

Envisioning Safety at Hennepin County Library



Prepared September 2020 by the Hennepin County Library Envisioning Safety Group

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Executive Summary

In June 2020, 15 Hennepin County Library staff came together out of a commitment to ensure that our library spaces are truly safe, welcoming and inclusive for all. The Envisioning Safety team formed with a goal to examine the impact of punitive systems in libraries, including security, and to re-envision with community members how we think about and resource safety in our library spaces. Our hope is that this report, which includes background, history, data, staff and patron experiences, and future possibilities for our work, will build the support we need for next steps.

We know that public libraries are vital community spaces that can help build safe and healthy communities. Hennepin County Libraries play a key role in supporting Hennepin County's vision for a future where "residents are healthy, successful and where our communities are vibrant and safe." Library staff actively support Hennepin County's commitment to reducing racial disparities which includes working toward community care and community safety in our libraries.

Our goal is safe communities and safe, welcoming library spaces – and we recognize Hennepin County places significant investments to support safety in our buildings. Just this year, Hennepin County signed a do-not-exceed, 3-year contract of \$4,917,977 with Securitas Security Services USA to provide contract security in our library spaces. This security coverage is in addition to Hennepin County Security staffing, security management and security tools like surveillance cameras. That investment has grown exponentially since the hiring of a police officer in 1970 for library security presence. Our team's question is this: Does our current model of security achieve our goal of safety for all of our staff and patrons?

Unfortunately, when we look at data, and staff and patron experiences, we can see that our current system of support does not result in feelings of safety for all. Our current policies and methods of enforcement, which are directly linked to criminal statutes, disproportionately impact some communities. In 2019, Fox 9 Investigators analyzed two years of Hennepin County Library security reports and found that many of the reports involved people who identified themselves as homeless, or who did not have a permanent address. Data also shows that our current system contributes to over-policing and over-surveillance of Black, Indigenous and Brown patrons. Patrons have shared with us in a recent small-scale survey that they have witnessed or experienced harmful or unwelcoming incidents in the library; they question the presence or usefulness of security and some patrons feel nervous or uncomfortable seeing security in our spaces. As we prepare to review additional data that we've requested as part of our process, we can already see evidence that our institution inflicts harm, and repair is needed. Given the connections that security systems have to policing, we must reckon with the connections this has to broader racial inequities and racial injustice in our communities.

If we want to truly achieve our vision of safe, vibrant communities and public library spaces, we need to develop new strategies that ensure our current system is truly working for all. To do that, we need support from the highest levels within the Library and the County. Our next step in this work is to

engage with community members, which will require staff time, financial resources and authentic partnerships with community members. Up until this point, community members have not been part of conversations about safety in libraries – especially those most impacted by our current policies, practices and security system. As we follow the steps of the Racial Equity Impact Tool, we know that we cannot move forward without community engagement, which is vital in supporting us in listening, learning and re-envisioning together how we support safety in our libraries.

Hennepin County uses the Racial Equity Impact Tool (REIT) developed by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity. This tool is designed to integrate explicit consideration of racial equity in the decisions we make.

To join us in this work, we hope you will start by reading this report, which outlines the history of security practices in Hennepin County Library and Minneapolis Public Library (which merged in 2008) and shares a conceptual framework for why this work is so important – especially now. We highlight data we have gathered – and the data we still need. We’ve also included staff and patron experiences, along with recommendations for next steps with internal work and community engagement. We hope to meet with stakeholders to talk through our vision for next steps and get support.

We know this work is dynamic and must allow space for growth and change. Our hopes are not centered on removing individuals or specific companies, but to move away from systems of punishment. Engaging in this work is about examining our library policies, practices, budgets, and the ways we think about and resource safety for some, at the cost of others. If we are to truly be accessible and welcoming to all and live up to our commitment to “nourish minds, transform lives and build community together” then it is vital that we begin this work together.

Introduction

In early June, 2020 several library branch staff drafted a letter to Hennepin County Board members, Hennepin County Administration, Library Administration, and Facilities Administration. Over 150 library staff across library branches, divisions, and job classes signed in support of the message. The letter asked for a pause on a new private security contract, which dedicated almost five million dollars over the next three years to Securitas, a private security firm. In the letter staff requested support to engage with community members most negatively impacted by policing to understand how we could shift this funding to support unmet needs and safety for all in our library buildings.

Since sending that letter, the Envisioning Safety group formed, focused on examining the punitive systems and practices in our libraries. This is a project led by branch staff with support from some library administrators. We currently have three sub groups:

- Community Engagement group
- Internal group
- Data group

The Community Engagement group is planning community engagement with patrons and community partners across Hennepin County. The goal is to hear how patrons want to experience safety in our libraries and how funding could be shifted to meet needs and support safety for all. The Internal group is focused on developing training, conversations, and resources to support staff in experiencing safety and engaging in this project. Finally, the Data group is collecting and analyzing existing data and tracking what data is missing. All three groups are creating recommendations for moving forward.

Punitive justice systems, also known as retributive justice, have a long history in the United States. Punitive justice believes that punishment can change behavior and that the infliction of pain will deter unwanted behavior. Punitive systems include institutions like prisons and practices like school suspension.

The Envisioning Safety group is following the steps outlined in the Racial Equity Impact Tool to approach this work.¹ We've started by identifying a proposal for our work. This report is the product of step 2, "Reviewing Data". At the end of the report we are asking for support for steps 3-7, which are "Community Engagement, Analysis and Strategies, Implementation, and Accountability and Communication."

Our Commitments:

1. We will work towards community care and community safety in our libraries. We know that security and feelings of safety are currently distributed unequally and often are granted to some at the expense of others. We know punishment culture unequally harms some. We aim to shift away from punishment and control, and towards mutual respect, care and accountability.
2. We will actively center staff, patrons and partners from communities most harmfully impacted from policing and security. This includes but is not limited to Black people, Indigenous people, Latinx people, Hmong people, undocumented people, immigrants, sex workers, people with disabilities, queer and trans people, people who have used criminalized substances, people who've been incarcerated, people without stable housing, people with low income, people who are unemployed and underemployed, BIPOC youth, and people who spend long amounts of

time in the library. We will specifically seek out the voices and perspectives of patrons who have been trespassed and/or experienced punitive harm from library staff. Any labor done by community members in this work is valuable and should be compensated.

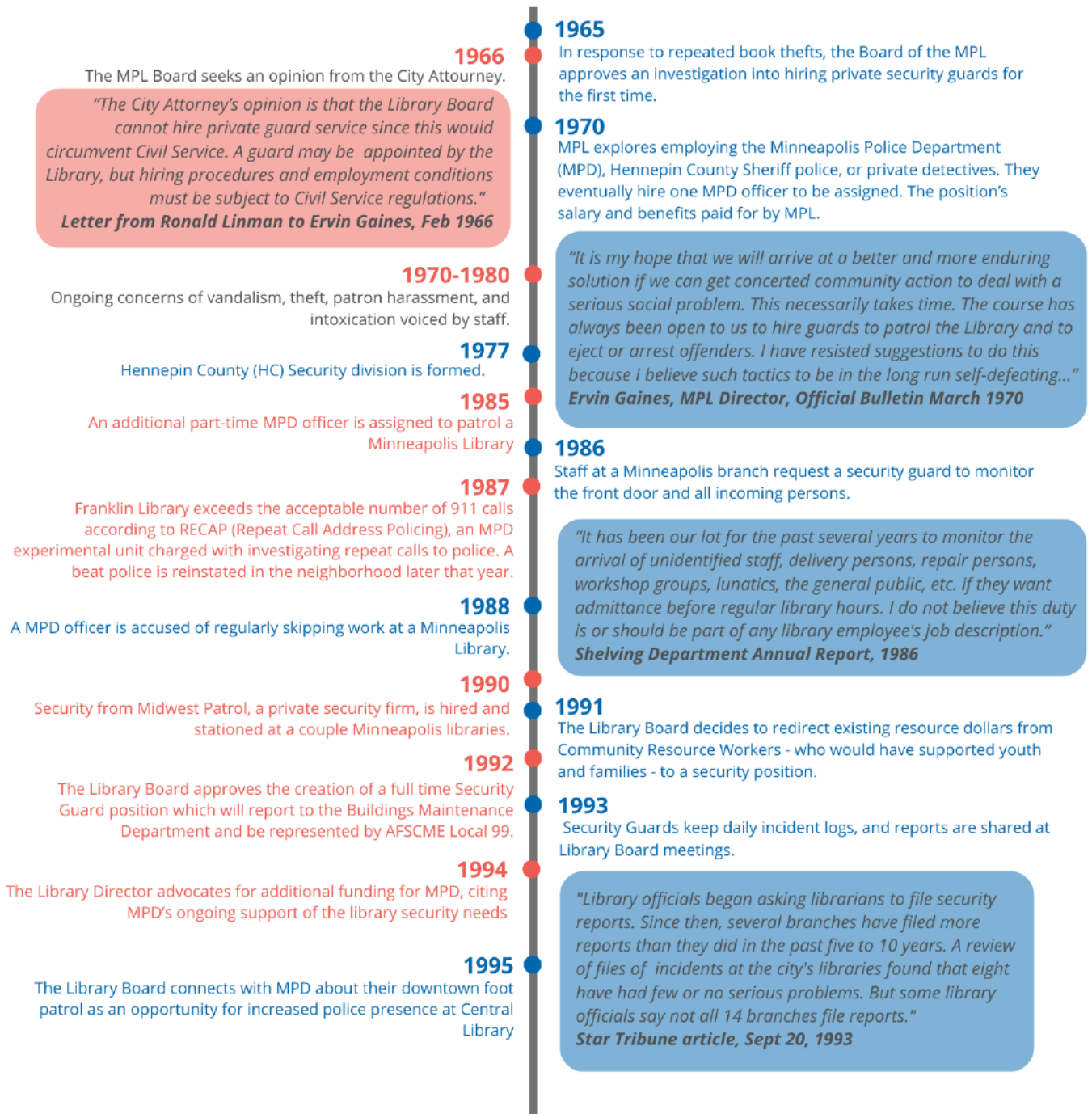
3. We will move from a place of deep relationship with fellow staff and community members as this work progresses. This includes holding tension and conflict as it arises in ourselves and with others. No community is a monolith and we embrace a variety of opinions and perspectives.
4. We know that carrying out this work necessitates a cultural shift in our libraries. We are a part of an organization that inflicts harm. We welcome emotions and know there is repair needed. As we move through this process we commit to communicating transparently.
5. We know this work is dynamic and we must allow space for growth and change. We will practice openness instead of perfection.

Acknowledgements

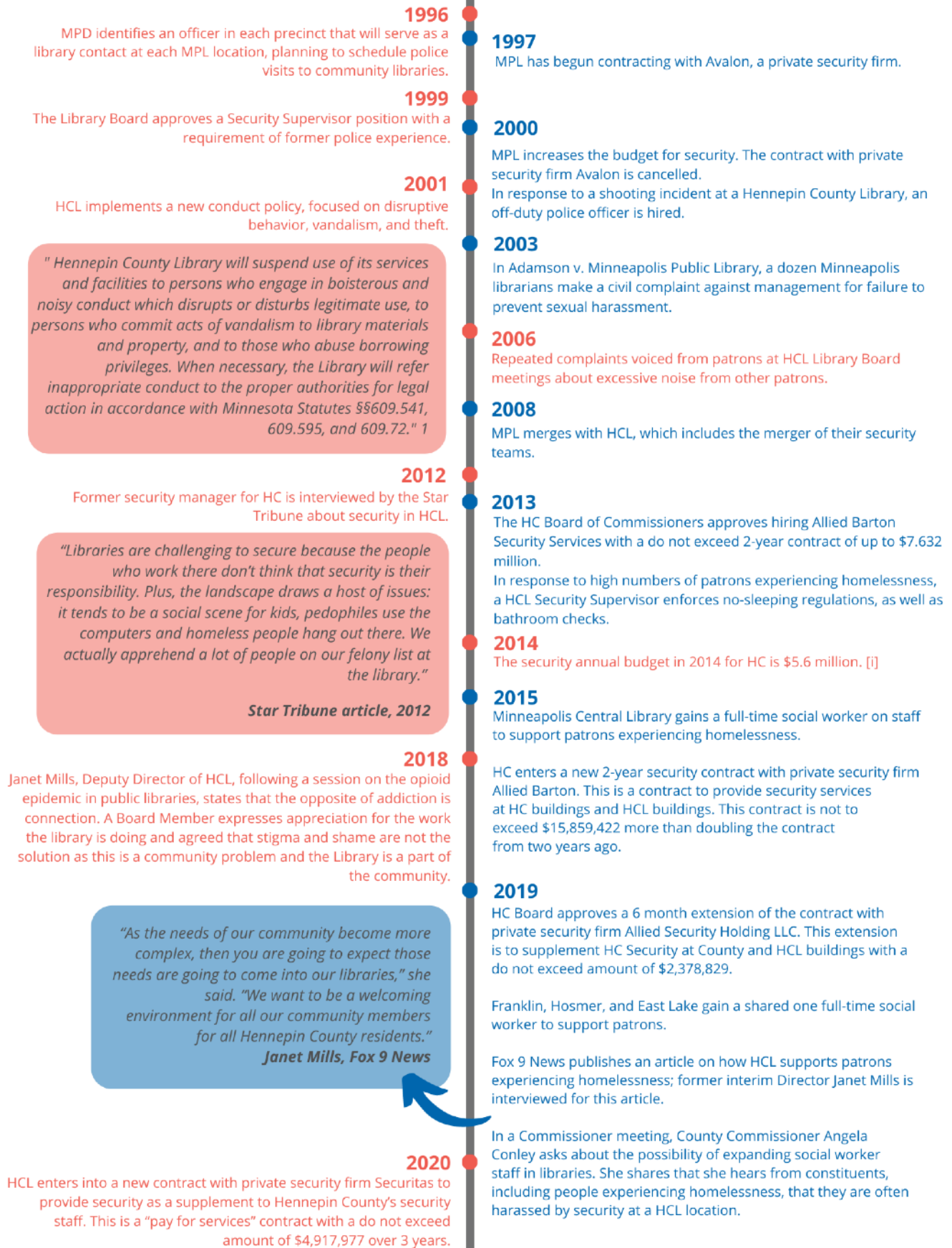
We want to express gratitude and appreciation for the many who are and have been working towards creating safety in our broader society. We are in debt to the organizers, educators, artists, youth and elders who are leading the way in nurturing, growing, and sustaining more just futures. We are grateful to all the Black, Indigenous, of other people of color, many times women and femmes who have lead the often invisibilized work of envisioning and creating community safety.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SECURITY SYSTEMS AT MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC LIBRARY AND HENNEPIN COUNTY LIBRARY

