

Stevens Memorial Community Library- Library Fine Free Policy

The mission of the Stevens Memorial Community Library is to provide open and free access to patrons. In order to keep with this mission Stevens Memorial Community Library is adopting a fine-free policy with regard to our circulating materials.

Libraries across the nation have demonstrated that imposing late fees on patrons is not an effective deterrent to the return of late materials. Instead, it commonly creates barriers for youth or may cause patron guilt, making library use less likely. We strive to overcome these barriers and increase access to our patrons, trusting that our show of good faith will encourage patrons to return materials in a timely manner.

LATE MATERIALS

While traditional fines will not accrue, a replacement cost will be charged if an item is not returned within a reasonable time, the patron's account will automatically incur the full replacement cost of the item and the patron assumes the full replacement cost of the item. It is at the discretion of the library director to determine if special circumstances allow replacement fines to be waived if items are returned after these designated periods. Once paid for, materials are the property of the patron and replacement fees will not be refunded.

Patrons with charges for items that have not been returned in the period listed in the previous paragraph will have their account blocked until related fees have been paid or have been satisfactorily worked out with the library director.

If an item is late due to being **lost or damaged**, patrons should notify the library of the items' status. The Library Director will work with patrons to extend due dates (when possible and within reason) for missing items. **Replacements** may be accepted for lost or damaged items if:

- The library has been notified within a reasonable amount of time
- The replacement is in "new" condition and matches the description of the item lost/damaged (i.e. hardcover, paperback, large print)

EXCLUDED MATERIALS

Due to their nature and cost, some library items belonging to system libraries will still incur fines, the Stevens Memorial Community Library cannot make policies governing what happens to materials belonging to other libraries.

OVERDUE NOTICES

An email reminder will be sent to the email on file. To ensure you receive these emails, please make sure we have an up-to-date email address attached to your account. **Not receiving library emails does not negate the patron's responsibility for returning library items.**

PRIOR LATE FINES

All late fines existing before the adoption of this policy will be waived. Lost/damaged item charges will remain.

Further Reading and Webinars:

- [The Case Against Library Fines—According to the Head of The New York Public Library \(Quartz\)](#)

- [Doing Fine\(s\)? \(Library Journal\)](#)
- [The End of Overdue Fines? \(Public Libraries Online\)](#)
- [Libraries Are Dropping Overdue Fines—But Can They Afford To? \(Huffington Post\)](#)
- [Long Overdue: Eliminating Fines on Overdue Materials to Improve Access to San Francisco Public Library](#)
- [Long Overdue—Why Public Libraries are Finally Eliminating the Late-Return Fine \(Slate\)](#)
- [Resolution on Monetary Library Fines as a Form of Social Inequity \(ALA\)](#)

“Many libraries are in the process of removing fines for overdue library materials. Some libraries are only doing this for children's materials while others are applying the practice to their entire collection.

Traditionally, fines have functioned as a scare tactic with the purpose to either punish those who do not return their items on time or to incentivize returning materials at all. Some libraries have even used fines as a way to bring in extra income. But as more and more libraries report going fine free, librarians are asking themselves, do fines even serve the purpose that they were initially created for?

Libraries that are eliminating fines are typically still charging patrons for lost or damaged materials. They are also reporting increased circulation numbers and increased library card applications.

Eliminating fines is a great way to open up access to libraries to all members of the community, but is it the right move for your library? If you're interested in making these changes, you'll need to get your board to agree with you. The research from the [Colorado State Library](#) is an excellent place to start. There are additional articles and webinars linked below to kick off your quest to becoming a fine free library.”

-Excerpt from <https://library-nd.libguides.com/publib/finefree>

Adopted by the SMCL Board of Trustees March 11th, 2023