state did not consider video footage to be exempt under the public records law, although it is unclear whether this had anything to do with the local law enforcement agencies pressuring the library to change its policies.

Ultimately, library legal counsel expressed some reservations about whether footage from the *exterior* cameras was actually exempt under the library records exemption, leading the administration to admit that it was not “totally comfortable that [their interpretation of the library records exemption] would be upheld in the courts.” Staff surveys also largely indicated support for the administration’s position that the cameras were a point of contention with law enforcement. However, one library that had maintained cameras prior being annexed into the system apparently had a very positive working relationship with their local police department. They mentioned a number of occasions when their cameras had been useful to police in solving cases involving stolen library property, a library break in, vandalism, and had also prevented a lawsuit when a patron claimed the library was responsible for injuries incurred on library premises.

Reasons for removing the installed systems

As mentioned previously, the installation of cameras was driven primarily by staff requests at individual libraries, and “was not an organizational initiative.” The administration admits knowing about the camera installations, but because of the large amount of “individual discretion” each branch maintained, branch manager requests were processed by the facilities department without oversight by central administration. Although the administration had conducted periodic security reviews, “the idea of using security cameras to... deal with security issues just wasn’t... part of [their] framework.” As such, it is apparent that the managers and staff at the individual libraries were much more invested in the camera systems than the central administration, a point that is reinforced by the results of a library survey of cluster manager opinions regarding the administration’s proposal to remove the cameras, discussed below.

Conflict with Law Enforcement

The administration’s concern about the library’s use of the camera systems was an on-going issue, but the impetus for the decision to remove cameras came in March of 2011 when a conflict arose with a local police department after the library demanded that police obtain a court order before the library would turn over camera footage of an assault in the library parking lot. This particular situation became further aggravated when police finally obtained a court order for the footage a week later and publicly stated that they had apprehended the suspect, a known transient, within 15 minutes of an officer viewing the footage. Shortly after the March 2011 incident, the administration set up a team to conduct a “critical review of security cameras to gauge the impact and effectiveness of the cameras and whether they are appropriate to our mission of protecting patron privacy and confidentiality.” The administration also discussed the

issue with their legal counsel and its library managers and conducted research into the effectiveness of video surveillance as a crime prevention tool. The administration announced its decision in a memo to library staff, which read, in part:

“We cannot argue with the sentiment that cameras make some people feel safer.... However, the potential impact to our mission to provide equal and open access to the library with protection of privacy and advocacy of intellectual freedom are too great to continue to provide security cameras.”

The library quickly removed all cameras under its control at its ten branches. Two branches continue to have cameras, but these are not owned, operated, or maintained by the library and do not primarily focus on the libraries. One branch has cameras on the exterior of its building that, when the branch was annexed into the library system, were turned over to city ownership and primarily survey the parking lot and adjacent city park. The other branch with cameras is one that never had them previously, but because the library shares the building with city hall, the city has since installed 5 exterior and 2 interior cameras that are not focused on the library entrance directly, but only the shared lobby and parking lot.

The library administration also felt that footage they had provided to police, upon the execution of a court order, had never really been of any real help in securing a conviction, and this feeling was also evident in statements made by library managers in a separate survey conducted by the library in April of 2011 as part of their decision making process. The survey attempted to elicit the feelings of library staff in regards to the presence of cameras in the libraries and the overwhelming response to this survey was that staff wanted the cameras retained.

Patron Privacy and Library Access for All

The library administration was also concerned about the negative effects having cameras might have on the library's mission to "provide free and open access to ideas and information for all citizens of the community." The library director stated,

"To walk into a building with security cameras and gates, that... sends the wrong signals... In a lot of our communities we're dealing with people who are new to the country, don't have any experience with libraries and that's not what you want to convey."

The administration is also implementing other programs to partner with other patron groups and community stakeholders, such as the large homeless populations that spend daylight hours in certain branches and the social services organizations that could also serve these groups. As the director of the library system put it:

"We are good at information and we should know who these people are, what these agencies are, we should have relationships with them and... let's work with these folks to help deal with all aspects of the community that we help."

Employee attitudes towards the cameras

The library administration twice conducted surveys of library managers about the usefulness of the cameras and whether the managers wanted the cameras retained or removed. In a survey conducted prior to 2009, all responding managers stated that the cameras were adequately serving their purposes and none recommended their removal. Interestingly, when the library surveyed its managers again in April 2011, all ten managers similarly stated that they wanted to

have the cameras retained, but only half stated they wanted the cameras actually set to record footage to tape. Their responses indicated a uniform feeling that the cameras were useful to library staff, both for staff safety and crime prevention, but recording the feeds to tape was not especially helpful or important and only led to problems with law enforcement. One response noted the presence of expensive equipment as a reason to retain cameras, another the presence of the library to go bookmobile, and others emphasized staff safety and the perception that the cameras had deterred unwanted behavior.

“Before the cameras were installed, there was heavy traffic in sex and drugs in the restrooms. Having the cameras is most important for the [library] staff.... The cameras provides [sic] staff with the opportunity to check outside the building before leaving.”

Despite the overwhelming positive response to cameras by the cluster managers, some also expressed understanding of the administration’s worries:

“I think the need for some [branches] to maintain good relationships with their police departments is more important than our need to have cameras. The cameras are useful, but not essential to us.”

Their responses also indicated that the administration’s concerns about poor relationships with law enforcement were very real. Cluster managers stated that “police often end up miffed when we report a crime but then can’t just turn over any video footage and the quality of the images isn’t all that great,” and “Having the recorded videos is more trouble than it is worth.” Additionally, managers reported that patrons had complained about the presence of

cameras in the library and staff at one location “[had] never gotten decent footage and staff can never figure out how to [do] the recording anyhow.” Another stated:

“The camera’s resolution is only good enough to recognize people by their clothing or accessories, i. e. back pack size, bags, etc. and not enough to recognize their face, so the cameras are only good in the very short term, like verifying that someone has left the library premises. So recording is really not useful.”