Our group identified that an important part of our data collection process was to understand our history. In reading public archives of library annual reports, memos, news articles, viewing county board videos and interviewing former library staff, we have been able to assemble an incomplete history of security and punitive systems in Minneapolis Public Library (MPL) and Hennepin County Library (HCL). Our guiding question was to understand the reasons these library systems hired security in the first place. **Data about library locations with security on-site and the number of libraries with security, including information from previous years has been removed from this timeline based on MN Stat. 13.37.**



Envisioning Safety Report



History

Security staffing at MPL started in 1970 with the hiring of a Minneapolis Police Department officer stationed at Minneapolis Central Library. One reason security staffing was originally implemented was to “control disorderly persons in the Library.”² MPL financed this Minneapolis Police Department position for 22 years. Throughout two decades and into the 1990s MPL also contracted with private security firms to staff other city libraries and fill gaps in service, mainly contracting with Midwest Patrol and Jacobson Security Service. In the 1990s, MPL switched from a contract with MPD to relying on a mix of staff and contract security officers, which it would sustain until the HCL merger. While we do not have a clear timeline on when pre-merger HCL started hiring security guards, we know it has been since at least 2000 when a suburban HCL branch hired an off-duty police officer. We had difficulty obtaining clear information as to the budget spent on security and Data about library locations with security on-site and the number of libraries with security, including information from previous years has been removed from this report based on MN Stat. 13.37. What is clear is that the number of security officers and budget for security has grown consistently since the 1990s.

In 1993 MPL hired their own guards as Civil Service positions with permanent library assignments. Several staff who worked for MPL at that time shared that this shift was significant, that it led to a much more cohesive and effective team, and that it was a vast improvement to having police or contract security. One staff person shared that, “Avalon security was mostly worthless, but having a uniform visible did help. MPL security was the best option. They were reliable and more consistent. They sometimes were too stringent in enforcing the rules...” Certainly, moving from police to contracted security to library security staff were steps in the right direction. Having security guards as a part of library staff teams, collaborative, and in ongoing relationships with patrons and library staff was an improvement. Unfortunately, because of the nature of the job, enforcement of the library’s punitive policies, these positions still caused serious harm at times. According to a memo from library staff received by the MPL Director’s Office in 1998, a MPL Civil Service Security Guard was fired for physically assaulting a patron, this after several staff complaints about the guard, accusations of misconduct, and three past suspensions.

In the early 2000s at MPL, an in-house security Department was established, which reported to the Director of Operations. This structure continues today with the security department housed in the Hennepin County’s Facilities line of business. Due to this reporting structure, security guards report to security management and their own private firms, rather than to library management. This operational structure generates many challenges in making sure that all staff, including security guards, carry out the library’s mission. In 1998, MPL Central Library Department Head, Walter Gegner wrote a memo to library administration foreseeing this concern and others. He recalled not long ago that the memo summarized concerns held by most of the department heads at Central Library at that time: “For twenty years we tried to provide for the library’s security needs by hiring off-duty or specially assigned police officers. I do not think this was adequate by any means. First, it was an expensive proposition for the library.... Hiring a private security firm is, I think, also short-sighted. The security staff would be cycled through library agencies. They would not know staff or problem customers in the same way or as

thoroughly as do library-employed security staff members. Staff would not know them...we don't have much direct control on the quality and performance of individual security personnel...I think relying on such service arrangements is penny-wise pound-foolish." ³

Similarly, former Assistant Library Director Jan Feye Stukas recollected recently that the private security firms, "always assured us that the guards...would be fully trained. However, our experience was that the people who actually showed up were often poorly trained...and not dependable or helpful...Since they reported to someone in the security firm rather than to library staff, it was difficult to train or discipline them when they did not do the job."⁴ HCL has contracted with many different security companies over the years. Regardless of the specific private firm, the library's experience has regularly been fraught with problems.

From our research it appears that the few times that security was removed altogether from a library building, alternatives to support safe environments were not implemented. This resulted in determining that removing security had failed and reinstating them. Even with regularly scheduled security officers in many of libraries, we still see the same types of incidents that were happening in the 1970's. We think it's time to try something different.

Why security?

When MPL first engaged police and security guards, it wasn't meant to be a long-term solution. This is highlighted by an official bulletin from 1970 that MPL Director Ervin J. Gaines sent out, in which he states: "The persistent misuse of the Library by some people has been a source of concern to us all. Staff and patron complaints have been numerous. In order to assure the staff that the problem is not being ignored, I wish to report what we are attempting to do. Efforts to enlist the Police Department on something more than an emergency call basis having been not altogether satisfactory, I recommended to the Library Board an approach to the Human Relations Commission.... It is my hope that we will arrive at a better and more enduring solution if we can get concerted community action to deal with a serious social problem. This necessarily takes time. The course has always been open to us to hire guards to patrol the Library and to eject or arrest offenders. I have resisted suggestions to do this because I believe such tactics to be in the long run self-defeating.... I would like to use this time interval to see if we can create a body of opinion in the city that will focus on the issue. If nothing constructive emerges by the beginning of next autumn I will, finally and reluctantly, recommend to the Library Board the employment of guards so that we do not have to go through another winter of panhandling and drunkenness in this Library."

In doing this research, we've identified two possible reasons for why MPL and HCL steadily increased reliance on police and security officers over the years. The first is staff feeling unsafe and/or unsupported when difficult or dangerous incidents happened in or around the library. The second is the increased racial and economic diversity of our library communities and the subsequent fears and discomfort of majority white staff conditioned by the racist society of a majority. Our society encourages punishment, and the ways many people think about safety in the United States is through a lens of anti-Blackness.

Societal Trends of Criminalization

The increasing presence of police and security guards in libraries is a part of the broader societal trends towards “law and order” and the expanding privatization of public spaces. During the 1990s—the “tough on crime” era in the United States—we also saw security staffing increase in our libraries. With the Anti-Drug Abuse Act signed in 1986 and the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 more money was allocated for prisons and harsher sentences were issued, including mandatory minimums.⁵ It’s well documented that these legislative acts and mass incarceration disproportionately affect communities of color.⁶ In Minnesota, while only around 6% of residents are Black, nearly 37% of the state’s prison population is Black. American Indians are about 1% of the population but make up more than 9% of prisoners.⁷ We also know that incarceration rates don’t align with crime rates: from 2008 to 2016 Minnesota’s crime rate dropped 24%, but incarceration rates increased 1%.⁸ Minnesota is one of the worst states in the country for incarcerating people of color at disproportionate rates.⁹ Just like laws, we know policies are applied to people differently based on race.¹⁰

Minnesota has continued to increase the number of criminal statutes on the books; MN Criminal code expanded from 32 pages in 1965 to 228 in 2013.¹¹ Since many of our library policies and practices are directly linked to criminal statutes—including our Patron Conduct Policy and Trespass Policy Guidelines¹²—as criminal code expands, so do our policies and enforcement of them. Through these policies and our methods of enforcement we contribute to the over-policing and over-surveillance of Black, Indigenous, and Brown patrons.

Safety Concerns

Over the years there have been difficult and sometimes dangerous incidents that have happened both in and around HCL libraries, causing staff and patrons to feel and be unsafe. Significant incidents include a shooting outside Sumner in 1992, a shooting in 2000 at the Oxboro Library, a shooting in Franklin in 2012, and a shooting outside North Regional in 2018. Another high-profile library safety incident was *Adamson v. Minneapolis Public Library*, in which a civil complaint was made in 2003 by librarians for a claimed failure to prevent sexual harassment over many years by library patrons having unlimited use of library computers for accessing pornography. We know there have been other serious incidents over the years including threats and acts of violence to staff. Though incidents this intense are rare, none are insignificant.

Shifting profession

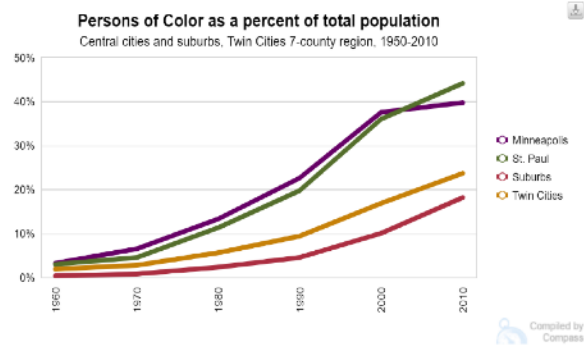
Historically, library staff and the profession of library work has viewed interacting with community members who were visibly poor, homeless, or experiencing addiction, as outside of their job duties. In 1970 the MPL annual report stated that “the problem of alcoholics and pan-handlers is not adequately handled in the city or county” and that “the addition of a police guard late in the year has relieved the Circulation Department of complaints and unpleasant duties.” There are many records in the archives referencing community members as “inappropriately using” the library. Over the years the library profession and library staff have reconsidered what we view as appropriate use of libraries. Our libraries

now have the internet and computer access, meeting rooms, play areas, and in many ways we embrace that libraries serve as important community hubs. We need to continue to be flexible and responsive to the ways that people need and want to access our spaces and resources, and that means our jobs, policies and practices need to adapt as well.

Demographic shifts

From the 1960's to now, there have been many waves of demographic changes in Hennepin County. The Sumner-Glenwood neighborhood in North Minneapolis shifted from being heavily white and Jewish in 1940 to predominantly African American by the 1970s.¹³ By 1970, two-thirds of mostly white Twin City residents lived in the suburbs.¹⁴ From the 1980s-2010 many Hennepin County suburbs saw a dramatic increase in racial diversity. For example, Brooklyn Center saw its nonwhite population grow from 4 to 54% during those 30 years.¹⁵ Brooklyn Park was 70% white in 2000; in 2010, it was 50% white; today, an estimated 46% of residents are white.¹⁶

Minnesota became home to nearly 110,000 refugees from 1979-2018.¹⁷ Hmong refugees began arriving in Minnesota in the mid-1970s, and Somali refugees began coming to Minnesota in the early 1990s. As of 2019, Minnesota has the largest Somali population and the second largest Hmong population in the United States.¹⁸ In recent years, several Twin Cities suburbs have seen their populations of immigrant and refugee residents increase. The latest census data has shown double-digit increases over the past 20 to 30 years in many communities. In Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park and Hopkins, more than 20% of residents are born outside the United States.¹⁹ We also learned that 98% of the Hmong population in Minnesota born outside the US settled in the Twin Cities, mostly in the communities of Frogtown, East Side of Saint Paul, North Minneapolis, and Brooklyn Park. Many Latinx people live in West Saint Paul, parts of Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center, and in some areas of Richfield and Bloomington. Of the Liberian population in Minnesota, 96% settled in the Twin Cities, mainly in Brooklyn Park, Robbinsdale, Richfield, and Logan Park in Northeast Minneapolis.²⁰



In the last couple years there have been several incidents of youth setting off fireworks in libraries. After one such incident, a security guard told staff that since this was a “felony,” the trespass recommendation would be a year. When referring to the same incident a security manager stated that the typical trespass would usually be 180 days. Either trespass length indicates that security considered this to be a serious incident. Looking back, at the 1968 Annual Report from the same library an incident of “lighted fire crackers” being thrown in the mail slot was considered a “usual petty annoyance.” There may be

many reasons for the shift in response to similar incidents. Our theory is that it relates to the changed racial demographics in the neighborhood where these incidents occurred.

