

Special Collections Security: Theft

Low/No Cost Solutions for Libraries,
Archives, Museums, and Other
Cultural Heritage Institutions



Objectives

- Identify the three types of special collections thieves
- Recognize warning signs of potential theft
- Discuss low/no cost security solutions



Types of Theft

- Outsider
- Researcher
- Insider
 - Employees
 - Contractors
 - Volunteers and Interns



Outsider Theft

- Daniel Spiegelman
- Outsider Theft
 - Dozens of repositories, most notably the Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library
 - 1994 and earlier



Researcher Theft

- Sandy Berger
- Researcher Theft
 - National Archives and Records Administration
 - Washington, DC
 - 2005



Researcher Theft

- Barry Landau
 - Accomplice Jason Savedoff
- Researcher Theft
 - Dozens of repositories, including the Maryland Historical Society
 - 2011



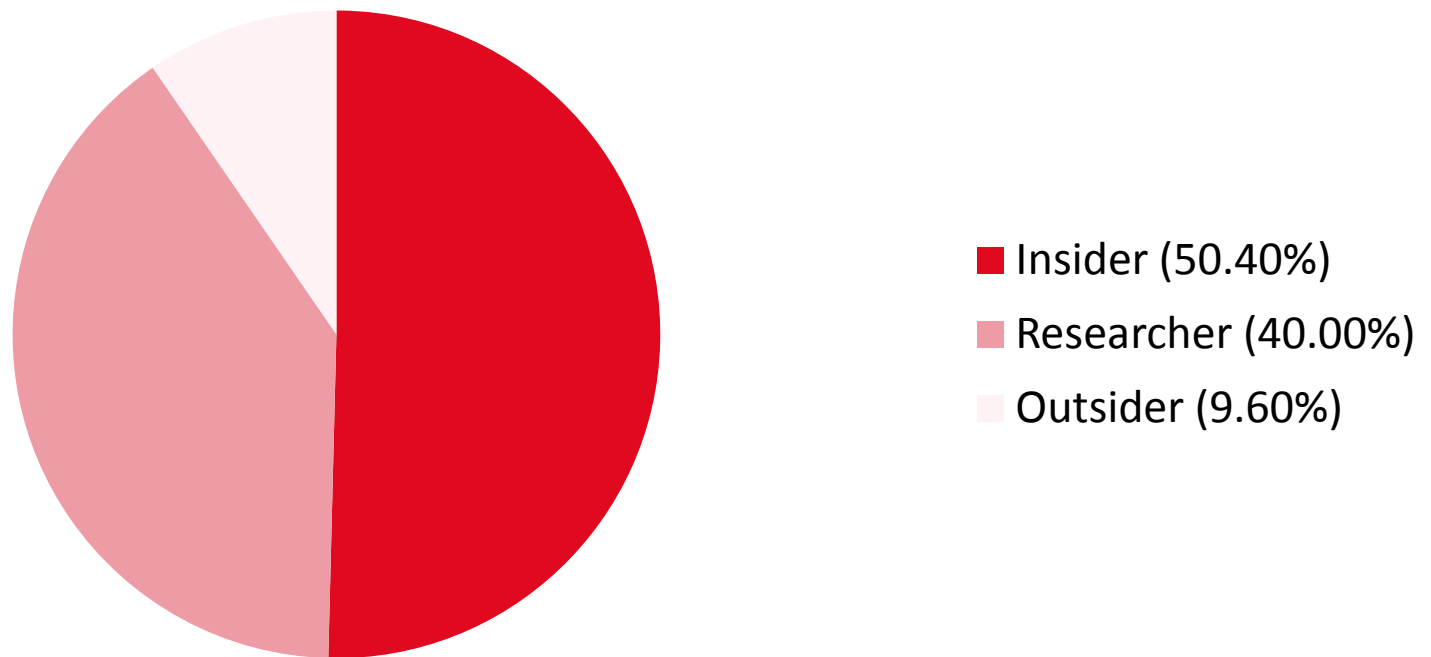
Insider Theft

- Daniel Lorello
- Insider Theft
 - New York State Archives
 - Albany, NY
 - 2008



