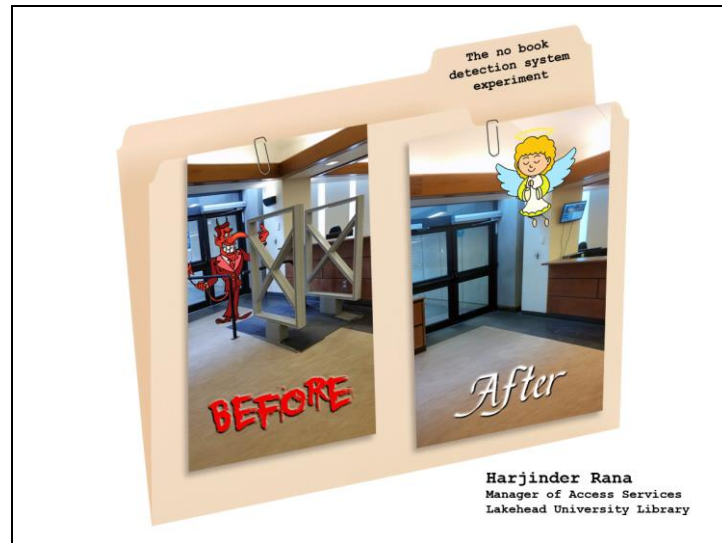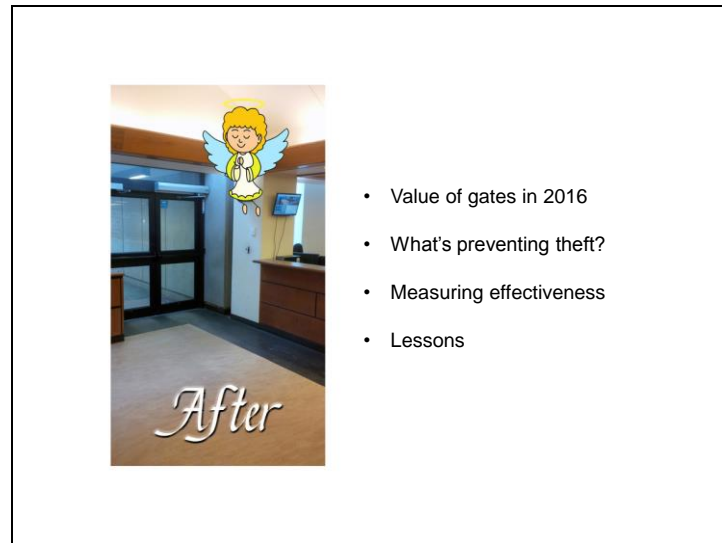Slide 1



- Public service objective: stop treating users like criminals, a less confrontational way of addressing possible theft of library books; we came up with unconventional result
- This is not a "one size fits all" solution, it is contextual to what makes sense in your location
- Not the first to try this (Jonathan H. Harwell (2014) Library Security Gates: Effectiveness and Current Practice, Journal of Access Services, 11:2, 53-65)
- Security gates are ubiquitous, non-controversial, simply accepted by those in the profession
- The take away is this: really think critically about things that we accept as self-evident in our profession, or as "necessary evils", think outside the box, challenge assumptions

