

Impact of the Police Video Surveillance Camera on Usage of Malvern Branch

Date:	November 12, 2007
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

At its May 2007 meeting, the Board passed a motion related to the police video surveillance camera in the vicinity of the Malvern Branch.

A number of activities related to the motion have been completed:

- a letter was sent to the Chief of Police informing them of the Board’s motion, and staff attended a public meeting organized by the police at the Agincourt Branch to discuss video surveillance by the police;
- community safety issues continue to be discussed through the Malvern Neighbourhood Action Team on which Library staff are active participants;
- usage patterns at the Malvern Branch were analysed for the five months after the installation of the camera (May - September) and compared to the previous year;
- a staff and public survey assessing awareness and attitudes towards the video camera was completed.

Analysis of usage patterns and the results of the staff and public survey show that the presence of the police video surveillance camera has had no discernable impact on usage at the Malvern Branch. Since the camera has been installed, there have been significant increases in information requests, visits, and program attendance when compared to the same period in 2006. Public and staff attitudes towards the presence of the video surveillance cameras are either neutral or positive.

Staff will continue to address issues related to branch and community safety through participation in the Malvern Neighbourhood Action Team and through regular branch liaison with the local community police officer.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

This report has no financial implications beyond what has already been approved in the current year's budget.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of May 14, the Board approved a motion directing staff to:

- consult with the Toronto Police Service to minimize the impact of the video surveillance camera on users of the Malvern Branch;
- consult with Toronto Police Service on strategies to enhance the safety of Toronto Public Library Branches;
- assess the impact of the camera on program attendance, in library use, information request, program attendance and library visits;
- survey staff and the public to understand how they feel about video surveillance in the Malvern neighbourhood.

This report responds to the motion.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Toronto Police Services Board installed a closed circuit television surveillance camera in close proximity to the Malvern Library as part of a pilot project. The camera is not on Library property and does not fall under the Library's Security Video Surveillance Policy.

COMMENTS

As outlined below, a number of initiatives have been undertaken to address the Board's motion related to the video surveillance camera in the Malvern vicinity.

A letter was sent to the Toronto Police Services Board (Attachment 1) informing them of the Library Board's motion and advising that Library staff would contact Malvern area police representatives to discuss the issue. The police referred the issue to the local division and subsequent contact was with local community police officers. In addition, staff attended a public meeting held on September 12, 2007 by the Toronto Police Services at the Agincourt Branch to discuss video surveillance cameras.

The Malvern Neighbourhood Action Team is a neighbourhood partnership composed of staff from city departments, agencies, boards and commissions and other community and citizen groups. These teams were established by the City in each of the 13 priority neighbourhoods to improve community safety and opportunities for youth. Much of the focus of the team's work is on the "prevention" component of community safety, i.e. providing alternative choices and opportunities for community members, especially

youth. Both the Library and Toronto Police Services are active participants in the Malvern NAT.

Currently the team is facilitating community safety training with Metrac (Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence against Women and Children) to provide citizens with information on community safety walks so that these can be conducted in various parts of Malvern. Library staff is involved in this initiative, and the police are assisting with a pilot session planned for the area around Scott Westney House. Library staff will continue to use the network of the Neighbourhood Action Team to address safety issues impacting the community and Library. In addition to the NAT, Malvern staff also regularly liaises and consults with the local community police officer. The police regularly visit the branch and work with staff to address various issues.

Usage Patterns

There is no discernable impact on usage patterns at the Malvern Branch. From May-September 2007, the five months after the video camera was installed in the vicinity of the Malvern Branch, the following usage trends were noted in comparison to the same period in 2006. Usage patterns at libraries are seasonal and using the same period provides an appropriate comparison:

- information requests increased 30%;
- visits increased 14%;
- in library use declined by 10%;
- workstation use increased by 20%;
- the number of programs offered increased and attendance rose 21%.

Survey Results:

A survey of staff and public was completed to assess awareness and attitudes toward the video surveillance camera in the vicinity of the Malvern Branch and the impact on library usage. Results of the survey indicate that the presence of the camera makes people feel safer and may encourage library use.

Public:

The public survey was completed during morning, afternoon, evenings and on Saturdays to capture a representative group of users. Those under the age of 16 can only be interviewed with parental permission. One-hundred and eighteen surveys were completed including young adults, adults and seniors.

Of those surveyed:

- 59% were aware of the camera;
- 80% indicated that the camera had no impact on their decision to visit the library;
- 20% indicated that they would be more likely to visit the library because of the camera's presence;
- A total of 42 comments were received of which 41 were in favour of the cameras and one indicated that it was an invasion of privacy. Comments included:
 - *Feel more safe-able to come to the library more often because of the camera;*

- *Feel bad about the misconception about the area but do feel reassured by the cameras;*
- *Would stay at the library a little later than before;*
- 32% of young adults (17-24) surveyed said they were more likely to visit the library because of the camera's presence which was higher than the results for all age groups.

Staff:

The staff survey was introduced at a staff meeting and results were submitted anonymously for a period after the meeting. A total of 32 surveys were received.

Of the staff surveyed:

- 81% of staff have not received any comments from the public about the presence of the security camera;
- 88% of staff feel that the police camera has not affected library service at the Malvern Branch;
- 63% of staff feel the camera has made them feel safer at the branch;
- 78% of staff felt that having the camera near the Malvern Branch was a good idea;
- A total of 43 comments were received from staff of which 37 supported the cameras and 6 were opposed. Comments included:
 - *I feel the community is a little safer;*
 - *There is an increase in attendance and less incidence of bikes being stolen;*
 - *Incidents in the library and surrounding areas have gone down.*

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Josephine Bryant
City Librarian

ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1: Letter to William Blair, Chief of Police from Josephine Bryant, City Librarian dated July 18, 2007