

Aged Overdue Fine Elimination Proposal

I propose that we go through the outstanding fines for Wells Branch Community Library District accounts and nullify any portion that is for items returned intact but overdue. Fines and fees for items that were lost or damaged will remain since those represent a true monetary loss to public funds.

Relevant Points:

- Libraries have been trending to a fine free model for overdue materials.
- The Wells Branch Community Library District currently shows 6482 people with overdue fines totaling \$86,308.73.
- An overdue fine is specifically for items that were returned without damage.
- Our library suspended overdue fines when we closed in March of 2020 and we have not reinstated them. That means any overdue fines sitting on our books are more than 18 months in the past. It is unlikely that these patrons are able or willing to pay.
- Fines that reach \$5 block a household from borrowing materials, even after the late items have been returned. That means we have literally thousands of patrons who have brought everything back but cannot use the library because of late fees.

Timeline and Process:

This is going to require touching each account with issues, so there is no instantaneous means to get it done. Especially on older accounts, there are fines and fees that transferred from previous software updates and need to be addressed individually.

If the Board of Trustees votes to eliminate aged overdue fines, we will:

- 1- Publicize the intention to remove these fines. This is wonderful community outreach. There are neighbors out there who are not using the library because they owe old fines, and this lets them know that they will be able to come back.
- 2- Sort the affected accounts by fine date, working backwards from March 2020 under the assumption that these are the patrons most likely to come back.
- 3- Create a system for a blocked patron to request their account move to the front of the review line.

Moving Forward:

The library determined to suspend overdue fines during the pandemic. The policy that defines circulation rules and fees comes due for review in February. By that time, all accounts in question should have been reviewed and settled. When the policy is reviewed and the time comes to reinstate regular circulation rules, the Board of Trustees can decide whether to charge overdue fines on print materials as part of standard operations.