



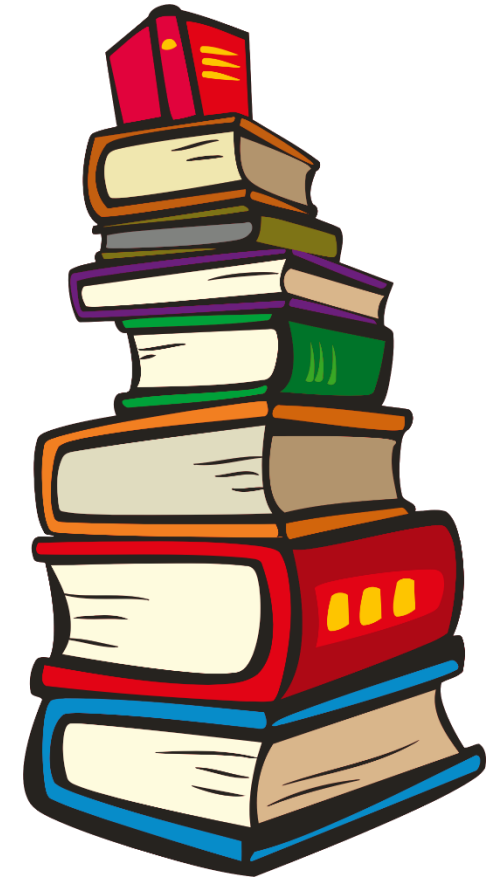
Library Fine Free Initiative

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Background

- The Library Board of Trustees created an ad hoc committee to review library fines and fees in April 2021. Its goals included:
 - to review trends in library fines,
 - to examine fines as a barrier to usage vs fines as an impetus to returning materials in a timely fashion,
 - and to assess if eliminating any or part of the fines' profile (on kids' books, media materials, all items, etc.) would bring about positive changes for usership and alignment with County initiatives.





Committee Findings

- Fines do not accomplish the intended goal of getting people to return items. Instead, fines serve as a punitive measure that discourages people from using the library in the long term.





Committee Findings

- Fines disproportionately affect youth and those in disadvantaged communities.
 - Pre-pandemic, “blocked” cards (accounts with fines over \$15) were about 17% of the total cardholder population. “Blocked” youth cards (accounts for users under the age of 18) were 23% of the youth cardholder population.
 - Data analysis showed that blocked card numbers are higher in areas served by Reston Regional Library (Hunter Mill District), City of Fairfax Regional Library, George Mason Regional Library (Mason District), Kingstowne Library (Mt. Vernon/Lee District) and Sherwood Regional Library (Mt. Vernon District). There appears to be a direct link between low-income communities and higher numbers of blocked library accounts.



Committee Findings

- Fines create an often-irreparable sense of ill will.
- Prince William, Loudoun, Arlington, Alexandria, Falls Church and D.C. libraries do not charge for late materials, leaving Fairfax as the only local jurisdiction still engaged in this practice.
- The FCPL has already adopted myriad programs to mitigate overdue fines, including:
 - Food for Fines
 - Read Away Your Fines
 - Library Equity Access Pass (LEAP) partnership with FCPS.
- Library fine revenue continues to decrease year over year.





Library Board Action

- At their September 2021 meeting, the Library Board of Trustees voted to approve a new philosophy that no longer associates overdue materials with overdue fines.
- The Library Board policy on overdue fines will be an action item at their December 2021 meeting, with an effective date of January 1, 2022.
- Lost and damaged items will still be billed on user accounts.
- The Library Board requests your support of their policy change, as it continues to work in support of equity and access in Fairfax County.