We identified a pattern in HCL's history—in neighborhoods where demographics trended toward fewer white residents, security presence at libraries increased. In a recent conversation, Gretchen Wronka, former HCL Youth Services and Outreach Coordinator, strengthened our theory when she recalled that as the suburbs became more racially and ethnically diverse some of the predominantly white staff were intimidated by patrons of color, especially adolescent boys. Wronka suggested from observation that Black, Hmong and Somali teens were trespassed from libraries at higher rates than white children for relatively minor "offenses." Wronka noted, "The critical need for systems to develop better ways to help staff learn how to defuse confrontational situations before they escalated was obvious."²¹ It appears as Hennepin County became more racially diverse, our majority white institution began to invest more staff time into punitive thinking and more money into surveillance and security systems.

The voices centered in conversations regarding security have been the predominantly white library staff, library and county administrators, library and county boards, and police and security guards. Patrons most harmfully impacted by the use of security guards, especially those who have been trespassed from the library, have not been a part of conversations about safety in libraries. One of the few records we were able to find from the perspective of a patron impacted by security was from a 2002 Star Tribune article. The man interviewed in the article was a part of an informal chess club at Minneapolis Central Library and shared that he was banned from the library for 90 days for a rules violation.²²

"I ate a potato chip," he said.

"I was hungry. I was going to take it outside,
but a man wanted to play me, so I ate the potato chip.

A security guard acted like he had just caught John Gotti. "

Conceptual Framework

Why now?

In this moment of societal reckoning with the institution of policing, it is time for us to engage in an examination of punitive systems and practices in our libraries. If we recognize the harm done by policing, then we must recognize it in our security policies and practices. We see punitive systems in libraries—including security—replicating many of the same destructive dynamics as the police and failing to ensure safety for everyone. Where there is a policing presence of any kind, there is a risk to people of color. Additionally, during this period of massive budget shortfalls, staffing reductions, and other proposed austerity measures in our libraries, we should question continuing to pay millions of dollars for practices that have not been shown to create an atmosphere of safety for all.

HC Commissioners recently declared racism as a public health crisis. This resolution directs Hennepin County to several action steps, including, “support initiatives to dismantle systemic racism, seek partnerships with local groups with track records of confronting racism, and promote community efforts to amplify issues of racism.”²³ Knowing that research has shown that experiences of discrimination negatively impact health and well-being²⁴, we see the work of rethinking safety and security in our libraries as one way to respond to this call to action from HC Commissioners.

“Library workers must begin by acknowledging our country’s history of race-based exclusion and its long-term impact. We can then accept the invitation, long ago extended by communities of color, to consider the unintended negative impact of practices, policies and procedures that work well for white communities but negatively impact communities of color — often inadvertently or unintentionally” –Advancing Racial Equity in

HCL has made promises to our patrons and residents of Hennepin County. In a statement this summer, HCL acknowledged that systemic racism and police violence led to the death of a community member. The statement goes on to say, “We are striving to listen, learn, educate and make critical changes that reflect our values as both community members and library staff.”²⁵ Alongside that statement, we signed on to the Urban Libraries Council statement on Race and Social Equity. A key component of their transformative library-community partnership is “reaching and engaging disenfranchised people in the community and helping them express their voice.”²⁶ If we want to dismantle the systematic racism within HCL, we need to work with community members and authentically engage with them.

The Public Library Association, a division of the American Libraries Association (ALA), recently released a statement and call to action for public library workers to address racism. Action steps include changing library policies that punish and criminalize patron behavior and investing in alternatives to policing and security guards within library spaces.²⁷ The ALA recently convened a working group to create recommendations on restorative justice practices and the use/presence of police in libraries.²⁸ The Library

Restorative Justice is an alternative to typical methods of discipline that supports people who cause harm to own their actions and make it right for those affected, while acknowledging those harmed and those who cause harm both need healing and support.

Freedom Project released a widely distributed statement with divestment ideas, which encouraged libraries to ask themselves, “do police or security guards communicate or collaborate with library staff, or do they make decisions and enact policy without input? [and] ... Assess why there are police or private security officers in your library. What specific issues or challenges is your library trying to address or get assistance with?”²⁹

We recognize the urgency of this collective work and believe it’s time to take action towards co-creating safety for all in our library spaces by de-investing from security and punitive systems, and investing in our patrons and staff in new ways. As a majority white government institution, we have resisted documentation and engagement that centers those harmed by our actions, and we see this report as a first step towards transparency and accountability. If we are to truly be welcoming to all and live up to our commitment to “nourish minds, transform lives and build community together” then it is vital that we begin this work.

If we act now, Hennepin County Library will be able to respond during a time when community members are engaging in the topic in other spheres, and we would be able to build on the work of others. Voices for Racial Justice, a local research organization, looks at how punitive systems and policies affect youth and families by using a research justice framework. Their report, Hennepin County Community Voices on Juvenile Justice Alternatives 2016-2017, highlighted the fact that “the majority of community members who participated in our project expressed deep mistrust for the Hennepin County juvenile justice system.” That mistrust came from lack of transparency and community engagement when it comes to policy and decision-making.³⁰ When community engagement is done in a timely manner, it can help government organizations develop anti-racist solutions alongside community.³¹ We cannot make important decisions without open dialogue with community members. Intentional and meaningful community engagement is needed to develop solutions that are not punishment based. We need to be a part of the community’s conversation around safety and implement community engagement efforts. If we stay silent and do not reach out, we run the risk of losing trust.

Racial Justice

Historically, libraries have considered themselves to be neutral spaces and institutions, but recently that stance has been under debate. It's easy to say that intellectual freedom should be upheld but there's more to the topic.³² Public libraries in the United States have a long tradition of not being neutral and upholding racist policies and practices. Historic wrongs, mixed with the fact that most librarians and library administrators tend to be white, have allowed White Supremacy ideology to shape our policies and procedures. Not advocating for change and not supporting disenfranchised community members are non-neutral stances that can cause harm.³³ Saying that libraries must remain neutral and not partake in racial justice work is a roadblock to prevent real institutional change.

Racial justice and racial equity go hand in hand. The Annie E. Casey Foundation gives this definition for racial justice, "Racial justice is the systematic fair treatment of people of all races that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone."³⁴ In the county's Race Equity Impact Tool, staff are asked to define the problem. We define the inherent problem as racial injustice caused by systematic and institutional racism, and we understand that racial inequities are the manifestation of those injustices. Taking a racial justice framework and making sure it's linked with our equity work, will have several benefits for Hennepin County Library and can ensure we develop policies and services that benefit all library users.

By using a framework that names racial justice, we can address harmful power dynamics and give control back to oppressed communities. Allowing the community to be in control will help us heal the harm that has been done by security and punitive policies.³⁵ It can also help us build leaders in the community, support the leaders we have, and encourage advocacy to affect change in systems outside the library. Working with community leaders is especially important for the library, since our staff does not always reflect the communities we serve. This report will go on to outline the racial inequities we see in Hennepin County Library and in the community and provide recommendations for community engagement.

Intellectual freedom is the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. It provides for free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause or movement may be explored.

The concept of harm shows up in this report frequently. A harm focus helps us move our attention away from "What rule was broken?" and "What is the punishment?" and towards "Who was harmed?" "What are the root causes?" and "How can the harm be addressed?" This framing comes to us from Restorative Justice.

Youth and Racial Equity

At the library, staff have observed that BIPOC youth and youth with disabilities are often harshly and disproportionately disciplined by security and library staff, which extends and compounds the school-to-prison pipeline. Security data we analyzed backs up this observation. 100% of youth in the small data set we received who were banned from our libraries were youth of color. (Refer to the Data Collection section of the report for more details.) "How schools use security guards is a matter of racial equity, school interactions with police and security guards, particularly the ones that lead to arrest...fall extremely disproportionately on children of color." ³⁶

The School-to-Prison Pipeline includes harsh school, municipal, disciplinary and law enforcement policies that intersect by isolating, punishing, and pushing young people into the criminal punishment system. This system disproportionately harms Black youth and youth with disabilities.

Nearly 32% of public schools with majority students of color took serious disciplinary action in response to physical disruptions like fights; only 16% of public schools with predominantly white students did. Black boys are three times more likely to be suspended from school than white boys; Black girls are six times more likely to be suspended from school than white girls.³⁷ Additionally, schools receiving federal grants for police programs saw a 2.5% decrease in high school graduation and a 4% decrease in college enrollment. These decreases disproportionately affected low-income students.³⁸ Public libraries use methods that are comparable to those used in schools, which result in pushing youth out. These tactics separate young people from educational and social supports and are generally ineffective in helping youth learn and develop or deepen a sense of community. Research shows us that a sense of community and social attachment is what leads young people in taking ownership and modifying behavior. Public schools and public libraries are not perfect equivalents; however, because we share similar educational and youth development goals, we find data from schools to be very relevant to our work in libraries.

"Teachers are being asked to deal with a plethora of issues and traumas that come in the door with their school population...But the solution thus far has been to hire police officers and security guards. And we've got 30 years of evidence that that's not helping."

- Kendrick Washington, youth policy counsel for the ACLU of Washington

Policing and Security

Security in libraries are a part of the same punishment, force, and carceral systems that operate outside of the library. Research indicates that stigmatized communities such as Black and Indigenous people, immigrants, visibly-poor people, unhoused people and drug users experience more frequent and more problematic and harmful interactions with security forces, just like they do with police.^{39 40 41 42} A recent study in Washington, D.C. showed people experiencing homelessness were more likely to experience harassment by businesses and private security agents than they are by police officers.⁴³ Security often function as quasi-police, from the uniforms that they wear to the disciplinary and surveillance roles they play. This structure informs the attitudes and priorities of security staff that are often at odds with Hennepin County Library's mission, vision, and expectations.

Carceral systems include formal incarceration, like prisons, jails, immigrant and juvenile detention centers, probation and parole. They also include tightly-networked systems of laws, policies, customs, and institutions that operate collectively to incarcerate people.

We've heard from many patrons that uniformed guards in our libraries are mistaken as police officers or as being armed. The styling of security guards after police officers is not an accident; it increases their power and authority. Securitas for example, offers three options of uniform style, including the "military" style. These are recommended if you need a "stronger presence" and include epaulette sliders, which are typically used as insignia of rank by armed forces and other organizations.⁴⁴ Hennepin County security vehicles and uniforms also appear to be modelled after police. The presence of security who look like police can create real and perceived barriers for patrons who have experienced harm from police.

There are many examples of how private security can replicate the same destructive dynamics as the police and fail to ensure safety for everyone. Professor Robert D. McCrie, who has studied the private security industry, says "The stakes run a gamut from inappropriate behavior to lethality. Somewhere in the middle is use of excessive force. More to the lighter side is the use of inappropriate language. So there are these vast array of offenses that an improperly selected, trained and supervised security officer might participate in."⁴⁵ Several recent incidents illustrate this spectrum of offenses. Since HC recently entered new multi-year contracts with both Securitas and G4S, we focus on these firms in the following examples.

In 2019, a Securitas employee in Boston was indicted on charges of assault and battery on a child and civil rights violations. This guard was accused of using "excessive and unreasonable force" to detain an 11-year-old. The DA's office said a lengthy investigation found this officer had been reprimanded at least four times previously for using more force than permitted and for violating protocol.⁴⁶ Securitas' Las Vegas branch faced two wrongful death lawsuits in Nevada in 2017 and 2018 stemming from encounters with guards employed by the company.⁴⁷

We want to be clear: we do not believe this is a case of HCL needing to find a better private security firm. We can look to Allied Barton's oppressive and sexist treatment of their own employees⁴⁸ and G4S's long list of human rights abuses as additional examples of the shared qualities between policing

and security.⁴⁹ Since 2008, G4S has employed at least 200 former police and corrections officers who were forced to resign or reprimanded over serious accusations, including excessive force, sex offenses, and domestic violence. In 2014, G4S averaged at least one serious incident every other day in the U.S. For example, a G4S guard allegedly pimped an underage girl out of the hotel he was guarding and staff at a G4S-run detention facility bribed kids with candy to beat each other up. One G4S employee was fired for assaulting children and then rehired, only to do it again.⁵⁰ Less evidence is available on the actions of employees of private security firms because they operate largely outside of public scrutiny, but we can still clearly see the similar patterns of force, harm, and control at any cost.

