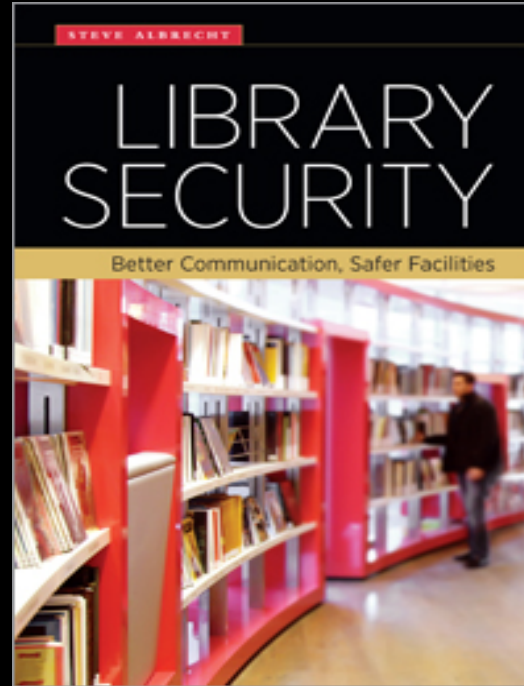


# Managing Challenging Patrons: Security for the New Library Environment



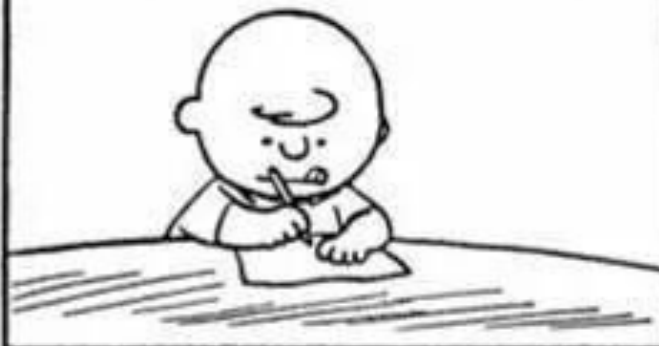
An Infopeople Webinar  
Dr. Steve Albrecht, PHR, CPP, BCC, CTM  
San Diego, CA  
619-990-2685  
[drsteve@drstevealbrecht.com](mailto:drsteve@drstevealbrecht.com)

DEAR LIBRARY,  
I HAVE LOST  
YOUR BOOK.

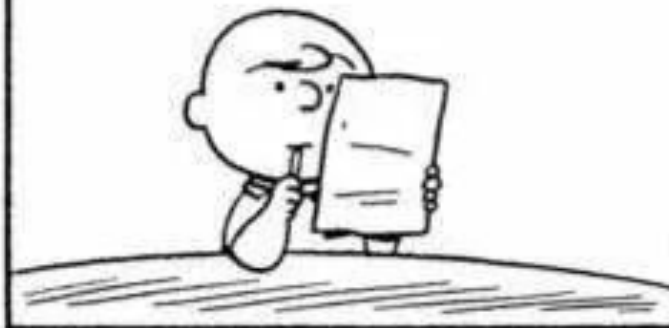
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I CAN NOT FIND  
IT ANYWHERE.



I WILL COME TO THE  
LIBRARY AND TURN  
MYSELF IN.



PLEASE DO NOT HARM  
MY MOTHER AND FATHER.



