IT resources, troubleshooting, internet security, and library security

Computers and printers (and also faxes and scanners) are an integral part of libraries today – in fact, many patrons and students expect them to be ready when they need them (and when they don’t need them!). Large libraries usually have an IT professional standing by in case of any emergencies. But the solo librarian is usually himself or herself the IT professional. How does the solo librarian become (somewhat) computer proficient to keep them running smoothly? Here are some suggestions and strategies.

• Learn as much as you can about how a computer and its network operate – this includes the computer hardware and software. For software, most librarians should be knowledgeable about Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, as many patrons use these on a regular basis. Java and Linux, for now, can be left to the experts (or referred to in a book or on a website; internet resources for these areas are provided here for your reference). But having at least a rudimentary background in how the major software systems function is always a good idea. This is also true nowadays with smart phones, Kindles, and other handheld devices; at the very least, the solo librarian needs to have information on hand in the library to assist patrons with using these devices, or should be able to direct them to websites that can help them with their questions.

• Creating a book collection devoted to basic computer operating systems (again, hardware and software) will help you and your patrons develop computer literacy. One good starting point is the Teach Yourself Visually book series, published by Wiley (www.wiley.com/combooks). They are full of easy-to-read text and colorful pictures that any computerphobe will learn to love! When I managed a one-person library, I became very good friends with our textbook publisher (and several other computer book publishers) and, given our textbook spending and budgets with them, I asked for several copies of computer books, telling them that the students and faculty would need to use them as library resources. I built a very comprehensive collection because of my networks and connections. If you don’t deal with textbook publishers, I find it cannot hurt to ask them if they have older copies of books that they would not mind parting with to help you build a collection of computer books.

• Nowadays, with e-book databases out of the reach of most solo librarians’ budgets, you should compile a list of internet resources dealing with computers and information technology that your patrons (and you) can use to understand more about how computers work. Obviously, given how fast technology changes, you should update this list frequently and stay ahead of the information curve by being current about the latest IT and trends.

• Join a listserv or computer users’ group for educational (and moral) support. Not only is this a good way to network with fellow librarians, who can answer any technological questions you may have, but this technology allows solo librarians to meet other librarians and learn (and find help) without leaving their libraries.

• Computer software can be a major expense for a library, as its proprietary nature and copyright can drain any library’s budget. Most libraries do require some form of the Microsoft Office suite (which includes Word, PowerPoint, Excel, and Outlook), which may be too prohibitive
in cost to add to library computers, but there are open-source alternatives, such as Apache’s Open Office. Created over 20 years ago, this suite of office software contains Writer (similar to Microsoft Word and word processing), Impress (for presentations), Calc (for spreadsheets), and Base (for database development and management). The same applies to email, if Microsoft is too expensive for libraries to obtain. The most recognizable open-source email system is Gmail; another is Mozilla Thunderbird, which is free and can operate on Windows and Mac platforms. eMClient is a third open-source email software that can easily synchronize with Gmail, so this may be preferred by solo librarians who use Gmail, as well as other Google software programs. Finally, those using the Windows 7 or 8 operating systems can use Windows Live Mail for free as an email platform as well (unfortunately, Windows Live Mail is not compatible with the Windows XP operating system). Open-source software gives solo librarians the ability to add the software their libraries need without breaking their operating budgets.

• Take a basic computer class. When I was in library school, I took a computer course (now probably required of all students) – not only did I learn how a computer functions, but I actually took apart an old computer and saw how it works (it was an eye-opening experience, to say the least). Taking such a course (or even dismantling an old computer on your own) may be just the catalyst to become more computer proficient as a solo librarian.

• Another way solo librarians can become more computer literate and troubleshoot computer problems more effectively is to earn a certification (A+ certification, which covers most of how a computer operates and functions, is the best one to obtain). If a solo librarian does not have any IT professionals on staff or on call, a certification can be a life-saver when computer problems arise (and they always do).

