

2023



Fine Free Presentation

SUBMITTED BY:
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What is a fine free library?

A library that does not charge late fees on items return past their due date.

Fine free is different for each library.

- Some do not charge fines for children and teen items/cards.
- Some only charge fines on specialty items.
- Some have fine free days or months.
- Some let patrons work off their fines by volunteering.

Fine free is not completely free.

- May still be a cost for services
- If a patron never returns an item, they are charged the cost of the item.

When going fine free, most libraries:

- Will waive and delete all lost items to let everyone start fresh.
- Will block a patron's card permanently or indefinitely until the item is returned or paid for.

Pros and Cons of fine free libraries

Pros

1. Might get back items that have been lost for a long time.
2. Might increase the number of cardholders as there are fewer barriers.
3. Might have less blocked accounts.
4. Possibly less confrontation with patrons over fine issues.
5. Possibly good PR for library to go fine free.
6. Less accounting issues if staff are not handling money as much.

Cons

1. Possibly longer wait time for items.
2. Will not help those that continue to lose books and have their cards block.
3. Possibly send out more notifications.
4. Possibly cost the library more in funding due to staff time, letters, or purchasing replacement books.
5. Possibly bad PR if the library uses a collection agency, files a court summon or felony charge.

IS GOING FINE FREE RIGHT FOR THE WHITE HOUSE PUBLIC LIBRARY AND OUR PATRONS?

- There are libraries of all sizes going fine free.
- Most say the patron doesn't feel ashamed to return the book if they know they do not have a large late fee.
- Most of the libraries that are fine free have a high poverty level.
- Every library that I talked to bans the patron indefinitely if they lose an item and never return it.
 - One library said they will send the patron a court summon if they do not return the book.

Region	Library Name	Level	Population Served	Funding	City Poverty	County Poverty
Clinch	Coalfield Public Library	I	3,021	\$12,828	23.7%	18.1%
Clinch	Sunbright Public Library	I	2,374	\$10,783	33.1%	18.1%
Clinch	Winfield Public Library	I	3,710	\$19,350	23%	22.4%
Clinch	Huntsville Public Library	I	4,580	\$26,938	48.5%	22.4%
Obion	Hamilton Parks Public Library	I	615	\$16,165	15.3%	12.5%
Obion	Dr. Nathan Porter Library	I	2,078	\$51,207	19.6%	19.3%
Obion	Sharon Public Library	I	918	\$41,410	25.1***	19.3%
Ocoee	Tellico Plains Library	I	3,196	\$29,285	38.3%	15.6%
Stones	Altamont Public Library	I	2,443	\$12,458	16.7%	20.5%
Stones	Beersheba Springs Public Library	I	1,089	\$11,980	23.6%	20.5%
Stones	Coalmont Public Library	I	1,997	\$13,480	29.2***	20.5%
Stones	Palmer Public Library	I	1,578	\$13,347	18.8%	20.5%
Stones	May Justus Memorial Library	I	2,921	\$31,076	21.6%	20.5%
Stones	Tracy City Public Library	I	3,318	\$9,798	11.8%	20.5%
Buffalo	Perry County Public Library	II	8,064	\$120,442	18.1%	17%
Clinch	Caryville Public Library	II	5,542	\$89,069	20.9%	19.9%
Clinch	Jacksboro Public Library	II	7,125	\$91,785	14.4%	19.9%
Clinch	Jellico Public Library	II	5,146	\$85,480	29.6%	19.9%
Clinch	Luttrell Public Library	II	9,844	\$79,979	19.2***	15.6%
Clinch	Maynardville Public Library	II	9,844	\$80,671	23.4%	15.6%
Clinch	Pigeon Forge Public Library (Food for fines all year round)	II	6,324	\$535,012	22.3%	13.2%
Ocoee	Etowah Carnegie Public Library (Juvenile Fine Free)	II	9,144	\$93,280	12.9%	14.5%
Stones	Moore County Public Library	II	6,411	\$115,641	8%	9.7%
Red River	Houston County Public Library	II	8,263	\$119,801	19.5%	15.3%
Ocoee	East Polk County Library	II	6,477	\$50,460	40.4%	13.5%

