

Week 2: CCTV and other surveillance tech in libraries

Real time lecture: June 13, 8:30 am Pacific/11:30 am Eastern

Overview

Surveillance technology like closed circuit television cameras (CCTV) are widely in use in libraries, yet their efficacy is debatable, and their procurement methods are often opaque. This week we'll talk about surveillance technology in libraries and our broader communities, discussing research about their efficacy as crime deterrents, as well as how their footage is used by law enforcement. We'll hear from Kade Crockford of the ACLU of Massachusetts on what librarians should know about CCTV, how we can build democratic processes around surveillance technology acquisition in our communities, and how to create policies around surveillance tech that can actually keep our communities safe.

Learning objectives

- Learn criticisms of CCTV use and efficacy
- Learn about surveillance technology acquisition methods
- Learn how to create policy around CCTV acquisition and use

Readings

- Video Surveillance in Public Libraries: a Case of Unintended Consequences?:
http://www.academia.edu/2395122/Video_Surveillance_in_Public_Libraries_a_Case_of_Unintended_Consequences
- What's wrong with public video surveillance:
<https://www.aclu.org/other/whats-wrong-public-video-surveillance>
- Silicon Valley startup that wants to put cameras in your neighborhood:
<https://www.mercurynews.com/2017/09/03/early-stage-this-surveillance-startup-wants-put-cameras-your-neighborhood/>
- School CCTV system broadcast publicly because they didn't change the default passwords:
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5432769/School-CCTV-systems-hacked-broadcast-online.html>
- [optional] The Panoptic Librarian: The Role of Video Surveillance in the Modern Public Library https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/47307/132_ready.pdf

Guest lecturer

Kade Crockford, Director of the Technology for Liberty program of the ACLU of Massachusetts
<https://aclum.org/about/staff-advocates/kade-crockford/>

Discussion

- Explore philosophically the concept of security -- who does surveillance tech make secure? Who does it make insecure?
- Is there a disconnect between CCTV efficacy and our policies? Between CCTV and library ethics?

- Is your library using CCTV? Where does the feed go? Who has access? How long is the data stored?
- How would you respond to arguments in favor of CCTV?
- What arguments can we make against CCTV? How can we redirect the conversation so it's still about safety?

Assignment

- Work with other LFI participants to begin drafting a CCTV policy. It doesn't need to be finished this week! But it could begin to explore the components that make a good one, eg who controls the information, who has access to the information, how it's stored, how it's acquired, when it's deleted, etc; or
- Write a one page plan on how you'd organize a democratic information session about surveillance tech in your community; or
- Write one page about how to find out if surveillance tech procurement is happening in your community and how to disseminate this info to patrons