In addition to these similarities between policing and security, it's also important to name the intersections of security, carceral, and policing systems. Security and library staff sometimes fill in where cops aren't present, extending the reach of policing. Our patron conduct policy states that "Failure to follow the Patron Use of Libraries Policy may result in eviction from the library and may include a trespass order or arrest. Inappropriate conduct will be referred to the proper authorities for legal action in accordance with Minnesota Statutes."⁵¹ 911 can be called and police are invited into our library spaces for a wide variety of situations, potentially exposing patrons to arrest or harm. In data we received from HC Security, we found that 10% of the Trespass Incidents (incidents that end in denied library access) provided, led to police involvement.

Research has also shown that security measures increase the number of behaviors and people defined as criminal and subject to formal social control, specifically poor and BIPOC people.^{52 53 54} The Library participates in this over-policing. For example, when we trespass unhoused patrons who have limited spaces to be, we increase their chances of dangerous interactions with police. Additionally, court data demonstrates that the growing use of banishment or trespass has increased the number of criminal cases involving allegations of noncompliance.⁵⁵ Trespass from libraries can serve as a pipeline to involvement in the criminal justice system.

We understand that one of the original goals of engaging security guards was to reduce police contact with patrons in our libraries, and we appreciate that security guards can serve as an alternative to calling 911. Shifting from police in our libraries to security was an important step, and we are grateful to our colleagues who pushed for that change. Now it's time to take the next steps necessary to move away from punitive systems. We know there are many individuals who provide security services in HCL who are skillful, compassionate, and share the values of the public library. These staff could be hired in jobs that don't require them to enforce our punitive policies, in positions that support the library and are well-paid, non-contract positions. Our hopes are not centered on removing individuals or specific companies, but to move away from systems of punishment. Our punitive systems exist beyond security presence in our libraries. Engaging in this work is about examining our library policies, practices, budgets, and the ways we think about and resource safety for some, at the cost of others.

The Opioid Crisis and Harm Reduction

The opioid crisis is among the most serious safety concerns occurring in our libraries. With the increase of synthetic opioids such as fentanyl in the supply of criminalized substances, the risk of accidental fatal overdose has increased for many people who use drugs.⁵⁶ Like other social crises, the opioid crisis is visible in our library buildings. Beginning in late 2017, library staff observed a noticeable increase in drug use in library restrooms, including the use of substances such as heroin and methamphetamine. This resulted in library and security staff responding to overdoses and other drug related medical emergencies. One patron died after experiencing an overdose in a Hennepin County Library branch in early 2018.

Hennepin County mounted a significant response to the opiate crisis, as the impacts of the situation touched many county departments such as health care systems, child protection, the county jail, and the criminal legal system. This included convening an opioid prevention strategic planning workgroup beginning in late 2017 and hiring an opioid prevention coordinator, in 2018. The strategic framework⁵⁷ developed by this group identifies three pillars: primary prevention to reduce the spread of the opioid epidemic, rescue to prevent overdose deaths, and treatment and recovery. This framework states: "Minnesota law allows naloxone to be administered by first responders, drug users, families, and friends.... Increasing naloxone kit access and training to more first responders, professionals working in high-risk settings or positions, and community members would result in more lives saved."

Despite identifying this as a part of the strategic framework, current HC policy around naloxone does not support library staff to access this resource or receive training in using it. As of spring 2018, Hennepin County security officers were trained and allowed to administer naloxone,⁵⁸ but library staff who have requested naloxone training have been told they cannot receive this training on work time and that they are not authorized to use the county's supply of Narcan. In summer 2020, a library staff member used the county-provided supply of naloxone during an overdose outside their library building. One week later, supplies of naloxone were removed from library buildings without regular security presence.

Though library staff do not have formal support to receive naloxone training, many staff are interested and have completed this training on their own time. While there is no systematic way of determining how many staff have taken this route, an informal count identifies at least 20 staff who have spent personal time to receive training and secure a supply of naloxone in order to respond to emergencies occurring in their workplaces. This has led to library staff administering or assisting patrons to administer naloxone to reverse at least seven overdoses from late 2017 through now. This is in addition to any naloxone which was administered by security personnel or emergency medical services.

Although security officer access to naloxone is helpful in responding to opioid overdoses, having security as the only option to administer naloxone presents challenges. Many drug users are fearful of contact with law enforcement or emergency medical services,⁵⁹ and may perceive a uniformed security officer as law enforcement. Once an overdose is reversed, experts recommend that the person who overdosed should receive follow-up medical attention,⁶⁰ because the effects of naloxone can wear off, and if opiates are still circulating they can overdose again. When security officers or law enforcement are present when a person who has overdosed is revived, individuals often decline follow-up medical care due to fears of arrest.

Another library response to the opioid crisis includes monitoring of restrooms by staff or security. This strategy can make patrons feel uncomfortable, stereotyped, and unwelcome. For instance, one patron commented in a Google review “why did I come out the bathroom and the security guard was standing in the corner staring.....can you say uncomfortable.” As the Hennepin County Opioid Prevention Strategic Framework states, “Public education and stigma reduction messaging to key audiences is widely recognized as a key priority in addressing the opioid crisis. Educating the public on opioid use disorder (OUD) - that addiction is a chronic condition, treatment is available, and recovery is possible - will help decrease the stigma associated with addiction.”⁶¹ Regardless of intent, such strategies as surveilling restrooms can increase shame and stigma around substance use.

Other library systems have developed strategies which help respond to drug use in the libraries while reducing stigma. For example, Denver Public Library employs six peer navigators and four licensed social workers. According to city librarian Michelle Jeske of the Denver Public Library, these peer navigators are “symbols of hope” for those experiencing opioid addiction.⁶²

Where we are now?

Patron Survey

When we identified a gap in data related to patron experiences, we reached out to a sample of Hennepin County Library patrons on the topics of security and punishment in our libraries. The respondent pool was recruited through pre-existing staff-patron relationships. This was a convenience sample and is not representative of all library patrons. We had 12 respondents to the following two questions. "How has security in the Hennepin County Libraries affected your experience in the library?" and "Have you been involved in any incidents with library or security staff that felt harmful, unwelcoming, or unsafe?"

Hearing from patrons is powerful, but is not the complete story of how library patrons access safety in our libraries. David Hough and Chester Cooper (County Administrator and Assistant County Administrator for Disparity Reduction) recently stated in the "Racism as a Public Health Crisis Report," that "program, policy, procedure and partnership decisions should be made with the direct participation of members of the groups affected" and that they "support the motto, 'Nothing about us without us!'" We agree, and see the need to enter robust and resourced community engagement processes to connect directly with our patrons most negatively impacted by policing and security in order to direct our next steps. For more details, please refer to the Recommendations for Community Engagement section of this report.

Some patrons who responded shared that they have witnessed or experienced harmful or unwelcoming incidents with library staff.

"I used to go the ----library a lot and have witnessed multiple incidents of security + management hassling patrons and demonstrating clear bias in who they confront and who they treat as valued patrons/customers.... It was unwelcoming, disturbing, and unnecessary how they policed some people and not others based on how they presented racially, socioeconomically, gender, age, etc."

"Made me feel unwelcome and confused about what I am doing wrong. I've gotten yelled at by library staff at the ---- library for using the computers the wrong way. It's confusing which computers are for what purpose."

Some patrons have more positive or no experiences with security guards at our libraries.

"The security guard at ---library helped me back into a parking spot once and has held the door for me when my arms were full. That guard has always been friendly and recognized me...that's my only vivid memory of a security guard at the library"

"I guess I don't trust library security, which does affect my experience in the library, but it's definitely the absence of actions rather than specific events I've seen that make me not trust library security."

Several patrons have questions about the purpose or usefulness of security.

"What is their purpose and who are they protecting or securing."

"I'm not sure what the point of security is for me as a patron."

"I don't understand why there are armed guards at the library, or what they are even guarding!"

"I wonder what type of situations they encounter with the large amount of youth and unsheltered people who use the library and how these patrons might be better served with the resources going toward security."

Many feel nervous and uncomfortable seeing security in our libraries.

"It just feels intimidating and unfriendly when I enter and exit. It also seems like they make the bathrooms unfriendly and potentially unsafe because they do sweeps in there periodically."

"Makes me nervous! I often come to the library with my 7 yr old Black nephew and seeing an (armed??) guard makes me very nervous. My little one is loud and energetic and I feel stressed about keeping an eye on him so he doesn't get on the wrong side of the security"

"Security makes me feel more nervous in the libraries. As the child of a librarian, I know that things can sometimes get rowdy or challenging in libraries, but I'd like to see alternative ways of resolving conflict. Also, just seeing the security cars out front freaks me out. Libraries should be sanctuaries for everyone."

"It makes me uncomfortable to see police or security at the library. It does not make me feel more safe and it makes me concerned for people who are targeted by security and police."

"I am a white, employed, sober person who has little risk of having a negative interaction with security staff. I know that I am the type of person who security is supposed to 'protect,' but I feel very uncomfortable whenever they are in the library. Their presence feels hostile to the people around me and it feels as if they're waiting for one little thing to go wrong so they can remove someone."

Several patrons shared that they have witnessed or experienced harmful incidents with security.

"I have witnessed several harmful interactions at the -----library between security and community members. Every time, it has appeared that the person targeted by security was no real threat and the security staff overreacted and caused a scene.... From what I have seen, security is not providing resources to people who need them (though I have seen other library staff do so, when it is probably beyond the scope of their job descriptions). Security just tries to get them to stop whatever they're doing or go away."

"A lot of the security guards at ----- library are not respectful of people who are homeless and are just trying to wash up in the bathroom. They can be aggressive in a verbal way. I don't like how they seem to be passing judgment onto everyone, treating everyone poorly based off a bad interaction with one person."

"I have seen security policing Black youth behaviors and even when the security was Black themselves."

Google Reviews

In addition to the patron survey, we pulled Google reviews for all 41 libraries related to safety, punishment, policies, and security.

A significant number of people have expectations around the libraries being quieter than they are.

"that staff would help remind particularly loud patrons to quiet down or help children find their parents instead of running around the place. Granted, this may not fall under their job description, but it can get very noisy and distracting at times"

"Total refusal of staff to enforce rules. Libraries are meant to be quiet, not rowdy play areas for adolescents. There needs to be a separate walled in area for teenagers to behave loudly and rudely to each other..."

"PLEASE do something about the screaming kids running around ruining the library for everyone else... The library has phenomenal resources, but are spoiled by the lack of discipline by the parent(s)."

"It SHOULD be a good place to study and read — and it's totally ruined by the kids that are allowed to run and scream throughout the library. And not in the play area, but screaming and running through the whole place. If the parents don't care to discipline, it would be great if the library staff could do something for the sake of the others who are trying to use the library."

Some people mentioned the friendliness of security guards.

"Nice Evening ☆ Officer ----- 'A Very Friendly & Always Helpful' Makes the library very inviting"

"All the staff is super friendly and approachable. Even the security guard."

"From the staff to security and the whole place is friendly."

"The guards are courteous and efficient so that everyone is safe and free to use the books."

Some people mention wishing there was more enforcement or more guards present.

"I wish the authorities would enforce a better standard of behavior."

"It's a great place but needs more police and security..."

"It would be nice if people used the library to study and read books. with all the chaos down here it would be nice if security just asked them not to come back to the library at all. The bathrooms are nasty as every homeless person is washing up in them. it is a beautiful library but they need to regulate the issues there. to have a library card to use rooms would be great!"

Many patrons talked about how security and staff have made them uncomfortable, feel unwelcome, or seem ineffective.

"there is this ---- security dude and he's so rude and I hope he will never come back to the library"

"why did i come out the bathroom and the security guard was standing in the corner staring.....can you say uncomfortable."

"Awful, awful experience. Library security guard(s) watching with scrutiny eyes with terrible communication skills towards patrons. Librarians gave me the same attitude vibe that the security guards were expressing... this was my observance as I finished my task near by."

"This library all ghetto has more security guards than books"

"its not quit [quiet] to read a book because library staff and library security are walking by all the time. Sometimes i feel like am in jail."

"i really do enjoy this library great computers nice staff but at times i feel like the security guard is racial profiling us. minute we walk in we are followed around like we are going to do something wrong She is not very welcoming. i prefer to go somewhere else because of this."

"the security is lazy and rude to peole [people]."

"You won't get much help from the Staff nor its' Security Officer who's often NEVER around."

Some patrons talked about experiences of inappropriate enforcement of rules, including racial discrimination.

"My middle child was singled out when other unattended children were also running around and being very loud"

"brought my kids to play in the play area, and they played at normal kid volumes but we were told we were too loud"

"Discriminatory librarian I have ever come into contact with. It is very clear by the behavior of the staff that they are not accustomed to seeing people of color... at one point the librarian was overheard by myself and my husband making derogatory statements about my son...As my son sat quietly in the kids area next to us on the computers she came up with a kids play backpack and scolded us for working on the paperwork while telling me about child development."

"We were humiliated here and scolded for kids being loud when, it not only wasn't us making the noise but it was a kids 'play' area and we were immediately told to leave. i thought it was a racial thing but it seems others have complained about the same thing. We were kicked out on two occasions the second time the woman working there said 'is this yours' referring to my child as a thing."