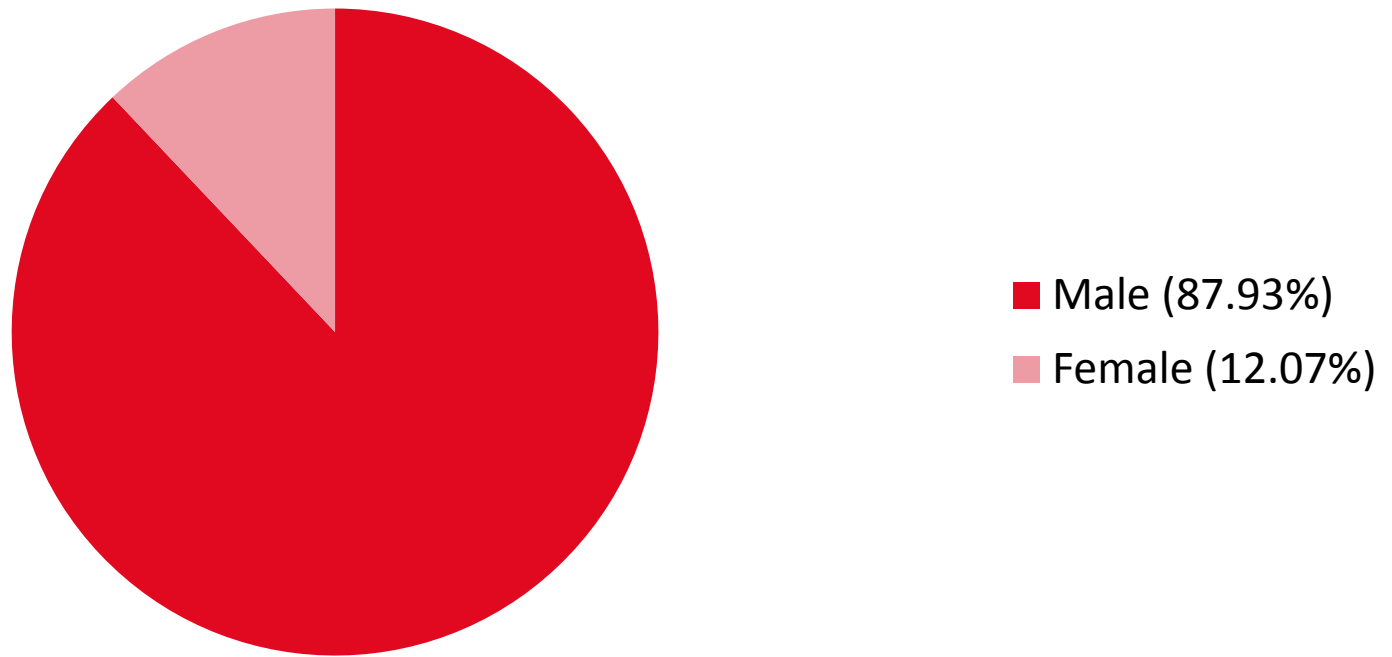
Who Steals?

Thief Type (All Repository Types)



