



CITY OF OREGON CITY LIBRARY BOARD AGENDA

Virtual Meeting
Wednesday, July 14, 2021 at 5:30 PM

This meeting will be held online via Zoom; please contact dbutcher@orccity.org for the meeting link.

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Review and approve minutes from the May 12, 2021 Library Board meeting.

LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

2. The Library Director will share his July, 2021 report.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Citizens are allowed up to 3 minutes to present information relevant to the City but not listed as an item on the agenda. Prior to speaking, citizens shall complete a comment form and deliver it to the Staff Member. When the Chair calls your name, proceed to the speaker table and state your name and city of residence into the microphone. The Library Board Officers do not generally engage in dialog with those making comments but may refer the issue to the City Manager.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

3. Review and discussion of overdue fines.
4. Discuss Library Board preferences for future meeting format (virtual, physical, hybrid).
5. Continue discussions about identifying and reaching the different populations and communities we serve within our library service area.

COMMUNICATIONS

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

6. Review, discussion, and possible update of Library Strategic Plan.

ADJOURNMENT

PUBLIC COMMENT GUIDELINES

Complete a Comment Card prior to the meeting and submit it to the City Recorder. When the Mayor/Chair calls your name, proceed to the speaker table, and state your name and city of residence into the microphone. Each speaker is given three (3) minutes to speak. To assist in tracking your speaking time, refer to the timer on the table.

As a general practice, the City Commission does not engage in discussion with those making comments.

Electronic presentations are permitted but shall be delivered to the City Recorder 48 hours in advance of the meeting.

ADA NOTICE

The location is ADA accessible. Hearing devices may be requested from the City Recorder prior to the meeting. Individuals requiring other assistance must make their request known 48 hours preceding the meeting by contacting the City Recorder's Office at 503-657-0891.

Agenda Posted at City Hall, Pioneer Community Center, Library, City Website.

Video Streaming & Broadcasts: The meeting is streamed live on the Oregon City's website at www.orcity.org and available on demand following the meeting. The meeting can be viewed on Willamette Falls Television channel 28 for Oregon City area residents as a rebroadcast. Please contact WFMC at 503-650-0275 for a programming schedule.



City of Oregon City Meeting Minutes Library Board

625 Center Street
Oregon City, OR 97045
503-657-0891

Item #1.

Wednesday, May 12, 2021

Online via Zoom

5:30 PM

1. Call to Order:

Cynthia Andrews called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Members Present: Cynthia Andrews, Heidi Blackwell, Nick Dierckman, Larry Osborne, Elizabeth Zinter.

Staff Present: Greg Williams, Library Director, and Denise Butcher, Library Operations Manager.

2. Approval of Minutes:

Nick Dierckman made a motion to approve the minutes from April 14, 2021. Larry Osborne seconded the motion. Cynthia Andrews, Heidi Blackwell, Nick Dierckman, Larry Osborne, and Elizabeth Zinter voted aye. The motion carried.

3. Library Director's Report:

Greg Williams highlighted the monthly statistics included in the report, noting that he had started including statistics pertaining to electronic resources, starting with Kanopy, a video streaming service.

Nick Dierckman asked if Kanopy was meeting Greg's expectation. Greg expressed general satisfaction with the product and noted that as it was a pay per stream service and as patron streaming was variable, it presented some budgeting challenges. Greg and Denise Butcher estimated the pre-pandemic cost per month of the service to be between \$300 and \$400 per month, and had risen to the \$500 to \$600 per month range during the pandemic and was now in the \$400 to \$500 per month range. Greg noted he felt the average cost per stream was reasonable. Greg noted that Kanopy analytics indicated that the Great Courses were among the most frequently accessed titles and knowing this allowed for future evaluation of physical collection materials and potential programming opportunities.

Greg expressed satisfaction with the way the "borrowed to loaned" ratio was trending.

Greg relayed that the Vale Muggia, Oregon City's Behavioral Health Specialist who works out of the Police Department, presented at the May Library staff meeting. Vale presented on trauma informed care for people and people in crisis at the staff meeting and there was hope that Vale would facilitate future staff trainings.

Heidi Blackwell asked for more details about the library's relationship with Vale. Greg shared that the long-term objective was to facilitate more cooperation between Father's Heart, Library and Police to better coordinate support for people experiencing difficult times and the people that interact with them.

Elizabeth Zinter voiced support for the use of trauma informed approach and suggested looking at the library set up from a trauma informed lens.

Cynthia Andrews asked for examples of practical takeaways from the session. Greg reflected on the results of a large study of cumulative trauma and life experiences. Denise shared the importance of consistent application of rules, how to recognize the limits of library resources, and how to refer patrons to other resources.

Nick Dierckman suggested trauma informed approaches as the subject of a future adult learning program.

Greg shared plans for the reconfiguration of the children's area. These included moving the children's service desk to face the entrance to the children's area in order to provide a more welcoming and responsive experience. Greg acknowledged that shelves may also need to be moved.

Heidi asked if the reconfiguration would necessitate removing the play kitchen and the computers. Greg stated that the computers would need to be reconfigured to accommodate spacing for long term service. Greg stated that the kitchen area caused safety concerns stemming from lack of spacing, communal toys, and the tendency of toys to end up in young patrons' mouths.

Heidi pointed out that the kitchen play area was the only indoor communal play space in Oregon City and anticipated community pushback to its removal. Greg agreed and shared that a scheduled playtime after storytime where toys would be available in the community room and toys could be sanitized was being considered.

Elizabeth pointed out that there was a recent study finding very low instances of child to child transmission of COVID.

Greg agreed and shared that another factor in this evaluation was that some of the previous toys led to more disruptive behaviors than others and he hoped that the reintroduction of play opportunities could be done in a manner that ensured a safer and more pleasant library experience for everybody.

Greg shared that based on new information and guidance from the Center for Disease Control, Oregon Health Authority, and Oregon State Library, the quarantining of library materials had been discontinued. Staff were still expected to wear gloves when handling materials and patrons picking up holds were still offered the opportunity to use hand sanitizer.

Larry Osborne stated that these findings were similar to the Spanish Flu of 1918, where library books were not found to be a significant spreader of disease.

Greg shared that on April 19, holds moved from appointment-based to drop in self-service. Patron occupancy was capped at four due to guidance from Oregon State Library and the need to also account for a staff member to provide assistance. Greg stated that people counters were functioning well and patron feedback had been positive.

Heidi shared a lack of clarity about whether children could enter in this new model and Greg said that communication would be made clearer.

Greg highlighted the teen summer book box subscription in which teen participants would receive a customized book box containing two to three staff selected books based on information the teen provided. A creative kit and surprise items would also be included.

Heidi asked if there was a way for teens to provide feedback about the book boxes. Greg shared that a general library program feedback form was being developed, and that he anticipated the form would include both standardized questions (applicable to all library programs), as well as customized questions for specific programs/audiences.

Greg related that Youth Services Staff had discussed the No Place for Hate program with school district counselors as part of outreach efforts. The general response was positive and educators who may not have had time to incorporate it in this session were looking forward to incorporating in future lesson plans. Heidi shared that part of that presentation had also included advertisement of the Summer Reading Program and resources for parents and educational staff.

4. Public Comments: none

5. Discussion Items:

Cynthia Andrews relayed that David Goldberg would report back at the next meeting on the Outreach feedback provided by Board Members.

Budget Review

Greg Williams reported that the Budget Committee met May 3 and May 6 and voted to approve the budget as submitted. The City Commission would vote on the budget next and under Oregon Budget Law, could change some items without further input from the Budget Committee.

Greg thanked Denise Butcher for her assistance in reviewing past budgets with him.

Greg reflected on the importance of finding an appropriate balance between maintaining a reserve and using available funds to provide services. Greg explained that if library spending was less than library revenue, the difference would accrue to the Library Fund's balance.

Greg reported that as part of this year's budget process, the Library and the Finance Department had established specific guidelines for a target Library fund balance. The target fund balance will consist of seven months' worth of operating costs, one year of debt service payment, and 10% of annual operating expenses. For the upcoming biennium, that target totaled approximately two million dollars. Greg also anticipated that some of the Library's fund balance might also be earmarked for future capital expenses. Greg stressed the importance of using any fund balance for one-time expenses and not relying on one-time dollars to fund ongoing operating expenses.

Larry Osborne pointed out that having excess money was a good problem to have.

Cynthia Andrews agreed and expressed appreciation for having guidelines for the fund balance.

Nick Dierckman proposed paying down the bond in a few years to decrease expenditures and using the funds to increase outreach efforts and other services in order to keep down the reserve.

Greg noted that the Full Time Equivalent comparison would show two additional positions compared to the last biennium budget. One of these was a Library Technology Specialist, which was a mid-biennium add (at .8 FTE) that occurred this fiscal year. The position was created out of a reorganization of existing personnel budget to address the increased need for technology services both during the pandemic and beyond.

The other new position in the budget request is a library safety officer position. This position was designated to assist in helping ensure all visitors can safely and successfully use the library. Greg reflected on the need for this position and voiced his strong desire to maintain a safe and welcoming environment. Greg mentioned a similar position being used by Multnomah County Library, where a library employee can act as a designated point person to better manage and address elevated behavior situations.

Greg shared that the library's primary revenue source is Library District tax receipts, and that the City historically has contributed to the Library out of the general fund. Greg reported that this year there were questions from the budget committee about the specifics of what expenses the contribution was used for. Greg stated that typically this contribution has been used to offset bond payments and to demonstrate the City's ongoing commitment to supporting the library.

Greg did not know if there would be more questions at the June 2 budget meeting. Greg noted that there were also questions about the request for purchase of a subscription software package intended to document patron behavior. The estimated cost of the software was approximately \$2000 per year. The intended purpose for this software was better record keeping of behavior issues, especially in cases where exclusion might be warranted.

Larry asked who the vendor for the system was. Greg responded the vendor under consideration was called Quipu and the software was called PITS (Patron Incident Tracking System).

Nick thought the software would pair well with the new safety officer position. Greg agreed and mentioned that the system could also assist in information sharing between groups serving patrons, while providing additional tools to ensure adherence to privacy standards and other information disclosure rules (such as HIPAA).

6. Communications:

Library Foundation

Cynthia Andrews reported no new updates as the Library Foundation would not meet until May 22.

Library District Advisory Committee (LDAC)

Nick Dierckman reported that there was a meeting scheduled in June, and that nothing else had happened since the last report.

Friends of the Library

Larry Osborne stated that the financials were good, rent went up two percent but was covered by the income, and income on per hour basis had increased compared to pre-COVID. Larry reported that donations of books and CDs are up and Friends were preparing to open Tuesdays and possibly Saturdays in the near future. The store front was going to be used as a film set on June 20.

Larry mentioned that approximately 300 books per month were being donated to the Women's Club Little Library and asked for more details about the little library.

Greg Williams stated that he did not know anything about this. Denise Butcher stated that Linda regularly supplied books to any little libraries that request them, but did not know anything specific about the Women's Club's Little Library.

7. Future Agenda Items:

Cynthia Andrews relayed David Goldberg's wish to continue discussing outreach opportunities at the June 9 meeting.

8. Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 6:29 PM.



Library Director's Report for July 2021

Monthly Statistics Notes

- We had our first public computer users of the year during June!
- There was a decline in Adult Programming numbers this month, primarily due to the end of our "Poetry Corner" videos.
- In social media milestones, we published our 2,000th Instagram post this week (a Guided Meditations with Sage video entitled "Cooling Breath").

Library Staff

- We are in the process of recruiting some additional on-call Library Assistants. As need arises, we periodically add to our pool of available Library Assistants. Increasing the size of this Library Assistant pool does not have a significant budgetary impact (we simply have more Library Assistants available to work needed/budgeted shifts).

Library Operations

- The last few weeks have been eventful, indeed! The entire staff has been focusing on implementing the next stages of our Phased Reopening Plan, and I'm happy to report that we hit some *major* reopening milestones over the past few weeks:
 - On June 22, we opened the Childrens Room for browsing and materials checkout (see below for a picture of our first visitors!). Capacity was originally limited to 15 patrons at once (based on State guidance), but those limits were removed on June 30.



Figure 1- First visitors to the Children's Room

- On June 29, we opened the second floor (Adults and Teens) for browsing and materials checkout (see below for picture of our first visitor!). Capacity was originally limited to 15 patrons at once (based on State guidance), but those limits were removed on June 30.



Figure 2 - First visitor to the 2nd Floor

- On July 3 (three days earlier than originally planned), we resumed our normal, pre-COVID hours of operation.

Getting ready for each one of these milestones has been a real “all-hands-on-deck” team effort; I want to recognize every member of our Library Staff, as well as our Facilities department (Anne and Seth) for all their hard work over the past several weeks!

- During the month of July, we will be focusing on restoring additional services, including:
 - Additional seating in the Children's Room, the 2nd Floor, and the Carnegie.
 - Restoring access to our historical/genealogical collections in the Carnegie.
 - We are troubleshooting some software issues with the microfiche/microfilm reader.
 - Making the 2nd floor Conference Room available for reservation/use.

We will also be working to empty out the Community Room, which (due to limited storage space in the Library) has been serving as a temporary storage area as we've been reconfiguring the facility and furnishings.