"lady caught me unprepared and said my daughter can't cry like that, or we will have to leave. I think that's really inconsiderate and rude, since I just got here and I have no intention to break any rules in the library."

"I don't like the ---[staff person] there she is very rude she kicked us out ...and she's very racist but other than that the library is pretty good"

There some reviewers that shared concerns around safety in libraries.

"I don't go there I dint like waiting on any bus in front I feel very unsafe in that area. It's a haven for drug dealers and people that won't do right as a citizen"

"the place is not safe. One time I was verbally threatened by a person sitting close to me just because I asked this person if she could lower the volume of her loud radio. My request, which was in line with the Library's rules, was done politely. I got scared by her threats."

There were many reviews referencing safety that contain racist and classist language and ideas.

Content warning: racist, classist language

"some of the people hanging out here are pretty 'shady', 'ghetto', and 'ratchet'."

"not a welcoming environment. I cut through the atrium every morning, weaving around the groups of thugs and seeing if i can get through without hearing several obscene words. why would i want to be here?"

"There are people here who obviously have no respect for the space or their fellow patrons, the staff seems weary and nearly terrorized by the thugs who are squatting here. I have empathy for the truly unfortunate among their number, but their is a very nearly criminal element that has staked major claim on this territory and they create havoc. It's literally impossible to find a quiet place to study. You have to be on high alert at every turn, do not leave anything you value unattended for a split second. It's not an exaggeration to say the place, in many ways, is dangerous."

"Scary place at times. You can't enter or leave without running a gauntlet of bums and racist ghetto trash who loiter there all day, sleep on the floor of the lobby, and/or harass you as you pass. Beware of whoever is lurking in the bathrooms, too. Worst part is, the library (and the county behind them) seem to not only ignore the problem, but encourage it with 'homeless outreach' programs."

People talk about theft in some of the reviews.

"The downside is that there is lots of theft here. I lost my backpack and security was not able to find it. They have lots of cameras in the building I wonder what these cameras are for?"

"Some time ago my niece left her smartphone in the bathroom for just a few minutes. It was immediately gone. Last week I locked my bike on a rack outside the main entrance on ----. It was stolen without possibility to review the Library's security footage."

Data Collection

Incident Reports

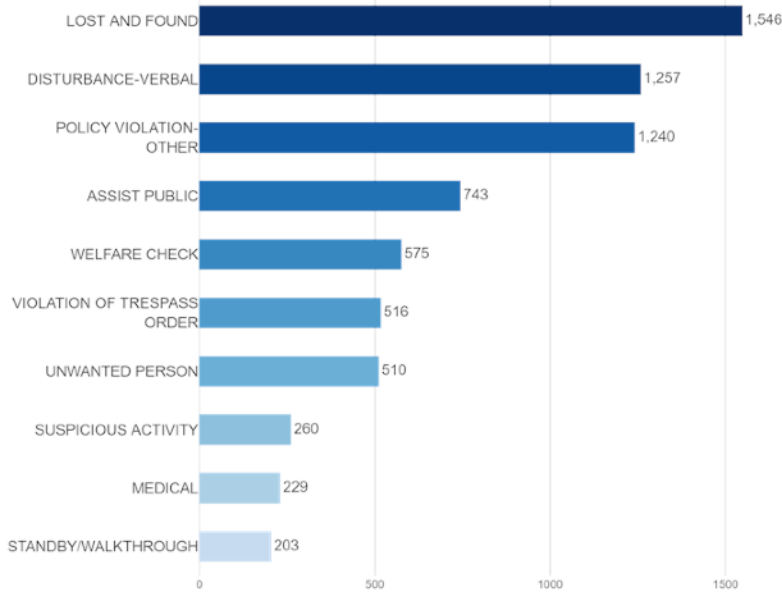
Incident reports provided by HC Security for the 41 HCL locations include the date, location, and broad category for each incident involving HC security or contract security officers in 2018 and 2019. Security reported incidents totaling 9,026 in 2018 and 10,082 in 2019. While these numbers may seem alarming, once we disaggregate them by incident type and severity, they paint a less dire picture.

Data provided from 2018 included information about the priority level identified by security for each incident (critical, high, moderate, low, report only, no action). In 2018, 688 or 7.1% of incidents were identified by guards as critical (4) or high priority (644). In 2019, priority information was not included on the report provided to us. We estimated by counting the number of incidents of robbery, physical disturbance, criminal sexual conduct, and medical issues for 2019 that about 782 or 7.8% of incidents might be considered critical or high. In both years, well over 90% of all recorded incidents appear to be non-emergencies. These numbers suggest that serious incidents do occur but are not frequent in our libraries.

2019 Incident Types and frequency

LOST AND FOUND	1546
DISTURBANCE-VERBAL	1257
POLICY VIOLATION- OTHER	1240
ASSIST PUBLIC	743
WELFARE CHECK	575
VIOLATION OF TRESPASS ORDER	516
UNWANTED PERSON	510
SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY	260
MEDICAL	229
STANDBY/WALKTHROUGH	203
POLICY VIOLATION- SLEEPING	199
SCHEDULE ADJUSTMENT	189
ALARM-MECHANICAL	182
ISSUED IN ERROR	157
DISTURBANCE-PHYSICAL	147
MECHANICAL INSPECTION	143
ACCESS	134
STAND-BY	133
FOUND ITEM	125
THEFT	124
UNATTENDED ITEM	118
ASSIST EMPLOYEE	116
ALARM-INTRUSION	95
ALARM- TROUBLE	90
MAINTENANCE EMERGENCY	89
UNSECURE AREA DOORS	87
POLICY VIOLATION- TOBACCO	84
ASSIST SECURITY OFFICER	69
THEFT-REPORT ONLY	60
ALARM-DURESS	58
DISTURBANCE-GROUP	53
THREAT	50
ASSIST PEACE OFFICER	43
ESCORT	43
SUSPICIOUS PERSON	43
SUSPICIOUS ITEM	36
POSSESSION VIOLATION	34
VIOLATION OF TRESPASS ORDER (REPORT)	33
PARKING VIOLATION	32
HARASSMENT	29
SPECIAL DETAIL	29
DAMAGE TO PROPERTY	25
ALARM-FIRE	22
INDECENT CONDUCT	17
JANITORIAL REQUEST	17
ACCIDENT-MOTOR VEHICLE	16
PARKING COMPLAINT	16
ELEVATOR ENTRAPMENT	15
SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY (REPORT)	13
DAMAGE TO PROPERTY (REPORT)	7
ASSIST EMS	6
THREAT (REPORT)	5
ROBBERY (REPORT)	3
HARASSMENT (REPORT)	2
PARKING TOWED	2
SERVICE REQUEST	2
SUSPICIOUS PERSON (REPORT)	2
ACCIDENT-MOTOR VEHICLE (REPORT)	1
ACCIDENT-PERSONAL INJURY	1
ASSIST FIRE	1
CRIMINAL SEXUAL CONDUCT	1
CRIMINAL SEXUAL CONDUCT (REPORT)	1
DEMONSTRATION	1
DISPATCH NOTE	1
FIRE	1
INFORMATION BROADCAST	1

Top 10 Incidents Types 2019



The graph above illustrates the top ten incident types as reported by security across the 41 libraries in 2019. We don't have access to how security defines the different incident type labels. For example, what do "Assist Public," "Unwanted Person," "Policy Violation – Other," "Alarm Mechanical," and other labels mean? What types of behaviors get labelled as "Disturbance: Verbal"? In our experience noise related incidents can include youth speaking loudly, patrons making cell phone calls, and headphones coming unplugged from computers, but can also include more serious incidents like verbal altercations. From the Incident Report data provided we do not know what the 1,257 "Disturbance: Verbal" incidents entail, but we reason there is significant variety in this category.

In order to understand the types of behaviors that might be labelled as "Policy Violation - Other," we were able to connect incident reports with trespass reports for the same events. Trespass reports generally have a short narrative included, which provides more context. We found the largest category of "Policy Violation—Other" that led to patron trespass were for alleged alcohol related policy violations. Some for verbal disturbances, several for viewing pornography, a couple for eating, sleeping, and smoking. (See Figure 1 for more detail). Based on this analysis we find that incident categories with the greatest number of occurrences include many non-urgent issues like "lost and found" and "policy violation-other."

Figure 1: "Policy Violation: Other" label in Trespass Reports

Incident Type	Number of occurrences
Alcohol Related	12
Verbal	5
Viewing Porn	3
Sleeping	2
Smoking	2
Eating	2
Asked to leave, escalated	2
Drugs	1
Illicit Act	1
Panhandling	1
Resting feet on stool	1
Urination	1

In 2013, the Star Tribune reported that the library security supervisor had implemented tougher enforcement of rules against sleeping and alcohol use, quoting this individual as saying, "I put in a policy if you are going to be in the atrium, you sit upright and stay awake." He implemented these policies because the library had a "huge population of people coming here because they wanted to sleep. ... It didn't look good." He attributed reduced alcohol use at the library to "increased patrolling in bathrooms." While HCL has since begun to move away from some of the stricter enforcement of policies that target unhoused people, we do continue to have odor and anti-sleeping policies.⁶³ In 2015, the US Department of Justice issued a legal opinion that making it a crime for people who are homeless to sleep in public places, when there is insufficient shelter space in a city, is unconstitutional.⁶⁴ Yet, when we reviewed the incident reports provided by HC Security there were 199 times in 2019 when guards interacted with patrons who had "violated" the HCL sleeping policy.

Additionally, as we reviewed incident reports provided by security, we identified that incidents are reported at unequal rates among the 41 locations in HCL. Many factors contribute to the frequency of incidents – the size of the library, the population density of the community served, the presence of security staff, the response style of library and security staff, and more. When we look to schools, one study showed that schools with School Resource Officers had nearly the five times the arrest rate of non-SRO schools, even after controlling for student demographics like race and income.⁶⁵ A study in Texas showed the rate of suspensions and expulsions increased by 200% when police were present in schools, disproportionately affecting Black and Hispanic students.⁶⁶ Considering this impact of officers in schools, we believe it is important to understand the impact of security presence on the number of library incidents and incidents that escalate to patrons being banned. We must be willing to consider potential bias in our use of security, particularly in libraries serving large populations of Black, Indigenous and people of color, patrons experiencing homelessness, and other groups that have been historically harmed by systems of security and surveillance. How is it decided which library locations have a security presence? Who makes these decisions? What data driven racial equity tools are being used to make these impactful decisions? What data is being collected to review these decisions for equity impact on a regular basis?

We believe, with more complete data and information, that resources could be identified that better meet the specific needs of each library. What additional staffing, resources, and policy changes could be implemented that would help us avoid or de-escalate some of these incidents? What could be an appropriate alternative response in handling such incidents as lost and found items? Could more serious incidents like medical emergencies and verbal disturbances be referred to alternative staff partners, like medical personnel and social workers? We believe the data reveals that the scale and strategies of punitive intervention that HCL uses does not align with the number and type of incidents happening in our libraries.

Library Trespass

"Nothing could be safer than an empty building, yet nothing could be further from the mission of a public library."

(Winnipeg Public Library report on securitization)

In addition to the incident reports analyzed above, we also requested one year of trespass reports from Hennepin County Security. At the time of writing this report, we received four months of trespass reports. Receiving a "trespass" is when a patron is cited for violating a policy and denied access to a specific County space for up to a year. Only security and law enforcement can issue formal written trespasses. Other Hennepin County staff can ask patrons to leave for the day with a "verbal" only trespass.

When a community member is trespassed from the library there is no formal hearing that takes place. If a patron disagrees with a trespass they were issued, they can choose to make an appeal. The appeal process requires patrons to mail a written letter to the Security Manager and include an address where they can receive a response back. Staff have expressed concerns that the process is difficult for patrons to navigate, particularly for youth and people with unstable housing. This appeals process begs the questions: What is the process used to determine if appeals are approved or not? And how many patrons attempt to appeal annually and how many succeed?

The American Library Association recommends that public libraries only exclude patrons who are breaking the law.⁶⁷ At Hennepin County Library, however, patrons are trespassed for behaviors like excessive noisemaking and eating.⁶⁸ According to Hennepin County policy, a patron needs to commit a felony in order to be banned from using the library for a year.⁶⁹ One public example of a felony level trespass was when an activist was trespassed from Hennepin County Government Center Plaza for writing slogans in chalk on the plaza. The County barred her from the plaza and Government Center property for a year. When she returned as a legal observer standing on the sidewalk adjacent to the plaza, she was arrested.⁷⁰

A situation that further demonstrates these challenges can be seen in the wide interpretation of trespass policy which almost resulted in the removal of a child from the library for a year, this was for kicking another youth in the head. This incident was interpreted by security management, not on site at the time, as being a felony level assault under Minnesota Law that could constitute a 365-day trespass. Security management took into context the age of the child coupled with the library mission, scaling the trespass back to 90 days. But they advised that if the youth's behavior didn't change they would extend the length of the trespass. According to MN Law, youth under the age of 14 are incapable of committing crime.⁷¹ If trespass length is determined based on criminal law for children too young to commit crime and chalking can be interpreted as a felony, we begin to understand the breadth of behaviors that may result in significant trespass lengths from county and library spaces.