3/9/06

SCHULZ

www.snoopy.com

# What's Happening in the "New" Library?

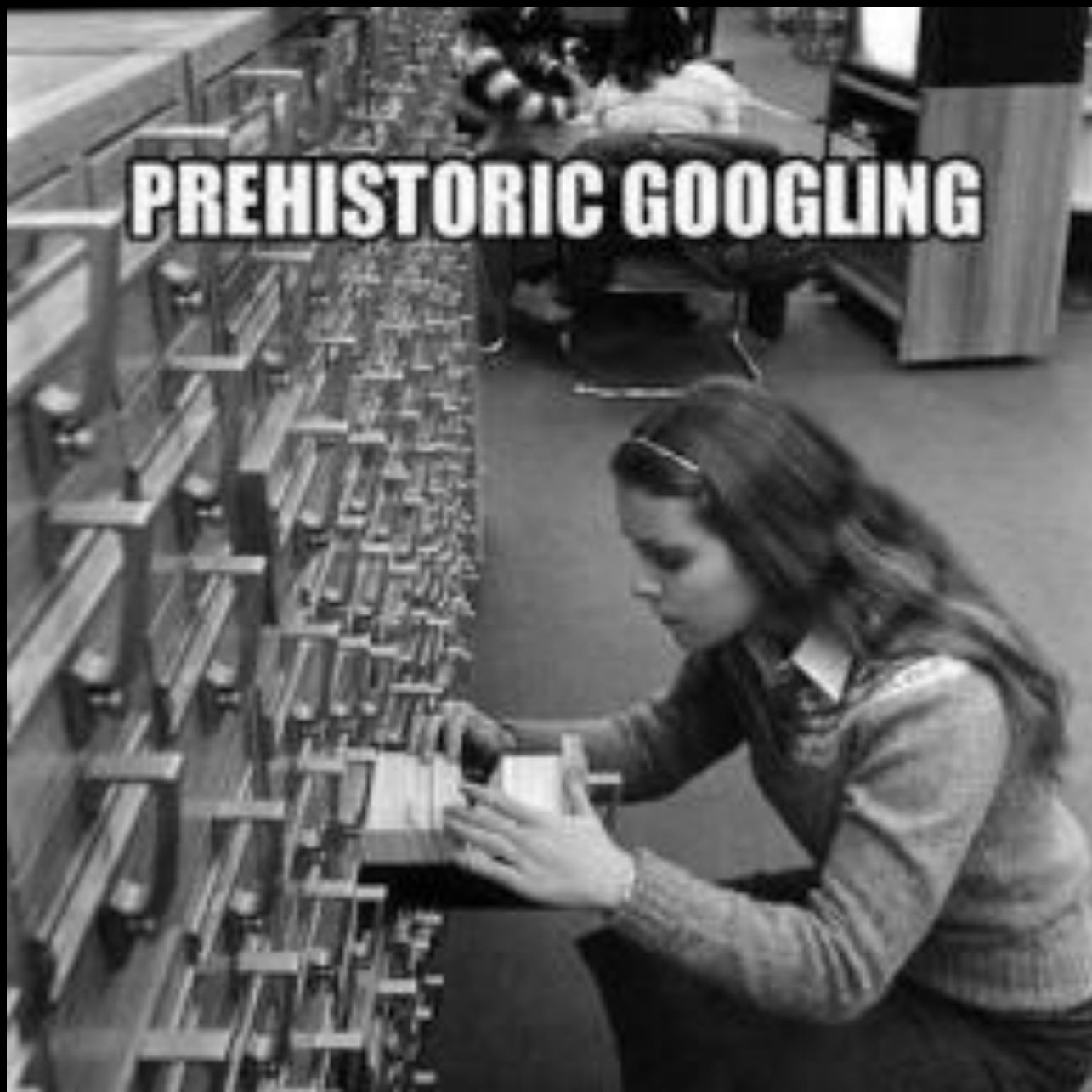


- Entitled or angry patrons (who miss the "old" library).
- Frustrated patrons who don't know or ignore our rules.
- Uncertain times, more stress, less money, for all.
- Employees who must do more, with less, and faster than ever before.
- Our "72 / 7" world mirrors their world.





# PREHISTORIC GOOGLING





**Posted  
Codes of  
Conduct**



**Firm, fair, consistent,  
and assertive  
approaches.**



**Creative  
customer  
service skills**

# Your Secrets to a Safe Workplace

**Self-Protection:** You can't take care of others if you're not safe from harm.

**Stress and Anger Management:** You can't take care of others or yourself if you're losing it. Manage your breathing. QTIP

**Working Smart:** Know what to say, what to do, when to stay or go, who to call, and how to get help.

## Some Themes . . .

Profiles or behaviors?

Peace or justice?

What should asking for help mean?

Do your job or do your job safely?

Chain of command or not?

How do we align with patrons?

If there are no consequences . . .

Acting skills . . .

If it's measured, it can be managed.



# Tough Situations

Entitled, angry, threatening, or eccentric patrons (and their beasts).

Unruly children and teenagers (or their parents).

Stalking or sexual behaviors by patrons.

Domestic violence comes to the library.

No security and missing police.

Door dashers, gate crashers, and thieves.

The chronically homeless and the mentally ill.

Criminals, substance abusers, gang members.

Internet hogs and Internet creeps.

Stinkers, talkers, smokers, bathers, eaters, and sleepers.

# Perpetrators of Workplace Violence per OSHA

Type 1: Criminals.

Type 2: Taxpayers, customers, students, patients, passengers, vendors, etc.

Type 3: Current or former employees.