We are also working to refine plans for how and when we phase in-person programming back in, particularly for kids. New State guidance is forthcoming; I will continue to keep the Board updated on our progress.

- As you likely know, on Friday, June 25, Governor Brown issued Executive Order No. 21-15, which rescinded all previous State masking, distancing, and capacity limit guidelines effective no later than 12:01 AM on Wednesday, June 30. Accordingly:
 - Neither patrons nor staff are required to wear masks while in the Library (although we certainly support any patron or staff member who chooses to wear one).
 - All COVID-related capacity limits and physical distancing requirements (whether in public areas or staff areas) have been lifted.
 - We are no longer implementing one-way patron traffic flows.

We are continuing to display occupancy counts for different areas of the Library, so that patrons have a better idea of how many people might be in a particular area and can make a more informed decision about whether or not they feel comfortable entering. We are also continuing to make hand sanitizing stations available and are continuing to utilize plastic shielding at service desks.

- On June 28th, we submitted an application to the State Library of Oregon for a Federal ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) grant of approximately \$150,000 to fund 8 specific projects to help mitigate the impacts of the COVID pandemic on the library and the community. I anticipate that many libraries throughout the State will be submitting applications and that grant requests will exceed available funds. The State Library has indicated that funding notifications will be made by July 15, 2021. I want to thank Library Board member Larry Osborne for his assistance and support in

preparing and reviewing our grant application (and we look forward to tapping his expertise on future grants)!

Library Grounds and Facilities

- As we have progressed through our phased reopening plan, we have been working hard to reconfigure the library's furnishings and spaces. Our goals have been twofold:
 - To ensure that, in the case of future public health crises, we have more options to available to us other than closing the facility.
 - To implement some changes to improve the patron experience, as well as staff efficiency and safety.

I have reported on many of these changes in previous Directors' Reports, but I wanted to take an opportunity to give an overall survey (and provide some pictures)!

Children's Room

The Childrens Room has been reconfigured to provide a more welcoming and open environment, to improve staff sight lines and patron safety, and to ensure that staff are more readily available to assist with catalog searches, materials checkouts and computer usage.



Figure 3 - Children's Room and Desk (angle 1)



Figure 4 - Children's Room and Desk (angle 2)

Media in the Children's Room (as well as in the Adults area) has been reshelfed "spine out". New spine labels have also been applied. Spine out shelving allows patrons to more quickly see which items are available and is more conducive to allowing patrons to browse in a safer, physically-distanced manner (patrons can stay farther apart, yet still see what is on the shelf in a particular area). In addition, staff can shelve items and pull holds much more quickly and efficiently.



Figure 5 - Media shelved spine out

Second Floor (Adults and Teens)

The majority of adult materials (including Large Print, DVDs, and Great Courses) have been moved upstairs.

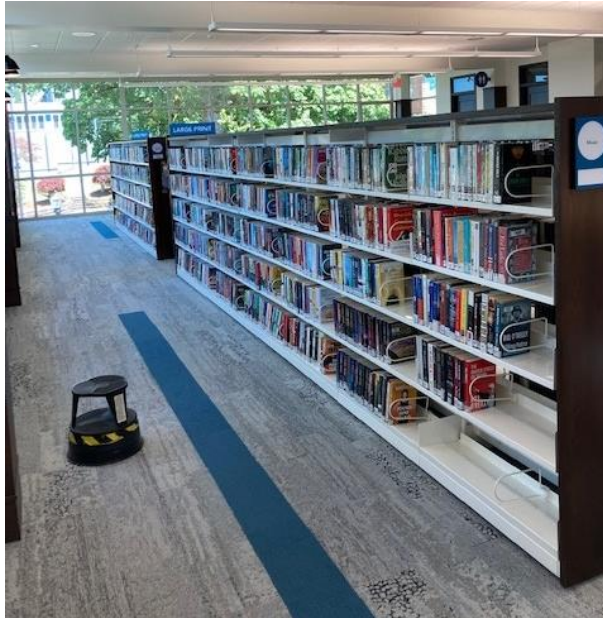


Figure 6 - Large Print collection (2nd Floor)



Figure 7 - Great Courses (2nd Floor)

The Reference Desk has been moved closer to the stairway, to make it easier for patrons to obtain assistance when first coming up the stairs. This has also allowed us to reorganize and consolidate the Non-Fiction collection, making it easier for patrons and staff to locate materials.



Figure 8 - Reference Desk



Figure 9 - Non-Fiction shelves

DVDs have been moved upstairs (where the combination Adult/Teen computer lab used to be located). Audio CDs have also been moved closer to the DVDs (alternate shelving for the CDs is being explored)



Figure 10 - Adult DVD collection



Figure 11 - Adult music CD collection

Carnegie

Adult computers and printing/copying have been moved into the Carnegie. We currently have 6 sit-down computers and are implementing an additional stand-up “express” computer (15-minute time limit).



Figure 12 - Carnegie computers

We also now have a staffed service desk in the Carnegie! This ensures that patrons needing technology assistance have access to a Library staff member.



Figure 13 - Carnegie service desk

The Library of Things collection now has a more accessible, easily-browsed home in the Carnegie! We are also developing signage to make it easier to find items with similar uses/purposes (e.g., games and puzzles, kitchenware, home and garden, etc...)



Figure 14 - Library of Things

Magazines and newspapers have also been relocated to the shelves along the Carnegie walls. Due to post-COVID space limitations, we have reduced the size of our physical magazine collection, and are working on options for adding a digital magazine subscription.



Figure 15 - Magazines and newspapers

And, of course, the Carnegie will continue to offer a place for historical research and comfortable seating (including the much beloved fireplace seating area). We are very excited about the possibilities for the Carnegie going forward, especially when it comes to community technology support and training.

Holds Room

DVDs have been moved out to increase available space in this heavy-traffic area. We have relocated two self-checkout machines in the holds room, and have relocated our community information into this room as well.

New Adult materials are currently being displayed in the holds room as well; we do plan to move these out into the Lobby in the not-too-distant future.



Figure 16 - Holds room

Lobby (in progress)

During the latter part of the pandemic, we erected a temporary, centrally-located circulation desk in the lobby. This configuration allowed us to better manage traffic and capacity. In addition, we discovered having the desk in this location provided other benefits as well (including making it easier to greet and assist patrons, and potentially opening up material display space).

Going forward, we plan to install a more permanent, centrally-located desk in the lobby. We also plan to use the lobby space to display new materials and Lucky Day items.

Library (general)

We have installed and configured enhanced people counters. During the COVID-19 pandemic (and during any future public health crises) these counters allow us to better monitor and manage capacity. In addition, these counters should give us more insight into patron usage patterns in different parts of the library.

Library Programs and Services

- We had 147 people register for our May the 4th Star Wars-themed scavenger hunt (93 kids and teens, and 54 adults), and of those, 73 registrants completed the entire challenge and claimed their exclusive, limited-edition prize (an Oregon City Public Library “May the 4th” sticker!).



Figure 17 - May the Fourth prize sticker

- The Library’s first family concert of the summer aired Wednesday, 6/16, at 11AM. The virtual concert featured Red Yarn, who has been a mainstay for our summer reading concerts for the last few years. Some parents shared how excited they were with some pics of their kids watching the concert.



Figure 18 - Facebook comments for Red Yarn concert

The scavenger hunt was featured in OCSD's May 7th OC Newsblast Community Newsletter. In addition, a participant emailed us to let us know: *"It was a great time. I'm very glad this community does all these things for the kiddos and parents. It means a lot."*

Library Partnerships and Outreach

- We were elated to learn that the 1st place art piece (pictured below) in OC Parks' 2021 Preserve Our Past Art and Poetry Contest was "The Library" painted by OC teen, Elizabeth.



Figure 19 - Prize-winning art!

- Library management attended the first Oregon City Homeless Coordination Group meeting. The group is an initial effort to improve communication and collaboration between City departments and homelessness service providers. Representatives from the Library, Parks, and Police attended, as well as representatives from Father's Heart, the City of Gresham, Clackamas County, and Central City Concern. The meetings are part of the City's efforts to address the newly-adopted City Commission goal of adopting and implementing a homelessness strategy for Oregon City. Future meetings are anticipated to happen regularly.

LINCC-wide Updates

- OC Library staff members led a county marketing subcommittee to create this year's LINCC Summer Reading ad, which will run weekly through the summer to help promote the Summer Reading Program at all Clackamas County libraries.

Reading Colors Your World
SUMMER READING
Sign up at your local library!

CANBY | ESTACADA | GLADSTONE | HAPPY VALLEY | HOODLAND | LAKE OSWEGO
MILWAUKIE | MOLALLA | OAK LODGE | OREGON CITY | SANDY | WEST LINN | WILSONVILLE

Visit lincc.org for more information

Discover the latest local places to go and things to do

pamplindigitalmedia.com/events

'Tribe'
From Page B1

space can be opened and appreciated and represented by all." The album features songs about vaccinations, appreciating great figures in black history, celebrating leaders and seeing the beauty in skin color (Alphabet Rockers "Shine"). "The whole objective is to uplift black and brown families and children," he said, "with entertainment and enrichment that is age appropriate. We want to give children music that has a beat and a sound that resonates with them and with a message that is holistic. ... We like to say it's family music; there's nothing better than seeing parents and kids singing and dancing together."

"All One Tribe" will be Smith's third release with Tuff Gong; he previously worked with Warner Brothers. He lives in Tigard now after years of living in Lake Oswego. He runs a nonprofit called One World Chorus and a production company called AYA World Productions.

"For me, it's a calling," said Smith, of the children/family genre, which he tapped into after the birth of his first child. "The first time I played a song in front of children, the light went off, it was a higher calling."

Figure 20 - Summer Reading ad in Pamplin Media

- The final Library District Distribution was received at the end of June (see attached memo from Clackamas County). Library District distributions are typically made twice a year, with the majority distributed in January, and any remaining FY revenue distributed in June. The total of

the final distribution was \$192,173, and the total FY 20-21 distributions (first and final) was \$2,510,966.

Patron Feedback

- A family sent us a heartwarming “Thank You” card (along with a box of cupcakes!) in advance of their move out-of-state. We are so grateful for the treats and the kind words! And best wishes on your new adventure from all of us at the Oregon City Public Library!

"Dear Library Staff -

For the past 8 years we have been Oregon City residents & frequent library guests. We have so enjoyed and appreciated all your help, especially this past year. Our library card is the most important one in our wallet! As we move to Idaho this summer, we wanted to somehow say Thanks! Please enjoy these cupcakes on behalf of our grateful family."



Figure 21- Thank you card

- Last month, we also received a lovely card thanking the staff for their work and efforts during the pandemic.
"I am so grateful for the amazing workers and staff at the OC Library!! With a constant state of change among us all, having [the] ability to hold a real book again and check out a new movie has brought back familiarity – SO THANK YOU! I feel incredibly safe picking up holds and anticipate the day of open browsing. Be well!"

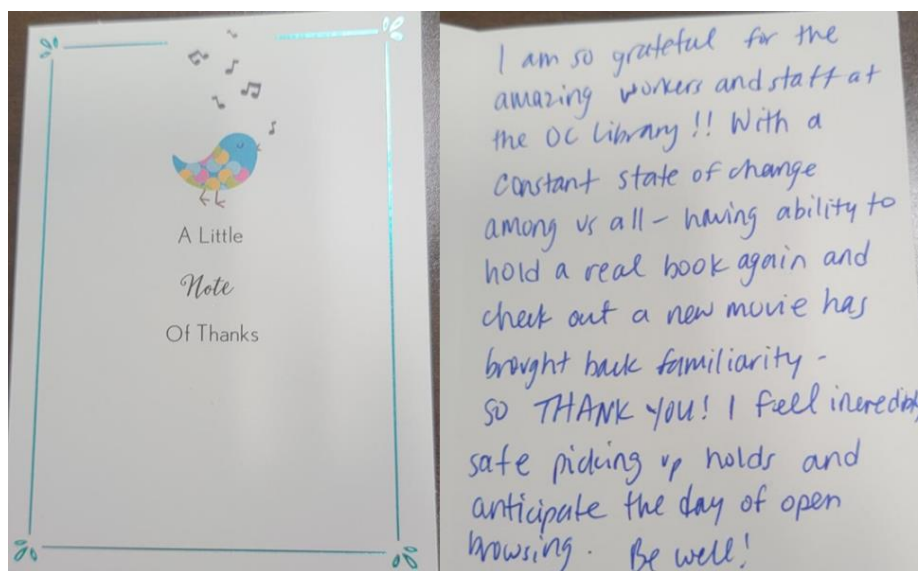


Figure 22 - Thank you card

- @lakayana from @wordisbondpdx shared a recent Guided Meditation video on his Instagram page and as well as some kind words about the Library's programming and social media content. *"@oregoncitylibrary is one of my favorite area libraries. They are always putting on dynamic programming (such as meditation) and creating interactive content on social media. Thank you for caring about our community."*

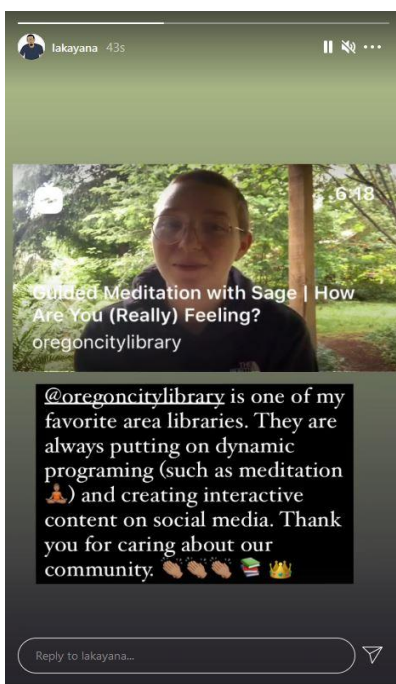


Figure 23 - Instagram kudos

- Miss Melissa received some positive feedback about one of her recent Song & Rhyme Time videos.

