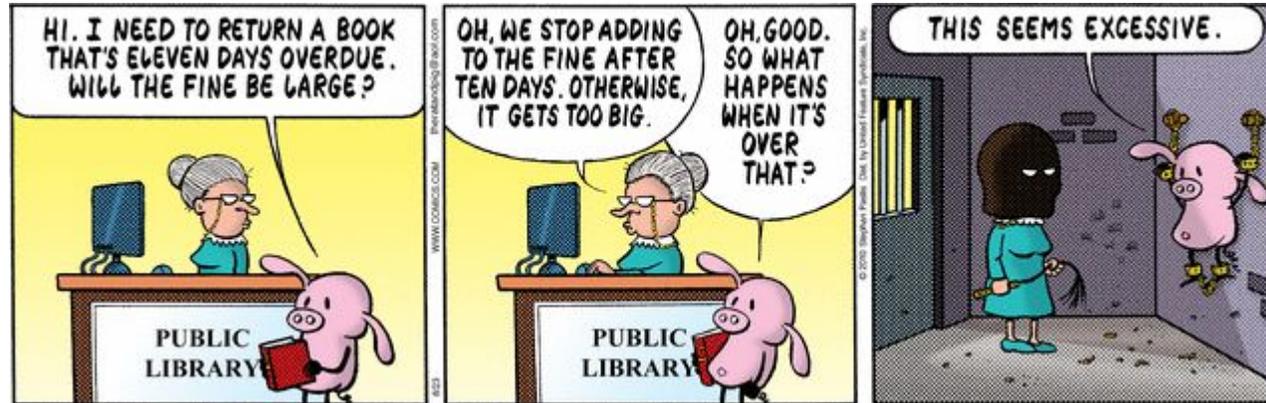


Is it time to get rid of Fines at your library?

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Patron Services Librarian

Brigham Young University



Pearls Before Swine August 23, 2010
<http://www.gocomics.com/pearlsbeforeswine/2010/08/23>

TRENDING: MET GALA DONALD TRUMP FIRST 100 DAYS NFL DRAFT NEW YORK METS UNITED AIRLINES



DAILY NEWS | ENTERTAINMENT



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Actress Tika Sumpter says her mother was arrested for \$10 library late fee



New York Daily News November 15, 2016
<http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/tika-sumpter-mother-arrested-10-library-late-fee-article-1.2873862>

What types of fines/fees are there?

Regular overdue fine

Reserve fine

Equipment fine

Recall

Damage

Processing

Lost



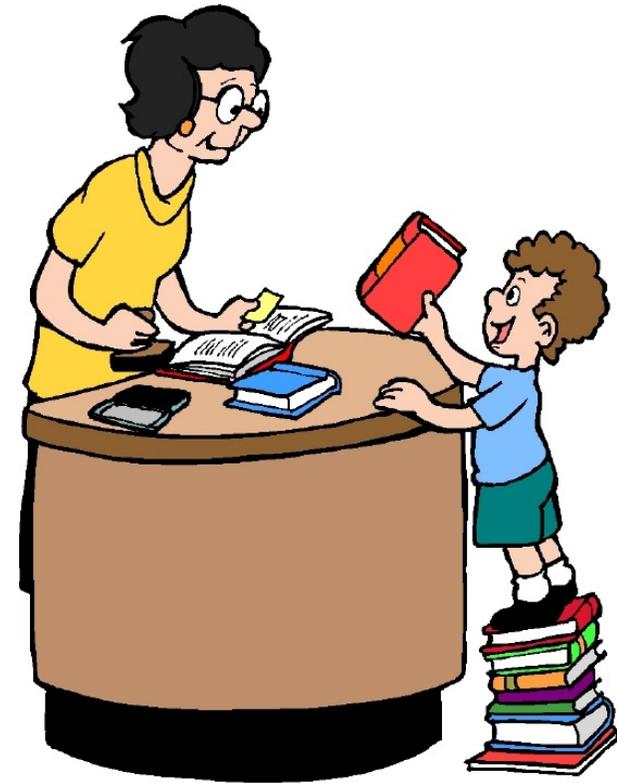
Why do we have fines?

