

Finally Fines Free!

Explore different ways of using
data to help your library advocate
for going Fines Free

/ o l a

∴ ontario library association

OPLA Research & Evaluation Committee

Presenting today:

Alison Clarke, Coordinator, Performance Measures & Data, Brampton Library

Kelly Bernstein, CEO, Brant County Library

Download materials for going fine free at:
<https://accessola.com/fines-free-libraries/>

Agenda:

- Analyzing overdue data
- Impacts on circulation
- Customer relationships
- Impact of fines on customers
- Budget implications
- Hidden costs
- Political impact
- You're in good company!
- Where to find all of these resources

Overdue Timing

Some of the concerns about going fines free include worries about customers taking longer to return items, or maybe not returning them at all.

How can you use your data to understand customer return patterns and see what happens before and after you go fines free?

A	B	C	D	E
ItemBarcode	CollectionName	CheckOutDate	DueDate	ItemStatusDescr Ho
34567012773097	Children's fiction	20/07/2021 19:05	10/08/2021 23:59	Out
63287000041894	Children's fiction	20/07/2021 16:05	10/08/2021 23:59	Out
34567021040611	Children's fiction	20/07/2021 19:05	10/08/2021 23:59	Out
63287001150975	Children's fiction	11/06/2021 17:30	10/08/2021 23:59	Out
63287001099297	Children's fiction	20/07/2021 14:22	10/08/2021 23:59	Out
34567022059701	Children's fiction	20/07/2021 19:05	10/08/2021 23:59	Out
63287000025939	Children's graphic novels	20/07/2021 15:37	10/08/2021 23:59	Out
34567021106156	Children's graphic novels	19/07/2021 15:59	10/08/2021 23:59	Out
63287000495892	Children's graphic novels	20/07/2021 15:38	10/08/2021 23:59	Out
34567017011113	Children's graphic novels	20/07/2		
34567016843862	Children's graphic novels	20/07/2		
34567018499226	Children's graphic novels	20/07/2		
34567019426939	Children's graphic novels	19/07/2		
63287001105961	Children's mystery	20/07/2		
63287000226578	Children's Early Reader	19/07/		
63287001105086	Children's Early Reader	20/07/2		
34567021841851	Fiction	29/06/2		
34567021302557	Fiction	29/06/2021 18:56	10/08/2021 23:59	Out
34567022210825	Fiction	20/07/2021 8:41	10/08/2021 23:59	Out
34567021974249	Fiction	29/06/2021 18:56	10/08/2021 23:59	Out
34567021989270	Fiction	29/06/2021 18:56	10/08/2021 23:59	Out
34567021977952	Fiction	29/06/2021 18:56	10/08/2021 23:59	Out
34567021935877	Fiction	29/06/2021 18:56	10/08/2021 23:59	Out
34567017077320	Fiction	19/07/2021 15:57	10/08/2021 23:59	Out
34567016973214	Fiction	29/06/2021 18:56	10/08/2021 23:59	Out
34567017860857	Fiction	29/06/2021 18:56	10/08/2021 23:59	Out

What data?

- Item barcode
- Due date
- Collection name

Overdue Timing

The **DATEDIF** formula calculates how many days between two dates - in this case, the Due Date, and the Date the data was pulled.

	D	E	F	G	H
	DueDate	ItemStatusDescr	How many days overdue?	09/09/2021	
19:05	10/08/2021 23:59	Out	=DATEDIF(D2,\$G\$1,"d")		
16:05	10/08/2021 23:59	Out	30		
19:05	10/08/2021 23:59	Out	30		
17:30	10/08/2021 23:59	Out	30		
14:22	10/08/2021 23:59	Out	30		
19:05	10/08/2021 23:59	Out	30		
15:37	10/08/2021 23:59	Out	30		
15:59	10/08/2021 23:59	Out	30		
15:28	10/08/2021 23:59	Out	30		

Overdue Timing

Use a pivot table to total how many items are overdue by how many days

The screenshot shows an Excel PivotTable titled "30 Days overdue before Sept 9 2021". The PivotTable has "Row Labels" in column A and "Count of ItemBarcode" in column B. The data is as follows:

Row Labels	Count of ItemBarcode
1	756
2	1455
5	496
6	356
7	372
8	326
9	383
10	213
11	29
12	165
13	249
14	357
15	143
16	184
17	32
18	67
19	129
20	127

The PivotTable Field List on the right shows the following configuration:

- Choose fields to add to report:
 - ItemBarcode
 - CollectionName
 - CheckOutDate
 - DueDate
 - ItemStatusDescr
 - How many days overdue?
- Drag fields between areas below:
 - Report Filter: (empty)
 - Column Labels: (empty)
 - Row Labels: How many days overdue?
 - Values: Count of ItemBarcode

Overdue Timing

What data?