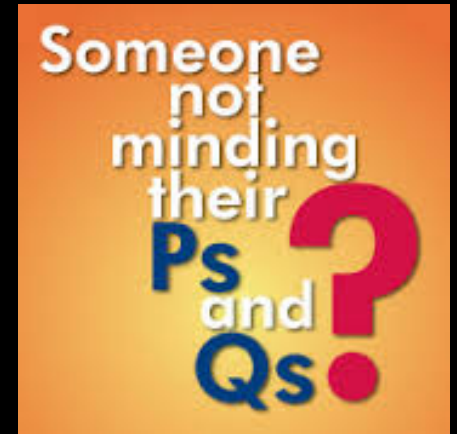
Type 4: Current or former spouse/partner of an employee.



**This is how workplace violence starts**



# Code of Conduct



In my Perfect Library World, your facility would post the Code of Conduct in many visible locations, in poster-sized versions.

Putting the Code of Conduct on a clipboard behind the Circulation Desk or only on your web site, is not enough.

Code of Conduct language needs to be written positively, and in plain English, not legalese.

THE LIBRARY  
IS NOW  
SELLING FREE  
COFFEE FOR

\$1



# The Need for Rules: Business Impact

- Smoking (E-cigarettes?).
- Soliciting for money.
- Interfering with the safe use of the library.
- Misusing the Internet.
- Bikes or skateboards.
- Theft or vandalism.
- Misuse of restrooms.
- Shirts and shoes.



# The Need For Rules: Business Impact

- Unattended children.
- Service animals versus “comfort” animals.
- Sleeping.
- Food and drink.
- Electronic devices – use or noise.
- Hygiene.
- Unattended belongings.
- Blocking aisles and exits.

# Don't Rationalize Irrational Behavior

I'm probably overreacting. . .

I'll stop it if he or she does "X". . .

They'll go away soon. . .

Maybe if I just wait her out. . .

It's not really that bad. . .

It's not my job to handle that. . .

I'm not a cop, psychologist, or a social worker. . .

Asking for help means I can't do my job . . .



# Introduce / Ask / Explain

**Introduce** yourself. Try to get the person's name.

**Explain:**

“I noticed that . . . “

“The reason I'm here is . . . ”

“I'm sure you already know this, but . . . ”

**Ask:** “I need to ask you to . . . ”

# Law Enforcement Support: ATM

In my Perfect Library World, a police officer or sheriff's deputy would visit your facility nearly every day, at different times.

Have staff put the Dispatch numbers into their cell phones.

Have your Director(s) call the Watch Commander and ask for regular or extra patrols.

Create a hangout environment for the officers or deputies.

Write Security Incident Reports with victim, suspect, witness information.

# Homeless, Mental Health, Social Services Support

In my Perfect Library World, we would have working partnerships with public and private advocacy groups that specialize in dealing with your most challenging patrons:

- County Behavioral Health Services / Hospitals or Clinics
- County Social Services
- Substance abuse treatment facilities
- Adult and Child Protective Services
- Faith-based and grant-funded homeless outreach

# Suspicious Activities: See Something? Say Something!

## Look for people:

- loitering in unauthorized or restricted areas
- not wearing ID, uniforms, or safety gear
- who act like they are lost
- who seem too interested in our employees
- who scare others with threatening or irrational behavior
- who leave quickly after abandoning a package
- taking photos or videos
- who seem too interested in our activities
- who seem like “vendors,” but are in the wrong place
- who leave cars in odd locations, or overloaded cars

