**Ending Library Fines Research and Information**

With the fiction of normality having just been exposed by the pandemic, why are we constantly talking of a New Normal? Let’s find the Silver Lining: How can we re-open libraries better and stronger and put our institutional purpose into action?

So, here's a document to underpin Library Board and Management conversations about fines and fine policies.

**Let’s end fines in Ontario . . . or at least start.**

**In the crucible that is Post-COVID 19 public library strategic planning, we have an opportunity to reimagine library services and reconnect with our core values, vision and mission. Fines, in many ways conflict with our strategic intent in public libraries and research shows that they interfere with our goals – and, sadly they don’t get the books back faster, they can ruin our public relations as a top-of-mind issue for our members, and interfere with the lives and success of our most needy, young, and disadvantaged members.**

FOPL chose to collect all of our links, news reports, and research here to assist public libraries and their boards to decide how and when they might reduce or remove fines. (HINT: Now is a good time to celebrate your re-opening. Ideally, your fines and returns policies should be approved in a generic fashion and leave the details as to amounts from Zero+ cents and the target members (kids, youth, students, adults, seniors, homebound, disabled, etc.) up to the CEO and Management Team.

**Five Unexpected Benefits of Eliminating Library Fines**

<http://fopl.ca/news/five-unexpected-benefits-of-eliminating-library-fines/>

## Benefit #1: Librarians and staff can provide better service to patrons

## Benefit #2: Being fine-free is more aligned with the real mission of the library

## Benefit #3: Libraries seeing an increase in item returns

## Benefit #4: Libraries can use their resources better

## Benefit #5: Eliminating fines can lead to a renewed appreciation for the library (or at least provide some good PR)

[As an aside when most Alberta Public libraries stopped being the only jurisdiction in Canada to charge for library cards, they say huge (double-digit) growth in library use, memberships and card ownership.]

# NPR: 'We Wanted Our Patrons Back' — Public Libraries Scrap Late Fines to Alleviate Inequity

<https://www.npr.org/2019/11/30/781374759/we-wanted-our-patrons-back-public-libraries-scrap-late-fines-to-alleviate-inequi>

**"A form of social inequity"**

"Acknowledging these consequences, the American Library Association [passed a resolution](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/council/council_documents/2019_ms_council_docs/ALA%20CD%2038%20RESOLUTION%20ON%20MONETARY%20LIBRARY%20FINES%20AS%20A%20FORM%20OF%20SOCIAL%20JUSTICE%20Revised%201_27_0.pdf) in January in which it recognizes fines as "a form of social inequity" and calls on libraries nationwide to find a way to eliminate their fines.

"Library users with limited income tend to stay away from libraries because they may be afraid of incurring debt," said Ramiro Salazar, president of the association's public library division. "It stands to reason these same users will also stay away if they have already incurred a fine simply because they don't have the money to pay the fine."

Lifting fines has had a surprising dual effect: More patrons are returning to the library, with their late materials in hand. Chicago saw a 240% increase in return of materials within three weeks of implementing its fine-free policy last month. The library system also had 400 more card renewals compared with that time last year."

**How are overdue fines preventing you from meeting your library’s core values?**

If you’ve not considered making your library fine free or want to know more about it, start with the white paper [Removing Barriers to Access: Eliminating Library Fines and Fees on Children’s Materials](https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/removingbarrierstoaccess) prepared for the Colorado State Library. In this white paper, Colorado State Library did a detailed and annotated literature review including:

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# The case against library fines—according to the head of The New York Public Library

<https://qz.com/1158839/the-case-against-library-fines-according-to-the-head-of-the-new-york-public-library/>

# Doing Away with Fines: A consummation devoutly to be wished?

<https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/doing-away-with-fines/>

# Libraries Are Dropping Overdue Fines — But Can They Afford To?: If libraries get rid of fines, the benefits may outweigh the losses.

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/libraries-are-dropping-overdue-fines-but-can-they-afford-to_us_5913733ae4b0b1fafd0dccc2>

# Four Niagara libraries eliminate late fees on children's materials: Fort Erie, Lincoln, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Pelham implemented new policy in January

<https://www.niagarathisweek.com/news-story/9848624-four-niagara-libraries-eliminate-late-fees-on-children-s-materials/>

# [Breaking Down Barriers to Library Service-Going Fine Free http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2018/11/breaking-down-barriers-to-library-service-going-fine-free/](Breaking%20Down%20Barriers%20to%20Library%20Service-Going%20Fine%20Free%20http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2018/11/breaking-down-barriers-to-library-service-going-fine-free/)

[**endlibraryfines.info**](http://endlibraryfines.info)

A fairly new website, [endlibraryfines.info](http://endlibraryfines.info), created to educate and inform librarians, library supporters, and the public about the benefits of eliminating library fines July 11, 2019 - The movement towards eliminating library fines has a place online at EndLibraryFines.info. The website offers the latest research on ending library fines, current media articles about libraries eliminating their fines, and a constantly updated map showing which libraries around the world have eliminated all or most of their fines. As more and more libraries look to eliminate this barrier to access, the need for information on the topic grows for librarians, library supporters, and decision makers such as elected officials, deans and provosts, and the general public.

