

Late Fee Elimination Synopsis

- **Values and Mission based**
 - Removing barriers to access
 - Providing equitable service
 - Increases usage by residents who might otherwise be disenfranchised
 - Late fees are a regressive method of raising revenue: they penalize hardest those families who can least afford it

- **Value of early literacy**
 - Late fees penalize children and their future success
 - Fee-free supports early literacy which is key to future academic and economic success

- **Improves customer experience**
 - Research has shown patrons return items because they are due and/or they are finished – not because of late fees.
 - Individual fee forgiveness requests can put people in the embarrassing situation of having to be “cap-in-hand supplicants to desk staff” or explain particularly sensitive situations resulting in late returns.

- **Improves staff experience**
 - Removes the need for staff to act as “debt collectors.”
 - Eliminates the need for staff to make judgment calls regarding a person’s reason when issuing late fee forgiveness.
 - It is not the library’s place to “teach responsibility.”

- **Increases collection usage**
 - Late fee forgiveness events often result in overall circulation increases after the events when people no longer fear the accrual of late fees in the library’s system.

- **Potentially cost neutral (due to savings of staff time)**
 - Loss/damage is cost of doing business. Many items have already depreciated.
 - Damaged and lost material is an inevitable aspect of library use, particularly with very young children, and needs to be considered the cost of doing business.

- **Fact-based and Research-based**

- Research does not support that late fees result in significant improvement in return of materials.
- Fiscally sound decision that allows us to better align limited staff time with duties that are more aligned with creating value for the community. Overdue fee collections account for approximately \$4,000/annually – less than .05% of the overall budget.

- **Additional Thoughts**

- Patrons will still be held accountable for returning items borrowed from the library. Once an item is 28 days overdue, the patron is charged a replacement fee for the cost of the item and is blocked from checking out any additional items from the library. Libraries that have eliminated overdue fees have discovered that patrons are more than willing to return long overdue items once they learn that they won't be charged upon return.
- Public libraries are not for book storage. They are for use by the community. Eliminating existing barriers serves to encourage more use! Late fees make people feel guilty – this counteracts attempts to make them feel welcome in the library... charging late fees sends mixed messages to library users.
- There is an antiquated attitude of “protecting” our collections from users. The library belongs to the community and should be easily accessed by the community with as few barriers as possible.