"Time to brush your teeth! Another great online moment from Oregon City library."

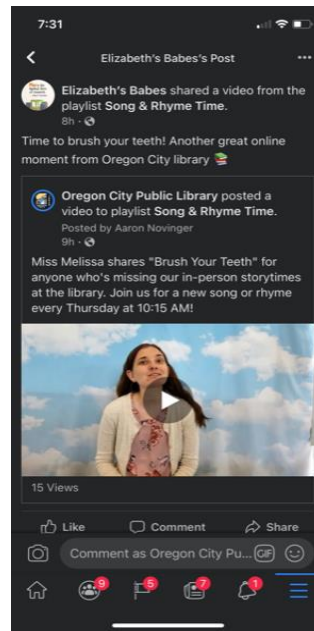


Figure 24 – Social media kudos for Miss Melissa

- Finally, on the Library's FB post announcing our return to regular operating hours, some of our page followers expressed their excitement and appreciation, including sending us some virtual flowers.
 - "Yay! Can't wait to come in and browse again!!!"*
 - "You're all the best. Thank you to everyone for all you have done through this extended upheaval. You are all greatly appreciated."*

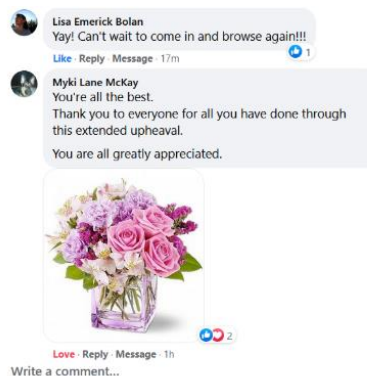


Figure 25 - Virtual flowers!

Oregon City Public library
Monthly Statistical Report
Reporting period: **June, 2021**

	Current Month	FY 20/21 YTD	Last Month	Same Month Last FY	FY 19/20 YTD
<u>PATRON REGISTRATIONS</u>					
New Patron Registrations	135	921	97	28	2,523
Total Registered Patrons	18,597	18,597	18,477	20,658	20,658
<u>CIRCULATION (includes 1st-time circ and renewals)</u>					
Adult materials	9,294	94,711	7,926	1,228	207,528
YA materials	1,166	10,137	1,022	122	16,884
Children's materials	9,766	83,938	7,988	480	155,409
Electronic materials	4,860	66,487	4,698	6,282	60,066
Total Circulation	25,086	255,273	21,634	8,112	439,887
1st Time Circulation (Physical)	13,166	120,423	10,676	1,553	264,345
1st Time Circulation (Self-Check)	12,747	96.8% 29,184 24.2%	10,309	96.6% 121 7.8%	227,218 86.0%
Holds received from other libraries	12,598	52.4% 138,424 54.5%	11,331	51.1% 1,385 36.2%	131,351 57.8%
Holds sent to other libraries	11,440	47.6% 115,383 45.5%	10,828	48.9% 2,440 63.8%	95,982 42.2%
<u>CIRCULATION DEMOGRAPHICS</u>					
Borrowers - City Residents	878	55.8% n/a	779	56.5% 222 50.6%	n/a
Borrowers - Unincorporated Residents	565	35.9% n/a	493	35.8% 174 39.6%	n/a
Borrowers - Other	131	8.3% n/a	107	7.8% 43 9.8%	n/a
Service Area Pop - City	35,570	58.3% n/a	35,570	58.3% 34,860 58.3%	n/a
Service Area Pop - Unincorporated	25,422	41.7% n/a	25,422	41.7% 25,401 41.7%	n/a
<u>TECHNOLOGY</u>					
Internet Sessions	107	107	-	-	15,545
WiFi Sessions	169	1,240	102	61	18,044
<u>SOCIAL MEDIA / EMAIL</u>					
Facebook followers	3,864	n/a	3,848	3,495	n/a
Instagram followers	1,848	n/a	1,821	1,564	n/a
Twitter followers	923	n/a	916	861	n/a
YouTube subscribers	185	n/a	183	105	n/a
YouTube unique viewers	457	n/a	451	633	n/a
YouTube views	621	8,037	658	1,638	5,082
Email newsletter subscribers	4,226	n/a	4,226	n/a	n/a
See monthly Hootsuite report for additional social media statistics					
<u>FINANCIAL</u>					
See monthly Budget to Actual report					
<u>PROGRAMMING *</u>					
Children's programming - # of progs	7	172	9	29	378
Children's programming - attendance/engagement	469	12,589	543	683	15,227
YA programming - # of progs	1	4	-	-	36
YA programming - attendance/engagement	16	20	-	-	334
Adult programming - # of progs	16	265	25	23	201
Adult programming - attendance/engagement	632	7,410	1,173	165	3,079
<u>ELECTRONIC RESOURCES</u>					
Kanopy plays	455	5,759	429	575	4,797
Kanopy cost	\$ 497	\$ 5,944	520	\$ 523	4,149
Kanopy average cost/play	\$ 1.09	\$ 1.03	\$ 1.21	\$ 0.91	\$ 0.86



Library Board Report

Jun 01 - Jun 30, 2021



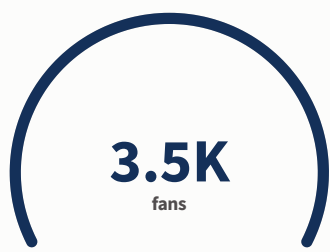
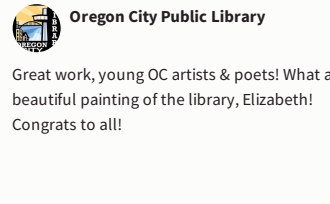
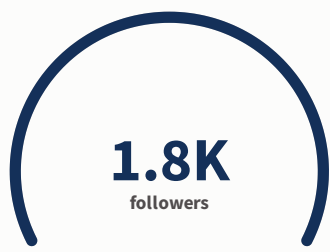
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Oregon City Public Library

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f Post Reach 20K users	f Top posts > Reach  958 users  744 users  739 users		
f Post Likes 137 likes	f Top posts > Reactions  20 reactions  16 reactions  15 reactions		
@ Followers  1.8K followers	@ Top Posts > Reach  600 users  441 users  328 users		
@ Posts 34 posts	@ Top posts > Likes  73 likes  38 likes  31 likes		

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 22, 2021

TO: Cindi Turner, Finance Controller

FROM: Allegra Willhite, BCS Deputy Director

CC: Gary Schmidt, County Administrator
Sarah Eckman, BCS Interim Director
Tracy Grambusch, BCS Financial Analyst

RE: Library Service District – Final Distribution Payment (FY 2020/2021)

Attached please find a spreadsheet which details the final Library District distribution payment for FY 2020/2021. Following are the distribution amounts for each of the Library District cities, the City of Tualatin and the County operated Libraries (Oak Lodge Library and Gladstone Library):

Payable to	Library	Final Distribution	Payment Method
City of Canby	Canby Public Library	\$ 77,401	Investment Pool Transfer
City of Estacada	Estacada Public Library	\$ 67,705	Investment Pool Transfer
City of Happy Valley	Happy Valley Public Library	\$ 239,654	Investment Pool Transfer
City of Lake Oswego	Lake Oswego Public Library	\$ 254,512	Investment Pool Transfer
City of Milwaukie	Ledding Library of Milwaukie	\$ 143,479	Investment Pool Transfer
City of Molalla	Molalla Public Library	\$ 76,779	Investment Pool Transfer
City of Oregon City	Oregon City Public Library	\$ 192,173	Investment Pool Transfer
City of Sandy	Sandy Public Library	\$ 109,110	Investment Pool Transfer
City of Tualatin	Tualatin Public Library	\$ 8,264	Investment Pool Transfer
City of West Linn	West Linn Public Library	\$ 135,664	Investment Pool Transfer
City of Wilsonville	Wilsonville Public Library	\$ 112,145	Investment Pool Transfer
Clackamas County	Gladstone Public Library	\$ 63,420	Library District Revenue 212-7635-00-333205
Clackamas County	Oak Lodge Public Library	\$ 115,274	Library District Revenue 212-7634-00-333205
Total		\$ 1,595,580	

Per the intergovernmental agreement, the distribution amounts for the Sandy Public Library of \$88,231 and Hoodland Branch of \$20,879 have been combined into one payment of \$109,110, which is sent directly to the Sandy Public Library.

If you have any questions, please contact Allegra Willhite at awillhite@clackamas.us or Tracy Grambusch as tgrambusch@clackamas.us.

Thank you.

**Clackamas County Library District
Fiscal Year 2020 - 2021 Distribution Formula**

Total Current Year Tax Receipts	\$1,435,570	100.00%	Prior Year
City Assessed Value	\$774,490	53.95%	\$85,925
Unincorporated Population Served	\$661,080	46.05%	\$74,085

Prior Year Fund Balance	\$0
Interest Earned	\$46,208
Delinquent Tax & Interest/Penalties	\$113,802
Total	\$160,010
Total Library District Revenues	\$1,595,580

	Assessed Value	Unincorporated Population Served	Assessed Value Prior Interest & Delinquent Tax	Unincorporated Prior Interest & Delinquent Tax	Tualatin Distribution	Total Distribution	%
Canby	\$43,139	\$26,575	\$4,709	\$2,978		\$77,401	4.85%
Estacada	\$10,456	\$50,507	\$1,083	\$5,660		\$67,705	4.24%
Gladstone	\$25,945	\$31,071	\$2,921	\$3,482		\$63,420	3.99%
Happy Valley	\$89,066	\$126,597	\$9,804	\$14,187		\$239,654	15.02%
Lake Oswego	\$205,627	\$19,899	\$22,624	\$2,230	\$4,132	\$254,512	15.95%
Milwaukie	\$60,178	\$68,818	\$6,771	\$7,712		\$143,479	8.99%
Molalla	\$18,355	\$50,705	\$2,036	\$5,682		\$76,779	4.81%
Oregon City	\$90,151	\$82,701	\$10,053	\$9,268		\$192,173	12.04%
Sandy	\$25,791	\$53,614	\$2,818	\$6,008		\$88,231	5.53%
Hoodland	\$0	\$18,775	\$0	\$2,104		\$20,879	1.31%
Tualatin	\$14,870	\$0	\$1,658	\$0	-\$8,264	\$8,264	0.52%
West Linn	\$108,119	\$13,023	\$12,236	\$1,459	\$826	\$135,664	8.50%
Wilsonville	\$82,793	\$15,139	\$9,211	\$1,697	\$3,306	\$112,145	7.03%
Oak Lodge	\$0	\$103,657	\$0	\$11,616		\$115,274	7.22%
Total	\$774,490	\$661,080	\$85,925	\$74,085	\$0	\$1,595,580	100.00%

Tualatin Assessed Value & Prior Year Distribution		Assessed Value	Prior Year, Interest and Delinquent Tax	Total
Tualatin	50%	\$7,435	\$829	\$8,264
Lake Oswego	25%	\$3,718	\$415	\$4,132
Wilsonville	20%	\$2,974	\$332	\$3,306
West Linn	5%	\$744	\$83	\$826
Total	100%	\$14,870	\$1,658	\$16,529



CITY OF OREGON CITY

Staff Report

625 Center Street
Oregon City, OR 97045
503-657-0891

To: Library Board
From: Library Director Greg Williams

Agenda Date: 7/14/2021

SUBJECT:

Overdue Fines

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

n/a – Informational only

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Library Director will provide Library Board members with an overview of how overdue fines have been handled in LINCC during the COVID-19 pandemic, and what recent changes have been made. The Library Director will also provide some background information on overdue fines to help facilitate future Library Board discussions.

BACKGROUND:

When the COVID-19 pandemic first started, LINCC libraries agreed to temporarily suspend overdue fines. The decision was made in recognition that the pandemic had made it more difficult for patrons to return items in a timely fashion, and that assessing overdue fines during a period of significant uncertainty and adversity could pose additional financial burdens and stress for many patrons. In addition to temporarily suspending overdue fines, LINCC libraries also evaluated other standard circulation-related policies (such as loan periods and hold expiration periods) and made temporary modifications to help alleviate some of the hardships and difficulties caused by the pandemic and increase safety standards around distributing library materials.