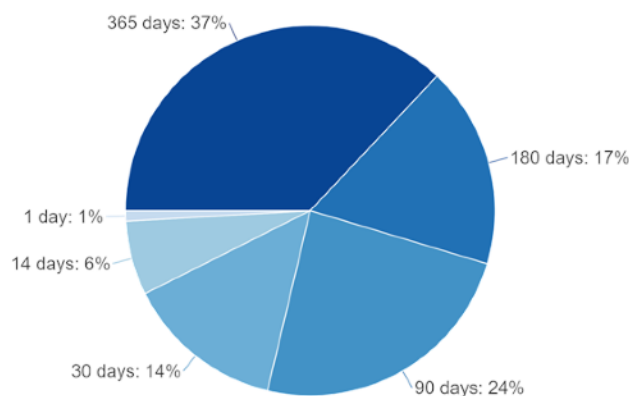
Trespass reports analyzed below were provided by HC Security for the 41 HCL locations. They cover formal trespasses issued by HC Security and contract security guards in January, February, March, and July of 2019. Each report contains varying information but generally include: a case

number, 1-3 incident type labels, date and time of incident, library location, officer name, length of trespass, and a brief report synopsis. Some reports include name, gender, date of birth, physical description, and address for the person being trespassed. Some include a photo and a few contain a copy of the handwritten trespass form.

Conducting data requests and data analysis for this report brought up questions for us about the data practices of HCL and HC Security. Based on the number of libraries represented in the data set (15 of 41) and comparison to other data, it appears the Trespass Reports received for Jan, Feb, March, and July 2019 do not cover all Trespasses that occurred during that time period. Analysis below is for the data we received, which may be incomplete. 42.91 % of the provided Trespass Reports didn't include a length of the trespass, 17% had 5 or less words in the narrative description of the incident. Library staff write our own internal documents when incidents occur, if security is involved in an incident they write their own report, and if security trespasses someone they write an additional Trespass report. We know through observation that there are inconsistencies in how library staff complete our reports: we don't receive training on how to do so, and neither HC Security nor HCL staff systemically collect racial data in incident or trespass reports. All of this compounds, making it difficult for the data to be analyzed.

One situation we've witnessed and experienced is the stress that arises for staff when someone is trespassed but returns to the library repeatedly because they need or want access to library resources. This is labelled by security as a "trespass violation." When reviewing the 192 trespass reports that were provided, we removed 26 "trespass violation" reports for before conducting our analysis. Research, data, and observation show that trespass isn't transformative: it doesn't support people in making changes, gaining essential resources, or addressing social forces that impact them. Compliance with trespass orders is complicated by the fact that the libraries from which people are trespassed offer crucial opportunities for social engagement, relationships, and social services.⁷² Rather than pushing people out for significant lengths as visualized below, how could we be collaborating with our patrons to meet needs, create contexts for accountability to occur, and co-create solutions together?

Trespass Lengths



Percentages based 108 Trespass Reports that included length of trespass.

Our patrons are separated from library resources for substantial amounts of time. More than half of the reports provided were for trespasses 6 months or longer. (Figure 2). One study which interviewed people who had received trespass orders in Seattle showed that “the pains triggered by banishment are qualitatively similar to those caused by imprisonment.”⁷³ This same study identified that “being excluded was often a powerful emotional experience, one that confirmed their sense that they were no longer considered citizens, even fully human, by other residents.” Lengthy trespass appears to be our “go-to” strategy at HCL, and we have reason to believe it deeply impacts our patrons.

Figure 2: Trespass Reports included length

Length	Occurrences
365 days	40
180 days	19
90 days	26
30 days	15
14 days	7
1 day	1
Total	108

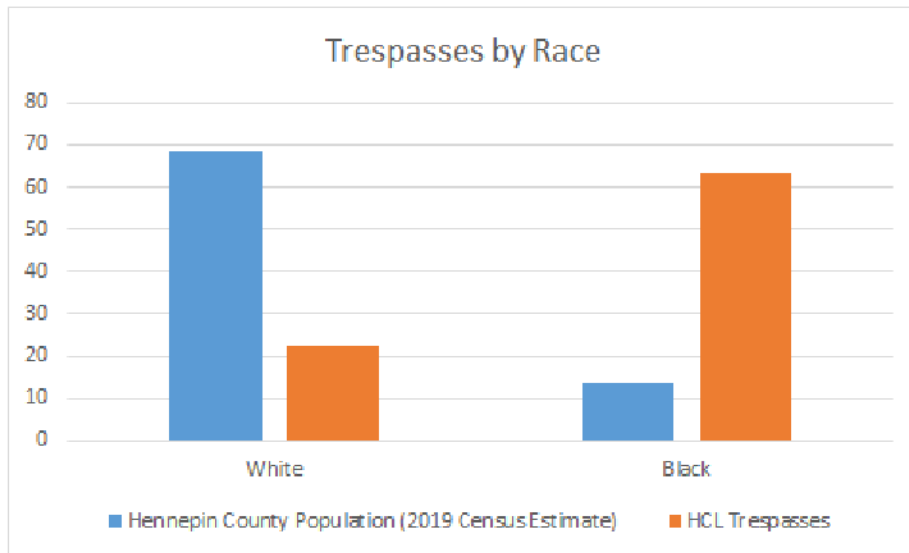
Through data and observation we see that many people who are trespassed from our libraries are the same community members who need access to our spaces the most: people without stable housing, people needing spaces to stay cool or warm, or youth seeking safe spaces to be after school or on weekends. In fact, some experts have argued that spatial exclusion or trespass is a “return to the discredited medieval practice of banishment as a strategy for managing the poor and unwanted.”⁷⁴ Fox 9 Investigators analyzed two years of HCL security reports in 2019 and found that many of the reports involved people who identified themselves as homeless, or who did not have a permanent address.⁷⁵ One study in Seattle estimated that at least 42.5% of trespass admonishments are given to unhoused individuals.⁷⁶ When we trespass we are taking away resources from people who need them, limiting access and making everyday life more perilous.

Figure 3:

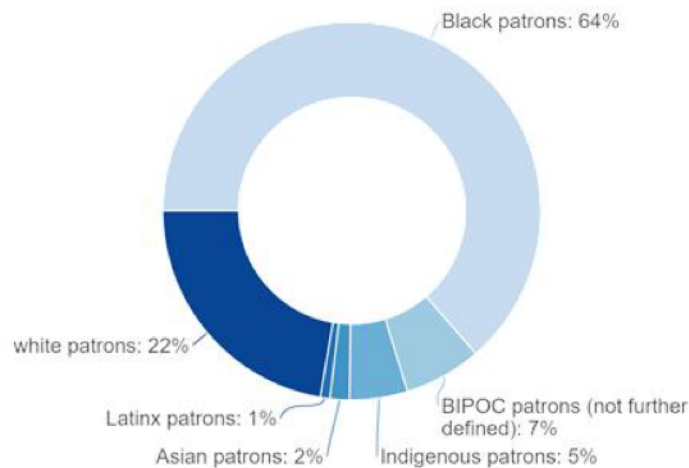
	Number of trespasses
Asian patrons	2
Black patrons	77
Indigenous patrons	6
Latinx patrons	1
BIPOC patrons (not further defined)	8
white patrons	27
Total	121

Analyzing library trespasses by race is critical to the reduction of disparities in Hennepin County. We were able to obtain the racial data of trespassed patrons in 121 reports. Although there is not currently a consistent method of collecting racial demographics of trespassed patrons, we relied on reports that included this descriptor in their narrative, patron self-identification, and guard and library staff observation (Figure 3). Even with an imperfect and incomplete collection of racial data, it is clear that Black people are trespassed at disproportionately higher rates than their white counterparts.

This is especially apparent when considering population of Black and White residents in the County as a whole.



Comparing the racial demographics of Hennepin County to who is being trespassed is not a one to one match. We know that the demographics of specific library communities within Hennepin County vary, but since we don't keep statistics on demographics of who uses our libraries, we are working with the data that does exist. No matter what data we compare to, we know it isn't right that over 75% of people in these reports being trespassed from our libraries are BIPOC.



As we dig deeper we also see that Black, Indigenous, and other people of color are trespassed for longer on average than white patrons. In the data provided we see that white people are trespassed for 177 days on average while BIPOC patrons are trespass for 201 days on average. (Figure 4). Our trespassing practices disproportionately affect communities of color and Indigenous people.

Figure 4:

	14 days	30 days	90 days	180 days	365 days	Length not provided	Total
Asian patrons			1		1		2
Black patrons	1	5	15	10	18	27	49
Indigenous patrons		1	1		1	3	6
Latinx patrons						1	1
BIPOC patrons (not further defined)			2	1	2	3	5
white patrons		6	5	2	7	7	27

We don't have statistics on what percentages of people trespassed from our libraries have disabilities. Based on studies from other fields we have grounds to be concerned that people with disabilities are also disproportionately affected by our policies and trespass practices. Studies show that the numbers of people with disabilities or those experiencing episodes of mental illness who are shot by the police is likely between one-third and one-half of total police killings.⁷⁷ Department of Education data has shown year after year that students with disabilities are disproportionately referred to and arrested by police in schools.⁷⁸ HCL behavior policies require that patrons "conduct themselves in a safe and orderly way." Since the ways our society tends to think about "order" are deeply influenced by ableism, we've witnessed that behaviors that don't align with "normative" behaviors are regularly marked as disruptive, prompting staff or security to intervene. We would like to know how policy makers review policies for bias, including ableism. As staff we know there isn't currently required training provided to us in order to build skills in this area and learn about ableism and its significant impacts.

Ableism is the discrimination and oppression of disabled people. A societal belief that being abled is "normal" and is preferred. (University of Arizona Disability Resource Center)

There were 13 reports included of patrons trespassed for 30-180 days for smoking in libraries during winter. It gets very cold in Minnesota and we know that some people break this rule to try to get out of the cold for a moment. When there are repeat behaviors like this, how can we engage creatively to try and understand and respond to the broader context and the needs that people

are trying to meet? We hope that trespass and incident data can become more accessible, so that these types of patterns can be identified and addressed in more innovative ways.

As public employees, we feel it is important to acknowledge the more rare but serious incidents that can occur, such as physical disturbances, harassment, and assault, as we want to be clear not to diminish the complicated safety-related situations that arise in our libraries. Based on a staff review of the "Report Synopsis Highlights" that security provided, we identified around 61 or 36.7% of the 166 trespass reports provided that appeared to be more escalated situations, these included incidents like verbal and physical fights, verbal harassment of staff, spitting on guards, and refusing to leave the library. As majority branch staff ourselves, we've all been involved in situations at work where we have felt vulnerable, fearful, or unprepared. This is why the Envisioning Safety Internal group has begun interviewing staff, to understand further what safety needs exist.

In the reports provided, we see that 27 children and teens were trespassed from our libraries over the four months of reports. 15 of these reports included racial data and 100% of those were issued to youth of color. (Figure 5). 17 of the 27 youth reports included trespass length, 82% of these were for over three months. (Figure 6). We recognize that we are working with a small data set for youth, however, if this data is indicative of larger trends, we find the patterns around race and trespass and length of trespass concerning.

It's important to note that youth also regularly receive one day "verbal" only trespasses from our libraries, which are not tracked by staff in a systematic way. Youth use our library spaces to access many needs, including social connection with peers and staff, internet access, food resources, quality programming, and a safe space to be during time spent out of school. Libraries are important resources for many young people and their families, and for most young people, enforcement that threatens or leads to punishment for misbehavior does not work well.

We have questions about the lengths of trespasses for same or similar policy violations. Looking at alcohol related violations we see trespass lengths varying from 30-180 days for having alcohol or drinking on library property. We understand there may be many variables affecting the decisions of trespass length. We aren't a part of trespass length decisions or review, making it hard for us to know how guards are making these decisions. The HCL patron conduct

Figure 5: Reports for BIPOC youth

	Age: 0-19
Asian patrons	
BIPOC patrons (not further defined)	2
Black patrons	13
Indigenous patron	
Latinx patrons	
white patrons	
n/a	12
Total	27

Figure 6:

Length of Trespass	Number of youth ages 0-19
365 days	7
180 days	4
90 days	3
30 days	1
14 days	2
n/a	10
Total	27

policy states that it's against policy to be "consuming alcoholic beverages or controlled substances or being under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances in a manner that causes a public disturbance."⁷⁹ 13.25% or 22 of the 166 Trespass Reports provided appear to be both alcohol related and don't indicate a public disturbance.