Slide 2
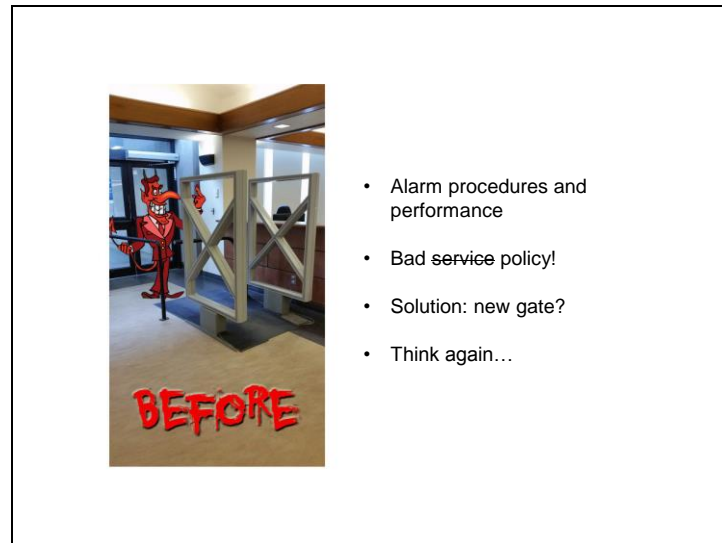


- False alarms occur, we've all probably been victim to them, it is an embarrassing experience
- Our procedures: stop the student, ask to see inside their bag, walk through without technology or book, repeat
- Have to often shout from service desk to get them to stop, if there's a lineup just let them go, we aren't going to chase people, call campus security, etc.
- Our gate model is grandfathered (FYI ours magnetic, not RFID), often needs servicing (no service contract), loud and annoying alarm sound, predominately goes off due to student technology, bookstore purchases, going through too quickly, too many people going through at once, etc.
- Overwhelmingly triggered by false alarms, can't remember legitimately stopping a book thief
- Students developed unique routines for walking through, for example walk through with their laptop over their head lol
- Students and staff both resent this experience
- Don't blame staff, more customer service training not the answer, staff can be as pleasant as can be in going through these procedures, the problem is the procedure itself (and frequency)
- Conventional thinking: purchase a new gate to reduce/eliminate false alarms, spoke to vendors at OLA last year, got quotes, prepared proposal
- Intent to ask new UL to purchase a gate, new UL asks if we need a gate, mind=blown lol

Slide 3



- Had gate fully removed in summer 2015 before students returned in September
- What are we protecting? Do people want our books to the extent that we need to spend ~$15,000 that we don't have? (see slide 4)
- Might it be cheaper to replace missing books (that we even want to replace) than to buy a new gate?
- Do we want our books? How much effort are we putting into weeding? Students can give us a hand lol
- Once was told by service person on a call to repair our gate that large part of effectiveness of security gates is deterrence, even for properly functioning models
- What if we just unplug it? Because there's also concerns about accessibility, aesthetics
- Recognize need for deterrence, still value our collection and don't want to advertise that books can be taken, can we achieve deterrence without the high price tag and bad user experiences?
- Security camera, patron exit counter, continue to sensitize/desensitize = deterrence
- Moved some items to closed stacks
- Effectiveness from public service perspective: no longer stopping students at exit, wasting front line staff effort/goodwill (IMO cost was actually more than ~$15,000, was costing us goodwill which can't be measured), we eliminated the customer service problem
- Culture change: positive relationship with our students more important to us than our books
- Effectiveness from circulation perspective: circulation did not decrease at greater rate since the change (see slide 5)
- Effectiveness from collections perspective: Coincidentally did a complete inventory of monograph collection right before the change, hope to complete another inventory this

summer and compare the numbers, did books go missing at a greater rate since the gate was removed, or was there no difference? Will give us some indication if the gate was necessary or not

Monograph Circulation (May - April)
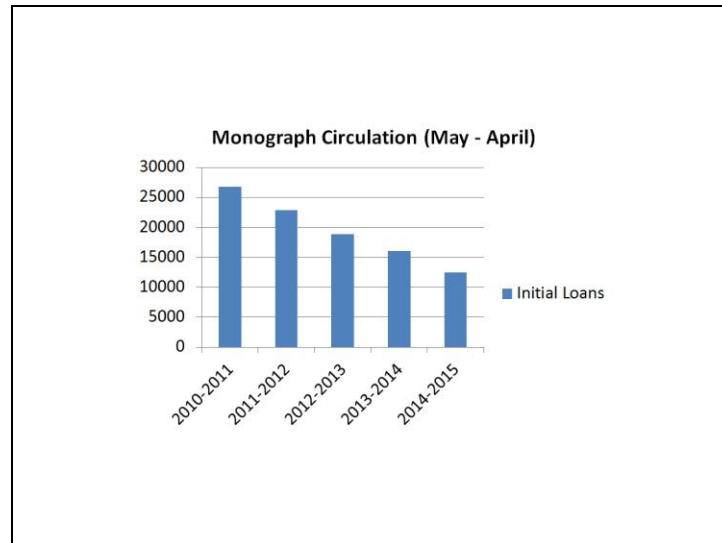
- Our monograph circulation for the last five years (53% drop), we are going to invest ~$15,000 that we don't have to protect these items that fewer and fewer people even want?
- Did I mention our monograph collection is old and morbidly obese? lol