As the pandemic has progressed, and as libraries have been able to restore more services, each of these temporary adjustments has been periodically evaluated by the LINCC library directors at their regular meetings. Potential changes to these policies are discussed and evaluated, and decisions are generally made by majority vote of the LINCC library directors.

In the case of overdue fines, a unanimous decision amongst LINCC directors was recently made to end the temporary suspension of overdue fines and to return to the pre-pandemic status quo starting July 1. However, as we are still emerging from the pandemic, there was recognition that individual libraries might decide to take additional local measures when it comes to reducing/waiving overdue fines past July 1, and no LINCC library is precluded from doing so.

There is a general recognition in the profession that library fines represent a barrier to access, and have an inequitable impact on library patrons, especially on those who may rely on library access the most. In 2019, the American Library Association passed a “Resolution on Monetary Library Fines as a Form of Social Inequity” (attached).

That same ALA resolution, however, notes that many libraries are dependent on library fines as an additional source of revenue to fund operating hours, staff, and library services. Like many libraries, the Oregon City Public Library includes fine revenue as part of our operating budget (see attached), and the permanent elimination of this revenue would represent a financial impact which would have to be addressed (either by additional revenue or by reduction of expenses). For the 2021-2023 biennium, fine revenue has been budgeted at \$40,000.

Historically, Oregon City library staff have been empowered to work with patrons when they have questions and concerns about overdue fines, and to reduce or waive those fines to help ensure that patrons continue to have access to vital library services. We have also, in the past, regularly offered “food-for-fines” programs and half-off fine events.

Even though our ILS (Integrated Library System) started to accrue overdue fines starting July 1, the Oregon City Library has continued to check in the majority of materials returned on a “fine free” basis (as we have done throughout the pandemic), so that any accrued overdue fines do not post to patron accounts. Knowing that a Library Board meeting was scheduled for July 14, we took this step so that we could get the Library Board’s feedback and input before making any significant changes to our local practices.

We hope this initial discussion with the Library Board regarding overdue fines will:

- 1) Answer any questions Library Board members may have about how overdue fines are assessed/collected within LINCC.
- 2) Provide Library Board members with some additional background materials on overdue fines.
- 3) Give staff the opportunity to hear initial feedback/input from the Library Board concerning overdue fines (both in the short- and long-term), and
- 4) Determine what additional information (if any) the Library Board might like/need going forward to inform future discussions about overdue fines.

In addition to the supplemental materials noted in the staff report above, I have also included a recent (2020) paper produced by the Syracuse University iSchool Public Libraries Initiative. Inclusion of this paper is not intended to advocate for any particular course of action; rather, I am presenting it as a recent and fairly comprehensive topical survey which approaches the issue of overdue fines in a holistic and accessible matter.

OPTIONS:

1. n/a – Informational only

BUDGET IMPACT:

Amount: n/a

FY(s): n/a

Funding Source(s): n/a

Resolution on Monetary Library Fines as a Form of Social Inequity

Whereas monetary fines present an economic barrier to access of library materials and services;

Whereas there is mounting evidence that indicates eliminating fines increases library card adoption and library usage;

Whereas monetary fines create a barrier in public relations, and absorb valuable staff time applying, collecting, and managing dues;

Whereas the first policy objective listed in ALA Policy B.8.10 (Library Services to the Poor) as approved by ALA Council on January 28, 2019, states that the American Library Association shall implement these objectives by "Promoting the removal of barriers to library and information services, particularly fees, and overdue charges";

Whereas ALA Policy B.4.2 (Free Access to Information) "asserts that the charging of fees and levies for information services, including those services utilizing the latest information technology, is discriminatory in publicly supported institutions providing library and information services";

Whereas in Economic Barriers to Information Access, An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights, ALA states "All library policies and procedures, particularly those involving fines, fees, or other user charges, should be scrutinized for potential barriers to access;

Whereas libraries will need to take determined and pragmatic action to dismantle practices of collecting monetary fines

Whereas libraries of all types are responsive to bodies, be they school districts, boards of trustees, college and university administration, or government entities and therefore need to be able to make the case to those bodies about eliminating fines; and

Whereas monetary fines ultimately do not serve the core mission of the modern library; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the American Library Association (ALA), on behalf of its members

1. adds a statement to the Policy Manual that establishes that "The American Library Association asserts that imposition of monetary library fines creates a barrier to the provision of library and information services.";
2. urges libraries to scrutinize their practices of imposing fines on library patrons and actively move towards eliminating them; and
3. urges governing bodies of libraries to strengthen funding support for libraries so they are not dependent on monetary fines as a necessary source of revenue.
4. establish a working group to develop information resources, including strategies and tips, for libraries interested in abolishing fines, with a report due to Council at the 2019 Annual Conference

Adopted by the Council of the American Library Association
Monday, January 28, 2019, in Seattle, WA

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mary W. Ghikas".

Mary W. Ghikas, Executive Director
and Secretary of the ALA Council

LIBRARY

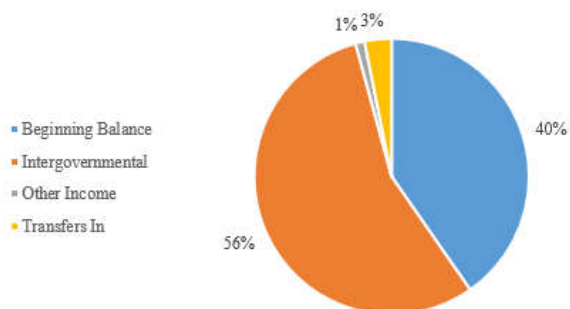
The entire operations of Oregon City's Library are accounted for in the Library Fund. Approximately 90% of its funding comes from Clackamas County Library District tax revenues, which pay for personnel and materials costs. Debt Service payments (principal and interest) are for

bonds issued for the construction of the library expansion.

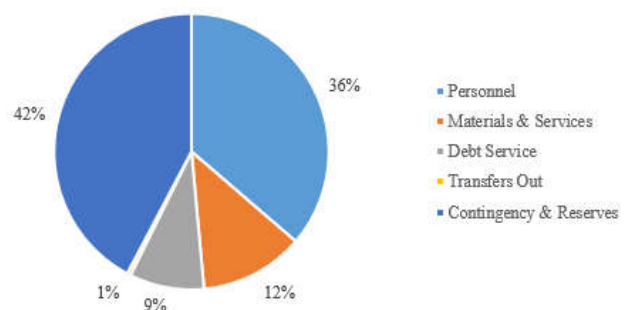
The table below compares total resources and requirements for the Library Fund for the proposed biennium, the current biennial budget and the two prior periods.

Library	2015-2017 Actual	2017-2019 Actual	2019-2021 Amended Budget	2021-2022 Proposed Budget	2022-2023 Proposed Budget	2021-2023 Proposed Biennium
Resources						
Beginning Fund Balance	\$ 871,643	\$ 1,951,493	\$ 2,890,126	\$ 3,808,673	\$ 3,890,410	\$ 3,808,673
Intergovernmental						
District Property Taxes	4,130,408	4,564,130	4,750,525	2,572,490	2,650,000	5,222,490
Intergovernmental	26,520	17,013	25,041	8,700	8,700	17,400
Charges for Services	6,576	6,957	-	2,520	3,020	5,540
Fines and Forfeitures	72,045	99,457	80,000	15,000	25,000	40,000
Interest Income	16,266	81,633	90,000	20,000	25,000	45,000
Miscellaneous Income	15,312	80,010	10,000	5,000	5,000	10,000
Transfer In	400,000	300,000	300,000	150,000	150,000	300,000
Total Resources	\$ 5,538,770	\$ 7,100,693	\$ 8,145,692	\$ 6,582,383	\$ 6,757,130	\$ 9,449,103
Requirements						
Personnel Services	\$ 2,143,758	\$ 2,377,951	\$ 2,934,275	\$ 1,676,210	\$ 1,751,660	\$ 3,427,870
Materials & Services	602,322	882,727	1,105,665	580,392	578,392	1,158,784
Capital Outlay	-	96,289	-	-	-	-
Principal & Interest	830,742	830,742	830,741	415,371	415,371	830,742
Transfers Out	10,455	-	40,000	20,000	20,000	40,000
Contingency	-	-	3,235,011	3,890,410	3,991,707	3,991,707
Unappropriated Fund Balance	1,951,493	2,912,984	-	-	-	-
Total Requirements	\$ 5,538,770	\$ 7,100,693	\$ 8,145,692	\$ 6,582,383	\$ 6,757,130	\$ 9,449,103

Resources by Type



Requirements by Category



Overdue Fines: Advantages, Disadvantages, and How Eliminating Them Can Benefit Public Libraries

By Sabrina Unrein

April 2020

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How to Cite

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Keywords

Public libraries, library fines, overdue books, library surveys, library research, equity, access, library budgets, improving library services, library demographics

About the iSchool Public Libraries Initiative

In 2018, the iSchool at Syracuse University launched a new home for public library research called the iSchool Public Libraries Initiative (IPLI), directed by Associate Professor of Practice Jill Hurst-Wahl. The IPLI predominantly focuses on public library innovation. In researching and disseminating information about public library innovation across the United States, the IPLI hopes to give libraries more opportunities to innovate and learn from one another about innovations happening across the country. In shedding light on these unsung innovations, the IPLI hopes to increase their capacity to continue innovating.

Additionally, the IPLI gives Library and Information Science graduate students a place to conduct research and create work relevant to their studies and interests. This report was created as a result of research conducted from the fall of 2019 through the spring of 2020. It was inspired by the question: what existing data supports the near-ubiquitous use of library fines in public libraries? When I was unable to find one, I started writing

this report. I wanted to create a resource for public libraries to use in assessing their use of overdue fines.

About the Author

Sabrina Unrein is a Master's of Library and Information Science graduate student at Syracuse University graduating in May of 2020. She has worked with the IPLI for the past two years, focusing primarily on library website design and library fines. In addition to public libraries, she is interested in archives and special collections and has worked at Syracuse University's Special Collections Research Center and CNN's video archive library in Atlanta.

Introduction

There are several cultural images that are pervasive when it comes to public libraries, many unchanging for decades. Unfortunately, one of the most well-known and perpetuated today is that the library is a punitive environment. If you are too loud, you are shushed, and if you don't bring items back on time, you must pay a fine. Many of us see these as harmful and outdated ideas. However, these preconceptions cause shame to be closely associated with libraries, despite the fact that we know they are meant to be places of equity.

A way we as librarians may be able to change the cultural perception of libraries is the wide-scale elimination of library fines. This could minimize the fear of punitive consequences in public libraries. However, it is important to acknowledge upfront that no blanket prescription will apply to every single library in the country. Each library has its own community, its own challenges, and its own values. Therefore, going fine-free may not be the right option for all libraries. This report is not meant as an indictment of any library that chooses to use fines, but serves to examine why fines are so pervasive and potential benefits libraries may reap as a result of eliminating them.

It is worth noting that this report is entering into a discussion that has been ongoing for many years. There have been articles published for decades positing the elimination of library fines and motivations for doing so. Some of the most frequently cited reports about library fine data came out as early as 1983.¹ The topic periodically recurs in popular publications as well, such as articles in the *New York Times*² and the *Huffington Post*.³ If this discussion has been happening for over 35 years, what new information does this report bring to the table?

1 Hansel, P., & Burgin, R. (1983). Hard Facts About Overdues. *Library Journal*, 108(4), 349.

2 In San Jose, Poor Find Doors to Library Closed—The New York Times. (2016). Retrieved October 4, 2019, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/31/us/in-san-jose-poor-find-doors-to-library-closed.html>

3 Libraries Are Dropping Overdue Fines—But Can They Afford To? | HuffPost. (2017). Retrieved October 4, 2019, from https://www.huffpost.com/entry/libraries-are-dropping-overdue-fines-but-can-they-afford-to_n_5913733ae4b0b1fafd0dccc2

First of all, the discussion around library fines is rapidly evolving and there are no comprehensive reports that capture the environment as it is now in 2020. This is especially relevant due to the recent national momentum toward eliminating fines in large library systems such as the Denver Public Library, the San Francisco Public Library, and the Chicago Public Library. With systems as large as these making the change, library fine elimination has made national headlines in publications such as *National Public Radio*⁴ and *Forbes*.⁵

Furthermore, there is something missing in the current discourse: data. Librarians love to make data-driven, evidence-based decisions, but most evidence is either old or small-scale. There is an often-cited report from 1989 titled *Managing Overdues: Facts from Four Studies*,⁶ but it relies on data that is over 30 years old, and public libraries have changed a lot since then. Authors also frequently cite *Do library fines work?*, a study of the impact of fines on students' behavior in two academic libraries⁷. Not only is this a relatively small-scale study, but it does not feature public library data at all.

The popular reports informing the recent trend toward fine-elimination, including the Colorado Department of Education's whitepaper, *Removing Barriers to Access*,⁸ and San Francisco's fine-free report,⁹ used their own data collection, reviews of the literature, and synthesis to make their arguments. There is no one document that unifies the many arguments made both in favor of and against the use of library fines.

