FINE FREE

August 2020

Plainfield
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Recommendation

- Become Fine Free starting September 1, 2020 to transition seamlessly from Fine Free Summer to permanently fine free.
- Any items checked out at Plainfield would not accumulate fines. (Note: If a Plainfield patron checks out an item at a library that charges fines, they would still have to pay the other library for those fines).
- At 2 weeks overdue, we would block check-outs. This includes check-outs at the desk and at self-check stations, as well as access to services that authenticate via SIP like our downloadables and online databases.
- After 30 days, if the item is still checked out, the patron will be billed for the item.

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MYTH VS FACT

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MYTH

Charging Overdue fines encourages people to bring materials back on time.

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FACT

*Patrons view fines as a donation to the Library. Fines do not encourage them to bring materials back in a timely manner.**

**See Bibliography for the End Library Fines website*

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MYTH

Fines hold people accountable for their actions.

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FACT

*Fines do not teach responsibility, but do keep people from using the Library.**

**See Bibliography for the Colorado State Library Whitepaper that goes into detail on this topic*

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MYTH

Fines are a significant source of revenue.

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FACT

Fines account for .5% of our revenue and continue to decrease each year.

FY	Amount
2015	$ 31,970.00
2016	$ 28,394.00
2017	$ 24,205.00
2018	$ 19,081.00
2019	$ 17,034.00
2020*	$ 11,606.00

**open only 9 months due to COVID-19*

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MYTH

There won't be any popular materials available if we eliminate fines.

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FACT

*Libraries that have implemented fine free have not seen a difference in when popular items are returned. 95% of library items are returned within a week from when they are due. Often people return the item as soon as they finish.**

**See Bibliography for the End Library Fines Website that goes into detail on this topic*

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MYTH

People in this community can afford to pay overdue fines.

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FACT

St. Mary Parish's monthly Mobile Food Pantry has been serving over 450 families each time at their 3-hour drive-through events during the pandemic. Thirty percent of students in PSD202 qualify for free or reduced lunch. It stands to reason that if families can't afford food, they would struggle to pay overdue fines.

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Other Considerations

- This is a nationwide trend that will only continue to grow. ALA now recommends any library that can go fine free do so.*
- More than 90 RAILS public libraries have gone fine free and dozens more are considering it within the year. Downloadable usage continues to increase; those items do not accrue fines.*
- Fountaindale Library is fully fine-free, White Oak and Shorewood are fine-free for children's items and Joliet Library administrative staff are presenting a proposal to their Board at their August meeting to go fully fine-free as of January 2021 when their new fiscal year begins.
- Account Services staff have negative interactions because of fines; eliminating fines would allow them to simply focus on offering great service instead of serving as bill collectors. Currently 1, 819 adults and 649 kids have more than $10 in fines on their accounts. And 217 adults and 47 kids have more than $50 in fines.
- Fines can be viewed as a form of punishment for using the Library, which contradicts our mission to be open and welcoming to all.
- During this pandemic, we have eliminated as many monetary transactions as a safety precaution as well as a barrier removal to make using the Library as easy and welcoming as possible during this difficult time.

**See the ALA Resolution on Monetary Library Fines as a Form of Social Inequity in the Bibliography*

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*Fine Free Libraries**

Addison Public Library	Decatur Library	Homer Township Public	Northbrook Public Library	River Grove Public Library District
Algonquin Area Public Library District	Downers Grove Public Library	Huntley Library	Northlake Library	Robert W. Rowe Library
Aurora Public Library	Eisenhower	Indian Trails Library	Oak Park Library	Roselle Public Library
Bedford Park Library	ELA Area Public Library	Johnsburg Public Library	Oglesby Public Library District	Schaumburg Library
Bellwood Library	Elk Grove Village Public Library	Joliet Public Library	Park Ridge	Skokie Public Library
Bensenville Library	Flossmoor Public Library	La Grange Public Library	Paw Paw Public Library District	St. Charles Public Library
Bloomingdale Public Library	Four Star Public Library District	Lake Forest Library	Peoria Heights Public Library	Thomas Ford Memorial Library
Bloomington Library	Fox River Grove Memorial Library	Lake Villa Library	Peotone Public Library District	Three Rivers Public Library District
Broadview Library	Fox River Valley Public Library District	Lansing Library	Peru Public Library	Vernon Area Public Library
Brown County Public Library District	Fremont Public Library - Mundelein	Lincolnwood Library	Peru Public Library	Warren-Newport
Cary Area Public Library	Gail Borden Library	Markham Library	Plainfield Public Library District	Washington District Library
Champaign Public Library	Galesburg Public Library	Marquette Heights Public Library	Pontiac Public Library	Waukegan Library
Chicago Public Library System	Glen Ellyn Library	Mattoon Library	Prairie Skies Public Library District	Westchester Library
Chicago Ridge Public Library	Glenside Library	Morris Area Public Library	Prospect Heights Public Library District	White Oak Library District
Colona District Public Library	Harvey Public Library District	Morton Grove Public Library	Richard A. Mautino Memorial Library	Wilmette Public Library
Crystal Lake	Havana Public Library District	Niles Library	River East Public Library	Wood Dale Library
Danvers Township Library	Homer Glen	Normal Library	River Forest Library	Zion Benton Library

**SWAN Library Services anticipates an additional ten libraries by the end of 2020*

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Alternative Revenue Sources

Some Illinois libraries have found ways to mitigate some of that revenue that is no longer collected by adding new fee-based services.

Passport Services:

- Requires approval from the State Department to be a site; Plainfield was rejected because both our Post Office and the Plainfield Township Office are existing sites and all of us are within 5 miles of each other.
- Requires a rigorous training program and requires a space that offers privacy because of confidential content being shared verbally. This would have been difficult for us to do.
- Libraries keep the $35 processing fee per passport. Shorewood Library collected almost $20,000.00 in FY19.

License Renewals:

- Rural libraries do fishing, hunting, etc., license renewals, which generate less than $1,000 annually.
- Two libraries (Six Mile in Granite City, Fox River Valley LD in Dundee) started as license plate renewal sites in January and anticipate generating $5,000 annually (prior to the pandemic).

We will continue to pursue alternative sources of revenue via fee-based services when it is feasible to do so.

Bibliography

- ALA Resolution on Monetary Library Fines as a Form of Social Inequity
- End Library Fines Website
- Imagining a Fine Free Future by Phil Morehart
- Removing Barriers to Access: Colorado State Library whitepaper
- TED Talk on Overdue Book Fines
- To Fine or Not to Fine: That is the Question
- Niles-Maine Ends Overdue Fines

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