**Overdue fines pose a significant barrier to library use** for many vulnerable populations, especially people living in poverty. Families with young children are often negatively affected since overdue fines prohibit them from fully experiencing the rich early literacy materials and staff expertise available in libraries that are crucial to a child's development. Studies have shown that a lack of literacy support at a young age can directly impact their long-term academic success as well as future employment opportunities and economic mobility.

**Most notably, there is no research to support the long-held belief that fines encourage people to return library items on time**. In practice, libraries that have eliminated fines in places such as Salt Lake City and St. Paul have maintained a consistent return rate. This shows that non-monetary incentives to return library materials on time are just as effective and without the additional staff time and equipment required to collected fines.

While eliminating library fines has been discussed within librarian circles since the late 1970s, it is only recently that ***the American Library Association passed a resolution which referred to monetary fines as a form of social inequity and encouraged all libraries to discontinue charging fines within their communities.*** Monetary fines are at odds with the core mission of the library to provide access to a wide variety of services and materials.

“We have arrived at the tipping point for the movement to eliminate library fines,” says Andy Woodworth, librarian and creator of endlibraryfines.info. “This website provides vital information to help those with the power to make the change to do so. It’s an important issue that makes a difference in the lives of those affected. It moves libraries back towards one of their commonly associated mottos: **free to all**.”

***About Andy Woodworth***

Andy Woodworth is an experienced public librarian and library advocate who has been involved in numerous statewide and national library issue campaigns and initiatives. Andy is a member of the American Library Association Working Group on Eliminating Fines in Libraries. He is a 2010 Library Journal Mover & Shaker, award winning blogger, library publication guest columnist, conference presenter, unconference organizer, and graphic designer. You can see his other library advocacy projects on his LinkedIn page: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/andy-woodworth/>

**Websites:**

<http://www.endlibraryfines.info>

“Library fines are a pressing social equality issue for the modern library. There is no study or research which shows that library fines function as a mechanism to encourage timely return of materials. Instead, they serve as an economic barrier that impedes access to library materials and services for the financially disadvantaged people within our communities, particularly minors. In addition, it creates conflict points between staff and the community, acts as a poison to public relations, and utilizes valuable staff time applying, collecting, and managing what can only be described as a regressive tax. It’s 2020. It’s time to end library fines for everyone.”

**Interviews, Articles and Links**

## ****Interviews****

* [**More Libraries are Going Fine Free. Here’s Why (Changing America)**](https://thehill.com/changing-america/enrichment/arts-culture/476997-more-libraries-are-going-fine-free-heres-why)  
  Meg and Andy talk about the movement to eliminate library fines.
* [**Denton, Fort Worth are the Latest Libraries to Get Rid of Late Fines, a Trend Some Say is Overdue (Dallas Morning News)**](https://www.dallasnews.com/news/2019/10/01/no-love-lost-late-fines-denton-public-library-eliminate-overdue-fines/)  
  Andy talks about the national trend to eliminate fines in libraries.
* [**Librarian: Ending Library Fines is a Social Justice Issue (KJZZ)**](https://kjzz.org/content/1002281/librarian-ending-library-fines-social-justice-issue)  
  Andy talks about the evolution of eliminating library fines on KJZZ’s program The Show.
* [**Princh Library Lounge, Episode 2: Library Fines with Meg DePriest and Beth Crist**](https://princh.com/podcast-ep2-library-fines-with-meg-depriest-and-beth-crist/)  
  Meg and Beth talk about the importance of ending library fines within communities and the impact it can make.

## ****Articles****

All articles have their state or country (if not within the United States) added in brackets to the headline so as to be found with a webpage search (Ctrl+F). For example, if you wanted to find all articles relating to libraries in New Jersey, you would search for “[NJ]”. Non-US libraries can be found by searching for their country name (e.g. “Canada”, “Australia”, “Ireland”).

For multiple articles about the same library, the most reputable source is chosen for inclusion; therefore, this is not an exhaustive listing of all library fine articles. In addition, websites that use paywalls to limit article access are generally avoided.

