

# Board packet June 19, 2018: Eliminating overdue fines on library materials

Friday, June 15, 2018  
11:58 AM

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Board packet June 19, 2018: Eliminating overdue fines on library materials</b>
<b>From</b>	Ryan Livergood
<b>To</b>	libraryboard
<b>Cc</b>	Noreen Reese; Gina Ornelas; Amy Blanchard; Sandy Beda; Jan Marsh; Douglas Wideburg; Kevin Getty; 'AFarr@MichaelSilver.com'; Jennifer Hoy; Ryan Livergood
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Good morning,

When I put together the initial Executive Director News and Notes for the Board overviewing the concept of going fine free, I initially thought it was a good idea, but what really held me back from fully embracing the concept was my fiscal conservatism. Revenue from fines and fees, while only about 1.3% of WNPL's revenue this fiscal year, is certainly not insignificant. But after talking with more of my colleagues at other libraries that have gone fine free, in addition to talking to staff about this issue, I now feel strongly that the Board should take action on this issue now and vote to eliminate overdue fines on materials. When George commented on how overdue fines get in the way of completing our mission to provide the community access to information at the June Committee of the Whole Meeting, this really made me think: What good does that fine revenue do if it means that you have to block access to 18% of your users?

As much as we have talked about this issue, the following points summarize my strong recommendation for the Board to take action to eliminate overdue fines on materials on Tuesday night:

#### **Access:**

- Nearly 18% of our cardholder base has their accounts blocked due to fines/fees—that equates to nearly 1/5 of our cardholder population. Over 17% of our blocked cardholders are under the age of 18, essentially eliminating access for our youngest cardholders.
- Low income families are less likely to have access to books in their homes, and rely on WNPL for resources not only for basic literacy support, but also for the variety of materials that only a public library can offer. Access increases equity.

#### **Sustainability of future revenue:**

- The model of charging fines is growing obsolete in a digitally advanced world. WNPL download & streaming services such as MyMediaMall, hoopla, & RB Digital charge no late fees and automatically return titles when loan periods are complete. To rely on fines for future revenue, is simply not sustainable.
- Charging fines on physical materials vs. digital models further impacts our cardholders who cannot afford the technology to utilize our download & streaming services, and rely on access to physical materials.

#### **Excellent service at the World's Nicest Public Library:**

- Fines are a detriment to positive customer service. Instead of discussing what WNPL can offer, staff is placed in the position of frequent, negative interactions with patrons. Not only is front

line staff dealing with negative interactions, but security, managers and persons –in-charge are often asked to intervene in these negative situations.

- Fines require significant staff resources to track & manage. This is costly in terms of both time and labor costs.
- Eliminating fines will improve customer service and the patron’s library experience.

**Enhancing WNPL’s reputation in the community:**

- Libraries in general are known as community leaders in removing barriers and providing access to all. Going fines free reinforces WNPL’s reputation as welcoming, patron friendly and benevolent.
- It is not our role to be punitive, thereby using fines as a method of teaching responsibility. Instead, WNPL grows our reputation for educating the community via our friendly and welcoming staff, informative programs, and variety and access to resources.
- Goodwill in the community builds support for WNPL for a variety of reasons, including fundraising and community partnerships. This helps us build a stronger community in general.

Thanks,  
Ryan

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