

REMOVING BARRIERS TO ACCESS: ELIMINATING FINES AND FEES

Dan Alcazar, High Plains Library District



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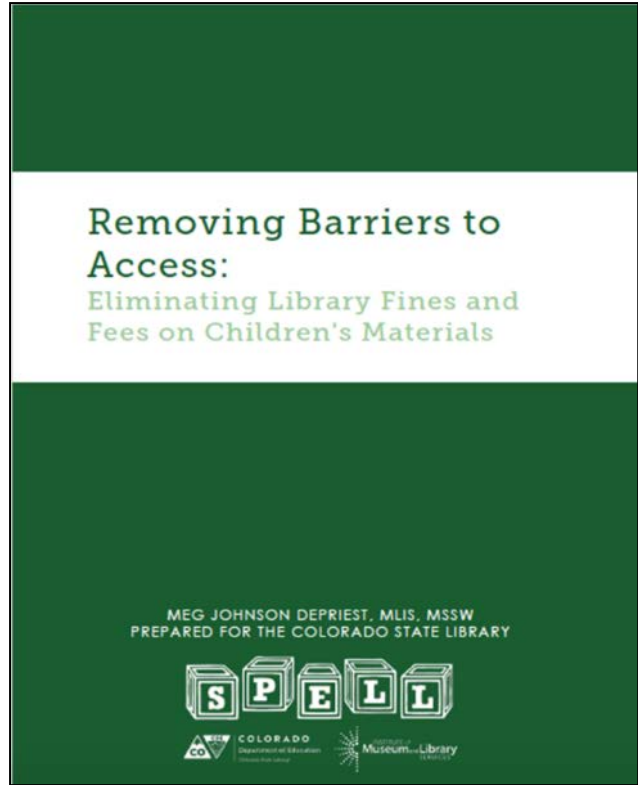
Meg DePriest, MLIS



Stephanie Myers, High Plains Library District

All about YOU!





<https://goo.gl/rbwStj>

Does your library charge overdue fines?

	Small	Midsized	Large
Total (weighted)	<25K	25K-99K	100K+
92%	88%	95%	96%

Have you considered eliminating fines?

	Small	Midsized	Large
Total (weighted)	<25K	25K-99K	100K+
34.3%	25.9%	31.6%	53.5%

Total fines collected monthly

	Small	Midsize	Large
Total (weighted)	<25K	25K-99K	100K+
\$3,345	\$449	\$2,691	\$9,788

Monthly costs to collect fines

	Small	Midsize	Large
Total (weighted)	<25K	25K-99K	100K+
\$714	\$84	\$594	\$3,265

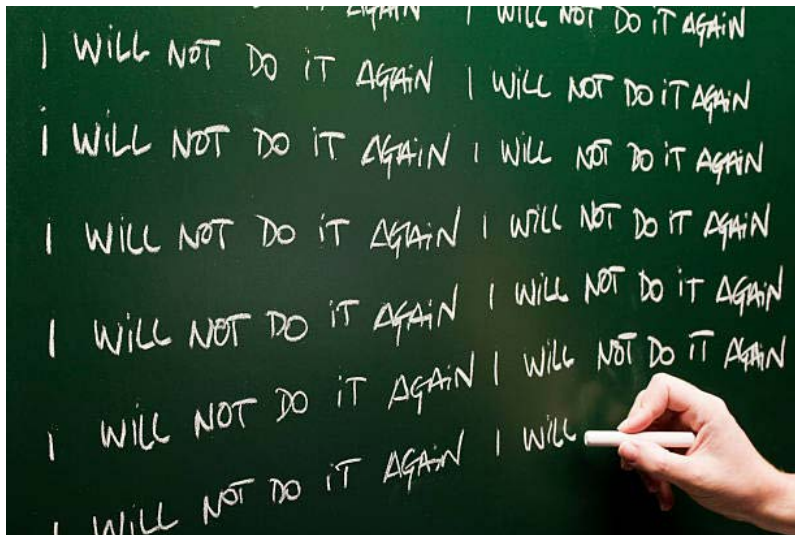
Dixon, J. & Gillis, S. (2017). Doing fine(s)? Fines & Fees. *Library Journal*.

Other costs linked to collecting fines



- Stressful for staff
- “Libraries have enough combat”
- “Not worth the severed relationships”
- Impacts those who can least afford it
- Contributes to negative stereotype

Why do we charge fines?



- Teaches civic responsibility
- Ensures equal access

Do the data support our assumptions?



Late fees did not influence borrowing behavior.



No significant difference in overdue rates between libraries that charged fees and those that did not

Hansel, P. and Burgin, R. (1983). Hard facts about overdues. *Library Journal*, 180(4), 349.

Low fines did not reduce overdue rates.

Small fines did not result in more prompt return of material.

Large fines did.



Burgin, R. & Hansel, P. (1984). More hard facts about overdues. *Library & Archival Security*, 6(2-3), 5-17.

Rewards did not affect overdue and loss rates.



Incentives (gift cards, etc.) did not change the speed of return of items.

Eliminating late fees did not affect circulation rates.

