



NEWS RELEASE
North Olympic Library System
2210 South Peabody Street
Port Angeles, WA 98362

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: August 26, 2019
Contact: Margaret Jakubcin, Library Director
360.417.8500 or Director@nols.org
Re: NOLS eliminates overdue fines

Beginning September 1, 2019, your library is fine free! The North Olympic Library System (NOLS) will no longer charge overdue fines for items returned late, and all existing overdue fines will be waived. If an item is lost or damaged, replacement fees still apply. “No fines” does not mean “no responsibility.” The elimination of fines is one part of a comprehensive policy adjustment to improve return rates of library materials. Beginning September 1, customers will be blocked from checking out material if they have an item that is 14 days or more overdue. An item will be considered lost when it is 21 days overdue, and a bill will be sent. Fees for lost items will be waived if the item is returned. Reminder notices about overdue material will be sent more frequently to help get materials returned sooner.

NOLS is not alone in eliminating fines. Many libraries have never charged fines, and more and more libraries across North America are going fine free, recognizing that overdue fines create barriers to access, consume valuable staff time, are not an effective tool to encourage on-time return of library materials, and have negative impacts on library/customer relationships. Earlier this year the American Library Association [passed a resolution](#) encouraging libraries to eliminate fines. At their August 22, 2019 meeting, the NOLS Board of Trustees passed a resolution and updated policies to make the change to fine free in Clallam County. The

materials and reports on which that decision was based are available at <http://local.nols.org/Docs/Fines-Free-Staff-Reports-and-Resolution.pdf>.

Why is NOLS going fine free?

Library fines create an unnecessary barrier to service and interfere with the Library's ability to fulfill its mission. The impact of fines falls most heavily on people who might most benefit from access to library service. Our community is stronger and healthier when *all* people have access to the programs, services, and materials they need to pursue their educational, career, family, and life goals, regardless of their ability to pay for them. Removing fine barriers encourages prior users to come back to the library, and attracts new users who can benefit from library offerings.

There are also pragmatic reasons for going fine free. "Those of us who grew up with library fines, may never have stopped to think about them, but in fact many traditional assumptions about fines are simply not accurate. As more libraries go fine-free the body of data that supports this new understanding has grown," said Margaret Jakubcin, NOLS Library Director. "The real purpose of fines has always been about maximizing the library's resources by providing incentive to library patrons to return their items on time, thereby giving the next person a chance to borrow the item. The NOLS Board of Trustees has wisely recognized that there are other, better ways to accomplish this."

Charging overdue fines is not an effective way to get library materials returned on time. People who can afford to pay fines often choose to retain materials beyond their due date, and pay the fine; and people who can't afford, or are embarrassed, to pay fines, often choose to hang on to the library item forever, and simply never return it to the library. Fines management is also costly to library operations – over the course of an entire year the cost in staff time needed to collect and process fines is significant – as much, or possibly more, than the modest amount of revenue that fines bring in. Although projected fines and fees revenues are incorporated into the library's operating budget, overdue fines account for a small portion of library revenue (less than half of one percent), and they are never guaranteed. Recent library trends, such as

increased check out of eBooks (which don't accrue fines) and automatic renewals, have significantly reduced revenue from overdue fines.

There are also non-monetary costs to fines. Time spent collecting overdue fines, is lost staff time that can be more productively focused on other valuable library services and programs. And of course, fines also have a costly negative impact on staff/customer relations.

New fines will stop accruing, and the new overdue reminder and billing timelines will go into effect, on September 1. The process to remove existing fines from accounts will begin in early September, but may take some time to fully complete. To find out what charges are on your account, log into your account at pac.nols.org/polaris/logon, or contact library staff at any NOLS branch. NOLS encourages all community members, to visit or return to their local branch, regardless of their account status.

NOLS understands that many patrons have always gladly paid their overdue fines and, happily consider fines a “donation” to their favorite library. For those who wish to continue supporting the library monetarily, it is easy to make a donation. Information about how to donate, or support the Library in other ways, can be found at www.nols.org/support-the-library.

For additional information about the fine-free decision, visit www.nols.org/nols-is-fine-free/, email Director@nols.org, or contact any NOLS branch.

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