

Eliminating overdue fines: A win-win for your library and community

An Infopeople Webinar
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Supporting Parents in Early Literacy through Libraries



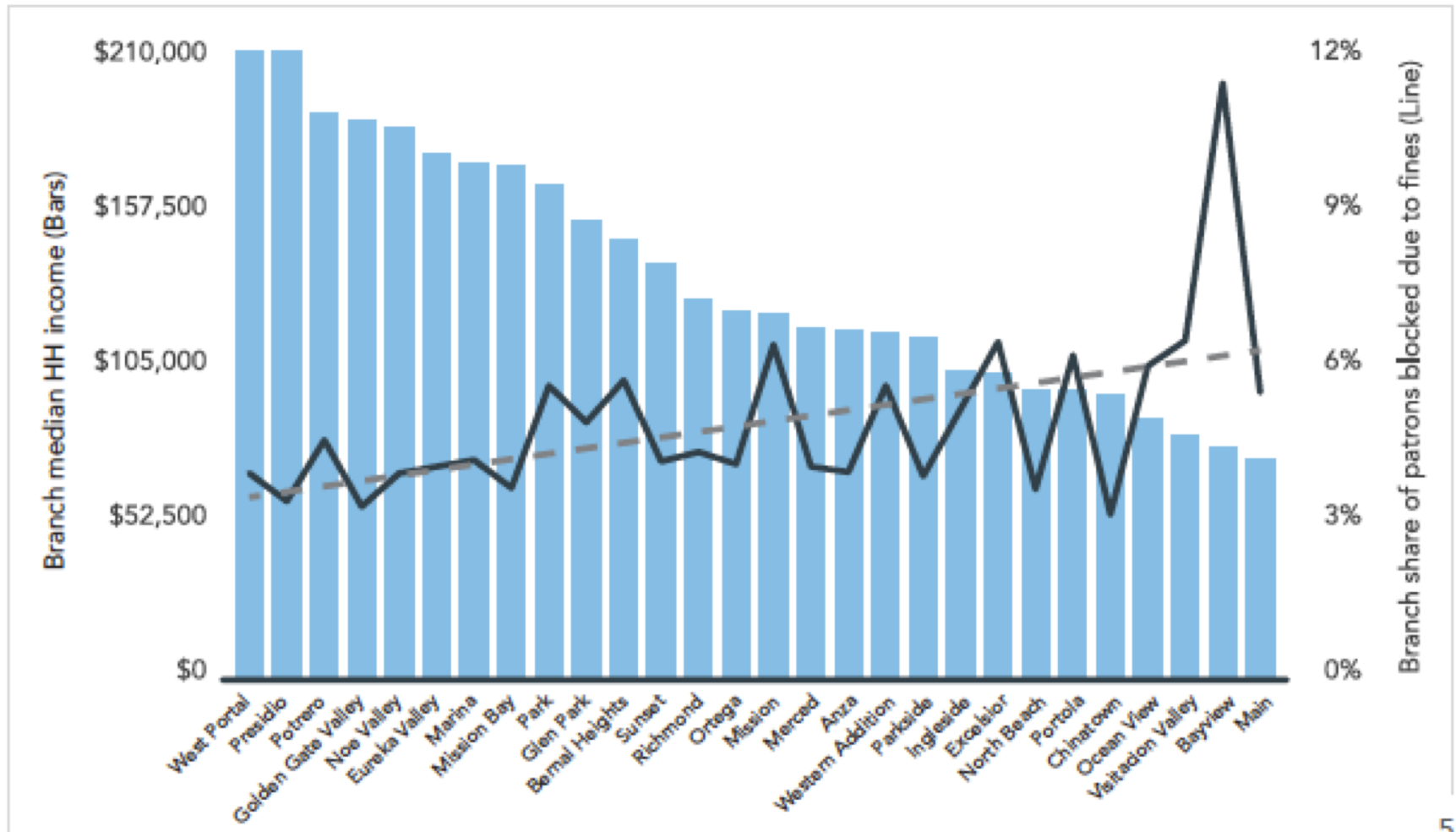
“I would check out materials quite often... However, my library card has been suspended due to excessive fines so I have been unable to check out materials as of last year... This definitely effects [sic] my relationship with the library in that I can no longer check out materials, and beyond that there is also a feeling of almost criminal shame going in.”