This report aims to draw all of these ideas into a comprehensive and accessible document. It hopes to spark new discussions in the community and help maintain the

4 More Public Libraries Are Eliminating Late Fines To Address Inequity: NPR. (2019). Retrieved January 19, 2020, from

<https://www.npr.org/2019/11/30/781374759/we-wanted-our-patrons-back-public-libraries-scrap-late-fines-to-alleviate-inequi>

5 Rowe, A. (2019). *Chicago Libraries' Late Fee Elimination Sparks A 240% Boost In Book Returns*. Forbes. Retrieved January 19, 2020, from

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/adamrowe1/2019/11/03/chicago-libraries-late-fee-elimination-sparks-a-240-boost-in-book-returns/>

6 Little, P. (1989). MANAGING OVERDUES: Facts From Four Studies. *The Bottom Line*, 2(2), 22–25. <https://doi.org/10.1108/eb025168>

7 Sung, J. S., & Tolppanen, B. P. (2013). Do Library Fines Work?: Analysis of the Effectiveness of Fines on Patron's Return Behavior at Two Mid-sized Academic Libraries. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 39(6), 506–511. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2013.08.011>

8 Depriest, M.J. (2016). *Removing Barriers to Access: Eliminating Library Fines and Fees on Children's Materials*. Retrieved October 24, 2019 from

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/removingbarrierstoaccess>

9 Cisneros, J. (2019). LONG OVERDUE: Eliminating Fines on Overdue Materials to Improve Access to San Francisco Public Library. *The Office of the Treasurer and Tax Collector*. Retrieved October 24, 2019 from: <https://sfpl.org/uploads/files/pdfs/commission/Fine-Free-Report011719.pdf>

momentum of the fine-free movement. It addresses the arguments in favor of and against fines, any evidence that supports those arguments in the current discourse, alternatives to total fine elimination, and new data from libraries that have chosen to go fine-free. It was inspired by questioning if fines are a measurably effective tool, but evolved into a discussion about equity and if library fines align with the values driving our profession.

Additionally, this report includes new research. As previously mentioned, use of library fines has already been extensively discussed. However, there has not been much investigation into libraries that have eliminated fines, and how that change has impacted their communities. Due to the rapid increase in libraries eliminating fines, it seemed important to explore a sample of libraries that have made that change. What positive and negative effects has the library experienced in the aftermath of eliminating fines for their entire community? The survey was sent to libraries across the United States, varying in location and population. Fifteen surveys were completed, and the results can be found in this report, following the discussion of the arguments for and against fines.

Deconstructing the arguments in favor of keeping library fines

1. Fines ensure materials are returned on time, making borrowing more fair

This seems obvious: fines are used because they help remind patrons to turn in materials on time. This should be one of the easiest arguments to defend and support with data. Unfortunately, there have been few studies conducted on the subject of library fines and their effectiveness, so there is not much available data to support this assertion.

Many libraries that have eliminated fines in recent years report just the opposite. For instance, the Chicago Public Library saw a 240% increase in returned books in the month

after they eliminated fines in September of 2019.¹⁰ Salt Lake City's Public Library saw late returns drop from 9% to 4% after fines were eliminated.¹¹ Six months after fine elimination at the High Plains Library District in northern Colorado, the library saw an increase in circulation and 95% of their materials were returned within one week of their original due date.¹² In Hansel and Burgin's oft-cited study of public libraries in North Carolina, *Hard Facts About Overdues*, they observed "no significant difference in overdue rates between libraries that charged fines and those that did not."¹³ Their data suggested that libraries that did not charge fines saw higher rates of overdue materials in the short-term, but lower rates of overdue materials in the long-term.

Libraries may decide that expedient returns are not as important as other factors. When the Columbus Metropolitan Library eliminated fines in 2017, they stated that they originally enforced fines "as an incentive to see those items returned by their due dates," but began to question that notion due to what they observed in the library field industry.¹⁴ They determined that equitable access was more relevant to their library's mission.

Admittedly, the results are skewed toward favorable outcomes. This is because institutions such as those mentioned above are subject to selection bias; they volunteered to report data that promoted positive results of eliminating library fines. Because this is the only information that was readily available, they were included in this paper. The research conducted for this report found no reports of libraries that have eliminated fines and experienced changes in patron behavior that negatively impacted library usage or resulted in significantly higher return rates for materials.

10 Spielman, F. (2019, October 30). Lightfoot's decision to eliminate library fines triggers 240% increase in book returns. Retrieved November 5, 2019, from Chicago Sun-Times website: <https://chicago.suntimes.com/news/2019/10/30/20940677/chicago-public-library-no-fines-book-returns-increase-lightfoot>

11 Cisneros, J. (2019). LONG OVERDUE: Eliminating Fines on Overdue Materials to Improve Access to San Francisco Public Library, p. 6. *The Office of the Treasurer and Tax Collector*. Retrieved October 24, 2019 from: <https://sfpl.org/uploads/files/pdfs/commission/Fine-Free-Report011719.pdf>

12 Depriest, M.J. (2016). Removing Barriers to Access: Eliminating Library Fines and Fees on Children's Materials. Retrieved October 24, 2019 from <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/removingbarrierstoaccess>

13 Depriest, M.J. (2016). Removing Barriers to Access: Eliminating Library Fines and Fees on Children's Materials. Retrieved October 24, 2019 from <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/removingbarrierstoaccess>

14 Columbus Metropolitan Library to eliminate overdue fines beginning Jan. 1, 2017 | www.columbuslibrary.org. (2016). Retrieved November 5, 2019, from <https://www.columbuslibrary.org/press/columbus-metropolitan-library-eliminate-overdue-fines-beginning-jan-1-2017>

These numbers do not directly address the idea of fairness, which is often brought up in defense of library fines and their relationship to item return rates. Some argue that they serve to make library services more equal because they ensure that there are consequences from late returns. Some see this as a protective measure for the assumed majority of people who do return books late against the people taking advantage of the system.¹⁵

This assumes that library fines are effective deterrents for lateness, which is addressed in the section titled *A Lack of Evidence*. Additionally, fines may seem fair to those who can afford to pay their fines but negatively impact lower-income patrons. Patrons feel entitled to some kind of retribution in exchange for irresponsible patrons who break the rules. However, this feeling of entitlement assumes that everyone is able to pay fines and that imposing fines makes the system more fair. In fact, it is doing the opposite. Imposing fines on all patrons is not a marker of equity. This argument is further addressed in the section titled *Fines Disproportionately Affect Lower-Income Patrons*.

2. Fines supplement library budgets

This particular argument is highly variant, depending on the budget of the library in question, how much they collect in fines per fiscal year, and where the money ends up. If fines support the library's budget directly, the collected funds may make up a significant part of it, and may be funding the library cannot afford to lose. Library fines also help supplement the cost of replacing items, funding programming, or the cost of the human labor of librarians who spend time dealing with overdue fine collection from patrons. This is the most demonstrative argument for the fact that no blanket prescription is right for all libraries. The library might be unable to function without the money they collect from fines.

¹⁵ Jerome, J. A. 1, judy_jerome@hotmail. com. (2012). Occupy the Library. *Public Libraries*, 51(6), 6–7.

3. Fines teach people to be civically responsible

One of the most frequently-made cases in favor of the use of library fines is that overdue books demonstrate irresponsibility of the patron and a lack of respect to fellow patrons. Fines serve as a reminder to patrons that there are consequences when the library's materials are not returned on time.

In his essay on library fines, David McMenemy reinforces this idea, asking "without fines, what incentives do users have to return material in a timely fashion to ensure it is available for others to use?"¹⁶ He argues that fines help ensure equal access by instilling civic responsibility, stating that "every individual who uses that collection has a collective responsibility to that group of people," and "if customers do not return their items on time, this deprives other users of that resource." He goes on to state that the elimination of fines would mean eliminating a "vital function of any library that requires efficient and equitable circulation of stock." He asserts that patrons who return materials late have selfish intentions and a lack of respect for the library community, and therefore lack a sense of civic responsibility. Eliminating fines would "allow a system that allows disregard for the needs of other members".¹⁷

Under this logic, one must assume that patrons feel inclined to be civically responsible only if there is a threat of punishment when they are not. As put by Anthony Marx, CEO of the New York Public Library, people respond to the idea of fine elimination as if it imposes a "moral hazard" on society at large.¹⁸ Without the threat of punishment, what motivation do citizens have to be responsible library patrons?

A key misunderstanding in the discussion of eliminating fines is the idea that it will eliminate all patron responsibility in kind. Removing fines does not mean removing all

16 McMenemy, D. (2010). On library fines: Ensuring civic responsibility or an easy income stream? *Library Review*, 59(2), 78–81.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/00242531011023835>

17McMenemy, D. (2010). On library fines: Ensuring civic responsibility or an easy income stream? *Library Review*, 59(2), 78–81.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/00242531011023835>

18 The case against library fines—According to the head of New York Public Library—Quartz. Retrieved October 4, 2019, from <https://qz.com/1158839/the-case-against-library-fines-according-to-the-head-of-the-new-york-public-library/>

consequences or even removing all monetary consequences for not returning library materials. In most systems that have eliminated fines, patrons who fail to return items within a given timeframe will be charged for the replacement of the missing items. The replacement fee is waived when the item is returned, even if it is past its due date. The item was ultimately returned, so there is no need to punish the patron. Therefore, removing overdue fines is meant to offer more flexibility in book returns and does not remove all responsibility from patrons.

Is teaching civic responsibility the library's job?

A more important point to address in this argument is the idea of libraries being responsible for teaching civic responsibility in the first place. Is this one of the library's key functions? Furthermore, if it is, does its obligation to teach civic responsibility outweigh its commitments to equal access for all patrons? Equitable Access to Information and Library Services is one of the American Library Association's (ALA) key action areas, which they describe as "guiding principles for investment of energy and resources" in the organization.¹⁹ Equity is also featured in other guiding documents, such as in the ALA's stated Core Values of Librarianship.²⁰ ALA's mission states that one of its goals is to help librarians and libraries "ensure access to information for all."²¹ Teaching patrons how to be civically responsible is notably absent from these documents.

These points are not intended to dismiss the importance of responsibility, especially when interacting with resources shared by an entire community. They are, however, intended to weigh the significance of denying access to patrons that have been branded as irresponsible, and therefore as deserving of punishment or deprivation of library materials entirely, against the significance of a patron returning an item late.

¹⁹ American Library Association. (2007, April 19). Key Action Areas. Retrieved November 4, 2019, from About ALA website:

<http://www.ala.org/aboutala/missionpriorities/keyactionareas>

²⁰ American Library Association. (2006, July 26). Core Values of Librarianship [Text]. Retrieved November 4, 2019, from Advocacy, Legislation & Issues website:

<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/corevalues>

²¹ American library Association. (2010, August 4). A.1 Mission, Priority Areas, Goals (Old Number 1). Retrieved November 4, 2019, from About ALA website:

<http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/policymanual/updatedpolicymanual/section1/1mission>

Are library fines effective tools for teaching civic responsibility? Take, for instance, the San Francisco Public Library. In a report put out by the Office of Treasurer and Tax Collector, in collaboration with SFPL, “more than one-third of library patrons hold debt on their account at any given time.”²² The Phoenix Public Library, who eliminated fines in November of 2019, stated that before eliminating fines, “103,975 [cardholders], or 10 percent, were blocked from checking out materials because they had \$25 or more in fines.”²³ Given statistics like that, one could conclude that turning in a library book late is a common mistake that anyone could make, and many people do make frequently. This argument is much more rational than the idea that one-third of all SFPL patrons and at least 10% of Phoenix Public Library patrons are irresponsible and disrespectful people.

Furthermore, libraries that have eliminated fines have not experienced a complete loss of patron responsibility. According to the High Plains Library District in northern Colorado, which eliminated fines in 2015, “the fear that fines were the only thing between civilization and chaos has proved unfounded: 95 percent of materials are returned within a week of their due date.”²⁴

The data provided above is limited and is not intended to represent incontrovertible evidence that library fines do not teach civic responsibility. However, it is intended to question the idea, as it is one of the most frequently cited arguments in favor of the use of fines, and has been largely unsupported by data. Perhaps it feels like library fines should work, or do work, to curb patron behavior toward goodness. But if all that stands between the library and complete moral bankruptcy are fines, then fines aren’t really teaching people how to be good anyhow. Being civically responsible does not mean simply acting good out of fear of being punished for wrongdoing. If patrons act irresponsibly when they are not threatened by the system, then have they learned to fear punishment, not to be responsible.

22 Cisneros, J. (2019). LONG OVERDUE: Eliminating Fines on Overdue Materials to Improve Access to San Francisco Public Library, p. 27. *The Office of the Treasurer and Tax Collector*. Retrieved October 24, 2019 from: <https://sfpl.org/uploads/files/pdfs/commission/Fine-Free-Report011719.pdf>

23 Phoenix Public Library to stop charging late fees in November. (2019, September 11). Retrieved October 4, 2019, from <https://www.abc15.com/entertainment/events/phoenix-public-library-to-stop-charging-late-fees-in-november>

24 Graham, R. (2017, February 6). Long Overdue: Why public libraries are finally eliminating the late-return fine. Retrieved October 31, 2019, from Slate Magazine website: <https://slate.com/culture/2017/02/librarians-are-realizing-that-overdue-fines-undercut-libraries-missions.html>

Arguments in favor of eliminating library fines

1. A Lack of Evidence

The pervasive nature of library fines suggests that there is evidence to support their effectiveness. However, there is a lack of data to support whether or not they actually work. More often than not, the justification for library fines seems to have stemmed from assumptions or feelings rather than explicit facts supported by research and data collection.