[**All 2019 & Earlier Articles**](https://endlibraryfines.info/articles-2019-earlier/)

**2020** (Articles are updated on a rolling basis)

* [Lancaster [MA] Library Removes Fines for Children’s, Young Adult Materials (Telegram.com)](https://www.telegram.com/item/20200316/lancaster-library-removes-fines-for-childrens-young-adult-materials)
* [Editorial: Eliminating Overdue Book Fines Increases Library Use for All (Richmond Times-Dispatch)](https://www.richmond.com/opinion/editorial/editorial-eliminating-overdue-book-fines-increases-library-use-for-all/article_a029718a-7236-52ab-93e6-ac557abd6d95.html)
* [North Library [IA] Public Library to Eliminate Fines for Overdue Materials (Little Village)](https://littlevillagemag.com/north-liberty-public-library-will-eliminate-fines-for-overdue-materials-later-this-month/)
* [‘Not So Much an Incentive as a Punishment:’ North Library [IA] Library Gets Rid of Fines (Iowa City Press-Citizen)](https://www.press-citizen.com/story/news/2020/03/02/north-liberty-community-library-gets-rid-fines-starting-march-23/4930809002/)
* [Removal of Late Fines Brings Surge in Patrons at Sarasota [FL] Libraries (Herald-Tribune)](https://www.heraldtribune.com/news/20200228/removal-of-late-fines-brings-surge-in-patrons-at-sarasota-libraries)
* [Williston [ND] Public Library Eliminating Book fees (KXNET)](https://www.kxnet.com/news/local-news/willison-public-library-eliminating-book-fees/)
* [No More Late Fees – Richmond [VA] Public Library Ends Overdue Fines (WRIC ABC8)](https://www.wric.com/community/no-more-late-fees-richmond-public-library-ends-overdue-fines/)
* [Mason County [MI] District Library is Going Fine Free (9&10 News)](https://www.9and10news.com/2020/02/26/mason-county-district-library-going-fine-free/)
* [Delta Township [MI] District Library Eliminating Most Fines (WITL)](https://witl.com/delta-township-district-library-eliminating-most-fines/)
* [Some Allegheny County [PA] Libraries Ditching Late Fees in Hopes that Readership Goes Up (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette)](https://www.post-gazette.com/life/lifestyle/2020/02/24/Some-Allegheny-County-libraries-ditching-late-fees-in-hopes-that-readership-goes-up/stories/202002220055)
* [Miles-Maine [IL] Library Going Fine-Free (Journal-Topics)](https://www.journal-topics.com/articles/niles-maine-library-going-fine-free/)
* [More Libraries Are Doing Away with Overdue Fines (New York Times)](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/23/us/no-library-fines.html)
* [Sawyer Free Library [MA] to Eliminate Late Fees (Wicked Local Gloucester)](https://gloucester.wickedlocal.com/news/20200221/sawyer-free-library-to-eliminate-late-fees)
* [Removal of Late Fines in Sarasota [FL] Libraries Proves Successful](https://www.yourobserver.com/article/removal-of-late-fines-in-sarasota-county-libraries-proves-successful)
* [Overdue Fines Eliminated at Many Libraries in Allegheny County [PA] (WTAE Pittsburgh)](https://www.wtae.com/article/no-overdue-library-fines-allegheny-county-fine-free-library-program/31004722)
* [Library Late Fines Removed Across Kempsey Shire [Australia] (Macleay Argus)](https://www.macleayargus.com.au/story/6635917/library-late-fines-removed-across-the-kempsey-shire/)
* [Louisville [CO] Library Eliminates Late Fees for Kids’, Youth Materials (Colorado Hometown Weekly)](https://www.coloradohometownweekly.com/2020/02/14/louisville-library-eliminates-late-fees-for-kids-youth-materials/)
* [Rowan County [KY] Public Library is Now Fine-Free (WMKY)](https://www.wmky.org/post/rowan-county-public-library-now-fine-free)
* [Troy [NY] Public Library to go Fine Free (CBS6)](https://cbs6albany.com/news/local/troy-public-library-to-go-fine-free)
* [Tolleson [AZ] Public Library Eliminates Late Fees for Overdue Items (KTAR News)](https://ktar.com/story/2962142/tolleson-public-library-eliminates-late-fees-for-overdue-items/)
* [No More Overdue Fines (Bethel Library) [MD] (Sun Journal)](https://www.sunjournal.com/2020/02/06/no-more-overdue-fines/)
* [Why Anchorage [AK] Public Library Has Gone Fine-Free (Anchorage Daily News)](https://www.adn.com/opinions/2020/02/07/why-anchorage-public-library-has-gone-fine-free/)
* [Check It Out: Beverly [MA] Public Library Eliminates Overdue Fines (The Salem News)](https://www.salemnews.com/news/local_news/check-it-out-beverly-public-library-eliminates-overdue-fines/article_2337e1c6-298a-51bc-b208-19b4e20d20a7.html)
* [Big Changes Coming to Pasco [FL] Libraries (Tampa Bay Times)](https://www.tampabay.com/news/pasco/2020/02/05/pasco-eliminates-library-late-fees/)
* [Brampton [Ontario, Canada] Library Has Been Recognized for its Children’s Fine-Free Materials Initiative (Bramptonist)](https://bramptonist.com/brampton-library-has-been-recognized-for-its-childrens-fine-free-materials-initiative/)
* [Library Prepares to Go Fineless with 5K (Saline County) [AR] (The Saline Courier)](https://www.bentoncourier.com/news/library-prepares-to-go-fineless-with-k/article_c0375572-49b5-11ea-8c4c-9f116052b257.html)