—Rhyia B., former teen library patron

“I support eliminating fines because some people simply can't afford to pay them. They are then prevented from using the library at all. I'm one of those people. While I still enjoy using the e-library system, I haven't been able to check out books for years because I can't afford to pay the fines on my account from when I got sick and couldn't get books returned on time.”

-Patron at San Francisco Public Main Library

In locations with lower average household income, larger shares of SFPL adult cardholders are blocked due to fines



San Francisco finds blocked accounts are higher in neighborhoods with lower incomes

Fines prevent borrowing

- Economically disadvantaged neighborhoods have lower circulation rates.
- Parents are reluctant to check out books for their children for fear of fines.
- Transportation and financial burdens disproportionately affect low income residents.



Literature Review Findings

- **No significant difference** in return rates between libraries that charge fines and those that don't.
- Small fines don't bring items back, but steep ones do.
- Rewards and incentives don't affect borrowing behavior.

Removing Barriers to
Access:
Eliminating Library Fines and
Fees on Children's Materials



www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/removingbarrierstoaccess

Some Libraries Have Never Charged Fines

No significant difference in

- Replacement costs
- Late return rates
- Hold fulfillment rates when compared to libraries that charge fines



Collections weren't pillaged; circulation and visits increased



Gleason Public Library

No change in time people keep materials



95% of materials came back on time



DAYTON
METRO
LIBRARY

Fewer items returned late than
before the policy change



SAINT PAUL
PUBLIC LIBRARY

42,000 previously blocked patrons returned
Circulation up 13-15% in low income areas



The City Library
THE SALT LAKE CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

3.5% more borrowers, circulation up 16%



39% increase in
youth borrowers

Revenue wasn't lost; often costs were exceeding revenue

Overdue fines bring in only about 1% of operating budgets. Staff time, credit card fees, collection agency fees, & mailing notices are **expensive**.



Collecting fines is cost neutral—no revenue is generated



Overdue fines have been decreasing steadily already for 10 years



Before the policy change, spent almost \$1 million to collect \$700,000 in fines



Casey
Cardinia
Libraries

Fines collected: \$110,000
Cost to collect them: \$115,405
Effect on budget: **-\$5,405**

Books came back!

CHICAGO
PUBLIC
LIBRARY



**Fines
Don't Fly
at CPL**

CHICAGO SUN★TIMES

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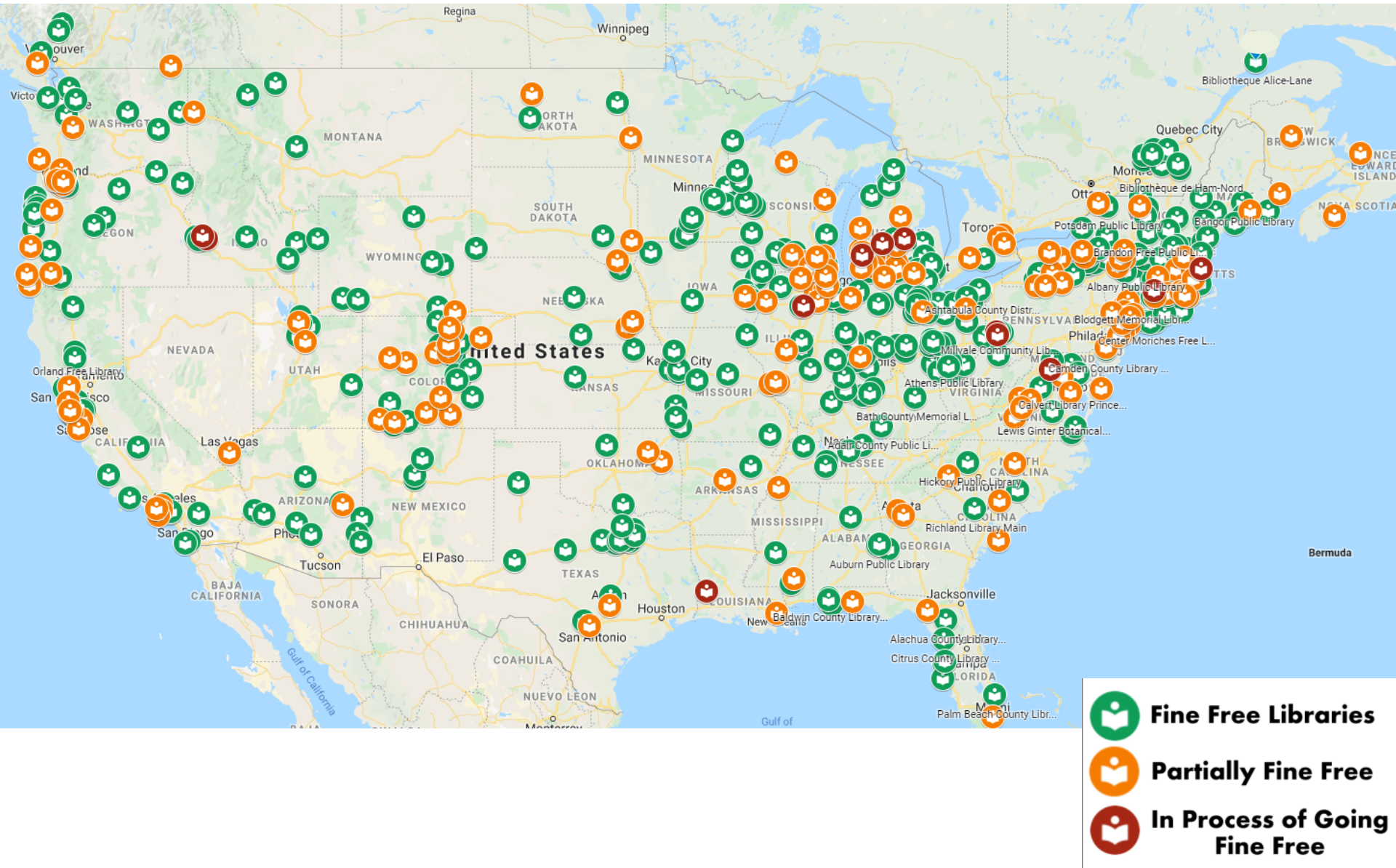
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Lightfoot's decision to eliminate library fines triggers 240% increase in book returns