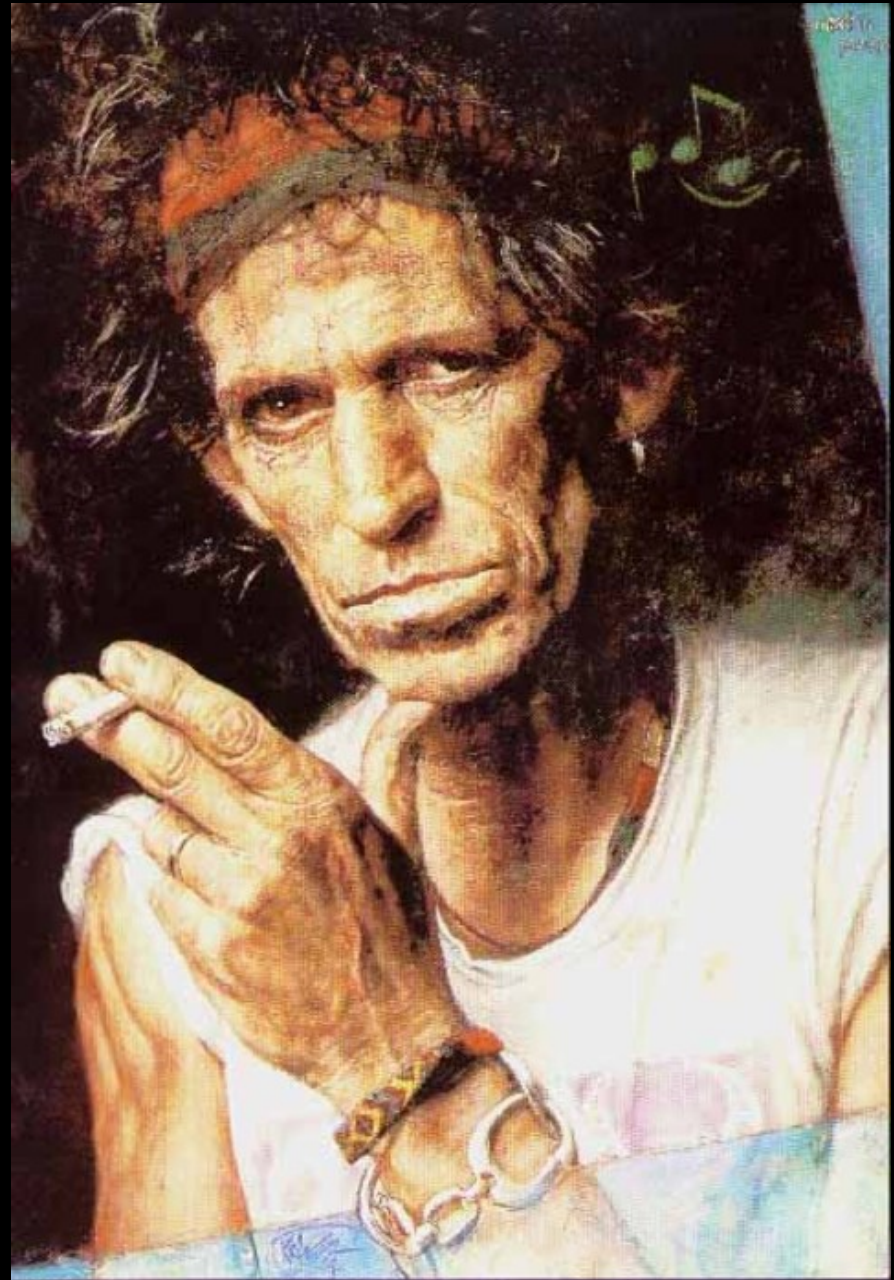


# Keeping it Special

1. Greet each patron immediately or when passing by.
2. Give each patron you meet your complete attention.
3. Make the first 30 seconds count for our patrons.
4. Play your part to be real, not phony or bored.
5. Show your energy with sincere friendliness.
6. Be the patron's problem-solver.
7. Use your common sense.
8. Bend the rules when the situation calls for it.
9. Make the last 30 seconds count for our patrons.
10. Take good care of yourself.

“I’ve never had a  
problem with drugs.  
I’ve had problems  
with the police.”

Keith Richards  
The Rolling Stones



# S.H.O.C.A.D.I.Ds

Stimulants	cocaine, meth, Ritalin, Adderall
Hallucinogens	LSD, Ecstasy, mushrooms
Opiates	heroin, pain pills, Methadone
Cannabis	marijuana, hashish, hash oil
Alcohol	beer, wine, distilled spirits
Depressants	anti-anxiety, tranquilizers, Valium
Inhalants	solvents, aerosols, gases
Dissociative Anesthetics	PCP, Ketamine, DXM

Source: California Narcotics Officers Association



**1998**



**2002**









# Face-to-Face or Over-the-Counter



Assess people. Read the body language signs of anger versus cooperation.

Think about past encounters.

Move closer to build rapport.  
Stay back if they are angry.

Use space and distance and proxemic barriers.

Practice venting and validation.

Use physical movement and the Assertive Whisper.

# Telephone Skills



Over the phone, body language is missing, so tone is all we have.

Neutral, friendly, polite.

Get permission to put them on hold.

Get a callback number.

Under-promise and over-perform.

Set boundaries for their bad behavior.

# What Not to Say: Here's What Usually Doesn't Work

"You need to calm down!"

"That's not our policy."

"What **you** need to understand is . . ."

"I can't help you. I don't know who can."