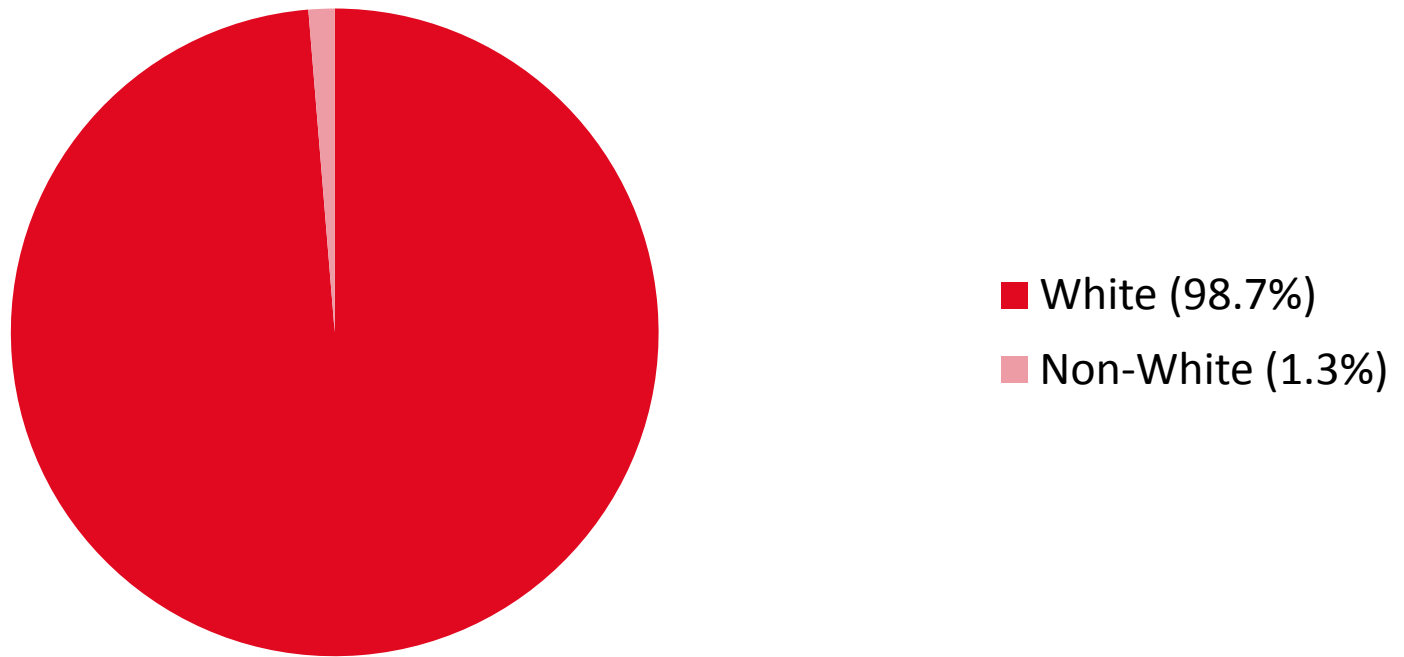
Who Steals?

Gender (All Repository Types)



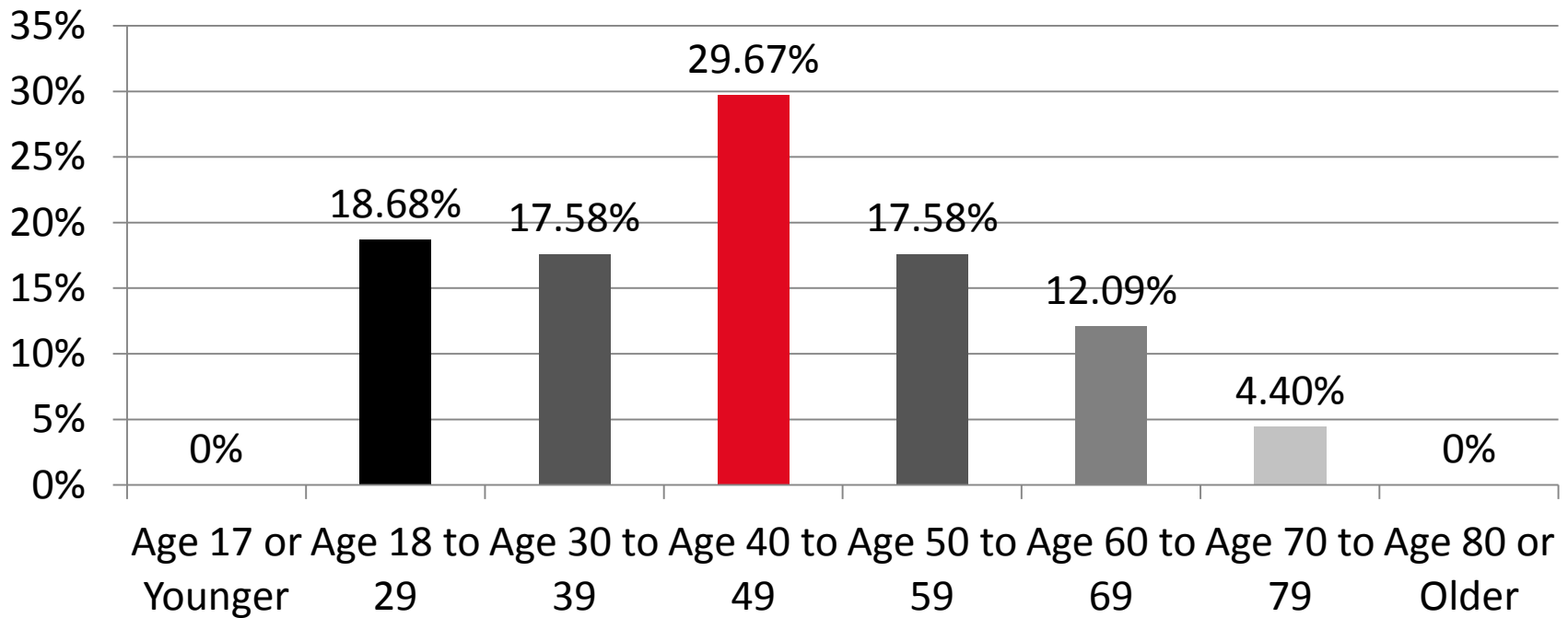
Who Steals?