Library Commissioner Andrea Telli says hundreds of long-overdue books have been returned in the three weeks since Chicago became the nation's largest major city to jump on the no-fine bandwagon.

By Fran Spielman | Oct 30, 2019, 5:25pm CDT

<https://endlibraryfines.info/fine-free-library-map/>



More libraries are going fine-free. That's good for everyone.

Your library is now

FINE FREE!



Call to renew: 740-702-4145
or visit CRCPL.org

If an item become more than 28
days late, your card is blocked!



Cranston Public Library's children's
and teen materials are now

**FINE
& WORRY FREE**
for Young People

Abilene Public Library no longer imposing new
fines

Op-ed: Eliminating late fines
simply makes sense

NO FINES!

Starting January 1, 2018

Lake Geneva Public Library will no longer
charge Overdue Fines on any
Youth Materials! This includes Picture
Books, Chapter Books, Easy Readers,
YA Books, Graphic Novels, AND Movies.



Baltimore's Pratt Library goes fine free for
overdue books

Eau Claire public library book fines to be waived

» Late fees ending for most items» Those with blocked cards welcomed back



ALA's Resolution on Monetary Library Fines as a Form of Social Inequity, January 2019:

1. asserts that imposition of monetary library fines creates a barrier to the provision of library and information services.
2. urges libraries to scrutinize their practices of imposing fines on library patrons and actively move towards eliminating them
3. urges governing bodies of libraries to strengthen funding support for libraries so they are not dependent on monetary fines as a necessary source of revenue.

How you can advocate

- Gather statistics:
 - # of patrons blocked due to fines, including differences in low income neighborhoods
 - \$ brought in by fines vs. how much it costs to collect fines
- Gather stories from your community
- Create talking points & debunk the myths



of the Waverly Public
Library's annual budget
comes from library fines.

This is a community conversation!

Be ready to answer questions like these:

- How will it affect your budget/taxpayers?
- What about teaching responsibility?
- Will I have to wait longer for books?
- It's just a few cents, why do you bother?



Fox River Valley Libraries




Dundee Library • Randall Oaks Library

Summary

Responses (198)

Survey

Do you support the Library becoming fine-free?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, stop charging late fees		78.8%	156
No, continue to charge late fees		17.2%	34
Unsure		4.0%	8

<https://stories.opengov.com/frvpld/published/pysWqCQFs>

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.**

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.”

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.