The existing writing in support of library fines must rely on data that is small-scale or old. Most proponents of library fines use Hansel and Burgin's 1981 and 1983 reports "Hard Facts About Overdues" and "More Hard Facts on Overdues." Among their findings, they reported that "libraries that don't charge fines tend to get their books back more slowly, but ultimately get more of them back; they have higher overdue rates in the short run, but lower overdue rates in the long run." Additionally they state that "libraries that restrict overdue patrons do significantly better at getting materials returned," and that "the higher the daily fine the faster the books come back."²⁵ Perhaps their most compelling conclusion of all was the fact that there are no easy answers; studies like this are difficult to conduct, and the complexity and diversity of library systems and communities make it difficult to draw large-scale conclusions based on these studies alone.²⁶

In addition to not taking a concrete stance on the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of library fines, one cannot ignore how old these studies are. No comparable study has been done between 1983 and now, in 2020. While these findings may have once presented sufficient, valid evidence to support fines much has changed since these studies were conducted. Libraries do not run the same way they did in 1983. Similarly, the role of the library and the library's relationship with its patrons may have also shifted

²⁵ Little, P. (1989). MANAGING OVERDUES: Facts From Four Studies. *The Bottom Line*, 2(2), 22. <https://doi.org/10.1108/eb025168>

²⁶ Hansel, P. (1983). Hard facts about overdue. *Library Journal*, 108(4), 350.

in the interim 37 years, and punitive action against patrons, particularly those from lower-income backgrounds, may not be as acceptable as it once was.

Another study used in support of the impact of library fines is *Do library fines work?: Analysis of the effectiveness of fines on patron's return behavior at two mid-sized academic libraries*. This study was conducted in part due to the lack of evidence to drive librarian decision-making in terms of fining patrons.²⁷ The study concludes that library fines are effective, but concedes that the use of fines may damage patron perception of the library, and may contribute to barriers to access. It is notable that this study focused on academic libraries, which function differently than public libraries. The sample size for this study is rather small, and therefore difficult from which to draw definitive conclusions.

With data this small-scale and potentially outdated, it is difficult to claim that there is a sufficient amount of data available to support the use of library fines. Librarians likely base their opinions in support of library fines on their own values and experiences working in the library. Personal experience and data collected by the library are both valuable in determining what is right for their community and their library and may be the determining factor in whether a library system uses fines. However, it is clear that in the current literature there is no strong, wide-scale evidence that supports the claim that library fines are effective for all of the reasons people use to defend them.

2. Fines Disproportionately Affect Lower-Income Patrons

While there is a lack of evidence to support library fine effectiveness, there is evidence that suggests library fines disproportionately affect lower-income patrons. A fine might seem like a small penalty for some. However, for many patrons, the consequences of returning books late is too cost-prohibitive, even if the initial checkout is free. Many

27 Phelps, S. F. (2015). Library Fines Make a Difference in Academic Library Book Return Behaviour. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, 10(3), 96.
<https://doi.org/10.18438/B8H89K>

large cities leading the movement toward going fine-free have cited this as one of their main motivations.

For instance, in Seattle, “the branches with the highest proportion of accounts blocked for overdue fines are all in parts of Seattle that are both poorer and more diverse than the city as a whole.”²⁸ Similarly, in San Francisco, “patrons across all branches accrue fines at similar rates, but locations serving low-income areas have higher average debt amounts and more blocked users.”²⁹ New York City is not a fine-free library system. However, prior to its fine forgiveness program, according to the NYPL’s CEO, “20% of our 400,000 juvenile and young adult patrons had blocked library cards; nearly half of those were concentrated in the poorest quartile of our branches.”³⁰

Logistically, this makes sense. Lower-income families have less disposable income, making it harder for them to pay off any fines they might accrue. In many cases, libraries will restrict access to materials once a patron has reached a certain total of accumulated fines. This further disproportionately targets lower-income households, who likely cannot afford to purchase books. Therefore, when a library cuts off a lower-income patron from the library, they may be cutting off any access they have to books, movies, periodicals, or the many other unique items that libraries offer.

For patrons who have more disposable income, “fines are often not a meaningful deterrent” for returning items past their due date.³¹ As well-stated in Slate’s article *Long Overdue*, “for middle-class patrons, [fines] may feel like a slap on the wrist, or even a feel-good donation,”³² but not everyone shares that privilege. The consequences of overdue fines are too high for some patrons, which can affect library behavior and

28 Kroman, D. (2019). *Library fines hit Seattle’s lower-income neighborhoods hardest*. Retrieved October 4, 2019, from <https://crosscut.com/2019/03/library-fines-hit-seattles-lower-income-neighborhoods-hardest>

29 Cisneros, J. (2019). LONG OVERDUE: Eliminating Fines on Overdue Materials to Improve Access to San Francisco Public Library, p. 5. *The Office of the Treasurer and Tax Collector*. Retrieved October 24, 2019 from: <https://sfpl.org/uploads/files/pdfs/commission/Fine-Free-Report011719.pdf>

30 *The case against library fines—According to the head of New York Public Library—Quartz*. (n.d.). Retrieved October 4, 2019, from <https://qz.com/1158839/the-case-against-library-fines-according-to-the-head-of-the-new-york-public-library/>

31 Cisneros, J. (2019). LONG OVERDUE: Eliminating Fines on Overdue Materials to Improve Access to San Francisco Public Library, p. 20. *The Office of the Treasurer and Tax Collector*. Retrieved October 24, 2019 from: <https://sfpl.org/uploads/files/pdfs/commission/Fine-Free-Report011719.pdf>

32 Graham, R. (2017, February 6). *Go Ahead and Return That Book Late—Libraries Are Doing Away With the Overdue Fine*. Slate Magazine. <https://slate.com/culture/2017/02/librarians-are-realizing-that-overdue-fines-undercut-libraries-missions.html>

usage. Some patrons never check out items due to fear of accruing fines.³³ In some instances, libraries will send patrons with unpaid fines to collection agencies, further punishing them.³⁴

This goes against much of what libraries today have come to stand for. Equity, diversity, and inclusion are some of the American Library Association's biggest priorities as a professional organization.³⁵ There is much discussion in the professional literature, as well as in the education of future librarians in Master's programs, of the library's role in its community. Libraries are intended to be places of equitable access for all. Therefore, should libraries enforce policies that are, by design, inequitable, and may effectively ban lower-income patrons with too many fines from access, all in the name of "fairness"?

3. Fines are punitive and are not effective in teaching people how to be better

As discussed earlier in this report, there is a lack of evidence to support library fines as effective tools for getting patrons to return items on time. While some of the evidence does point in that direction, there haven't been many studies done to support this claim. If they are not being used as friendly nudges toward civic responsibility, it is difficult to view them as anything other than punitive, as if seeking retribution either for the library as an institution or on behalf of the "more responsible" patrons who do not accrue fines.

David McMenemy, who ultimately argues in favor of the use of fines, summarizes the issue very well in his editorial piece *On Library Fines: Ensuring Civic Responsibility or an easy income stream?* He states,

The term fine is pejorative in nature; we associate it with punishment. We are fined when we do something wrong, something outside of the

³³ *In San Jose, Poor Find Doors to Library Closed*—*The New York Times*. (2016). Retrieved October 4, 2019, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/31/us/in-san-jose-poor-find-doors-to-library-closed.html>

³⁴ *It's Not Fine to Not Pay Your Fine* » *Public Libraries Online*. (2016). Retrieved January 19, 2020, from <http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2016/05/its-not-fine-to-not-pay-your-fine/>

³⁵ JGRAY. (2008, June 13). *Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion* [Text]. Advocacy, Legislation & Issues. <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/diversity>

expected public standard. Is it then correct and proper for the profession to perpetuate a system that places such a punishment on a library community, be it public or educational? Does such a system deter users who see it as a negative that overcomes any potential benefits in using the collection?³⁶

McMenemy ultimately concludes that the punishment fits the crime, as a system without punishment is “a system that allows the disregard for the needs of other members.”³⁷

The issue of fines as punishment is also discussed in *Putting a Sacred Cow Out to Pasture: Assessing the Removal of Fines and Reduction of Barriers at a Small Academic Library*. The authors, librarians at Vancouver Island University, eliminated fines due to their inherently punitive nature. They assert that fines, the proverbial sacred cow, have been upheld due to strong feelings in the library community, not evidence-based decision making. They break down the issue simply: the issue of library fines pertains to the library’s relationship to their patrons. Either they decide to take the “enforcer or tax collector role,” potentially at the detriment of library usage in general, or they decide against it.³⁸

While McMenemy concludes that the potential loss of patronage is worth risking in order to collect library fines, the librarians at Vancouver Island University decided it was not worth the risk. They argue that libraries now, possibly more than ever, are socially threatened by those who do not see the library as relevant. The library has too much to lose, and “holding a threat above the heads of borrowers” does not serve the library’s

36 McMenemy, D. (2010). On library fines: Ensuring civic responsibility or an easy income stream? *Library Review*, 59(2), 78.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/00242531011023835>

37 McMenemy, D. (2010). On library fines: Ensuring civic responsibility or an easy income stream? *Library Review*, 59(2), 78–81.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/00242531011023835>

38 Reed, K., Blackburn, J., & Sifton, D. (2014). Putting a Sacred Cow Out to Pasture: Assessing the Removal of Fines and Reduction of Barriers at a Small Academic Library. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 40(3–4), 276. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2014.04.003>

image. Furthermore, in relying on library fines to support library operations, “VIU library would be tacitly supporting student failure.”³⁹

Many uphold library fines as a symbol of a patron’s respect for the library, meaning that returning items late is demonstrative of a patron’s lack of respect and inherent irresponsibility as a citizen. However, the threat of punishment should not be the thing curbing patron behavior, and there are many other ways patrons can demonstrate respect for the library as an institution. As described in SFPL and the Office of Treasurer and Tax Collector’s fine-free report, “patrons can practice responsible behavior by using the library, reading books, sharing communal spaces, and making sure materials get back to the library. Rather than a permit for irresponsible behavior, fine elimination is a way to ensure all community members continue to have opportunities to practice those skills.” They described the punitive nature of fines as one of their motivations for wanting to remove fines. They wrote, “overdue fines do not turn irresponsible patrons into responsible ones, they only distinguish between patrons who can afford to pay for the common mistake of late returns and those who cannot.”⁴⁰

Even if one feels that fining patrons is appropriate for getting books back and enforcing responsibility at the risk of deterring some patrons from using the library, it appears that it is not a very effective form of punishment with the intent to curb patron behavior. Before the New York Public Library’s fine forgiveness program, 20% of juvenile and young adult patrons had blocked library cards because of too many fines.⁴¹ In the Phoenix Public Library system, over 10% of their patrons had blocked cards because of fines.⁴² Given statistics such as these, does it seem like fines are doing their job, making

39 Reed, K., Blackburn, J., & Sifton, D. (2014). Putting a Sacred Cow Out to Pasture: Assessing the Removal of Fines and Reduction of Barriers at a Small Academic Library. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 40(3–4), 275–280. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2014.04.003>

40 Cisneros, J. (2019). LONG OVERDUE: Eliminating Fines on Overdue Materials to Improve Access to San Francisco Public Library, p. 27. *The Office of the Treasurer and Tax Collector*. Retrieved October 24, 2019 from: <https://sfpl.org/uploads/files/pdfs/commission/Fine-Free-Report011719.pdf>

41 *The case against library fines—According to the head of New York Public Library—Quartz*. (n.d.). Retrieved October 4, 2019, from <https://qz.com/1158839/the-case-against-library-fines-according-to-the-head-of-the-new-york-public-library/>

42 *Phoenix Public Library to stop charging late fees in November*. (n.d.). Retrieved October 4, 2019, from <https://www.abc15.com/entertainment/events/phoenix-public-library-to-stop-charging-late-fees-in-november>

patrons more responsible, or are they simply excluding a significant number of their patrons from certain library privileges?

Going fine-free might result in more effective means of motivation to ensure timely returns. This argument against fines as an effective means of punishment comes from *If We Charge Them, Will They Come?* The authors, two librarians from the University of Massachusetts, questioned whether or not fines were effective deterrents. They describe their hypothesis as “tying a price to book tardiness should curb unwanted behavior,” and fines serve as “a price to soothe the shame of being late.”⁴³ Without the ability to wave away guilt with money, patrons face social consequences that are not so easily soothed. Wood and Almeida assert that patron responsibility will stem from “respect for policy and nothing more,” and that “patrons [would] choose not to betray social norms by disappointing” other patrons. This helps the library’s image, turning it away from its traditional image of punishment, and will make “librarians appear kind and accommodating” and “merciful, even when it is merely policy.”⁴⁴ Isn’t this kind of social contract a more effective way for patrons to display their civic responsibility, and not just behavior motivated by fear of punishment?