Smith, F. & Mitchell, W. (2005). Using rewards to minimize overdue book rates. *Journal of Access Services*, 3(1), 47-52.
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. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 40(3/4), 275-280.

“Fines are a **contentious topic** among librarians, with many **strongly held beliefs** about their effectiveness **backed by little evidence.**”



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. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 40(¾), 275-280.

What do borrowers think about fines and fees?



- Libraries are **unfriendly** places with strict rules
- Low-income users **avoid** using library to avoid fines and fees
- Parents say fines and fees are a **barrier** to the library

Breslin, F. & McMenemy, D. (2006). The decline in book borrowing from Britain's public libraries: A small scale Scottish study. *Library Review*, 55(7), 414-428.

Zhang, D. (2013). *SPELL research methodology and findings*.



Supporting Parents in Early Literacy through Libraries

Questions?



Putting the Research into Action

Stephanie Myer,
Patron Services Supervisor



LIBRARY JOURNAL

THE
Advocate's
TOOLBOX

The insight you need
to make the case



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Doing Fine(s)? | Fines & Fees

By Jennifer A. Dixon, Steven A. Gillis on April 4, 2017 [1 Comment](#)

Fees and fines have traditionally been a fact of life for public libraries in America, even though a nonnegligible proportion of librarians and patrons have long considered fines at best an unpleasant hassle and at worst a serious barrier to access to resources for those unable to pay them. A number of libraries nationwide from [High Plains Public Library in Colorado](#) to Columbus, OH, to Ipswich, MA, have recently made news by [eliminating charges for late returns](#). Others are creating fine-free cards for certain categories of patrons, such as California's Peninsula Library System's for kids and teens, or Toledo Lucas County Public Library's for active duty military personnel and veterans. As many libraries continue to assess and overhaul their fine and fee structures, sponsored by Comprise Technologies, *LJ* surveyed a random selection of public librarians in January 2017 to learn about their libraries' approaches to fines and fees. *LJ* received 454 responses.

I owe how
much???!!!



WHERE DID THE IDEA COME FROM?

- Book Desert
- SPELL Project
- Staff Recommendation

Removing Barriers to
Access:
Eliminating Library Fines and
Fees on Children's Materials

MEG JOHNSON DEPRIEST, MLIS, MSSW
PREPARED FOR THE COLORADO STATE LIBRARY



Why eliminate late fees?

- Dollars are negligible
- Fines feel like punishment
- Remove barriers
- Provide equitable access
- Promote literacy

LOGISTICS

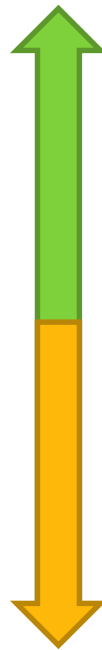
- Eliminated most fines
- Reminder notice sent 3 days prior
- Overdue notice sent at 3 days & 10 days
- Invoice sent at 45 days
- Card blocked after \$7.50

- Unique Management used for unresolved charges

Effects of Reducing fines

Loss of revenue:

- ↓ in fine revenue
- ↑ in Unique Management fees



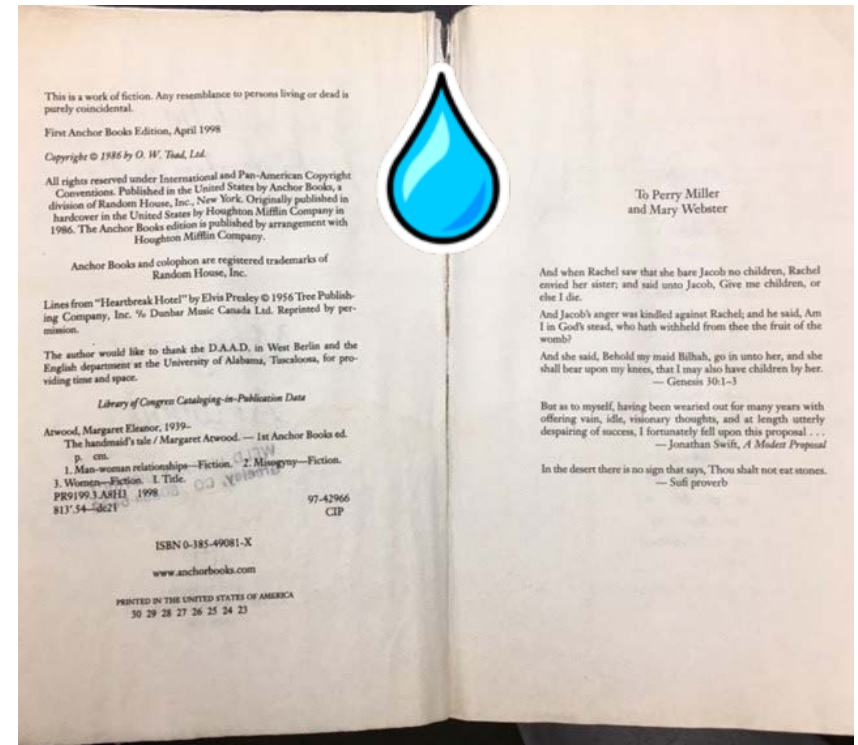
Financial savings:

- Cancelled 3M payment plan @ \$8,000 per year and rising
- Transferred from Comprise to III @ \$13,000/year
- Staff time savings @ 30 seconds per transaction
- ↓ in number of money handling transactions

Money is neutral

We still collect for:

- Blu-rays and DVDs (\$.10/day)
- Lost items
- Damaged items



Due Date Analysis

- Items not returned – 1 week overdue = 7.66%
- 45 Days – Item is billed
- 61 days – Item goes to Debt Collection

Chart 1.