Ocoee	West Polk County Library	III	10,421	\$49,500	18.3%	13.5%
Obion	Gibson County Memorial Library	III	22,070	\$175,873	27.7%	13.4%
Obion	Humboldt Public Library	III	13,733	\$4209,785	25.3%	13.4%
Obion	Martin Public Library	III	14,813	\$296,437	29.2%	18%
Obion	Benton County Public Library	III	16,184	\$294,784	17.7%	18.3%
Clinch	Oneida Public Library	III	13,749	\$48,372	34.7%	22.4%
Falling Water	Macon County Public Library	III	24,265	\$179,871	25.1%	15.9%
Hatchie	Chester County Library	III	17,276	\$104,336	25.1%	17.6%
Ocoee	Rockwood Public Library	III	15,561	\$151,650	21%	13.1%
Red River	Stewart County Public Library	III	13,561	\$261,192	12.5%	13.1%
Red River	Humphreys County Public Library	III	18,486	\$195,111	10.6%	12.1%
Ocoee	Meigs Decatur Public Library	III	12,306	\$59,163	17.7%	21.1%
Stones	Fred A. Vaught Memorial Library	III	11,012	\$113,526	12.5%	17.8%
Red River	White House Public Library	III	14,820		5.7%	8.6% 10.5%
Holston	Bristol Public Library	IV	26,987	\$1,708,333	19.6%	17.1%
Hatchie	Tipton County Public Library (Juvenile fine free)	IV	34,495	\$320,030	26.5%	13.1%
Falling Water	White County Public Library	IV	27,107	\$234,751	19%	16.4%
Obion	Tiptonville Public Library	IV	34,485	\$317,420	35.2%	33.4%
Obion	McIver's Grant Public Library	IV	30,534	\$234,188	23.7%	16%
Buffalo	Marshall County Public Library (Juvenile fine free)	IV	33,683	\$423,934	20.5%	13.7%
Buffalo	Giles County Public Library	IV	25,063	\$299,548	24.4%	12.4%
Stones	Coffee County – Lannom (kids and Seniors only)	IV	27,978	\$520,179	17.2%	15.6%
		IV	27,722	\$512,853	16.4%	
Stones	Coffee County - Manchester					
Stones	Shelbyville-Bedford County Public Library	IV	49,713	\$299,658	19%	13.4%
Stones	Magness Public Library	IV	40,878	\$174,000	27.7%	15.6%
Clinch	Barbara Reynolds Carr Memorial Library	V	32,023	\$120,049	25.6%	17.1%
Falling Water	Putnam County Public Library (Food for fines all year round)	V	78,843	\$898,607	21.7%	13.7%
Hatchie	Jackson-Madison County Library	V	97,605	\$1,353,146	23.7%	17.1%
Clinch	Sevier County Library System	V	87,424	\$1,393,438		13.2%
Holston	Sullivan County Public Library	V	76,711	\$905,728		17.1%
Stones	Rutherford County Public Library	V	313,091		12.1%	8.7%

Jul 1, 2017 through Jun 30, 2018

Fine Type	Number of Transactions	Fines Added	Fines Waived *	Amount Tendered *	Difference
Damaged.	48	\$404.97	\$67.00	\$225.44	\$112.53
Lost.	252	\$2,945.10	\$963.38	\$298.99	\$1,682.73
Overdue items.	11,117	\$6,499.74	\$531.60	\$5,042.37	\$925.77
White House Library Totals:	11,175	\$6,942.70	\$599.10	\$5,305.30	\$1,038.30

Jul 1, 2018 through Jun 30, 2019

Fine Type	Number of Transactions	Fines Added	Fines Waived *	Amount Tendered *	Difference
Damaged.	22	\$185.68	\$101.98	\$66.25	\$17.45
Lost.	282	\$4,176.93	\$381.95	\$406.91	\$3,388.07
Overdue items.	11,469	\$5,165.86	\$433.90	\$3,584.76	\$1,147.20
White House Library Totals:	11,773	\$9,528.47	\$917.83	\$4,057.92	\$4,552.72

Jul 1, 2019 through Jun 30, 2020

Fine Type	Number of Transactions	Fines Added	Fines Waived *	Amount Tendered *	Difference
Damaged.	37	\$263.87	\$74.98	\$195.89	(\$7)
Lost.	269	\$4,199.56	\$373.77	\$134.98	\$3,690.81
Overdue items.	8,169	\$3,734.80	\$282.40	\$2,412.81	\$1,039.59
White House Library Totals:	8,475	\$8,198.23	\$731.15	\$2,743.68	\$4,723.40