Knowing that strong relationships are among the most significant motivators to curb drug and alcohol misuse,⁸⁰ and that drinking and drug use are often a reaction to social conditions such as racism and poverty,⁸¹ it is harmful to deny patrons access to library resources. Some trespasses that raised additional questions for us included people being trespassed for sleeping in the library, for leaving items unattended, panhandling, and one patron who was trespassed for a year for selling cigarettes. There appears to be great discretion and inconsistency in how library policies are interpreted and enforced. How can we shift our policies and practices to be supportive of our patrons, to strengthen relationships and access to resources, rather than compounding the problems of oppressions and isolation?

Ongoing Data Needs

We understand that taking disparity reduction work seriously means that we must always be willing to ask hard questions about our own role in perpetuating the harm done to those who are the most vulnerable in our communities. It means we must always be willing to take a deeper look into our own patterns of behavior and become more aware of the ways our biases can play into interactions that inflame rather than de-escalate situations of conflict. It requires us to examine (and regularly re-examine) the ways in which we mirror the same destructive patterns of punishment we see in the broader society, as well as the practices and methods that truly support systems change. Essentially, it invites us to take a closer look at how we understand conflict and the ways we engage with our patrons around it, and to move to develop a more compassionate style of resolution that serves to both advance racial equity and repair trust for all those who have been damaged by years of rigid and punitive system policies and practices.

In order to do this, it will take a commitment to asking the right questions, and to collecting, reviewing and analyzing the right kind of data. This is important for us to fully recognize what our patterns are, so that we can take the correct steps to reverse any harm and begin the much-needed process of repair. We know that by paying better attention and becoming better listeners we will deepen our level of understanding and awareness, which supports us in acting in ways that are more conducive to true transformation taking place and healing in our communities!

To further understand the racial equity impacts of current library and security practices and guidance, we've identified the following needs in data collection and processes:

- Trespass and Incident data disaggregated by race (not currently systematically collected)
- HCL budget spent on security staff and security mechanisms annually
- Library Staff Incident Report Data
- Access to security Trespass Guidelines
- Definitions of Security Incident types
- Data on how many patrons apply for and are granted appeal from their trespasses
- A clear process for staff to make data requests

In the future we hope to see:

- Collaboration across departments on what data is collected
- Collection of the right data moving forward for to support Hennepin County's stated goal of advancing racial equity and inclusion and reducing disparities
- Commitment to reviewing data, sharing data with staff, and creating action plans in response to data

Staff concerns

We all want workers and patrons to feel welcome, comfortable and to experience safety in our libraries. We aim to move towards a new library culture that understands and acknowledges that the safety of both library workers and patrons are inter-connected. Staff have many valid concerns about safety in our workplaces. One of our concerns is whose safety is prioritized at the cost of others. Punitive systems can reduce feelings of unsafety and discomfort for some, but don't improve the conditions of safety for all.

Research indicates crime/incident prevention mechanisms can lead to more incidents and crime.⁸² HCL is highly surveilled with security guards and security cameras, including in select public bathrooms,⁸³ which can contribute to a climate of fear and suspicion. Measures like security, surveillance, and irregular consequences can potentially provoke unpredictable responses from patrons, instead of building community trust."⁸⁴ This leads us to believe the current methods of security at HCL are detrimental to patrons and staff due to the culture of fear that is developed. Staff deserve to experience safety at work, but not by relying on tools that use fear or coercion in an attempt to control library patrons.

HCL has continued to increase our budgets dramatically towards reliance on security mechanisms spanning over decades. Even though research shows that there is no reliable correlation between policing and rates of crime.^{85 86} In 1995, the total cost of security for MPL, including guards, armored cars, repairs, alarms, training and more was \$160,433—inflated to today's dollars would be equivalent of \$272,758.21. The millions we are spending annually at HCL now, although not a direct comparison, is still telling. We estimate millions, because we requested, but did not receive budget numbers for Hennepin County Security expenditures for recent years. Widening our view, we learned that HCL's 2020 budget for public libraries and the law library was \$90,919,680⁸⁷ while HC Sheriff's Department budget in 2020 was \$118,659,559. This amount in addition to the substantial police budgets for each municipality within Hennepin County. Even though there have been dramatic increases in funding for policing and security mechanisms, incidents continue, and some staff and patrons continue to feel unsafe in our libraries.

One reason library workers feel vulnerable is continued understaffing in our branches. Under-resourcing causes library workers to feel stressed and precarious, and having appropriate staffing levels is crucial for everyone to experience safety. One example is youth to adult ratios in our library buildings. During a Library Visit Count in 2019, there was a day at Webber Park Library where there were 56 patrons in the library: about 52 of those patrons were youth, with two staff scheduled to be on the public floor. Before COVID this ratio of youth to adults was not uncommon at that branch in the summer. When difficult situations arise in the library, having colleagues and a manager available and on site to brainstorm and respond as a team is very important. Libraries with inadequate staffing are more likely to struggle with conflict, escalation, and difficult interactions.

Envisioning Safety Report

In 2018 we had 619.2 full time equivalents (FTE), down in 2019 to 605.4 FTE, and down again in 2020 with 535.6. During this same time period HC Sheriff's department added FTE from 797 full time equivalents in 2018, up to 807 in 2019, and 810 in 2020. ⁸⁸ With recent austerity measures, the County Administrator has requested additional cuts that would potentially reduce the library down in 2021 to only 500.6 FTE, with the Sheriff's Office proposed to remain steady at 810 FTE. If the budget proposals go through as is, then in two years HCL will have lost 110.8 FTE.

MAJOR PROGRAM/DEPARTMENT	2019		2020		2021	
	ACTUAL	FTE	BUDGET	FTE	BUDGET	FTE
PUBLIC WORKS						
Public Works Services	\$64,400,183	318.0	\$66,237,493	309.0	\$62,556,900	305.0
PUBLIC SAFETY						
Public Safety and Justice	13,206,430	60.0	16,794,241	74.0	16,304,656	73.0
County Attorney's Office	59,289,042	398.0	61,971,948	407.5	61,917,335	407.5
Court Functions	2,012,497	0.0	2,258,600	0.0	2,258,600	0.0
Public Defender's Office	12,549,119	41.0	10,891,292	35.8	10,061,861	31.8
Sheriff's Office	113,838,372	807.0	119,696,662	810.0	120,865,997	810.0
Community Corrections & Rehabilitation	<u>124,018,330</u>	<u>996.2</u>	<u>129,383,108</u>	<u>990.8</u>	<u>126,641,482</u>	<u>947.2</u>
Subtotal	324,913,790	2,302.2	340,995,851	2,318.1	338,049,931	2,269.5

Department Expenditure Summary:	2019 Actual	2020 Budget	2021 Budget
Public Library	80,469,784	87,416,284	64,049,449
Law Library	1,426,030	1,451,445	1,436,032
Total Expenditures	\$81,895,814	\$88,867,729	\$65,485,481

Budgeted Positions:	2019 Actual	2020 Budget	2021 Budget
Public Library	605.4	529.6	494.6
Law Library	6.0	6.0	6.0
Budgeted Positions (Full-Time Equivalents)	611.4	535.6	500.6

Source: 2021 Hennepin County Proposed Budget Book ⁸⁹

Still, with dramatic increase in security budgeting, it appears contract guards earn less now than MPL staff guards earned over 20 years ago. In 1998, MPL contracted with Avalon Security for temporary security coverage, at that time Avalon paid their guards \$15 an hour. In 2006, MPL paid \$14.42 starting salary for guards. We believe that the wage now for contract security at HCL starts at around \$15.60. Adjusted for inflation, the \$14.42 rate from 2006 would be equal to a starting rate of \$18.53 in today's dollars. In 1998, AFSCME Council 14 sent a memo with concerns about library staff safety. They shared their alarm that MPL would "contract out" or "privatize" security personnel on a permanent basis, leading to security staff being underpaid. It seems this concern has come to fruition.

Another set of staff concerns revolve around the negative impact of security on library staff. Because of many factors including security policies, sexism, and conflicting values, the relationships between security and library services staffing can be strained and difficult. Library services staff are told we cannot dictate the work of security, but we also find there are many barriers to collaboration with some security guards and security management. Often staff expertise around youth development, library ethics or other topics we specialize in are overwritten by Security policies or opinions. Branch staff may agree on an appropriate response

to a situation based on knowledge of the patrons involved but are told it's out of our hands and that security get the final say. Library staff have also shared that they have experienced ongoing sexual harassment from security guards in the workplace. There have been many times where months have passed where staff and patrons have shared concerns about the actions of guards and the guards have remained in those libraries creating workplaces that don't feel supportive or respectful. Additionally, our current security policies don't allow for patrons or staff impacted by safety concerns to have autonomy to choose accountability processes instead of punitive ones, or the agency to be supported in what they need to heal.

We can still move towards support and resources and away from punishment during the COVID-19 pandemic. We cannot be clear enough on the extreme importance of library staff having the necessary resources and support for safety including adequate PPE, updated HVAC systems, and managers on site, limits on length of visits and more. When thinking about how we create safe environments during this time, it can be helpful to remember there is little evidence that shaming works to change behavior; in fact, it can cause unintended harmful consequences.^{90 91}
⁹² What if library branches who needed extra support around COVID guidelines, instead of having security guards, were able to hire health "ambassadors" from the library community, to help educate, hand out free masks, and support patrons in finding alternatives to physical services if needed; emphasizing the important message that wearing masks and physical distancing is community care. We've heard from staff that having staffing resources on site like social workers or health workers would be a great support in this difficult time.

As we look back at the history of Minneapolis Public Library, one important takeaway was that there have been times when we removed security presence at certain libraries, but we have never removed security and intentionally invested in alternative safety supports. Shifting away from punitive systems is not an opportunity for budget reductions or removal of resources. This is about re-allocating our resources in ways that meet the needs of staff and patrons, creating opportunities for safety for all.

Looking Forward

We are not alone in our hopes to ensure that everyone – especially groups harmed by policing and security systems – experiences safety in our libraries. We cannot solve all the problems that our patrons may be experiencing, but we can be a part of the solution. To do this we need more resources to serve patrons. Right now we spend millions on security personnel and mechanisms annually at HCL and less than \$150,000 on two social workers across our 41 library branches.

We have many examples to look to. San Francisco Public Library and Los Angeles County Library have partnered with their mental health departments to host social workers.⁹³ Arizona's Pima County Library has on-site public health nurses hired through the county's Department of Health to focus on behavioral and mental health issues among patrons. Since starting this program in 2012, they have seen a clear reduction in 911 calls reporting threatening conduct.⁹⁴ In 2011, Denver Public Library established a Homeless Services Action Committee to better serve the needs of patrons experiencing homelessness. That committee advocated for and secured four social workers and six peer navigators, who help address crises that might otherwise have been handled by police or security.⁹⁵ Many libraries have begun to implement Restorative Justice Practices, including Oakland Public Library, Pima County, Skokie Public Library, and ourselves—providing workable alternatives to punitive responses.

Peer Navigators are individuals that have found stabilization in regards to housing, mental health and/or substance abuse, and are able to support others in connecting with resources and support.

Toledo–Lucas County Public Library is forming a public safety working group that will “attempt to untangle complex questions about what safety means, who is perceived as a threat, what individual biases we bring to our expectations around public safety, and how we can ensure our public safety practices are advancing positive outcomes for staff, customers, and the community.”⁹⁶ Some libraries, including Redondo Beach Public Library, are working toward establishing procedures and training to limit the number of 911 calls made for drug or violence-related events in their libraries. Thunder Bay Public Library, considering the ongoing negative relationships security has with BIPOC communities, is looking at ways to phase out their security forces. John Pateman, Chief Librarian of Thunder Bay explained “While having uniformed security staff in the library reassures some staff and patrons, I also think that it can give the message that the library is not a safe space. Our medium-term aim is to remove security staff from the library and redirect the resources to build alternative capacity within the organization.”⁹⁷

There have been campaigns by community members and patrons for public libraries to de-invest from policing and security systems as well. Millennium for All in Winnipeg has been organizing against forced bag searches and metal detector scans at the Millennium Library in downtown Winnipeg.⁹⁸ Cop Free Library in New York City is a group of librarians based in NYC interested in accessible, safe libraries for all people. They advocate that this cannot include partnership with a violent police force.⁹⁹ Los Angeles Public Library workers, patrons, and others

have called for an end to LAPD presence at their public libraries, through an Open Letter to LAPL's Board of Library Commissioners team.¹⁰⁰

We have implemented some of the alternatives and resources being explored at other public libraries. We partnered to host two social workers in our library spaces, one at Minneapolis Central, and a second social worker at Hosmer, Franklin, and East Lake Libraries. Kate Coleman, the Minneapolis Central social worker, estimates that she helps about "150 patrons a month connect with public assistance, find shelter, get treatment and search for a home of their own."¹⁰¹ Minneapolis Central's Advisory Board on Homelessness which is made up of patrons who have experienced homelessness firsthand has done incredible work at Minneapolis Central to create welcoming spaces for unhoused people. Our library Restorative Justice team is entering year three of training, recommendations, and implementation of Restorative Practices at four pilot sites. Franklin Library has formed a new Native Advisory Council of Indigenous community members. HCL joined GARE and created our own Race Equity team in 2017 which has led staff in engagement and training; focused on examining administrative and everyday policies, practices and procedures; and developed ongoing learning opportunities. Staff in library branches are expanding our skills, making connections with community organizations, and working to deepen relationships with our library communities. We can build on the good work already being done by making real commitments with our resources, budgets, and actions.