To make sure we get our materials back

To make sure we get our materials back on time

To teach patrons responsibility for others materials

To provide a revenue stream for our institution



Why do patrons really return books?

Because they are finished with them

Because of due dates

Wilson et. al. 2013 “Review of Circulation Periods, fines, and Recalls” (unpublished internal report)



What do librarians think about fines?

78% felt that fines help get materials back

Wilson et. al 2015 “Circulation Policies in Major Academic Libraries”



Do fines work: to get materials back

“Maintaining borrowing privileges is the reward for returning your materials on time at Ela Area Public Library District...Evidence suggests that this approach might be more, or at least equally, effective as fines. After running a circulation report of long overdue materials shortly after implementation of the fine-free program, Ela discovered that only four patrons out of over six hundred still had items overdue. ‘I call that a win,’ maintains Womack.”

Kohn 2015 “Fine (Free) and Dandy: Libraries Say Good-bye to Overdue Charges”

Do fines work: to get materials back on time

“As a result of this study, it is determined that a fines policy is an effective tool to ensure that books are returned on time and available to the maximum number of library users. While this study has determined that the imposition of fines does impact patron behavior in terms of the return of books, it in no way takes away from the contention that fines are harmful to the image of the library, a barrier to access, and that other approaches can be equally effective. Indeed, the results also support that the courtesy notices and overdue notices are effective in encouraging patrons to return books on time or to remind them of overdue books.” Sung and Tolppanen 2013
“Do library fines work?: Analysis of the effectiveness of fines on patron's return behavior at two mid-sized academic libraries”

Do fines work: to get materials back on time

They may help with the timely return of materials

May be useful for high use collections



Do fines work: to get materials back on time

“The biggest fear preventing more libraries from letting go of fines is that materials won’t come back in a timely matter and thus create longer wait periods for items with holds. The libraries who have implemented fine-free programs have proven that these fears are unfounded.”

Kohn 2015 “Fine (Free) and Dandy: Libraries Say Good-bye to Overdue Charges”

Do fines work: to get materials back on time

Is it better to have an item sitting on the shelf just in case it will be used or to have an item in a patrons hand who might be actively using it?

Does the current holds process ensure that those who want a book can get it?



Do fines work: To teach patrons responsibility

“Overdue fines have always operated as a hedge on that communal trust, the nagging little stick that comes with the big, beautiful carrot. Fines imply that a library’s mission is not only to encourage reading but to perform a kind of moral instruction. But does it make sense for libraries to perform both of those jobs? ‘We’ve had 150 years to try to teach customers timeliness or responsibility, and I don’t know that that’s our greatest success story,’ said Losinski, a few days after his library system abandoned late fees. Reid put it more simply when she explained the message she wanted residents of High Plains to take away: ‘We trust you.’” Graham 2017 “Long overdue: Why public libraries are finally eliminating the late-return fine”

Do fines work: as a revenue stream

“...Fines are a ‘regressive method of raising revenue: they impact the most those who can least afford them.’” Inklebarger 2016



Do fines work: as a revenue stream

In describing a situation where a low income family is discussing a damage fine with a library staff member, DeFavari says,

“If the library does not charge for the damaged book, it loses about \$25.00. When the library fails to recognize situations where charging replacement costs means losing library patrons, it loses the opportunity to participate in the life of the patron and the patron's family. By choosing to make a \$25.00 replacement cost more significant than the role the institution can play in the social, developmental, and community life of the family, the library forfeits its role as a community and literacy advocate and leader...

“It will cost the library more than \$25.00 to convince this mother to return to the library. It will cost the library more than \$25.00 to persuade this mother that the library is a welcoming community place willing to meet her needs and support her family. It will cost the library more than \$25.00 to mount literacy programs aimed at her children, who will not benefit from regular library visits and programs. And when these children are adults, it will cost the library more than \$25.00 to convince them that the library is a welcoming and supportive place for their children.” DeFavri 2015
“Breaking barriers: Libraries and socially excluded communities”

What about?

Food for fines?

Fine amnesty days?