- Item barcode
- Due date
- Collection name

- Pull data several times over a period of time - different months, different seasons to establish a baseline
- How many items are overdue?
- How long are items overdue?
- Is the count similar over time?
- Is there a difference in the pattern between adult and children's materials?
- Run the data again during and after the pilot test to check for differences in the patterns

Video & slide deck outlining steps is available on <https://accessola.com/fines-free-libraries/>

Impact on circulation

- Collect circulation baselines before starting your pilot
- Adult v children's - might depend on the nature of the pilot
- Seeing results might take a while
- You may not get dramatic results
- Look for results in other data
 - Program attendance
 - In-person visits
 - Printing
 - Computer usage

Fines impact the library's relationship with library users and keep people away

Fine collection often strains relationships between staff and customers. Library fines and the anxiety prompted by the threat of fines deter people from using the library.

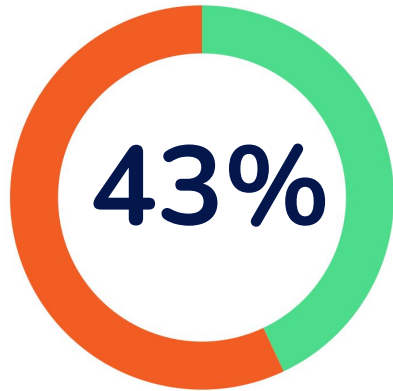
- **Negative interactions at the circulation desk** are often related to fines, resulting in stress for both the library user and the library clerk.
- In Brampton, analysis revealed that **over the past 5 years 3 out of 10 of customers who go inactive each year have fines**. Those fines will never be paid. Those customers are not coming back.

Unrein, Sabrina. (2020). "Overdue Fines: Advantages, Disadvantages, and How Eliminating Them Can Benefit Public Libraries." Syracuse, NY: iSchool Public Libraries Initiative at Syracuse University.

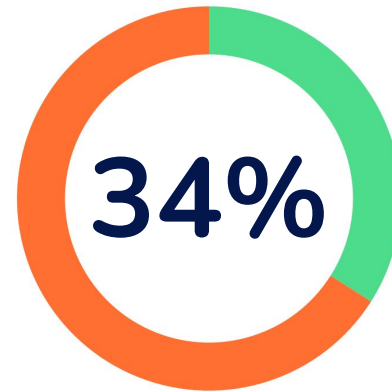
<https://ischool.syr.edu/five-unexpected-benefits-to-eliminating-library-fines/>

Library fines impact our communities unevenly

Ottawa Public Library staff found the majority of users whose accounts had been blocked (suspended due to fees owing of more than \$50) were located in low-income neighbourhoods.



43% of library users with accounts in collections were identified as members of visible minorities.



34% of all accounts with fines were held by children and teens

The library serves people, not books

“But no one will bring their books back!”

User feedback at Temiskaming Shores Public Library shows that the number one concern from community members about the library going fine free is related to the treatment or mistreatment of library resources.

Library	Impact on Circulation	Impact on Membership
High Plains	Increase	Increase
Oxford County, ON	Increase	Increase
Prince Edward County	Increase	Increase
Salt Lake City	Increase	Increase
San Rafael	Increase	Increase
Windsor, ON	Increase	Increase

There is a difference between library late fines and fees for lost items. Removing late fines removes socio-economic barriers while keeping fees for lost items maintains accountability.

In Ottawa, 3,500 children and teens had accounts had their accounts blocked due to fines

Particularly in today's challenging times, libraries need to remove barriers and connect children to the information and resources they need for school, for lifelong learning, and for culture and entertainment. Eliminating overdue fines will ensure that all children have equitable access to library resources.

Bust the Myths!

The committee has created a slide deck you can download and customize to support your library's efforts for going fine free.

Find these resources here:

www.AccessOLA.com

> Advocacy

> Public Library Issues

> Fine Free Libraries

Direct:

<https://accessola.com/fines-free-libraries/>

Slide Deck - Fines Free Mythbusting

Forget What You Believe About Library Fines

Myth #1: Fines are a key source of library revenue.

Myth #2: Fines are an effective incentive to return library materials on time.

Myth #3: Library fines are a minor cost to library users.

Myth #4: Library fines teach responsibility.

