



SAINT PAUL
PUBLIC LIBRARY

FACT SHEET (2018)

Eliminating late fines: Improving access to your library

Background

- For years, Saint Paul Public Library staff have been talking about eliminating late fines as a way to make the library more accessible to everyone in Saint Paul.
- In 2018, Library staff led 6+ months of research on this topic. We analyzed our service and financial data. We read articles. We interviewed colleagues from other library systems. We interviewed our own staff. We talked with community members.
- Based on this research, the Library and Mayor Carter have proposed eliminating late fines in 2018.
- **The City Council will vote on this proposal in December 2018.**

SPPL has already taken steps to decrease the impact of fines:

- ✓ No fines on children's or young adult books, music, movies, and more.
- ✓ "Read Downs" offered for anyone, any time the library is open.
- ✓ No overdue fines for Library Go cards (all Saint Paul Public Schools students).
- ✓ E-materials, like e-books and digital magazines, have never accrued fines.

Still, many people remain unable to check out materials.

People in Saint Paul tell us about the impact of fines and fees:

- "I really love the library, and it makes me sad that I haven't been able to make use of it because of this policy on fines."
- The library should stop "charging late fees and institute a system that is more effective and does not drive the people who need libraries most away due to shame or inability to pay."



19% of cardholders (51,132) cannot check out materials because they have too many fines/fees.

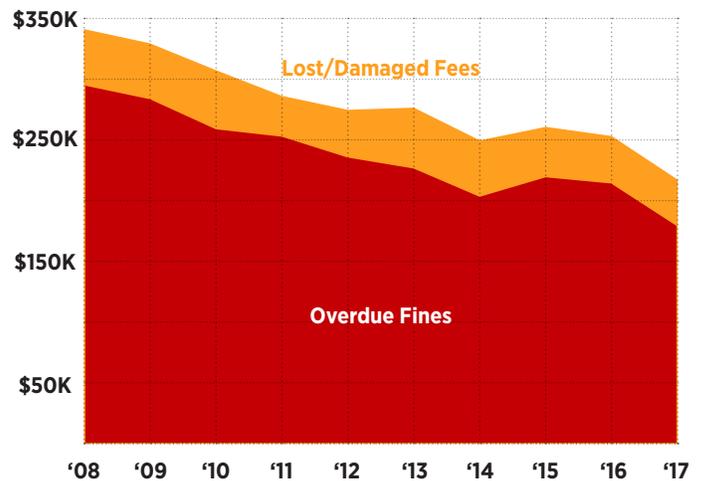


34% of cards are blocked at Rondo. Percentages are higher in economically challenged neighborhoods.

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Fines are not a sustainable or dependable form of revenue.

Money collected from fines and replacement fees has gone down steadily for the last 10 years. The Mayor's budget proposal seeks to fully fund the Library's budget from sources other than late fines.



Late fines are not effective.

Studies have shown that small fines do not have any impact on return rates.

“The scant research on the value and impact of library fines and fees does not indicate a clear benefit of administering these policies, and they may be costly to enforce.”

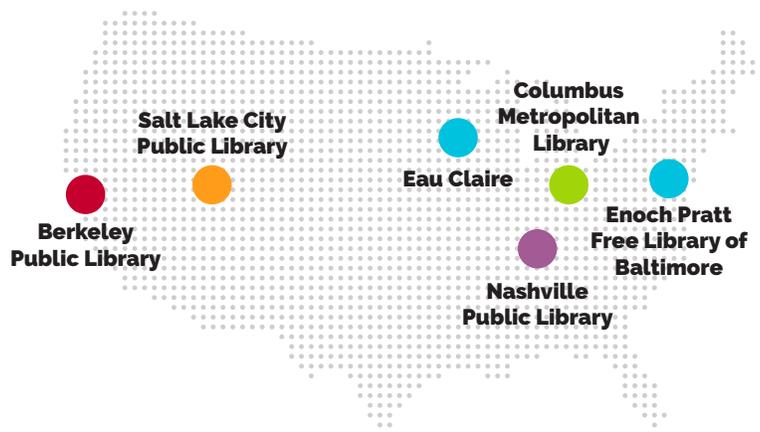
- REMOVING BARRIERS TO ACCESS
(COLORADO STATE LIBRARY WHITE PAPER)

In fine-free libraries, people still return items.

- Library users still need to return items, and will still receive reminders when a due date approaches and when it has passed.
- Most libraries that eliminate late fines will still block accounts of library users who do not return materials.
- Most libraries still collect fees for lost and damaged items.

Libraries across the country are eliminating late fines, with no reported negative outcomes.

- “With less staff time focused on enforcing fines, we can spend more time doing the positive people-focused work of the modern library.” - Peter Bromberg, Salt Lake City Public Library
- “We’ve shut off access to the library when one of our staunchest principles is trying to provide the widest access possible.” - Patrick Losinski, Columbus Public Library



Learn more at sopl.org/fine-free.