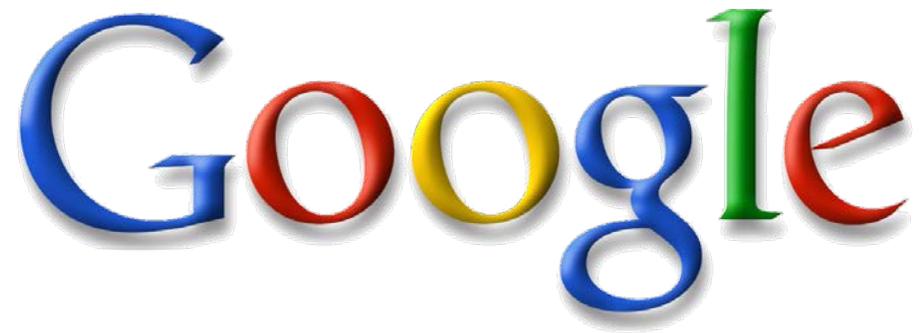


Other effects of fines?

Barrier to access for patrons who can't afford them

Create a bad image for the library

Give reason to patrons to search for alternative ways to get what they need

The Google logo, featuring the word "Google" in its characteristic multi-colored font (blue, red, yellow, blue, green, red) with a slight 3D effect and shadow.The Amazon logo, featuring the word "amazon" in a bold, black, lowercase sans-serif font, with a yellow curved arrow underneath it pointing from the letter 'a' to the letter 'z'.

What does work?

Reminder notifications

Grace periods

Blocking access to the library

At a college/university placing a hold on students ability to register/get transcripts, etc.

Billing for non-returned items

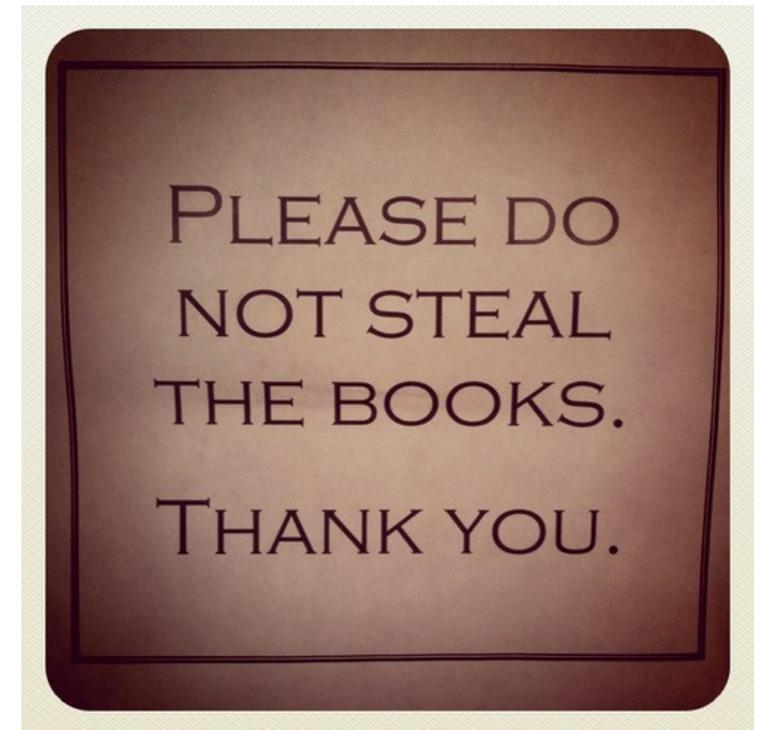
But what about that one patron who...

Never responds to emails

Wouldn't bring the book back no matter what

Ruined the book

Lost the book



Cost of doing business

I became a librarian to provide access to materials.

If people haven't learned that they need to return things that they borrow then a library fine will probably not help them.



But fines are how I fund...

Is there a way to recuperate the cost elsewhere?

Is the fine revenue really that substantial?

Does the fine revenue offset the cost to collect fines?

Does the goodwill generated by eliminating fines offset the loss in funds?

What we did at BYU

Eliminated regular overdue fines

Reserve, and equipment fines still continue

Send notifications

Bill at 30 days at which point they are blocked at the university from registration, transcripts, etc.

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