• Network and use some savvy. Do you know of a student or a reliable patron who is computer proficient? If so, appeal to their better instincts (or, in the case of students, offer a little money, if available) either to teach you the basics of computer troubleshooting or offer you a few hours of their services to help you maintain the computer equipment (or be available to answer questions by telephone or email, for instance). Figure 5.1
Internet security

When your patrons use your library computers, I would safely bet that they are primarily using them for the internet, whether to check their emails, do library research, or conduct other unmentionable activities (which, of course, need to be monitored and curtailed – but that is another course in itself!). Internet security, to ensure that your computers are running properly, is just as important as learning computer troubleshooting skills. One caveat here is that there are many resources, but perhaps a good investment is to review these with an IT professional to ensure that your computers are receiving the best bang for your buck and being protected properly. If an IT professional’s services are not within your library’s budget, you could find a computer science student who would be willing to assess your computer security situation, or perhaps if you employ or know of a computer science instructor, he or she would be willing to help for a nominal fee.

And another good idea is to create a computer policy for your patrons; at least you will have something on paper to refer to and some order can come out of chaos so that patrons can use your computers in the proper way without ruining them. This is especially important for public libraries and school media centers, as they are public institutions and need to provide guidelines for their users as part of regulations that govern these organizations. Like any policy, computer and internet use policies should be reviewed and potentially updated periodically (e.g. quarterly) to ensure that they remain current with changing computer software.

How does a solo librarian decide what internet security software to purchase, absent any recommendations from an IT professional? Cost and coverage are two areas that are important in choosing the proper software, and there are many free versions of anti-virus, malware, and other internet security software available, such as Avira, Glary Utilities, and Ad-Aware; others, such as AGV, are free for an initial period of time and then available at cost. Internet security software needs to be updated often, as its content changes regularly (given the number of new computer viruses and malware present), so solo librarians need to become knowledgeable about updates in internet security products by reading such trade publications as PC Magazine and Computerworld, as they contain reviews of new and existing security software.

With a little resourcefulness and motivation, the solo librarian can wear many hats, one those hats being that of an IT expert!

Library security

A library should be a safe and secure place where users can work and conduct research without any concerns for their personal safety and security, as is the case with any public space. This is especially a concern for solo librarians, who cannot rely on a large staff (or a security or police force, in the case of large academic and public libraries) to maintain order and safety. What solo librarians can do to maintain their libraries’ safety and security is to create and implement plans and strategies so that
their individual spaces are safe. These policies should reflect the library’s layout and location in the organization or institution, and should allow for the maximum safety and security for its users (as well as the maximum freedom of users to enter, exit, and use the library without distractions); the plans and policies should be revised regularly, along with the organization’s management, to ensure that they remain current and up to date.

The next concern that may arise is implementing safety gates and other electronic tools to provide library security (this is also the case for securing books, computers, and other library items). This will depend not only on the solo librarian’s budget, but also the needs and wishes of the library’s parent organization to provide additional security measures to ensure users’ safety. The solo librarian and management should work closely to ensure that user safety is the primary goal here.

Solo librarians should also take an active role in working with their organizations to conduct emergency procedures and strategies for their institutions as a whole; not only does this involve solo librarians in actively participating in the community, but it also allows them to help maintain order, safety, and security throughout the institution.

Case studies

Amanda Tarbet, reference librarian, MGH Institute of Health Professions, Boston, MA

Information technology

I have an IT department that handles most troubleshooting issues. However, I do find myself in troubleshooting situations more often than I would like. For instance, I recently had to troubleshoot RefWorks. It turned out that the link we have to RefWorks in our CMS/website was causing problems because it was opening RefWorks up inside the frame of the CMS. I needed to add a “target = _blank” to the link to ensure it would open in a new window/tab. We also occasionally have problems with Micromedex, a web app used widely by our nursing students for pharmaceutical info. And when we were choosing an ILS, the first one we chose had way too many troubleshooting issues, so we ended up going with Koha. I guess that most of my issues are software based, rather than hardware based, but it definitely helps to be comfortable with technology to be able to do troubleshooting. In 2007 I became a Mac person, and I do not do my own troubleshooting for my personal computer because I really don’t understand Macs on that level. On the other hand, I have never had a virus or trojan since switching, so there’s a trade-off there.