Possibilities for change

Our priority is to enter community engagement processes that center community members most impacted by punitive systems to understand how patrons think about and experience safety, how we can co-create safety and how we can resource safety in our spaces. Divestment from security and punitive systems means a deeper investment in our staff, our patrons, and our buildings. However, we do offer these ideas formulated by HCL staff to show possibilities and the breadth of change that could be made to shift away from punishment.

Staffing

- **Staffing models** Shift funding from security contracts into regular, benefitted, union represented, proactive and supportive positions. These positions could include youth workers, social workers, emergency medical staff, mental health experts, dedicated de-escalation staff, harm-reduction/addiction specialists, and peer navigators.
- **Hiring procedures** Hire library staff with experience and skills in social/racial justice work, trauma informed service, a commitment to restorative practices, reducing disparities, and youth work. Localize the hiring process, including having job postings accurately reflect the community context of each library. Prioritize resources to hire and support teens and young adults in the County's pathways program in a broader and more flexible way. In the United States, 88% of librarians are white, as are 73% of library assistants.¹⁰² In 2018, just 6.8% of librarians identified as Black or African American.¹⁰³ Hire and promote more BIPOC staff.
- **Adequately staffed libraries, determined with an equity lens** Libraries with inadequate staffing are more likely to struggle with conflict, escalation, and difficult interactions. Adequate staffing levels are crucial for staff to be able to participate in co-creating safety. Decisions about staffing should address not only materials handling and circulation, but also community use and youth presence.
- **Consistent staffing** Our model of security guards in libraries and relying on substitute staff to provide basic library services does not provide consistency. When we have consistent staff, we have the opportunity to know and be known by community members and can develop deeper relationships, leading to reduced conflicts and needs for intervention.
- **Support the work of Patron Experience Supervisors.** Ensure that they are able to support staff in addressing difficult situations, both as a partner to staff, and/or as a follow up step after staff have engaged. Critical here is developing and supporting their ability to be skilled in engaging in de-escalation and providing them with the tools they need to personally debrief and re-engage.
- **Providing sufficient supports for staff** The current Employee Assistance Program is limited and not able to adequately respond to traumatic incidents, leaving staff feeling vulnerable and unsupported. More mental and emotional support and trauma-informed care for workers is needed.

Training and Conversations

Library staff need to be supported in being confident, skillful, and empowered to engage ourselves as part of our library's community instead of relying on punitive systems.

- **Regular training needs** A commitment to ongoing, regular training and coaching, for all staff is vital. Self-examination, relearning and skill building is critical for all staff. This may include anti-racist de-escalation, mental health first aid, trauma-informed care, racial bias, conflict prevention, Narcan training, CPR and basic medical emergency, class, sexuality, and race trainings, and conflict resolution skill-building.
- **Prioritizing learning** Staff need to have dedicated regular time away from patron services and other responsibilities to engage in learning, training, and conversations. Learning and development needs to be prioritized in staff schedules and expectations.
- **Incident Debriefing** A regular practice and culture of incident debriefing for staff is critical to help us grow and change together as teams.
- **Staff Conversations** Supporting staff in all positions in the organization in thinking through intersections of identities, privilege and power and how those relate to sense of safety, authority, and ideas of respect.

Space

There are ways we can design our library spaces that support unmet needs and reduce potential conflict.

- **Disable external speakers on computer workstations** At many libraries, it is a regular occurrence that headphones accidentally become unplugged from public terminals. Staff intervene to reduce disturbance and this can become a source of conflict.
- **Provide a suitable, easily-cleaned space for patrons to eat** Much of the rule enforcement in our libraries is about eating. If we remove this rule, we remove the need for enforcement and therefore escalation. Providing options for people are basic tenets of trauma informed services, youth work, and conflict prevention and de-escalation.
- **Have separate quiet areas and areas where more noise is welcome** Different patrons have different needs for our library spaces. We need to continue to intentionally design our buildings to support these needs, including spaces designed specifically for families and youth.

Policy

Reexamine the following policies using equity and restorative justice lenses. Ensure policies aren't enacted out of fear and exist to control people, but instead serve to decrease harm experienced in our library spaces. Many of our policies end up specifically policing Black and Brown youth behavior, and the behavior of disabled and unhoused people.

- **Trespass policy** Trespassing abandons patrons and contributes to systemic oppression. We need to rethink the common use of a policy that pushes people out of our spaces. Some specific concerns include trespass policies being interpreted to be very punitive for minor behaviors, trespass rules being the same for youth and adults, using the same trespass policy in all county buildings, lack of transparency on trespass guidelines for

staff, and an inaccessible trespass appeal process. Many library systems have separate youth and adult trespass policies, and some dictate that the maximum trespass length for a young person is no more than a week. Having reduced trespass lengths for youth is reflective of the weight of punishment a trespass has on a young person. An equitable trespass policy that is reflective of youth needs reduces disparities.

- **Creating a policy for staff on when we call 911** Engaging 911 and police has dire consequences for Black people, Indigenous people, and people with disabilities. We need policy that reduces our frequency of calling 911 and provides clear guidance on continued staff roles when cops or security arrive on site.
- **Sleeping Policy** Currently, sleeping that “impedes others from using library spaces or resources... snoring, laying on furniture, or taking up more than one seat” is considered a violation of the Patron Conduct Policy. This policy targets unhoused people who don’t have access to many places to sleep safely.
- **Odor policy** We have policy that states, “offensive body odor, including excessive scent, which unreasonably interferes with other patrons’ ability to use the library and its services.” We do not enforce a low-scent space for staff, and so it becomes clear that this policy specifically polices unhoused patrons.
- **Eating policy** Our policies do not allow for people in eat in our libraries. From a youth development perspective and a physical health perspective, people may need to eat when they are accessing library services. Additionally, patrons experiencing homelessness are likely to benefit from policies that allow eating in the library, thereby decreasing the number of security incidents with a vulnerable population. Allowing eating supports people’s basic needs.

Recommendations for Internal work

Through staff engagement and training, we will endeavor to understand what resources staff need to feel safe, and we will explore how libraries contribute to harm in our communities through using punitive mechanisms to seek safety. We need to put resources toward understanding how we can work toward reducing and eliminating this harm, and work instead towards policies and practices that support the safety of both patrons and staff. We need dedicated time and support to untangle complex questions about the meaning of safety, how different people experience safety, who gets perceived as threat and what biases affect expectations and ideas of safety.

As we work towards a system-wide culture shift away from punitive and security systems, we recommend all staff attend training and learning opportunities. It's a priority that these opportunities come from outside trainers and facilitators who specialize in anti-racist, trauma-informed crisis response. We do not have current internal resources and expertise to do this work well, and we often rely on our staff of color to do this—no matter what their position is in the organization. Throughout this process, staff need to feel supported, heard, and have room to grow. The internal workgroup will work in tandem with the community engagement work to uphold trust with the community and with staff.

We are requesting:

- **A dedicated and meaningful budget for staff training** with community trainer/facilitators. We are committed to hiring trainers and facilitators who are dedicated to alternatives to punitive punishment.
- **Support in implementing the suggestions** that come from training
- **Continued safety training** incorporated into onboarding and training for staff transitioning to a new role. This includes training for all managers, supervisors, and leaders on how they can effectively support staff to grow their skills in this area of work.
- Integrating our commitment to community engagement, racial justice, and **safety for all into our hiring process**, by being transparent about how promoting safety is part of our work and hiring staff with recommended skill sets and experiences to be part of this work.
- **Building trust** with staff that real change will be a result of this process.
- **A system wide culture shift** across job classes. All staff supported and held accountable to these changes, working to create a culture shift.
- **Time and support** for staff to engage in, reflect on, and grow in this work. Support in working with county and library administration to support this work.

Recommendations for Community Engagement

We are requesting support to start funded and robust community engagement processes that center library patrons from communities most harmfully impacted by policing and security systems. We want to co-envision safety in libraries with our communities and implement what comes from those conversations.

As a majority white and middle-class institution, we need to partner with people most impacted by punitive systems in order to make the right changes. Not engaging the community prioritizes white staff voices, and could lead us to make no changes, or enact something that is, at best, not helpful, or, at worst, furthers harm. There is a national and local movement happening right now around rethinking community safety. As a government institution that has been a part of this type of harm, we have an obligation to be a part of these essential conversations and actions.

In the past, community engagement has been limited to one-off surveys or tabling for feedback on library initiatives. These types of engagement efforts often result in a small number of responses used to represent many people's voices and opinions. This experience can be tokenizing, and can feel like it only symbolically includes members of marginalized communities. We also hear from patrons via social media or feedback to County Commissioners, which prioritizes the voices of our more privileged patrons. The voices of those most impacted by trespass, security, and punitive library systems are invisibilized and often unheard in our institution. Sharing experiences with punitive systems can be emotional and potentially re-traumatizing and we need to be resourced and use trauma informed processes that are respectful to our communities. Re-envisioning safety will be a huge shift for our institution, and we need to be thorough and intentional.

This is an opportunity to transform the library's community relationships to be in alignment with library values. In order to engage in authentic community engagement, we need support from library and county administration, both in concept and in action.

We are requesting:

- **A dedicated and meaningful budget for community engagement:**
 - Paying Community Partners: We are committed to actively centering people from communities most harmfully impacted from policing and security and strongly advocate that any labor done by community members in this work is valuable and should be compensated. We need a budget to pay community partners for community engagement visioning, implementation, data analysis, and for an ongoing advisory board.
- **Support implementing the suggestions that come from community engagement processes**
 - Implementing alternatives will require a dedicated and significant budget.

- Community engagement from the government has a history of being one-sided and transactional. We want to be able to commit to be in real collaborative relationships with our community partners and to enact meaningful changes.
- **A dedicated and meaningful budget for interim safety mechanisms**
 - As we enter into community engagement processes, we need an appropriate and realistic timeline for community informed and trauma informed processes. We request funding to implement some pilot safety methods, including contracting with community organizations as welcoming presences in our library spaces.
- **Time and support** for staff to engage in this work, and support in working with county and library administration to support this work

Questions from Report

1. Does our current model of security achieve our goal of safety for all of our staff and patrons?
2. Do police or security guards communicate or collaborate with library staff, or do they make decisions and enact policy without input? Why are there police or private security officers in your library? What specific issues or challenges is your library trying to address or get assistance with?
3. How has security in the Hennepin County Libraries affected your experience in the library? Have you been involved in any incidents with library or security staff that felt harmful, unwelcoming, or unsafe?
4. How are security incident categories defined? For example, what do "Assist Public", "Unwanted Person", "Policy Violation Other", "Alarm Mechanical" and other labels mean?
5. How is it decided which library locations have a security presence? Who makes these decisions? What data driven racial equity tools are being used to make these impactful decisions? What data is being collected to review these decisions for equity impact on a regular basis?
6. What could be an appropriate alternative response to security in handling such "incidents" as lost and found items?
7. What additional staffing, resources, and policy changes could be implemented that would help us avoid or de-escalate incidents?
8. Could more serious incidents like welfare checks, medical emergencies, and verbal disturbances be referred to alternative staff partners, such as medical personnel and social workers?
9. How many patrons attempt to appeal their trespasses annually and how many succeed? How does security management determine if they approve an appeal request or not?
10. How can we shift our policies to be supportive of our patrons, to build strengthen relationships and access to resources, rather than compounding the problems of oppressions and isolation? Rather than pushing people out, how could we collaborate with our patrons to meet needs and co-create solutions together?
11. With the majority of trespasses relating to possession of alcohol or intoxication we wonder what other resources or strategies we could be exploring?
12. How are policy makers reviewing policies for bias, including ableism?
13. When there are repeat behaviors, how can we engage creatively to try and understand and respond to the broader context and the needs that people are trying to meet?
14. Why are the lengths of trespasses for same or similar policy violations so different?
15. How can the following data be collected and made accessible to library management and staff for analysis:
 - a. Trespass data disaggregated by race (not currently systematically collected)
 - b. HCL budget spent on security staff and security mechanisms annually
 - c. Library Staff Incident Report Data
 - d. Security Trespass Guidelines
 - e. Definitions of Security Incident types
16. Whose safety is prioritized at the cost of others?

Envisioning Safety Report

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