

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

FINES AND PENALTIES

BACKGROUND

Fines and fees represent significant barriers to access to using the library, especially for children and teenagers. For some parents, the threat of a fine serves as a deterrent to permitting their child to borrow books and other materials, for fear that they will be responsible for paying their children's fines. Currently, in order for a child to sign up for a library card, a parent or guardian must sign the application. This is to ensure that someone will be responsible for any accrued fines or fees. DCPL is considering eliminating fines and fees for all children and teenagers.

Approximately \$106,000 was collected in fines and fees in FY2014. It is unclear how many of these were accrued on children and teen library cards. Money collected returns to the City general fund.

Eliminating the need for parents to sign children's applications enables the Library to work with OSSE and OCTO on the automatic registration of public school students via the DC One Card. We cannot automatically register students if parents are required to provide consent.

Eliminating fines and fees is not a radical concept. Many libraries around the country already consider this best practice. The Board however must also consider what—in the absence of fines and fees—will prevent the abuse of library privileges. One approach is to block patrons from further borrowing if they have passed a certain threshold of number of past-due items. That determination can be made separate from a vote on the elimination of fines and fees.

FINES AND PENALTIES

803.1 Adult borrowers, 20 years of age and older, shall be charged a long overdue fee of five dollars (\$ 5) for each item overdue thirty (30) days or more.

803.2 All borrowers, 20 years of age and older, shall be assessed lost and damaged fees on all material types including children's materials and books that are overdue sixty (60) days or more, as follows:

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| (a) | Hardcover Books; | \$ 20.00 |
| (b) | Paperback Books, CDs, DVDs,
and Audiobooks; and | \$ 15.00 |
| (c) | Magazines. | \$ 8.00 |

- 803.3 Adult borrowers, 20 years of age and older, of materials and books are responsible for the payment of both lost and damaged fees and the long overdue fee, if applicable.
- 803.4 Adult borrowers, 20 years of age and older, who incur outstanding fees totaling forty dollars (\$ 40.00) or more on their library account will be blocked from checking-out or renewing books and other library materials, until the account is in good standing.
- 803.5 When library materials are ten days overdue the Library shall send a notice to the borrower.
- 803.6 [RESERVED]
- 803.7 The librarian or designee can at his/her discretion forgive fines for library materials. This option can be utilized when the borrower provides reasons such as: hospitalization, death in family, incarceration, fire, flood, or other catastrophic personal hardship.
- 803.8 The librarian or designee is authorized to cancel fines when the borrower claims that the library material was returned and it is found in the library or the library was closed due to an emergency.

Any person desiring to comment on the subject matter of this proposed rulemaking should file comments in writing not later than thirty (30) days after the date of the publication of this notice in the D.C. Register. Comments should be submitted to Grace Perry-Gaiter, DCPL, General Counsel, Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, 901 'G' Street, N.W., 4th Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001. Telephone: (202) 727-1134. Copies of the proposed rulemaking may be obtained by writing to the address stated above.