Almost ironically, at least one local police department – the same one that was involved in the incident in March 2011 described above – reacted to the library’s announcement that they were removing the cameras by publicly stating that the library’s decision, “hinders our ability to do police work” and was “jeopardizing... the security of... all the millions the people that are using the library every month.” The library also received criticism from local media. Concerning the negative community reaction to the decision, the library director said,

“We got a lot of criticism... in the community, but you know frankly... we’ll live with that criticism.... We’d rather have this organization maintain that principle [of intellectual freedom] rather than do what’s politically expedient or the easiest thing.”

Response from the library staff was mixed. Some were pleased that they didn’t have to interact with law enforcement over the footage issues anymore, but others were not happy about the decision. However, the administration did take concerns about safety and crime seriously too. They hired “additional teen librarians... to start game on programs” and have been looking to hire a Patron Compliance Coordinator to interact with the patron communities in a more positive way, and to “partner with the schools, the parks, and law enforcement.” Once the Patron

Compliance Coordinator is in place, the library plans to eliminate having off-duty police officers in its three branches that currently have them.

DISCUSSION

Video Surveillance, Crime Reduction, and Surveillance Creep

The installation of the cameras was primarily a reaction to incidents of unwanted or criminal activity occurring in or outside some of the library's branch locations. These were generally minor crimes such as theft or vandalism, but over time, and consistent with the idea of "surveillance creep" [15, 32], the cameras became used and relied on by staff for additional purposes, such as ensuring personal safety prior to leaving the buildings after closing as well as to identify participants engaged in objectionable behavior. We also found evidence that supports Webster's ideas [15] about the diffusion of video surveillance policy against the rising tide of evidence that cameras alone do little to deter or prevent crime. This is especially important, considering that most of the installations were in higher-crime and deprived areas. It was interesting, although not ultimately surprising, that the administration had conducted research into the effectiveness of video surveillance, both in the library's own experience and elsewhere.

Discrimination, "Social Sorting", and the "Purification" of Public Spaces

Although we found no direct evidence that the library's video surveillance systems had contributed to any sort of discrimination against patrons or employees, the administrators did present that they had been concerned that the cameras could prove unwelcoming to certain segments of their communities. Given the methods chosen by many of the studies reporting links between video surveillance and discrimination, namely extended observation of video

security control rooms and security staff, this line of research could be conducted in a library setting where such systems are in place. The importance of ensuring that libraries are free from the potential discriminatory effects of video surveillance makes this an important subject for further research.

Surveillance in the Workplace

One of the most surprising discoveries we encountered during this research was the fact that library managers strongly supported the retention of the video cameras in their branches, despite the administration's oft-repeated concerns related to privacy, intellectual freedom, and deteriorating relationships with law enforcement. Library managers expressed wide agreement that the cameras were an important tool for ensuring staff safety and for deterring unwanted behavior. One branch, annexed into the system after having cameras already in place, indicated a very positive relationship with its local police department after discussing the surveillance footage policies of the larger system with the department after joining the system.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The primary limitation of this study has been its scope, as we limited our investigation to accessing and analyzing publicly available documents and conducting an interview with two administrators of only one library system, albeit one with a unique experience. We plan to expand the reach and methods of this study to also include interviews with library staff, patrons, and local police officials, to better understand how the presence of surveillance cameras may be changing the traditional relationship between libraries and their patrons and communities. We also intend to pursue additional research into the effects of video surveillance on library access for poor and underserved populations that may be particularly impacted by library surveillance,

and to conduct research with additional libraries that have implemented video surveillance systems. Expanding our current findings in these ways will enable us to make claims that are generalizable beyond the limited scope of this current study, gain a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the issues involved when libraries implement video surveillance, and further triangulate our data collection and analysis efforts. Because of differing theoretical definitions and practical approaches to the concept of privacy across national boundaries [56], we are also planning comparative international research including libraries in the United States and the United Kingdom.

CONCLUSION

Library surveillance may take many forms, including traditional reading and borrowing histories, RFID tracking, e-book borrowing choices visible to outside vendors like Amazon and Barnes and Noble, electronic and web-based communication and interaction between patrons and library staff, Internet browsing histories, and video surveillance. The accumulation and aggregation of these forms of surveillance data can potentially pose a threat to the privacy of library patrons and staff in conflict with library commitments to privacy and intellectual freedom, especially if libraries do not establish policies to ensure prompt deletion or when state laws may not adequately protect all these forms of library records.

In this paper, we have been particularly focused on the role of video surveillance in one public library, but the findings of this study provide some stark contrast to the usual, and expected, increase in the adoption and implementation of modern surveillance technologies in our society. Although the library implemented video surveillance systems primarily in response to specific criminal activity occurring in or around library buildings, library staff ultimately utilized the

cameras for various other purposes as well, including ensuring patron and employee safety and protecting library property. This finding is consistent with “surveillance creep” theory. The data we collected did not demonstrate any actual or intended discriminatory enforcement by library staff, but the fact that this potential was recognized by the administration, and was part of the reason for removal, suggests that this line of inquiry will remain an important question in our future work. Surprisingly, despite the discontent and ethical considerations so important to the administration, we discovered that library managers were highly content with the presence of cameras and requested that they remain in place, although they were overall not as interested in recording the feeds and dealing with law enforcement requests as well. However, more in-depth research with a wider variety of library staff would provide a better understanding of how staff felt about the systems. Because of the importance of privacy, intellectual freedom, free speech, and non-discrimination in public libraries, we hope that further research will continue to shed light on this important subject.

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