

# Improve Library Security Reporting with Google Forms

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## Abstract

After a dramatic increase in security issues at the Pasadena City College Shatford Library, Google Forms was utilized for web-based security incident reporting and to build an incident database for library administration when working with Campus Police. Through the use of this free technology, we were able to quickly implement a library-wide security reporting system and to systematically and thoroughly document incidents. Training for staff was minimal and there has been an overwhelmingly positive response from library staff and administration. Google Forms (<http://www.google.com/google-d-s/forms/>) is an innovative and low-cost way to improve internal and external library safety communication.

## Introduction

Pasadena City College (PCC) is a community college that is located on a busy, main street and the Shatford Library receives an average of 5,000 patrons per day. The most common security incidents in the Library are theft of library materials (usually textbooks) and theft of student personal belongings including laptops, wallets, backpacks, and purses. In addition to these incidents, there has been a rise in the number of distressed, disruptive, and dangerous patrons. Safety and security is a high priority and all library staff, including student workers, are trained to call Campus Police for emergencies and if they or someone else feels threatened.

Prior to our implementation of Google Forms, there were no formal guidelines for security incidents except for emergency evacuations. A print theft log form was kept behind the Circulation Desk for any attempted library material thefts or reported personal belonging thefts. Reporting of non-theft security incidents was inconsistent to library administration (in-person, telephone, email, or not reported). In fall semester 2011, there was a sharp rise in security incidents. On one day alone, there were three separate incidents that required Campus Police involvement including a disoriented, possibly homeless patron, a verbally abusive student, and an arrest of a suspected thief in the library building.

## *Google Forms Implementation*

With the high volume of security incidents, the Shatford Library formed a security task group with all public service desk leads (Reference, Circulation, and Computer Labs). To improve communication across the library and not have a weekly security meeting, the group developed a web-based Library Security Incident form using Google Forms. Questions were determined by the type of information asked by Campus Police dispatch. We ask any library staff filling out the form to provide the following information:

1. Name of Staff Reporting Incident (for follow-up if needed)
2. Date of Incident
3. Time of Incident (AM or PM)
4. Reported to Campus Police? (Yes or No)

5. Description of Incident (include direct quotes, location, witnesses, officer name, items stolen, etc.)
6. Physical description (age, race, gender, height, weight)
7. Clothing description (color, headgear, belongings)
8. Name of patron(s) involved (if possible)<sup>1</sup>
9. Student ID# (s) (if possible)<sup>1</sup>
10. Other comments/information

When a form is submitted, the information automatically is put into a database that can be downloaded into Excel and PDF formats. The database is shared with the security team and they have signed up for email alerts when forms are submitted from any area of the library.

### *Google Forms Assessment*

Since implementation in October 2011, there have been 26 security incident reports submitted through our Google Form. The form was easy to set-up, user-friendly, and free. Minimal training was needed for staff. The security incident database keeps all incidents in one place if data is needed; Library Administration finds the report database to be helpful for communication with Campus Police about library security needs. The database reporting feature could be improved as it requires individual field cut and pasting to generate a report to send to staff. Overall, our Library Security Incident Form has standardized staff reporting and has received positive feedback from library staff and administration. An additional benefit of the form is that it guides library staff to collect relevant information during stressful situations.

### *Presentation Information*

The CARL 2012 Lightning Round Presentation with the PCC Library Security Incident Report Form is available at: <http://prezi.com/nlchguopx2zx/google-forms-and-library-security/>.

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<sup>1</sup> We highly value patron privacy but record patron names and student identification numbers when necessary for Campus Police or to make referrals to College Psychological Services and/or C-PART (Crisis Prevention and Response Team).