Jul 1, 2020 through Jun 30, 2021

Fine Type	Number of Transactions	Fines Added	Fines Waived *	Amount Tendered *	Difference
Damaged.	33	\$322.99	\$212.99	\$126.99	\$16.99
Lost.	274	\$4,560.84	\$412.85	\$135.99	\$4,012
Overdue items.	2,152	\$1,881.90	\$398.11	\$1,263.00	\$220.79
White House Library Totals:	2,459	\$6,765.73	\$1,023.95	\$1,525.98	\$4,215.80

Jul 1, 2021 through Jun 30, 2022

Fine Type	Number of Transactions	Fines Added	Fines Waived *	Amount Tendered *	Difference
Damaged.	22	\$213.95	\$49.00	\$145.95	\$19
Lost.	251	\$3,779.00	\$577.43	\$202.00	\$2,999.57
Overdue items.	3,426	\$2,824.50	\$502.00	\$1,573.50	\$749
White House Library Totals:	3,699	\$6,817.45	\$1,128.43	\$1,921.45	\$3,767.57

Activity Summary for Location
White House Library
Include Auto-Renewals
Nov 1, 2022 through Nov 30, 2022

Circulations *	
Circulation Type	Counts
Check Out	3,457
Check In	4,018
Renewal	2,903
In-House Use	5
Circulations Total	10,383

Holds *	
Hold Type	Counts
Hold Added	162
Hold Arrived	248
Hold Canceled	40
Hold Checked Out	129

Fines Paid/Waived *	
Transaction Type	Total
Fines Paid	\$223.60
Fines Waived	\$315.53

Overdue Notices **	
Notice Number	Items Notified
1	253
2	157
Courtesy Notice	5,683
Items Notified Total	6,093

Borrower Maintenance *		
Borrower Maintenance Type	Borrower Type	Counts
Borrower Add	WHADULT	1
Borrower Delete	OBR	1
	WHADULT	1
OBR Borrower Add	OBR	94
Borrower Update	OBR	1
	WHADULT	132
	WHFRIEND	12
	WHSTAFF	1
	WHSTUDENT	37
	WHYA	9
Borrower Maintenance Total		289

Stats Only Check Outs
No Data matches Selection Criteria

Activity Summary for Location
White House Library
Include Auto-Renewals
Jul 1, 2021 through Jun 30, 2022

Circulations *	
Circulation Type	Counts
Check Out	44,820
Check In	45,432
Renewal	28,578
In-House Use	33
Circulations Total	118,863

Holds *	
Hold Type	Counts
Hold Added	2,298
Hold Arrived	2,651
Hold Canceled	674
Hold Checked Out	1,596

Fines Paid/Waived *	
Transaction Type	Total
Fines Paid	\$3,797.35
Fines Waived	\$1,201.43

Overdue Notices **	
Notice Number	Items Notified
1	1,686
2	1,099
Courtesy Notice	55,122
Items Notified Total	57,907

Borrower Maintenance *		
Borrower Maintenance Type	Borrower Type	Counts
Borrower Add	WHADULT	47
	WHFRIEND	1
	WHSTUDENT	14
	WHYA	1
Borrower Delete	OBR	117
	WHADULT	41
	WHSTUDENT	6
OBR Borrower Add	OBR	1,125
Borrower Update	GAJUV	1
	GRMTEA	1
	HPECARD	1
	OBR	77
	PYA	1
	WHADULT	3,089

Stats Only Check Outs
No Data matches Selection Criteria

Staff Opinion

My staff and I are on the fence and feel like we could go either way.

WHY?

What are the goals of doing this? What are we trying to accomplish?

- More accessible to patrons?
- Alleviate a financial strain on patrons?
- Increase cardholders?
- Improve customer service?
- Increase circulation and not decrease circulation?
- Not increase wait time for items?



Staff Concerns

Aside from knowing the goals, the staff's biggest concerns are

- Longer hold time.
- Not helping those who lost an item and not drop in lost items.
- Increase staff time to do this and possibly staff abuse.

