

## Questions and considerations regarding CCTV and minors in the public library

A trend to keep in mind regarding to youth in current society: Youth is monitored while at home, school, private spaces (that appear as public or semi-public) such as malls and public spaces such as parks or the library. This “increased protection of children by monitoring them” is seen as “a central characteristic of modern childhood” (Fotel & Thomsen 2004, p.536). This idea is important to keep in mind when discussing notions of privacy regarding youth as well as the need for continuous surveillance to youth. These ideas are especially relevant because it might put the librarian as the only one interested in questioning this trend and thus advocating for the right to privacy that minors have. In connection with this, what are the privacy expectations of a minor? Although the US [has not ratified](#) the UN Convention of Children’s Rights, it is appropriate to know that the Convention does protect the right of a child to privacy in **Article 16**:

1. No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his or her honour and reputation.
2. The child has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

The problem with this right is that most often than not it is disregarded in connection to issues of safety. I would like to present two scenarios; one scenario that can be encountered as a call for improvement in security measures in the library (potentially including CCTV); the second scenario is when youth is presented as the cause of feeling unsafe in the library:

- 1) The following paragraph comes from a [piece of news](#) about the increase of crimes in public libraries in Toronto. The article is not about the installation or increase of surveillance systems but about the development of staffless libraries, one of the highlighted crimes is a good scenario that might trigger adults/parents/caregivers to request an increase in surveillance  
“This past week, a nine year old boy at Parkdale library was approached by a man and asked several inappropriate questions. Police arrested Ryan McFarlane, 38, and charged him with failing to comply with probation.”
- 2) A different perspective is presented by Newell & Randall article. The idea of “undesirable youth activity” (p.5) is mentioned as one of the reasons given by managers who completed the survey regarding why they installed cameras.

These two scenarios introduce two different ways of thinking about youth in public libraries, but both might trigger requests for increased surveillance: Children need to be protected from strangers and the library/patrons need to be protected from unruly youths.

### Questions to consider regarding installing cameras in areas mainly populated by minors?

What is the objective of these cameras? What are we trying to achieve? This question would be relevant to present to upper management, parents/caregivers, and to teens themselves.

- Potential answers about safety:
  - Monitor “dangerous outsiders”
  - Cameras encourage self-policing, especially among teens
- Potential arguments about security:
  - Petty theft

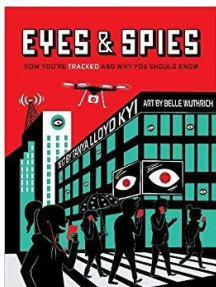
- Graffiti
- Is there any potential criminal activity, specifically against children or teens?

**Potential actions to inform the process or after:**

- The rights of minors vary from state to state so it might necessary to consult with the library legal team regarding the actual responsibilities that the library has or not. For example, are the any special provisions in relation to photographing/recording minors in public spaces?
- Do parents/caregivers need to be consulted before installing cameras?
- Can we have a focus group or town hall with teens?
- If cameras are already in place: Create a pamphlet specifically explaining to parents/caregivers and teens about the fact that they are being recorded and the policies attached to this.

**ALA - [Questions and Answers on Privacy and Confidentiality](#). Some highlights**

- There is a provision directly connected to minors, **IV. Minors' Privacy Rights**
- "Whenever a third party has access to personally identifiable information (PII), the agreements need to address appropriate restrictions on the use, aggregation, dissemination, and sale of that information, particularly information about minors. In circumstances in which there is a risk that PII may be disclosed, the library should warn its users." *Do libraries have specific policies or informational brochures to let parents/caregivers and teens know regarding this potential disclosures? Can this line of thoughts be applied to camera recordings?*
- "The legitimate concerns for the safety of children in a public place can be addressed without unnecessary invasion of minors' privacy while using the library." *Has the library considered other ways of addressing safety concerns? For example, most libraries have an unattended child policy that should indicate under what circumstances children are allowed in the library without supervision. A good comparison to work with is comparing the library with a park, as a public space.*



This book is designed and written to work with and for teens, but it might be a good tool to share also with parents, especially the section The Creepy Line since it might push them to think of unexpected issues. Chapters 1 and 3 focus on surveillance in schools and public spaces and there are some helpful information and examples about surveillance cameras.

Kyi, Tanya Lloyd, and Belle Wuthrich. 2017. *Eyes & spies: how you're tracked down and why you should know*. Toronto; Berkeley; Vancouver : Annick Press,