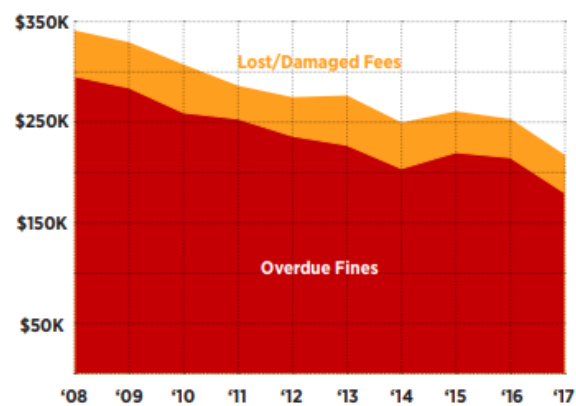
19% of cardholders (51,132) cannot check out materials because they have too many fines/fees.



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

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 sppl.org/fine-free.

<insert
logo>

Eliminating Late Fines:

Improving access to your library

Background

- <Library name> is interested in eliminating late fines as a way to make the library more accessible to everyone in <community name>.
- <Insert information about research done by your library. For example: 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 talked with our community members.>
- Bottom line: Eliminating all overdue fines will have only a positive effect for the citizens of <community name>.

Fines are not a sustainable or dependable form of revenue.



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

Many people remain unable to check out library materials.



___% of cardholders (<insert #>) cannot check out materials because they have too many fines/fees.



___% of cards are blocked in <insert neighborhood name>. Percentages are higher in economically challenged neighborhoods.

Our community members tell us about the impact of fines and fees:

"<Quote from community member affected by overdue fines.>"

--<Patron name> and photo, if desired

"<Quote from community member affected by overdue fines.>"

--<Patron name> and photo, if desired

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 Library Use, Colorado State Library, 2015

In fine-free libraries, people still return items, and on time.

- Library users still need to return items, and will still receive reminders when a due date approaches and has passed.
- It often costs more money to collect fines and fees than the revenue it brings in.
- Many libraries even report that patrons return more items after going fine-free.

[www.coloradovirtuallibrary.org/
resource-sharing/eliminating-
fines-resources/](http://www.coloradovirtuallibrary.org/resource-sharing/eliminating-fines-resources/)

<insert
logo>

Eliminating Late Fines: Improving access to your library

<Insert information about research done by your library. For example: 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 talked with our community members. Bottom line: Eliminating all overdue fines will have only a positive effect for the citizens of <community name>.>

Fines don't bring in revenue.

Overdue fines are cost neutral:



Only _% (\$<#>) of the library's operating budget comes from fines. Plus, money collected from fines and replacement fees has decreased steadily for the last <#> years.



Collecting fines is expensive. The costs for staff time, credit card fees, mailing notices, and collection agencies equals the \$<#> brought in from fines each year.

Fines don't bring back materials faster.

Libraries that have eliminated overdue fines get materials back at the same rate (or even faster). Your Library will continue to send overdue notices and charge borrowers for items not returned.



Salt Lake Public Library's late-return rate dropped from 9% to 4% following fine elimination.



Vernon (Ill) Public Library's average number of days an item is overdue fell 42% after ditching fines.

Fines DO have a negative impact.



_% of cardholders (<#>) cannot check out materials because they have too many fines/fees.

"<Quote from community member affected by overdue fines.>" --<Patron name>



_% of cards are blocked in <neighborhood name>. Percentages are higher in economically challenged neighborhoods.

"<Quote from community member affected by overdue fines.>" --<Patron name>

Dropping fines will increase use.



8% ↑ in juvenile borrowers at High Plains Library District (CO)



10% ↑ in check-outs and borrowers in Salt Lake City



40% more youth borrowers in San Rafael (CA)

What if it doesn't work?

- Ask why
- Consider changing your ask:
 - 1 year pilot
 - Children's and YA materials only
- Keep collecting data and stories
- You've planted a seed; try again in a year!



Questions?



CLYDE PUBLIC
LIBRARY

**NO SHAME, NO BLAME,
NO OVERDUE FINES!
STARTING FRIDAY,
FEBRUARY 1!**

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Slide 1

Graphic from [Hillsborough County Public Library Cooperative](#), FL

Slide 2

[SPELL project](#)

Slide 4 + 5

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Thank You!

For more information:

<https://www.coloradovirtuallibrary.org/resource-sharing/eliminating-fines-resources/>

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Save the Date!

Want to find out more about how going fine free aligns with your library and community strategic goals and vision?

Join us on **Thursday, February 13th @Noon Pacific** for a special, online guided conversation with Santa Monica Public Library Director Patty Wong and Chicago Public Library Commissioner Andrea Telli as they discuss the impact, strategic alignment with community need and local government goals and the why along with the how they took their libraries fine-free. More details coming soon.