Slide 5
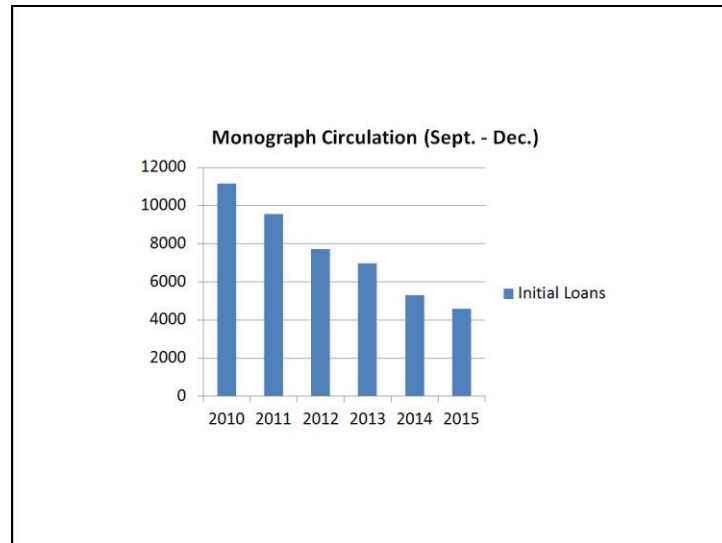


- Our monograph circulation for the Fall term: we've had one full term with no security gate (Fall 2015), comparing monograph circulation during this time with monograph circulation at this time in years past shows a decline, but not at a greater rate than years past
- 13% drop from 2014 to 2015 (gate to no gate) vs. 24% drop from 2013 to 2014 (gate in both years)
- Theory that students would see no security gate and would just walk out with books and not bother signing them out at circulation desk, this hasn't happened, students probably think there is something else in place (either by assumption or by our new deterrence measures) or maybe they just think that it's wrong to take
- Also launched a free book section (made up of weeded and donated material) during this time which is very popular, students take those books because we explicitly advertise that they're free
- Could also research all of this from a behaviourist perspective!

Slide 6
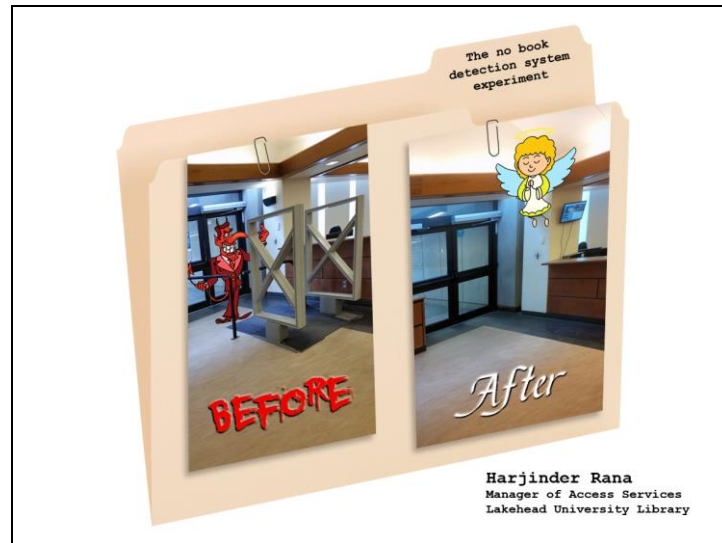


- Tried to focus this talk on public service
- May decide to purchase a gate in the future, if you have one that works that's great, but if yours acts like ours did, consider ALL of your options, don't just pencil in the expense
- What other longstanding policies and assumptions should we reconsider for better public service? Overdue fines? Loan lengths?
- Hope to come back with inventory results for full picture (FYI previous inventory showed 0.074% of our monograph collection went missing over a ~5 year period before gate removal)