REMOVING BARRIERS TO ACCESS: ELIMINATING FINES AND FEES

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All about YOU!
**Does your library charge overdue fines?**

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<tr>
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<th>Small</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total (weighted)</td>
<td>&lt;25K</td>
<td>25K-99K</td>
<td>100K+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>96%</td>
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**Have you considered eliminating fines?**

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<td>Total (weighted)</td>
<td>&lt;25K</td>
<td>25K-99K</td>
<td>100K+</td>
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<tr>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
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### Total fines collected monthly

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<td>&lt;25K</td>
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<tr>
<td>$3,345</td>
<td>$449</td>
<td>$2,691</td>
<td>$9,788</td>
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### Monthly costs to collect fines

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<td>&lt;25K</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>$714</td>
<td>$84</td>
<td>$594</td>
<td>$3,265</td>
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</table>

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.

Low fines did not reduce overdue rates.

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

Large fines did.

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.


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

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


Questions?
Putting the Research into Action

Stephanie Myer, Patron Services Supervisor

Feeds 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
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 ($0.10/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
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…

Long Overdue

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

by Ruth Graham

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

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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