"I'm going on my break. You'll have to call or  
come back later."

"You didn't read the instructions or directions."

# Phrases That May Work

"You can't do that if you want to stay here . . ."

"I can see you're upset . . ."

"I'm sorry. I'm not trying to make you mad."

"You could be right . . ."

"It's not me, it's the computer . . ."

"Please help me do my job for you. . ."

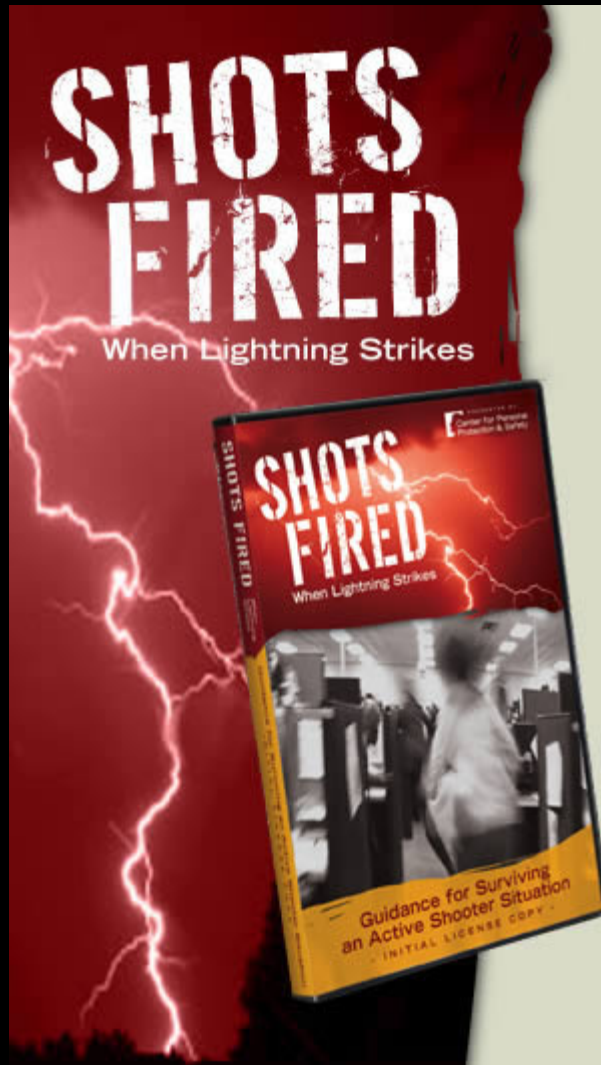
"I can take your name and cell number for my supervisor if you'd like . . ."

**IN CASE OF FIRE**



**EXIT BUILDING  
BEFORE TWEETING  
ABOUT IT**

# The Run, Hide, Fight Response



Knowing the Outs:  
Figure Out  
Get Out (Evade)  
Hide Out (Barricade)  
Keep Out  
Spread Out  
Take Out (Defend)





Posted  
Codes of  
Conduct



Firm, fair, consistent,  
and assertive  
approaches.



Creative  
customer  
service skills

# Closing Themes

- Always assess the Business Impact.
- Update and post your Code of Conduct.
- Stay firm, fair, consistent, and assertive.
- Change your vocabulary about patrons from “difficult” to “challenging.”
- Create on-going working relationships with police, mental health, homeless, social services, and security agencies in the public and private sector.

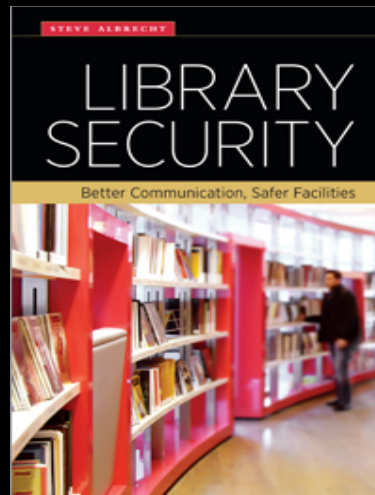
# Closing Themes

- Develop creative answers to common patron questions, behavior problems, or complaints.
- Document new, on-going, or chronic problems with Security Incident Reports.
- Use more civil stay-away orders, both verbal and served.
- Try a lighter touch first; you can always get tougher.
- Have courage.

# Questions?



# Thanks For Listening!



Dr. Steve Albrecht, PHR, CPP, BCC, CTM  
San Diego, CA  
619-990-2685  
[drsteve@drstevealbrecht.com](mailto:drsteve@drstevealbrecht.com)



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