Library security

Safety and Security Policy

Although the MGH IHP Library is not a public library with a lot of traffic, it is nonetheless important to be aware of your surroundings. The building in which we are housed does get a great deal of guests/patients, and our floor is not locked during
the day. Please adhere to the following procedures so that we may maintain a safe and welcoming environment for both the IHP community and guests.

**General safety and security issues**

Alerting staff to incidents
- When and how to call 911/MGH security
- Who to inform
- Filing reports/documentation

MGH security escorts
- How to request

Harassment by telephone, email, or in person
- What to do
- Who to inform
- If you are asked for your name

Log books
- Incident log
- Needs to be paper for signatures
- Should we be sending copies to MGH security?
- Log should be updated in a timely manner

Illness or injury
- Library does not provide first aid or medical assistance
- Who to contact if a patron/staff member is ill and needs assistance
- What to do if assistance is refused

Lost and found
- Lost and found items should be transferred to the first-floor security desk

Personal items
- Should be locked in desk and/or kept out of sight

Policies and training
- Policy should be reviewed annually
- Staff should be trained annually -- coordinate with MGH security?

**Conduct of library users**

The library is not a place for people to do whatever they want.

Rules violations: what to do if you need to approach a patron
- Remind of rules
- Give them an out
• Start nicely and become more authoritative if necessary
• Do not get into their space or touch them
• Call security if patron becomes aggressive or is under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol

Computer violations

• All computers are under the administration of IT
• If you see a computer lab PC or laptop being misused, inform the IT help desk or other IT staff member

Emergency contacts

MGH security phone number:
Charlestown Navy security phone number:
Security desk in Building 36 phone number:

Lisa Lin, career resource consultant, McGill University Career Planning Services, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Information technology

I’m lucky to have an IT department that does troubleshooting for us. All the staff computers are part of the university’s computer domain and the basic security such as anti-virus and email filtering are all covered. The only thing I have to manage is the student computers, which are not part of the domain. I know a little about computer installation, and so far they haven’t been a problem for me. For those who do install programs on their computers, a good website is http://ninite.com/. The site allows you to download the most commonly used free software (Essentials, Firefox, PDFCreator, FileZilla, etc.). The installation is pretty easy. Once you select a bunch of software programs, you get an installer that will install all the programs in one shot and does not require much interaction.

Some key issues that I also think are very important before buying:

• make sure the purchase fits your current and future computing needs
• find out what operating system (e.g. Windows XP) comes with the computer
• what peripherals are included with the computer.

In my case, I always pay attention to what operating system a computer comes with before buying. I try to choose a stable system that can last for a while (e.g. Windows XP rather than Vista), with the right peripherals (e.g. DVD drives and wireless network cards).

Library security

General Safety Guidelines

This section describes steps staff members should take when an incident is reported or takes place.

• General procedures
• Illness or injury
• Lost and found
Emergency Procedures
This section describes the emergency measures that will take place to ensure the safety of the community.

- Emergency evacuation
- Fire and smoke
- Medical emergencies
- Natural disasters

User Safety Guidelines
This section describes the Centre’s expectations, users’ responsibilities, and procedures to take to ensure safety.

- Cell phones
- Disruptive behavior
- Food and drink
- Library computers and printer
- Pets
- Suspicious behaviors
- Theft
- Sexual and other assaults
- Theft and vulnerabilities

Forms

- Disruptive behavior report
- Theft/loss report

Wendy O’Brien, Richmond Public Library, Richmond, VA

Library security

Draft Security Policy– Richmond Public Library

Security in building

- Keep all personal belongings in back room.
- Do not count book sale/fine money while patrons are present.
- Double-check all rooms (including back corners of non-fiction room and children’s room as well as for problems in the bathroom) prior to closing.
- For the future: develop security incident form.

Security for computers

- See completed “Use of Patron Computers Policy”.
- Always sign out of Library World to protect patron records.

Security for staff

- See completed “Unattended Child Policy”.
• Be aware of front desk when helping patrons on computers or shelving books in back areas.
• For the future: install a mirror to help with security as well as providing assistance for handicapped entrance.