Race (All Repository Types)



Who Steals?

Age (All Repository Types)



Why Do They Steal?

- Financial gain is *rarely* the primary motive.
- Individuals may steal documents and files:
 - That prove or disprove claims or theses
 - To keep other people from accessing them
 - To cause or avoid embarrassment or implication
 - For convenience
 - For revenge/retaliation
 - Because they feel entitled to them
 - Because they believe they can better care for them
 - Compulsion/mental illness



Warning Signs: Insider Thief

- Establishes own rules
- Arrives too early/stays too late
- Works on weekends
- Leaves for no particular reason
- Warns when a supervisor approaches
- Refuses to go on vacation
- Aggressive collector
- Sells historical items
- Struggling with debt
- Demonstrates irrational sensitivity to questioning
- Not a team player
- Disregards access controls
- Frequent misshelving



Warning Signs: Researcher Theft

- Moving too rapidly through documents
- “Cruising” the research room
- Examining materials on other tables or carts
- Scanning materials being used by other researchers



Warning Signs: Researcher Theft

- Moving to dark corners or away from visible areas
- Making frequent trips to lockers, copier, reference desk, restroom, or outside
- Requesting collections unrelated to stated research topic



Warning Signs: Researcher Theft

- Working near the floor, under the table, or in lap
- Frequent looks at attendants, cameras or mirrors
- Shielding position from electronic or human monitors
- Paying more attention to the surroundings than the research



Warning Signs: Researcher Theft

- Putting hands in pockets, under the table
- Frequent stretching, clothing adjustments, bending, reaching or scratching
- Moving desktop folders, papers, laptops or boxes to create a barricade



Warning Signs: Researcher Theft

- Efforts to engage staff or other researchers in long conversations
- Behaving obnoxiously to encourage avoidance by staff or other researchers
- Acting overly solicitous or familiar with staff or other researchers



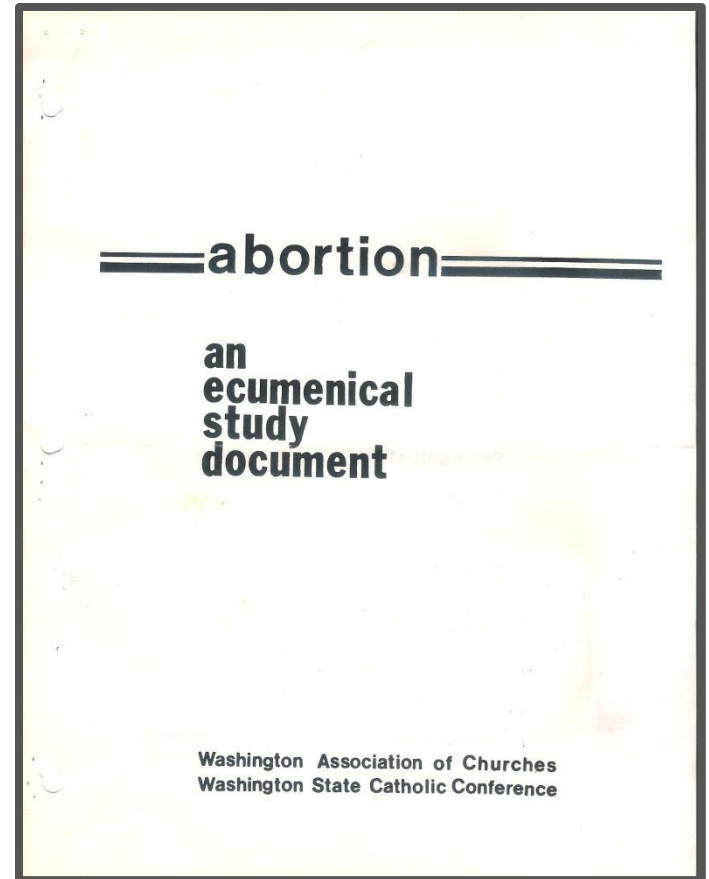
Warning Signs: Outsider Theft

- Missing or relocated items
- Disarray in storage areas
- Triggering of electronic monitoring
- Damage to windows, doors, walls
- Unlocked or propped doors
- Your stuff is for sale!