* [Fine Time to Dump Library Fines [Manitoba, Canada] [OpEd] (Winnipeg Free Press)](https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/analysis/fine-time-to-dump-library-fines-567686072.html)
* [100,000 Patrons Return to the Denver [CO] Public Library After Late Fine Elimination (Colorado Politics)](https://www.coloradopolitics.com/denver/patrons-return-to-denver-public-library-after-late-fine-elimination/article_3059dd0a-41de-11ea-a0f6-aff66b2fbb08.html)
* [Library System [OK] Does Away with Fines, Fees (Muskogee Phoenix)](https://www.muskogeephoenix.com/news/library-system-does-away-with-fines-fees/article_d220b514-34e1-5784-9a94-b7bac62c0062.html)
* [Local Libraries [ID] May Eliminate Fines on Overdue Books (Moscow-Pullman Daily News)](https://dnews.com/local/local-libraries-may-eliminate-fines-on-overdue-books/article_c8079d2f-1aae-51cc-b7a3-ce4fce4586a4.html)
* [Several Regional Libraries [ID] Eliminate Fines for Missed Due Dates (Lewiston Tribune)](https://lmtribune.com/a_and_e/several-regional-libraries-eliminate-fines-for-missed-due-dates/article_b793af1a-64bb-57f3-aea7-a4e7a2f61ed4.html)
* [Grove [OK] Public Library Eliminates Overdue Fines for DVDs and Equipment (Grand Lake News)](https://www.grandlakenews.com/news/20200203/grove-public-library-eliminates-overdue-fines-for-dvds-and-equipment)
* [Eliminating Late Fees Didn’t Hurt Library’s Bottom Line [British Columbia, Canada] (The Interior News)](https://www.interior-news.com/community/eliminating-late-fees-didnt-hurt-librarys-bottom-line/)
* [New Braunfels [TX] Library to Go Fine-Free in February (KENS5)](https://www.kens5.com/article/news/community/hill-country-reporter/new-braunfels-library-goes-fine-free-in-february/273-fd5efc40-0bf9-4ad2-bdb9-661e21ce6ef6)
* [Lake Forest [IL] Library to go ‘Fine Free’ (The Lake Forest Leader Daily)](https://www.lakeforestleader.com/p/news-community/lake-forest-library-go-%E2%80%98fine-free%E2%80%99)
* [Boulder [CO] Public Library Says Goodbye to Late Fees (Boulder Colorado Government)](https://bouldercolorado.gov/newsroom/boulder-public-library-says-goodbye-to-late-fees)
* [WCLS [WA] Permanently Eliminates Library Late Fees (The Northern Light)](https://www.thenorthernlight.com/stories/wcls-permanently-eliminates-library-late-fees,9271)
* [UM’s Mansfield [MT] Library Gets Rid of Overdue Fines (KHQ)](https://www.khq.com/regional/um-s-mansfield-library-gets-rid-of-overdue-fines/article_f0971f63-4a2e-55d6-bea8-46c844783c30.html)
* [Two Indiana [IN] Counties Become Latest to End Library Late Fees (WFYI)](https://www.wfyi.org/news/articles/2-indiana-counties-become-latest-to-end-library-late-fees)
* [Montclair [NJ] Library Reports Uptick in Usage After Eliminating Overdue Fines (Montclair Local)](https://www.montclairlocal.news/2020/01/25/montclair-library-overdue-fines-nj/)
* [Local Libraries [WA] Will Now BE Fine Free (LC Valley)](https://lcvalley.dailyfly.com/Home/ArtMID/1352/ArticleID/54480/Local-Libraries-Will-Now-All-be-Fine-Free)
* [Are Library Late Fines a Form of Social Inequity? Sault [Ontario, Canada] Looks at Dropping Them (SooToday)](https://www.sootoday.com/local-news/are-library-late-fines-a-form-of-social-inequity-sault-looks-at-dropping-them-2051938)
* [Monroe County [IN] Public Library Board of Trustees to Vote on Dropping Overdue Fines (Indiana Public Media)](https://indianapublicmedia.org/news/monroe-county-public-library-board-of-trustees-to-vote-on-introducing-new-fine-fee-system.php)
* [University of Montana’s Mansfield Library [MT] Eliminates Library Fines (KPAX)](https://www.kpax.com/news/western-montana-news/ums-mansfield-library-eliminates-library-fines)
* [Waterford [WI] Public Library Going ‘Fine Free’ in an Effort to Increase Circulation after Road Project (The Journal Times)](https://journaltimes.com/news/local/waterford-public-library-going-fine-free-in-an-effort-to/article_9fc57dbd-2e0c-5ffb-bb23-3d46e231fa12.html)
* [Anchorage [AK] Public Library Will No Longer Charge Fines for Overdue Materials (KTOO)](https://www.ktoo.org/2020/01/08/anchorage-public-library-will-no-longer-charge-fines-for-overdue-materials/)
* [Overdue Library Fees Eliminated at (Timberland Regional Libraries) [WA] (The Vidette)](https://www.thevidette.com/news/overdue-library-fees-eliminated-at-trl/)
* [Eugene [OR] Library Eliminates Fines for Children, Teen Items (The Columbian)](https://www.columbian.com/news/2020/jan/05/eugene-library-eliminates-fines-for-children-teen-items/)
* [[IA] Library Waves Goodbye to Overdue Fines (Ottumwa Courier)](https://www.ottumwacourier.com/news/library-waves-goodbye-to-overdue-fines/article_cb4820e2-309f-11ea-bc1e-039fb3e62959.html)
* [St. Louis [MO] Area Nixes Library Fines, Joining Growing Trend (AP)](https://apnews.com/402d4a4952d104d3e5151785a0887e2a)
* [Fine-Free Libraries, Zero-Fare Olympia [WA] Buses and Other Changes Coming to the Region in 2020 (The Daily World)](https://www.thedailyworld.com/northwest/fine-free-libraries-zero-fare-olympia-buses-and-other-changes-coming-to-region-in-2020/)
* [Kaukauna [WI] Library Drops All Fines for Late Returns (WBAY ABC2)](https://www.wbay.com/content/news/Kaukauna-Library-drops-all-fines-for-late-returns-566672251.html)