We have three options

1. Keep everything the same.

2. Alternative way of reducing/waiving fines.

3. Going fine free on almost everything.

KEEPING EVERYTHING THE SAME

PROS	CONS
We would not increase our wait time for items.	It would not help anyone who is having a financial hardship.
It will give us more time to do research and collect data.	Not help us get back books that have been long overdue.
It would not cost the city any more money.	

ALTERNATIVE OPTION

- We have specific fine free month(s).
- We give everyone a 7-day grace period before we start charging fines.
- Charging a patron for an item when it is 5 months overdue.

What this looks like:

1. One or multiple months we waive fines on any lost/late items brought back as well as any existing fines even if the items were brought back a long time ago.
2. When an item goes overdue, the patron does not get charged a late fee for 7 more days. We use our calling software or email to contact that patron and let them know that their item is overdue and that if they return it in that 7 day window, they won't be charged a late fee. (not sure if we would want to exclude hotspots)



Pros

Patrons that are financially challenged would have fines waived.

The 7 day grace window may seem more like a reward than a punishment.

It might get more patrons to come into the library.

Those that can still pay fines will and so the city would get some revenue.

Should reduce the amount of fines that are left unpaid each year.

Cons

If a patron is financially challenged he or she would have to wait for this event to arrive.

If someone lost a book and couldn't find it, they would still not be helped by this program.

Would require some more staff time.

Wouldn't be able to do food for fines anymore and would have to just do food drives.

The incentive for bringing your items back is so you don't have to pay a late fee or wait 6 months to have your fees waived.

Could also consider wiping everyone's account before we start this program.

FINE FREE ON ALMOST EVERYTHING

If the board wanted to go fine free, this is my recommendation:

- Fine free on everything except tech devices e.g. hot spots, tablets, and Chromebooks.
- Reduce the number of items a patron can checkout on their card to 12.
- Teacher cards can still checkout 40 items.
- Change it so that kids cards can only checkout juvenile and kids items.
- Adult and YA cards can checkout any item in the building.
- 21 days after an item is overdue, the patron is charged the cost of the item.
- A patron cannot checkout if there are any fines or fees on their card.
- Still purge the cards every three years, so if someone loses an item, they are not blocked indefinitely.

Pros

Cons

Patrons that are financially challenged will not have their card block from late fees.	Patrons that lose a book will still have their card block.
By not letting parents checkout adult books on their child's card, it might reduce the number of kids cards that are blocked.	Patrons might be upset over the item limit and checkout restrictions.
Possibly fewer confrontations with patrons.	Longer wait times and allowing fewer items could lower circulation.
Some patrons might still make donations to the library since they are not charged fines.	We would not be able to do food for fines.
Wouldn't need to purchase credit card software.	The city would not get as much revenue.
Should have an increase in cardholders.	Will cost more in staff time, postage to mail bills, and to replace items never returned.
Possibly better PR for the library.	If it doesn't go over well, it would be really difficult to add fines back.
	Will patrons keep ILLs too long?

- Even if the board votes to go fine free, we could not start this until after March as the policy committee would need to meet in February to change all the policies to fit these parameters and the board would have to vote on the policy change in March.
- We would need time to adjust all our software setting and advertise that it is coming.
- We need to go vote to adjust the budget to include more part time staff hours, postage and more for replacement items.

Neither of these options truly make the library more accessible for patrons who have lost a book. We currently have a policy in place that we will accept other items in exchange for waiving fines.

The library will accept items in exchange for fines only on a need-based system. If the library director believes the library needs or can utilize an item(s) that a patron is willing to donate, then the director may decide to waive that individual's fines in exchange for the item(s). The director will decide the amount of fines to be waived. Patrons are not allowed to set the value of an item. If the director believes that the item(s) will not be an asset to the library, then all donated items will be considered a regular donation. Once the regular donation is given to the library, it then becomes the sole property of the library and the library will decide on its use as the organization sees fit.

In addition to this existing policy, we could add one to allow patrons to do "Volunteer work" to pay off the cost of a lost item.

- This would only be for lost items (not late fees).
- Only for teens and adults.
- They would have to apply and interview for this program.
- They would only be allowed to do this one time.
- They would not be doing the same work as regular volunteers.
- Do not want to start this program the first year we go fine free.