THE SECURITY OF THE INDUSTRY

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Planning Security for a New Library

When building or planning a new library, many librarians find that their security can sometimes be left as an afterthought. It is, however, an integral part of the day-to-day operation in most libraries around Australia.

With each patron transaction, there is typically an operation involving a component of the security system, be it electromagnetic or RFID. This can be a transaction at a self-service machine, a loan at the circulation desk, or returning items into a book drop. Now, with RFID this has been extended even further to activities such as stocktake and automated book sorting.

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For a library to run smoothly and ergonomically, it is best to get the security system right at the planning stage. A good starting point is the placement of the security gates (or panels). These, of course, should be placed so they don't impede the patron traffic flow; wider aisles are better and help keep patron traffic moving.

As all security systems work by sending and receiving signals, it is important that the area around the gates is free from interference. Interference can be caused by things such as electrical cables and metal studded wall frames. Specifications for this can vary so including your supplier in the planning stage is a good idea.

Moving further into the library you need to look at where to place your self-service machines. High usage is the aim, so keep them easily visible and make sure they are user friendly. If they are RFID machines, make sure you can process multiple books at a time to increase throughput.

At the circulation desk, equipment such as reactivators / deactivators or RFID reader pads should be placed so transactions can be performed both correctly and ergonomically. If your circulation desk is complete, it may be worth putting masking tape on the proposed area and acting out transactions before the equipment is permanently fixed into place. Reality is always different to what's drawn on a plan.

Large equipment such as book sorters are quite complex, so close communication with your supplier is paramount; your supplier will also have to communicate with the library builder.

Of course, your security wouldn't be complete without tags. When tagging for RFID, it is important to alternate the position of the tag. This will help avoid tags 'shielding' other tags when placed on reader pads or when using hand-held stocktaking devices.

For electromagnetic, alternate the page the tail-tag is hidden in so those trying to find the tag don't have a pre-set page to go to. As the tags are hidden, a small mark on the book is also a good idea so you know if a book is tagged or not.

Remember, your security system supplier has a wealth of knowledge you can tap into. It is always a good idea to get as much information on their equipment specifications and have them involved in the planning process. Good planning now will lead to a great library security solution in the future.

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