# ARTICLES 2019 & EARLIER

* [New Year, No Library Fines (Petoskey News) [MI]](https://www.petoskeynews.com/news/community/new-year-no-library-fines/article_0ed64f87-ecab-5f0d-bf19-b0adb13bd84f.html)
* [Bozeman [MT] Library to Be Fine-Free (NBC Montana)](https://nbcmontana.com/news/local/bozeman-library-to-be-fine-free)
* [[OH]io Library Ends Fines for Overdue Books to Boost Access (13 WOWK)](https://www.wowktv.com/news/ohio/ohio-library-ends-fines-for-overdue-books-to-boost-access/)
* [Bloomfield [NJ] Public Library to Eliminate Library Fines in 2020 (TapInto)](https://www.tapinto.net/categories/letters-to-the-editor/articles/bloomfield-public-library-to-eliminate-late-fines-in-2020)
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**2007**

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* [Better Late than Never (School Library Journal)](https://web.archive.org/web/20070310190925/http:/www.schoollibraryjournal.com:80/article/CA6410502.html)  
  “… the issue of late fines almost always comes up. That’s why I wasn’t surprised when the Columbus (OH) Metropolitan Library surveyed their young patrons and discovered that 41 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds said their library cards were blocked due to overdue materials. These kids weren’t using the library because they couldn’t afford it.”

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* Philadelphia Backs off Fine Policy (Library Journal)  
  2/15/2006, Vol. 131 Issue 3, p20-20. 1/8p.“A year ago, the library doubled daily book fines to a formidable 50¢ per day but, according to the Philadelphia Inquirer, that actually deterred use. “Fewer books were coming back, and people were not paying fines…but, more important, we saw evidence that fewer people were borrowing books,” director Elliot Shelkrot told the newspaper. Fine revenue for 2005 was $760,000, down from the $780,000 it collected the previous year. So, the library has reversed its policy, and fines are now 25¢ a day.”