Chart 2.



Chart 3



80-90%

Patrons are (mostly) happy

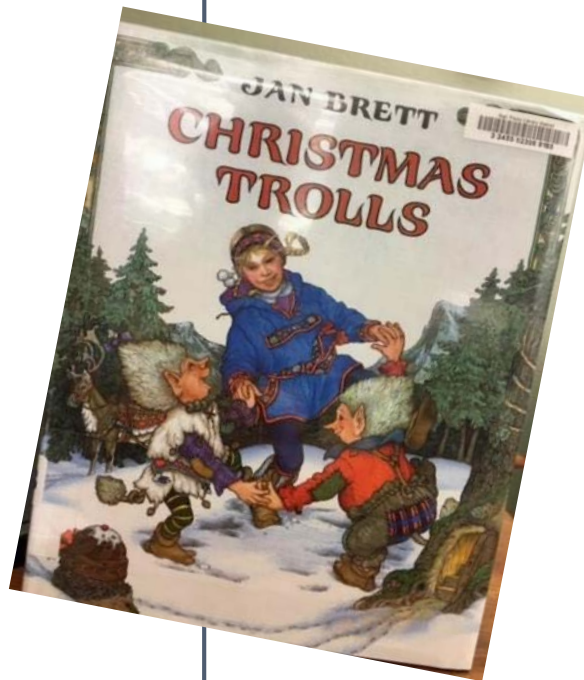


10%

A tad skeptical

Increase in Children's Materials Circulation

- +4% media
- +8% juvenile
- +16% picture books



FOOD FOR FINES



For every can
donated, we remove
\$1 of fines.

ELIMINATING FINES IS A WIN-WIN

For Patrons:

- Good will
- Trust
- Accountability
- More participation in library programs & services

For the Library:

- Responsive to community needs
- Fewer uncomfortable conversations
- Continued rate of return
- Less cost to administer
- More use of collection



Questions?



A growing trend...

CULTUREBOOK ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, AND MORE. FEB. 6 2017 10:11 AM

Slate

Long Overdue

Why public libraries are finally eliminating the late-return fine.



By Ruth Graham



A thing of the past?

Photo illustration by Slate. Images via jmkart, omePS/Stock.

In 1906, a reporter for the *Detroit Free Press* described a scene that had become all too common at the city's public libraries. A child hands an overdue book to a stern librarian perched behind a desk, and with a "sinister expression," the librarian demands payment of a late fine. In some cases, the child grumbles and pays the penny or two. But in others—often at the city's

A Publication of the Public Library Association

PUBLIC LIBRARIES ONLINE

NEWS & OPINION



The End of Overdue Fines?

by Julia Pyattsky on November 3, 2015

The Vernon Area Public Library (VAPL) in the northwest suburbs of Chicago eliminated overdue fines this past August, and ELA Public Library, a neighbor of VAPL, followed suit in September. They are modeling their decision on Algonquin (IL) Public Library (another neighbor) and their decision to remove overdue fines in September 2014. VAPL noted that Algonquin, nearing its one-year anniversary of instituting the policy, has had no adverse effects. In fact, it's only increased the goodwill of patrons towards the public library. Since introducing the no overdue fines policy, VAPL has also received only positive responses from their patrons and the community at large. Is this something that should become a trend for public libraries in general?

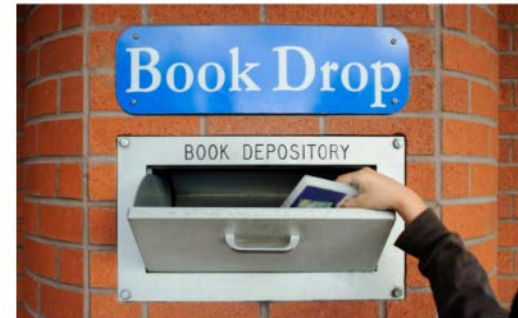


ARTS & CULTURE 05/25/2017 12:27 pm ET

Libraries Are Dropping Overdue Fines — But Can They Afford To?

If libraries get rid of fines, the benefits may outweigh the losses.

By Claire Fallon



REUTERS VIA GETTY IMAGES

The New York Public Library has joined the growing ranks of public library systems contemplating the end of overdue fines for children, according to a WNYC report.

A fifth of NYPL accounts held by children have been blocked due to unpaid fines, but the library president, Tony Marx, would like to motivate kids to be good library users without charging them for failures.

Thank You!

Eliminating Fines and Fees White Paper:

<https://goo.gl/rbwStj>

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