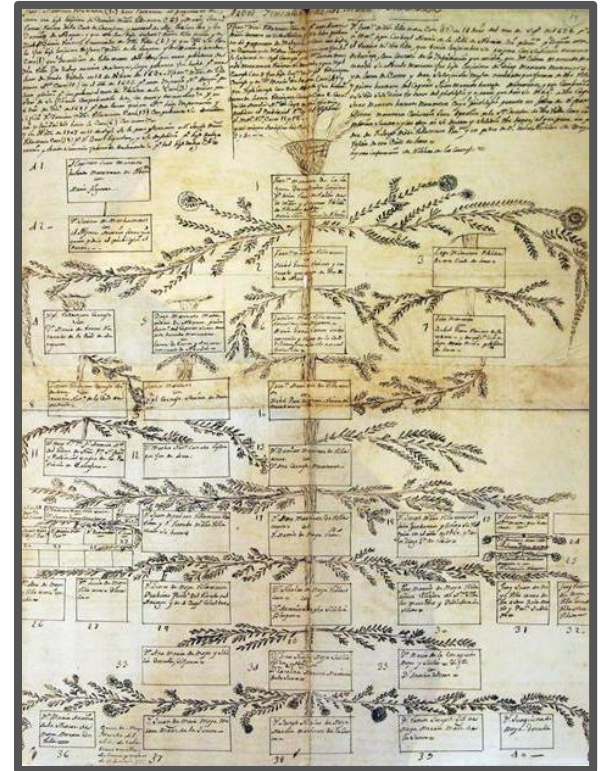
What Gets Stolen?

- Autographs
- Controversial topical materials
- Architectural drawings/plans for famous buildings
- Materials related to the occult



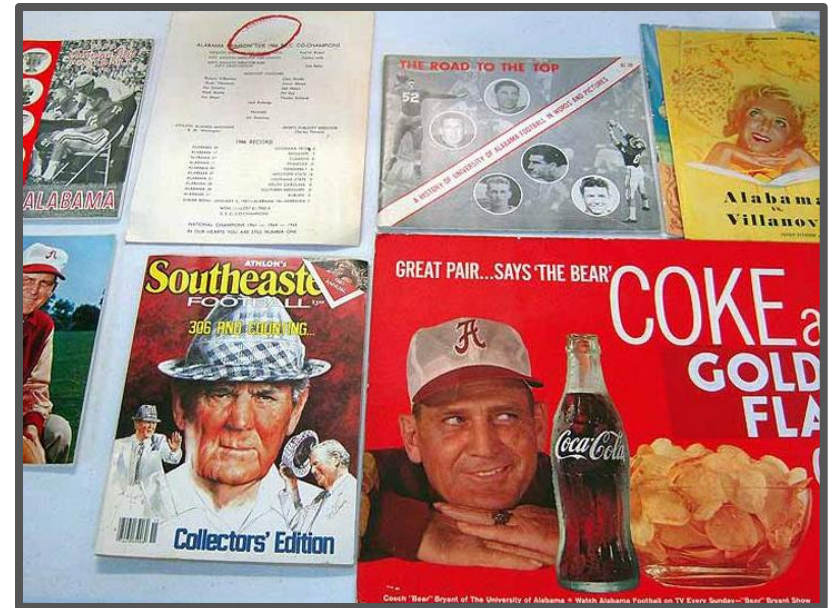
What Gets Stolen?

- Ephemera
- High-value collectibles
- Maps
- Genealogical materials



What Gets Stolen?