**Carol Munroe, Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee, WI**

*Information technology*

**Figure 5.2** is a very useful flowchart that can help solo librarians manage and troubleshoot computer problems.

![Flowchart of computer troubleshooting](image-url)
Martha Kennedy, librarian, Concord Academy, Concord, MA

Library security

Security Plan for the J. Josephine Tucker Library

Facility Security
The Main School building, including the Library, is locked every evening and unlocked each morning by school security.

The Director staffs the Library from 7:30am–5:00pm, Monday through Friday. Evening staff coverage is provided from 6:00–9:00pm on Sunday, 7:00–9:30 on Monday, 6:30–9:30 on Tuesday and from 7:30–9:30 on Wednesday and Thursday. The building is opened each morning at 7:00am and secured once students return to their boarding houses by 10:00pm during the week, and 11:00pm on weekends.

The Library Office and workroom are locked until the Director arrives in the morning.

The school does not utilize video surveillance cameras on campus.

Collection Security

Signs are posted on each exit door clearly stating the Circulation Policies of the Tucker Library. A manual sign-out sheet is available on the Circulation Desk when the Director is away. All items are to be checked out at the desk.

Locked collections that require access with the Librarian are the DVD collection, the Alumni Authors case, and the Academy Archives.

The library does not utilize an alarm system for books.

Patron and Staff Security

Fire drills are conducted regularly through the school and the Town of Concord’s Fire Department. Exits are clearly marked, and audible and visible alarms alert patrons to fire emergencies.

Furniture is safely maintained to allow easy egress to all exiting the facility.

Fire extinguishers are tested annually and are located throughout the facility.

Air-horn stations are also located throughout the facility and are to only be used to alert patrons of a lockdown drill or emergencies. The school’s Director of Operations, in consultation with town emergency officials, has a clear plan that goes into place in the event of a lockdown situation. (This would be on the order of a dangerous person alert on the campus.)

In the event of a non-lockdown emergency, the Chapel bell rings continuously to call all to the Chapel for an all-community meeting. This would occur in the event of a 911-type incident.

Further explanation of our open campus policy in regards to campus buildings is in order. As a boarding/day school, approximately 40 per cent of our student and adult population live on campus. Ours is an open campus, meaning students do not need hall passes or permission to move about the campus when not enrolled in a class. This also means that students are free to walk into the town of Concord during free periods
without explicit permission from an adult. If students are to leave campus by the com-
muter rail or by car, they must have permission to do so. With regard to open class-
rooms, studios, and common areas, the school’s Code of Common Trust is the ruling
principle. All community members are to treat all people’s personal belongings with
respect and not disturb, destroy, or take items belonging to others. This includes library
items, classroom equipment, and dining-hall plates and cutlery. Overall, the amount
of actual theft is quite low, but along with Common Trust goes its partner, Common
Sense. Yes, materials do walk out of the library without being signed out or with my
explicit permission, but that amount is small. In the years when full inventories were
conducted, the general loss was well under 5 per cent. Some of the worst offenders are
faculty, who often bury borrowed items in their offices for years. Students respond bet-
ter to gentle cajoling or email reminders to return items. I’m also going to declare an
amnesty day in which any taken items may be returned with no questions asked.

To summarize

- Solo librarians need to become computer and technology proficient to be able to assist their
  patrons with any questions they may have.
- Solo librarians need to be able to troubleshoot computers successfully so that, in the absence
  of any information technology professionals, they can keep their library computers well
  maintained and running smoothly.
- Solo librarians should compile ample resources to help patrons with information technology
  questions, and should stay current with the latest technologies.
- Solo librarians need to implement security strategies to maintain safety and security in their
  library spaces for their users.

Further reading

Chicago, IL: ALA Editions.
for the Low-Tech Librarian*. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited/ABC-CLIO.
Davis, Susan, Malinowski, Teresa, Davis, Eve, MacIver, Dustin, Corrado, Tina, and Spagnolo,
ALA Editions.
Response*. Chicago, IL: ALA Editions.
Unlimited/ABC-CLIO.