

Proposal would allow libraries to search concealment suspects

By Barbara Comito
Staff Reporter

Concealing or failing to return library materials would be made a punishable crime by LB288, and library officials would be powered to detain or search people suspected of doing so.

The bill was amended and advanced to the full legislature by the Miscellaneous Subjects Committee Friday. The amended version removed sections six and seven of the bill, which would allow libraries free, unlimited use of Small Claims Court.

Sen. Vard Johnson of Omaha, one of two committee members present for the majority of the public hearing, said he thought the bill was too "heavy-handed."

Passage of the bill "would be giving greater immunity to libraries than shopkeepers who face the same problem," Johnson said.

Anita Cook, representing the University Libraries at UNL, testified that the cost of mutilation, theft and failure to return materials amounted to thousands of dollars annually.

Cook, director of circulation services, also said libraries need to have the legal right to search people who set off the detection alarm.

Carol Conner, director of Lincoln City Libraries, testified in support of the bill. However, under advice from the Lincoln City Council, Connor recommended deleting the section that would give librarians the power of search and seizure.

Ron Schroeder, research assistant to the Miscellaneous Subjects Committee, said he thought some form of the bill probably would be passed.



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