- Memorabilia related to well known families, events, groups, individuals
- Native American documents
- Black history materials
- War-related materials



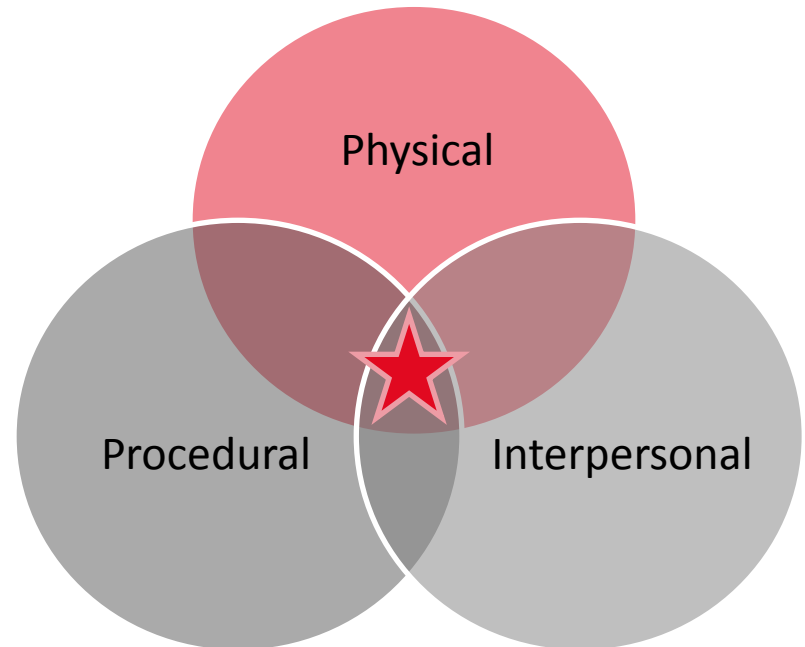
What Gets Stolen?

- Philatelic items
- Photographs
- Presidential materials
- Lighthouse, and railroad-related materials
- Vintage blank paper
- Documents with “PII”



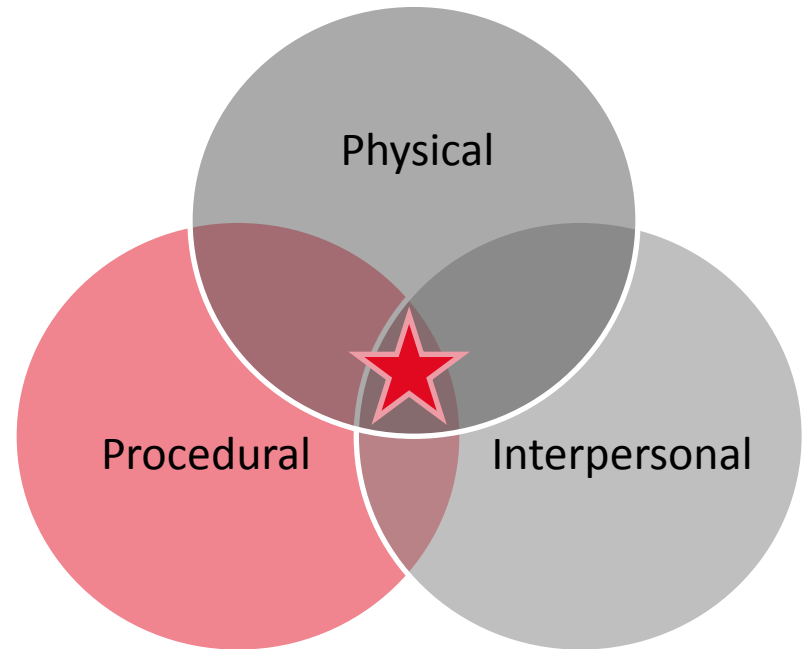
Types of Security

- Physical
 - Grounds
 - Facilities
 - Storage Areas
 - Monitoring (Electronic)
 - Access Controls