4. Fines may not make up a significant portion of the library’s budget

This will vary from library to library. As mentioned in the introduction, there is no singular prescription that will apply to all libraries. It is difficult to argue against a library that receives a significant part of its budget from the fines they collect. However, it did appear to be a motivating factor for many library systems when they decided to go fine-free. Several of these institutions discussed this as a motivating factor in news publications about their decision.

⁴³ Wood, E., & Almeida, J. (2017.). *If We Charge Them, Will They Come?* 56(3), p. 159.

⁴⁴ Wood, E., & Almeida, J. (2017). *If We Charge Them, Will They Come?* 56(3), p. 159.

In The San Francisco Public Library “\$333,129 collected in overdue fines in FY 2017-2018 represents 0.2 percent of the total operating budget,”⁴⁵ which they argue was likely the same amount spent on human labor in the “employee time consumed by communicating with patrons about fines and engaging in transactions...administrative costs and collections contracts.”⁴⁶ The Seattle Public Library collected about “\$1.1 million a year in overdue fines. That’s about 1.3 percent of its \$80.9 million budget for 2019.”⁴⁷ Phoenix Public Library “fines reportedly account for \$200,000 a year, which is less than one percent of the library’s annual budget.”⁴⁸ In the Detroit Public Library System, the library collected “about \$30,000 in fine payments — less than .1 percent of its total budget.”⁴⁹

These are just a few examples, and all of the aforementioned library systems are large. Therefore, it is not the most representative sample of the ratio of budget and fines. However, research later in this report shows evidence that this trend proves true in smaller library systems, too.

5. Eliminating fines may improve circulation

The elimination of fines could benefit not only patrons but the library as well. One of the ways in which the library could benefit is an increase in circulation. This result makes sense: if patrons are no longer afraid to use the library’s collections, they might be more willing to check out books. Similarly, patrons whose fines have been forgiven might return to the library and check out materials again. Clearly, they were interested in or

45 Cisneros, J. (2019). LONG OVERDUE: Eliminating Fines on Overdue Materials to Improve Access to San Francisco Public Library, p. 6. *The Office of the Treasurer and Tax Collector*. Retrieved October 24, 2019 from: <https://sfpl.org/uploads/files/pdfs/commission/Fine-Free-Report011719.pdf>

46 Cisneros, J. (2019). LONG OVERDUE: Eliminating Fines on Overdue Materials to Improve Access to San Francisco Public Library, p. 25. *The Office of the Treasurer and Tax Collector*. Retrieved October 24, 2019 from: <https://sfpl.org/uploads/files/pdfs/commission/Fine-Free-Report011719.pdf>

47 Kroman, D. (2019). *Library fines hit Seattle’s lower-income neighborhoods hardest*. Retrieved October 4, 2019, from <https://crosscut.com/2019/03/library-fines-hit-seattles-lower-income-neighborhoods-hardest>

48 *Phoenix Public Library to stop charging late fees in November*. (n.d.). Retrieved October 4, 2019, from <https://www.abc15.com/entertainment/events/phoenix-public-library-to-stop-charging-late-fees-in-november>

49 *Detroit Public Library eliminates overdue fines*. (2019). Retrieved October 4, 2019, from http://www.deadlinedetroit.com/articles/23160/detroit_public_library_eliminate_overdue_fines

needed to check out materials in the past, so the removal of any barriers to entry might lead to higher circulation.

This is more than just a thought experiment or optimism. When the High Plains Library District eliminated fines in 2015, they “saw increased circulation six months after fine elimination.”⁵⁰ More specifically, they saw an increase of 16% in their children’s department alone.⁵¹ Similarly, “The Salt Lake County Public Library experienced an 11 percent increase in the number of monthly borrowers and a 14 percent increase in the number of items borrowed in the year after they eliminated fines.”⁵² It is worth acknowledging that these numbers were not collected in a vacuum. Libraries are complex ecosystems, and as a result, the increases may not be entirely due to the elimination of fines. That being said, one could safely assume it is at least a contributing factor.

Many libraries that still use fines do allow fine forgiveness for children and teens. A notable example of this is the New York Public Library, who forgave fines for all patrons under the age of 18 in October of 2017.⁵³ Of the 41,000 young people who used the library in the month following the amnesty, 11,000 of them had not used the library in the past year. As put by the CEO of NYPL, Anthony Marx, “we know 11,000 kids and teens have rekindled their relationship with reading, learning, and libraries...we expect numbers to continue to increase as we continue to get the word out about the program.”⁵⁴

50 Cisneros, J. (2019). LONG OVERDUE: Eliminating Fines on Overdue Materials to Improve Access to San Francisco Public Library, p. 17. *The Office of the Treasurer and Tax Collector*. Retrieved October 24, 2019 from: <https://sfpl.org/uploads/files/pdfs/commission/Fine-Free-Report011719.pdf>

51 Graham, R. (2017, February 6). Long Overdue: Why public libraries are finally eliminating the late-return fine. Retrieved October 31, 2019, from Slate Magazine website: <https://slate.com/culture/2017/02/librarians-are-realizing-that-overdue-fines-undercut-libraries-missions.html>

52 Cisneros, J. (2019). LONG OVERDUE: Eliminating Fines on Overdue Materials to Improve Access to San Francisco Public Library, p. 17. *The Office of the Treasurer and Tax Collector*. Retrieved October 24, 2019 from: <https://sfpl.org/uploads/files/pdfs/commission/Fine-Free-Report011719.pdf>

53 NYC Libraries Announce Fine Forgiveness for Kids and Teens | The New York Public Library. (n.d.). Retrieved January 20, 2020, from <https://www.nypl.org/blog/2017/10/19/fine-forgiveness>

54 *The case against library fines—According to the head of New York Public Library—Quartz*. (n.d.). Retrieved October 4, 2019, from <https://qz.com/1158839/the-case-against-library-fines-according-to-the-head-of-the-new-york-public-library/>

6. Improved Patron/Librarian relationships

Fine-elimination could lead to improved patron interactions. When thinking about library fines, one might not initially imagine the potentially tense interactions that can be associated with fine collection. Some library systems circumvent this possibility by providing online payment options, but other libraries may not be able to afford this feature. These interactions are undoubtedly undesirable for both patrons and librarians and could lead to uncomfortable, if not damaging, interactions. Having to deal with the negative consequences of these painful conversations may contribute to burnout or anxiety among library staff. This is something that librarians in most large public libraries have to contend with. According to a Library Journal survey conducted in 2017, “98.0 percent of large-sized libraries have to train their staff on how to handle collecting and enforcing fines.”⁵⁵

Many publications have highlighted the benefit of improved patron and librarian relationships when writing about eliminating fines. Eliminating fines can improve the public image of librarians and staff and foster general feelings of goodwill toward the library as an institution. As discussed by the librarians at the University of Massachusetts who wrote *If We Charge Them, Will They Come?*, “the absence of fines is implied trust...The goal of lending resources is to further social progress. This intent, unobscured by penalty, evokes trust because it is supportive of the collective.”⁵⁶ The American Library Association’s 2017 president, Julie Torado, described the move toward fine elimination as one of the many ways “to maximize access and positive relationships between libraries and patrons.”⁵⁷

55 Cisneros, J. (2019). LONG OVERDUE: Eliminating Fines on Overdue Materials to Improve Access to San Francisco Public Library, p. 24. *The Office of the Treasurer and Tax Collector*. Retrieved October 24, 2019 from: <https://sfpl.org/uploads/files/pdfs/commission/Fine-Free-Report011719.pdf>

56 Wood, E., & Almeida, J. (2017). *If We Charge Them, Will They Come?* 56(3), p. 160.

57 *Libraries Are Dropping Overdue Fines—But Can They Afford To?* | HuffPost. (2017). Retrieved October 4, 2019, from https://www.huffpost.com/entry/libraries-are-dropping-overdue-fines-but-can-they-afford-to_p_5913733ae4b0b1fa1d0dccc2

Library Survey Results

As a part of this report, I thought it was important to hear about the experiences of libraries that have chosen to eliminate fines. I was interested in data, such as how much of their budget previously came from fines, if they saw changes in library usage after the shift, their motivations for eliminating fines, and the advantages and disadvantages they experienced after making the change.

The survey was completed by 15 libraries in 12 different states within the United States. They eliminated fines at points varying between early 2015 and the middle of 2019. The libraries varied greatly in both size of community served and budget. While there is room for growth in the number of respondents, as well as the breadth and depth of questions asked, libraries that completed the survey offered interesting and compelling answers from their experiences. As the surveyor, I ultimately found the qualitative responses about the first-hand experiences of the librarians to be the most illuminating part of the survey, but I'm including both qualitative and quantitative data in the results below.

Library Demographics

When the library eliminated fines

Year fines were eliminated	Number of libraries that eliminated fines
2015	1
2016	0
2017	3
2018	6
2019	5

Library budgets

Budget Range	Number of libraries in that range
<\$1,000,000	1
Between \$1,000,001 and \$10,000,000	5
Between \$10,000,001 and \$25,000,000	3
Between \$25,000,001 and \$50,000,000	4
Over \$50,000,000	2

Population versus number of locked accounts at time of elimination (from libraries who answered both questions)

Library Name	Library population served	Number of locked accounts	Percentage
Columbus Public Library	1,292,000	~43,890	~3%
San Diego Public Library	1,420,572	Over 174,000	~12%
Denver Public Library	705,439	20,287	2.9%
St. Paul Public Library	309,180	47,294	15%
Kent District Library	395,000	2,045	<0.10%
Contra Costa County Library	1,144,863	116,740	10%
Enoch Pratt Free Library	620,961	26,000	4%

Maximum amount allowed in fines before account privileges locked

Dollar amount	Number of libraries
\$5	3
\$8	1
\$10	7
\$15	1
\$20	2
\$25	1

How does eliminating fines make a difference?

Of the libraries who responded to the survey, two-thirds reported an increase in the total number of items borrowed in the fiscal year following the change. 40% reported an

increase in the total number of library visits. While many of them did not track average wait times for items on hold, two reported no change to wait times, and two reported an increase of one to two days of wait time, on average. 33% saw an increase in the number of new accounts opened at the library in the fiscal year after eliminating fines.

It is important to note that eliminating fines may not be the sole reason for these changes, as libraries are complex systems and there are a myriad of factors that influence library attendance and borrowing patterns. However, as the surveyor, I determined the changes noted above were significant enough to mention.

"Not spending dollars to collect dimes." - Nancy Kreiser from the Contra Costa County Library, describing an advantage to fine elimination

It may seem like an obvious statement, but in giving up fines, libraries are giving up money. One might assume that libraries rely heavily on fines for supporting their budgets. This was not the case for many of the libraries that have eliminated fines, meaning that they could afford to lose that revenue in exchange for the benefits of not fining their patrons. However, one cannot assume this is true for all libraries, which might be the motivating factor for why so many libraries continue to implement fines.

Percentage of total budget that was collected by fines

Percentage Range	Number of libraries
Between 0% and 0.5%	3
Between 0.51% and 1%	7

Between 1.01% and 1.5%	1
Between 1.51% and 2%	4
More than 2%	0

Motivations for Eliminating Fines

One section of the survey asked the librarians to rank the following motivations from 1 to 5, from most aligned with the library's motivations for eliminating fines, to least aligned:

- The library wanted to remove barriers to access.
- The library wanted to improve staff morale.
- The library wanted to improve patrons' relationship to the library.
- The library wanted to free up staff to do other work.
- The total amount collected from fines was small.

14 out of 15 libraries stated that their top motivation was removing barriers to access, and the second most important factor was improving their patrons' relationship to the library. The one library that did not answer in that order put patron relationships first and removal of barriers to access second. This suggests that the libraries were predominantly concerned with the social justice aspects of removing fines, and felt motivated by those implications over the more operational sides of eliminating fines. This speaks to earlier sections of the report, specifically the ones that detail how fines are increasingly being seen as inequitable and punitive rather than a necessary practice. These sentiments are further echoed below, in the section where libraries expressed their personal experiences in their own words.

Disadvantages of eliminating fines

*"...we can use every penny we can get each year. That said, I think the **advantages definitely outweigh the***

disadvantages.” - Jeana Gockley from the Joplin Public Library

Half of the libraries surveyed either left this section of the survey blank or specifically stated that their library has not experienced any disadvantages from making the change yet.

Not surprisingly, reduction in revenue was the most-cited disadvantage to eliminating fines. 6 out of the 15 libraries surveyed cited this as the main disadvantage. In the words of Jeana Gockley from the Joplin Public Library, “we can use every penny we can get each year. That said, I think the advantages definitely outweigh the disadvantages.”

Four librarians cited confusion as a disadvantage to the change. There are several sources of this confusion. Overdue fines are recognized as a component to library functionality, and the transition could be confusing to patrons who expect to be fined. The librarians at the High Plains Library District elaborated to say that their institution still charges for damaged and missing items, which patrons might not understand when they hear that their library is fine-free. Libraries such as the Sun Prairie library still have fines attached to their specialized collections, which is another point of confusion for patrons. However, these instances demonstrate that being a fine-free library does not mean that all materials need to be fine-free, or that the elimination of fines means the elimination of consequences.

