Don,

Garden City got rid of our gates in 2006.  We have no security other than the circulation desk being by the exit (and alarms on the emergency exit doors).  If we ever decide to go the RFID route we may reconsider gates.  But that is a huge upfront cost.  We would have to prevent a lot of theft to recoup the investment.

Hey Don

We are looking to remove our gates this summer.  We are getting a new Information Desk and Computer Island and they will need to be removed to allow clearance since we have three.  Half the time they do not work properly but that is because they are fairly old.  I pay a fee to maintain them through Bibliotheque which is not worth the money.

I agree, those who steal, find ways around gates so they don't really serve much of a purpose anymore.

I believe Rochester Hills removed theirs as well.

Hi Don,

We haven't had security gates at our library (I don't think ever) but certainly not in the last 20 years. I'm sure we have some theft, but I don't think it's significant. We do have our adult movies in locking cases. We keep the music discs in a drawer and put them in the empty case at checkout. But given the declining circ for music CDs, that's less of a concern. Overall I like the cleaner look without the gates and enjoy not having the frequent false alarms I've experienced at other libraries.

Hi Don,

Just adding this paradigm to consideration:

We updated gates at Northville in January 2018. When we updated the gates, we went to Envisionware gates, which serve dual purpose. They're not just security gates, but they're also reporting gates.

Our gates count the number of people in and out (so no more separate door counter)

Our gates report ANYTHING that's not checked out. So when there are mistakes (as common with any self check out), the gate informs us what item "went out the door". Not a random beep, but it reports the item to the desk. When patron returns (99.9% of the time), we know exactly which item to get properly checked out.

We did have the same discussions before switching gates, but decided the added functionality would be helpful in the long run. There was also more than a bit of concern expressed about appearing to not be adequate stewards of the library collection if we were to just let is walk out the door...

To finish this thought... before we replaced the gates, our OLD gates (3M gates) were essentially non functional. They only accurately activated if you were kind enough to rub your stolen material directly against a 5 inch diameter spot on the gate pedestal. Did we experience an increase in theft? On and off. Have we seen that lower? Yes, but that was likely because we all managed to catch onto the Video Game thieves.

Hope all is well. Stay safe!

Only reason I still have them is a people counter.

Aanii Donald,

I hope this message finds you well.

We have never had security gates (or tags), and our loss rates are right in line with those of our partner libraries (Chippewa River District Library system, Coleman Area Library, and Pere Marquette District Library), with whom we share an automation system. My impression is the same as yours – they don’t really do much to deter theft. Our public library is staffed all open hours, but our college location is not (there are many open hours when the library is available and patrons can use self-check, but no library staff is there – this is during non-COVID closure times, of course), and the loss rate there is no different than any of the other locations in the system. Our locations (with the exception of the elementary school) are smaller than the other partner locations, but when I make these comparisons I’m going based on percentage, so hopefully as apples-to-apples as possible.

Don -- I agree 100% with you -- honest people will be honest (VAST majority of library users) and stealers gonna steal. We had Checkpoint gates at two entrances that worked some of the time. Mostly didn't work. We were using RFID tags and either the gates would go off for checked out items or they didn't go off for unchecked out items.They seemed to be serving the function of getting in the way of people with walkers/wheelchairs, moms & strollers, and generally ugly at the entrances. We removed them about 5 or 6 years ago and have seen no increase in theft, etc.

I did this at my previous library (southern Indiana) - suggested it here during renovations and the staff was sure that life on earth would end.

So we replaced them. Waste of $$ in my opinion. One of the gates has already been damaged...

We did install a pretty robust camera system and this was money well spent! We've got over 30 cameras in color and the backbone of the system is fairly easy to navigate and collect files from. The cost was roughly the same, and the camera system doesn't have any ongoing support costs associated with it. Unlike the gates...

We've caught book damage as well as a lot of general mischievousness via the camera system.

Hi Don.

Following this.  We are considering this too.  I know of three Libraries the the Grand Rapids area that have.  Ours are not working well and we stopped the service contract.  Wat too expensive for the limited amount of theft.  When they die, they die.  😉

Best wishes and I hope you are well.

We have not had security gates before because of how small our entryway is. I do really wish we had the ability to have gates sometimes. Our newest DVDs do not seem to stay very long- especially anything Marvel. We are a late fine free library so people could really keep something for a long time if they wanted. I am thinking they might be just trying to sell them. If we were to get a bigger building, we would have to make a decision about this since we would then have an option.

On the other hand, another library I worked at that did have security gates had a problem of an organized group checking out large quantities of video games and never returning them with the intention of selling them. Their way to help prevent this was making a more strict limit to items checked out at a time.

It is so disheartening that people will always seem to find a way to do this. You might be onto something. Let me know what you decide! I would be interested to know.

This is just my two cents without statistics or a study. Your theory has merit, but I think the gates can alert patrons who might have forgotten that they put an item in their bag or grabbed a thin item with their stack of homework papers, or missed checking out an item due to some error either with self check out or with a clerk. They might also deter a less determined thief.  The gates can help deter less experienced or determined thieves and prevent 'accidental' thefts.

You could think of them like a bike cable lock compared to a stronger U-lock.  The cable will deter someone from grabbing an unlocked bike, but not the person carrying bolt cutters.  The thief has to work harder, plan ahead, and be more determined to steal.

Hi Don,

Would you please share the responses you get about removing security gates? Our security gates haven’t worked for several years, but we have left them up, hopefully as a deterrent (not that they deter much). I’d love to take them out, so learning about the experiences of other libraries would be helpful.

I saw your inquiry on MichLib-L.  Ypsi is planning a new branch library in Superior Township, and we will not be investing in gates for this location.  It is a budget decision for us but I tend to agree with you that gates do not deter those who are most determined to steal.  If you get some good responses I hope you'll share.  Thanks!

Hi Donald,

We are a Class IV library and we had non-working gates that preceded me (I’ve been at Brandon for five years).  When we renovated last year, we removed the gates.  It’s hard to say whether or not the theft rate is any higher since the gates hadn’t worked for years.  However, I managed the Central Library in Sacramento, CA and when we had gates and the alarm went off, security would check their bags and it was almost always something that hadn’t checked out properly from the self-check machines.  I question whether the cost of the gates is worth the loss rate, but I’ve never run that study.

We will be removing our gates soon.  They have not worked for a few years but we left them as a visual deterrence.  We have not noticed any change in loss of items since the system stopped working.