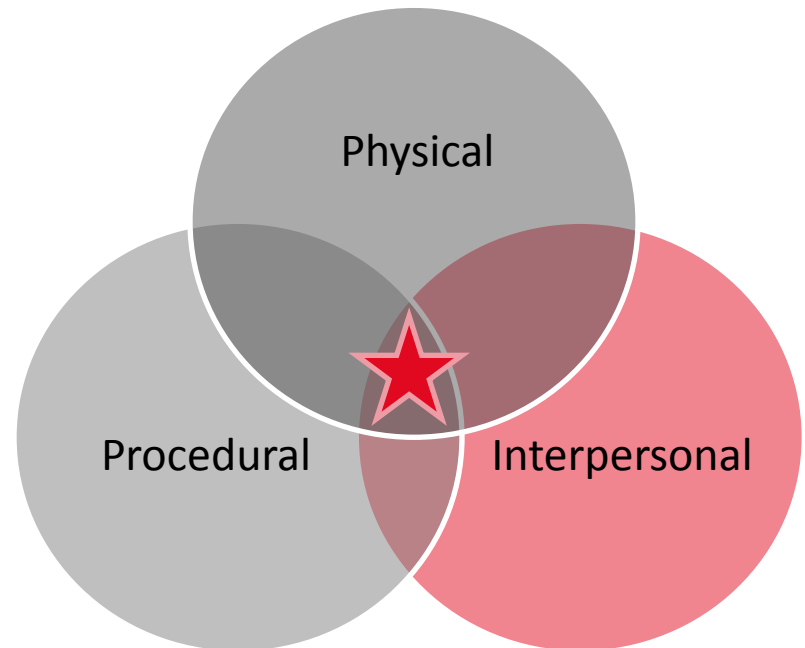
Types of Security

- Procedural
 - Documentation and Recordkeeping
 - Policies and Procedures
 - Accountability/Checks and Balances
 - Notification and Response
 - Consistency
 - **Transparency**



Types of Security

- Interpersonal
 - Screening
 - Education and Training
 - Awareness
 - Preparedness
 - Support
 - Communication



Making It Work

- Different types of collections and institutions have different needs and different resources
 - \$\$\$
 - Staff
 - Time
 - Facilities



“Archival security is like fashion. There is no such thing as one-size-fits-all.”

- Tim Gunn?



Making It Work

- Consider the needs of your environment
 - Risk Assessments, Risk Management
 - Be Realistic
- Focus on the Highest Risks
 - Insider Theft?
 - Researcher Theft?
 - Outsider Theft?
 - **Inaction/Inconsistency!**



Low/No Cost Solutions

- Establish Policies & Procedures and...
- *Enforce them!* Be prepared to assert yourself!
 - Begin with a “customer service” approach
 - If behavior is suspicious, but theft is not observed:
 - First Approach: Friendly, make eye contact, offer help
 - Second Approach: Warn researcher, quietly alert Supervisor
 - Third Approach: Bring in Supervisor/Remove researcher



Low/No Cost Solutions

- Use your head
 - Researcher may have accidentally mixed collection materials in personal possessions.
- Trust your instincts
 - Researcher may have “accidentally” mixed collection materials in personal possessions.



Low/No Cost Solutions

- Identify gaps
 - Security Assessment
- Document everything!!!
 - Research Room Rules
 - Retrieval Requests
 - Incident Reports, including “saves”
 - Collections



Low/No Cost Solutions

- Know who is accessing your collections
 - Researcher Registration
 - Background screening
 - BOLO List
- Create/monitor routines
 - Hours of operation
 - Opening and closing procedures
 - Shelf audits



Low/No Cost Solutions

- Collaborate
 - Professional organizations
 - Local, State, and Regional Groups
- Education, training, and support
 - Researcher orientation
 - Staff training
 - Drills
 - Manuals and plans



Low/No Cost Solutions

- Communicate
 - Media
 - Emergency Responders
 - “Sister” institutions
- Plan for security improvements
 - Start small, but...
 - Be mindful of future opportunities and potential setbacks



Discussion

- Challenges
 - What are your barriers to prioritizing security?
 - How can they be overcome? Do they need to be overcome?
 - What has worked for you? What hasn't?
 - What areas would you like to explore in greater detail?
 - Other questions/ideas/suggestions?



Available Workshops

- Theft Prevention
- Facility Design
- Security Technologies
- Policies and Procedures
- Security Assessments
- “Enhanced Customer Service”
- Collection Management and Exhibit Security
- Post-Theft Response
- Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response
- Social Media
- Records Management and Information Governance
- Public Records and Freedom of Information



Thank you!

– Shreve Memorial Library

- www.shreve-lib.org
- bturner@shreve-lib.org
- (318) 226-5888

– Society of American Archivists Security Roundtable

- www2.archivists.org/groups/security-roundtable