An anxiety about eliminating fines that has been discussed earlier in this report is longer hold times. While some libraries’ statistics demonstrated shorter or unaffected hold times, three libraries mentioned longer hold times as a potential disadvantage to being fine-free. However, when describing increases in hold times, each of the libraries expressed that this is a hypothetical effect, or that the increases have been slight. Therefore, the potential increases in hold times a library might experience is not big enough of a change to detract from the benefits of eliminating fines.

There were two unique disadvantages cited by only one library each. The first was mentioned by Holly Jackson at the Portneuf District Library. She described pushback from more traditional patrons and staff members who thought that the elimination of

fines would lead to a breakdown in the system. In her words, “they believed that no fines would result in anarchy and no items coming back.” However, their library has not found this to be the case, and feedback about the change has been mostly positive.

The other disadvantage was also related to the patron response to the change. The library expected fine elimination to lead to increases in circulation and library usage, which is a benefit that has been cited by several libraries who have gone fine free. Evidence suggests that this is a possible result of the change. However, this library did not see much of a difference as a result of the change, which was, understandably, disappointing.

Advantages of eliminating fines

*“Overdue fines are a regressive method of raising revenue, **they hurt the most those who can afford them the least**, create stress-filled interactions, and require significant amounts of staff time to manage.” - David Seleb from the Oak Park Public Library*

While the libraries that were surveyed, for the most part, cited the same handful of disadvantages to the change, their responses to the advantages of the change were extremely varied. Almost every library had a unique perspective on this, and found different benefits for their library system. This demonstrates how overwhelmingly positive the change can be, and how it can impact communities of various sizes and budgets. There were several major benefits cited by many libraries, but it is the unique experiences they mentioned that illuminate how much of a difference the shift away from library fines could make.

*“...fines have become a privilege and — **not only do they not work** — they actually encourage people to keep materials*

*longer if they can afford it." - Annette Birdsall, Director of the
Tompkins County Public Library*

The one advantage that many libraries described was how eliminating fines helps eliminate barriers to access. As stated by David Seleb from the Oak Park Public Library, "overdue fines are a regressive method of raising revenue, they hurt the most those who can afford them the least, create stress-filled interactions, and require significant amounts of staff time to manage. Having a fine free library eliminates unnecessary barriers to service and improves access for everyone, especially for more vulnerable or marginalized community members." This point is elaborated on by Annette Birdsall, the Director of the Tompkins County Public Library. She said, "it's libraries recognizing that this is a social equity issue, that fines have become a privilege and — not only do they not work — they actually encourage people to keep materials longer if they can afford it. If you can afford it, you pay your fines, you don't feel guilty and you support the library. We love people to support the library. We don't love that it was a privilege and that people who couldn't afford fines stopped using the library altogether."

In addition, two libraries specifically mentioned removing barriers to access of information and literacy resources for children. Increased access for children can be a particularly motivating factor for change. Randall Goble shared this anecdote from the Kent District Library: "A story was shared by one of our branches this year where a woman had recently gotten out of an abusive relationship. She asked staff if anything could be done with her large fines to allow her children to use the library again. And when staff waived the fines with the blessing of administration, she cried."

Another frequently mentioned advantage was how it would affect library staff. Five libraries mentioned that not having to deal with fines would make library jobs less stressful because they have significantly decreased, if not eliminated, negative interactions with patrons. According to Holly Jackson from the Portneuf District Library, "we now have very few negative interactions at our front desk and we have 100% less time being spent on sending late item/fine notifications." Tension has decreased between librarian and patron interactions because they no longer need to ask them for money or deny them access because of fines. As stated by Jennifer Schlossberg from the

Tompkins County Public Library, "it allows their transactions to be about reading and books, and not a discussion about owing \$.50 or \$5.00."

Four of the libraries mentioned an increase in staff time to do other work, and how time-consuming fine collection used to be. According to Randall Goble from the Kent District Library, "the library spent an estimated \$150k of our payroll dollars on staff time dealing with fines (either collecting the payment or manually waiving them). This staff time could be better focused on providing excellent, positive library service, instead of on negative interactions around fines."

The remaining advantages were mentioned by only a small number of libraries but demonstrate the variety of positive outcomes that librarians have observed since making the change.

*"Is a library's mission to teach responsibility, or is it a library's mission to provide information and learning experiences?" -
Holly Jackson from the Portneuf District Library*

More aligned with the real mission of the library to provide information

Three libraries mentioned that imposing fines on patrons is in direct opposition to the mission of the library. One librarian, Holly Jackson of the Portneuf District Library, was forced to confront the motivations behind library fines when asked this question: "Is a library's mission to teach responsibility, or is it a library's mission to provide information and learning experiences?" According to Nancy Kreiser from the Contra Costa County Library, this change has also led to "a heightened awareness of equity and the impact of barriers. We continue to question policy and procedures from this perspective and are implementing change on an on-going basis."

Increased goodwill

Three libraries specifically mentioned increased goodwill as a noted benefit. This is closely tied to the ways in which patrons perceive and interact with the library, but is a

specific type of sentiment that implies an increase in warm feelings and trust in the library as an institution.

Better service to patrons

Four libraries mentioned that their staff are now better able to serve their patrons now that they don't have to worry about the repercussions of handling fines. As stated by Randall Goble at the Kent District Library, "staff time could be better focused on providing excellent, positive library service, instead of on negative interactions around fines." Nancy Kreiser from the Contra Costa County Library echoed this point, stating that staff can focus on the "value of service versus the value of enforcing the minutiae of rules."

Improved morale

While the survey itself included a section on whether or not the library was motivated to eliminate fines by the prospect that it may improve employee morale, one library specifically mentioned it again in the short answer section.

Better use of resources

Three libraries specifically mentioned that this shift would lead to better application of library resources. While one library's use of the phrase "better use of resources" was vague, another library specifically mentioned that patrons were better able to learn about and take advantage of library resources on offer, and the third mentioned that children have more access to literacy resources in the library. This phrase could also refer to how the library allocates its own resources, or as put by Nancy Kreiser from the Contra Costa County Library, "not spending dollars to collect dimes."

Increase in item returns because there is no fear

In the words of Holly Jackson at the Portneuf District Library, "we see more items being returned instead of kept when the patrons don't fear fiscal punishment." If this proves true in other libraries, then patrons may experience shorter hold times on average as a result. Additionally, libraries may experience fewer permanently lost items.

Staff doesn't have to deal with money as often

If libraries are not frequently collecting fines, there is less need for librarians and staff to handle money. Two librarians mentioned this benefit. One specifically mentioned that less staff time spent handling money means fewer accounting mistakes made in the library's till.

Patrons may still donate money if they are able

The Portneuf District Library mentioned that they still get monetary donations from patrons who can afford to give. Patrons who may have viewed the library fine as an opportunity to donate money to the library still have the opportunity to do so, without the negative repercussions of punishing those who were unable to make such a "donation" in exchange for access.

Good PR for the library

Two librarians highlighted that eliminating fines can lead to good PR/good advertising on the library's behalf. It is a notable event likely to garner the attention of local media, and contributes to the larger narrative happening around the momentum of the movement. It can also be used as a tool to re-invite patrons to the library who may have been discouraged from coming due to fear of fines, too many fines, or the other issues that can be associated with overdue fines.

Less concern over borrowing limits

Patrons no longer need to fear racking up extremely high fines for having a large quantity of items past their due date. The Jefferson County library mentioned that in their library, DVDs carry a one dollar fine per day late, and a patron can have out 10 DVDs at a time. This means 10 DVDs one day late carried a 10 dollar fine, almost half of the total allowed limit before borrowing privileges were revoked. Patrons no longer need to fear borrowing many items at one time. Similarly, libraries do not need to worry about setting high borrowing limits in terms of item quantity, at least in terms of the repercussions that overdue fines used to carry.

Increased lost book revenue

The Joplin Public Library mentioned seeing an increase in revenue from lost book fines. This demonstrates that patrons are responsible when it comes to paying for the replacement of lost items, and implies that accruing large fines did not directly correlate with the morality or responsibility of the patron.

Renewed appreciation for the library

While this reason resembles that of goodwill, it is also connected to library publicity. The librarian who mentioned renewed appreciation explicitly mentioned this attitude being expressed by local businesses and civic leaders. This could mean new opportunities for collaboration and outreach between the library and its community. This sentiment was also seen in other responses about patrons returning to the library after an extended period away. The librarians at the Saint Paul Public Library noted an increase in circulation and active users after over five years of consistent decreases. The Contra Costa County library also mentioned circulation increases, which they had not experienced since 2011.

Alternatives to completely eliminating fines

If nothing else, I hope this report has made it clear that library fines are a complex, multifaceted issue. There are no easy answers that will work for every library. If going totally fine-free is not possible for your library, there are other options. Many libraries across the country have found creative ways to forgive fines for their patrons without eliminating fines completely.

Donations

Libraries can collect a variety of items to help decrease patron fines. However, there is a major drawback to collecting donations in exchange for fine forgiveness. Patrons who cannot afford to pay their fines likely do not have the disposable time or income to donate items to charity, and may, in fact, be the ones in need of those charitable resources. However, this does provide an opportunity for patrons who are able to

contribute to charitable causes, which help provide them with feelings of goodwill and community engagement. Included are several examples of library systems that have conducted donation drives for various things, such as winter clothing, canned goods, blood, and time, and may serve as inspiration if this is more achievable for your library.

[Library Fun Run Clears the Fines of Nearly 300 Patrons](#) - Great Falls, MT

[Pay Off Library Fines with Canned Goods](#) - Corpus Christi, TX

[Red Cross Blood Drive - Library Fines Waived for Donors](#) - New Canaan, CT

[Sock Donations](#) - Red Bluff, CA

Amnesty

[One Time Amnesty](#) - New York Public Library

Rather than eliminating fines for good, library systems can implement an amnesty program. Systems such as the New York Public Library have done one-time amnesty for patrons under the age of 18, which gives them a “second chance” at using library resources and materials. Amnesty programs can be applied to patrons of all ages.

Similarly, you can eliminate fines just for children and teenagers. Many library systems that have not eliminated fines entirely have stopped imposing overdue fines on patrons under the age of 18. This is because they are more likely to be beholden to their parents, who have more control over the frequency of library visits and are more likely to have money to pay fines than their children do. This helps foster feelings of goodwill to the library at a young age and does not limit access to materials for children who may have no other means of getting books and learning resources.

Automatic Renewal

Updates to library notification and renewal systems may help patrons. Automatic renewal programs, such as the one implemented in Marshalltown, Iowa, automatically

renew items that have no other patron holds on them. This gives patrons more flexibility in returning items and does not require the patron to renew the materials themselves.

[Automatic Renewal Program](#) - Marshalltown, IA

Conclusion

There is no blanket recommendation that will work for every library. Public libraries all function a bit differently from one another, and are influenced by librarians, staff, their budgets, and their communities. This report is not meant to criticize any libraries still using library fines. However, it does ask that libraries question their motivations for using fines. Is there evidence driving their usage? Does our confidence in the reliability of fines come from data, or does it stem from tradition?

The intent of this report is to serve as a conversation-starter for libraries to address library fine usage. It is meant to provide context from the existing literature to help support or refute the long-standing arguments surrounding the topic of fine usage. I hope that it provides useful resources and discussion points to help libraries reflect on the use of overdue library fines, especially as more libraries across the country choose to remove them.

Appendix A:

Library Fines Survey

For the fiscal year prior to the library eliminating fines:

- What was the library's budget for that period?
- What was the total amount collected in fines in that period?
- Did the fines collected go to the library's budget?
- How much were patrons charged for late items, per item, per day? Your response can be broken down by item type and/or loan type, if necessary.
- What was the maximum amount in fines a patron could accrue before library privileges were locked?

Please rank the following reasons for eliminating fines, in order from most aligned with your library's motivations, to least aligned to your library's motivations.

- The library wanted to remove barriers to access.
- The library wanted to improve staff morale.
- The library wanted to improve patrons' relationship to the library.
- The library wanted to free up staff to do other work.
- The total amount collected from fines was small.

If you collect data for the following metrics, provide numbers for the fiscal year prior to fine elimination:

- Average return rates of items
- Number of items borrowed
- Total library visits
- Total number of new registered users
- Average wait time for a hold request

Additionally, provide numbers for the fiscal year after fine elimination:

- Average return rates of items
- Number of items borrowed
- Total library visits
- Total number of new registered users
- Average wait time for a hold request

What is the numerical population of the community your library serves?

What was the total number of library accounts that were locked due to library fines at the time fines were eliminated?

How many library accounts did the library have when fines were eliminated?

From your library's experience, describe the advantages of having a fine-free library.

From your library's experience, describe the disadvantages of having a fine-free library.

Appendix B: Libraries that completed the survey

Library Name	State
Oak Park Public Library	IL
Columbus Public Library	OH
High Plains Library District	CO
Joplin Public Library	MO
Jefferson County Public Library	WA
Portneuf District Library	ID
San Diego Public Library	CA
Denver Public Library	CO
Sun Prairie Public Library	WI
Tompkins County Public Library	NY
Saint Paul Public Library	MN
Kent District Library	MI
Contra Costa County Library	CA
San Mateo Public Library	CA
Enoch Pratt Free Library	MD