Get the Facts about Library Fines

Download the slide deck

Customize the slide deck for your library

Use the template created by the OPLA Research and Evaluations Committee to create your own customized infographic:

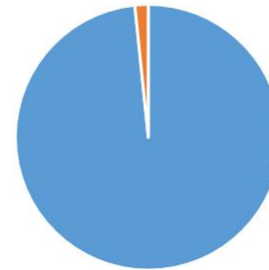
1. Learn how to modify the slide deck using Canva
2. Access the template slide deck using Canva

Budget Implications

Overdue fines are perceived to be a major source of revenue, but they are not.

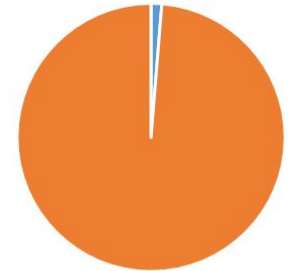
Fine revenue is typically less than 1% of a library's annual operating budget.

Peterborough Public Library
2021 Operating Budget



■ Operating Budget ■ Fine Revenue

Vancouver Public Library
2020 Operating Budget



■ Fine Revenue ■ Operating Budget

Peterborough Public Library. 2021, June 28. "Report to Peterborough Public Library Board: Fine Free Service Budgeting, Fine Free Service Budgeting"
<https://pub-peterborough.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=29200>

<https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/09-28-2020-vpl-board-report-on-fine-free.pdf>

Budget Assumptions

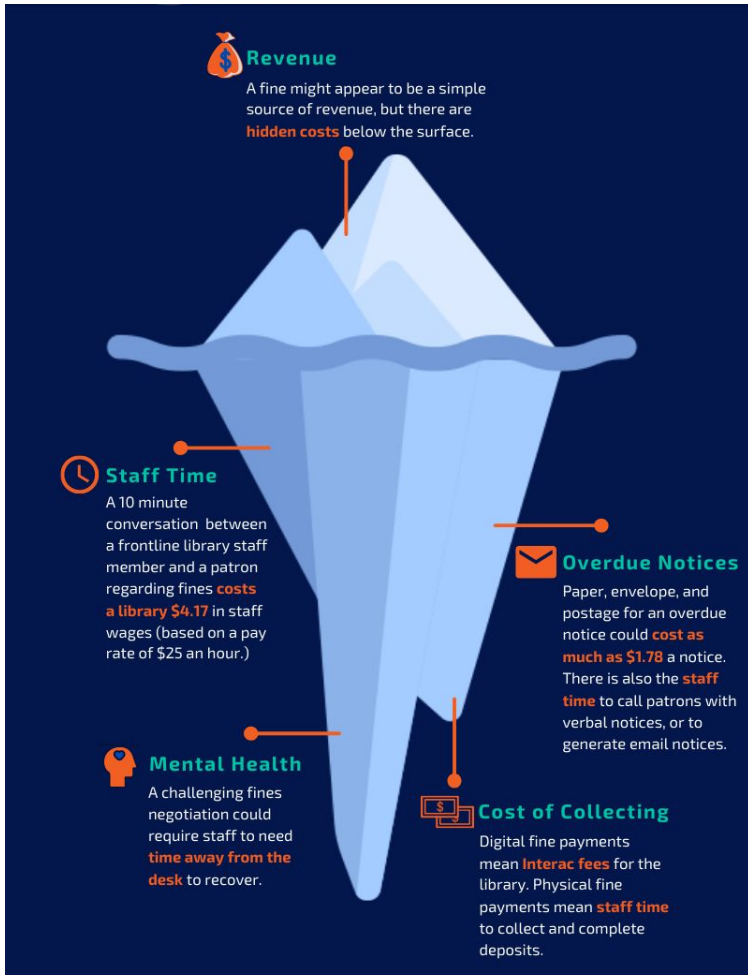
As digital material use increases, fine revenue decreases

Fines are not a reliable source of future revenue

Vancouver Public Library Fine Revenue
Budget vs. Actual 2010-2019

YEAR	ANNUAL BUDGET	ACTUAL COLLECTED IN YEAR
2010	\$1,057,900	\$844,300
2011	\$938,300	\$915,300
2012	\$940,300	\$884,200
2013	\$901,500	\$798,600
2014	\$906,500	\$744,700
2015	\$839,500	\$729,700
2016	\$814,900	\$734,700
2017	\$729,800	\$724,700
2018	\$706,800	\$713,600
2019	\$706,800	\$666,500
10 year change	-33%	-21%

Vancouver Public Library. 2020, Sept 17. Report to Library Board: "2021 New Investment Request for Expansion of Fine-Free Services" <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/09-28-2020-vpl-board-report-on-fine-free.pdf>

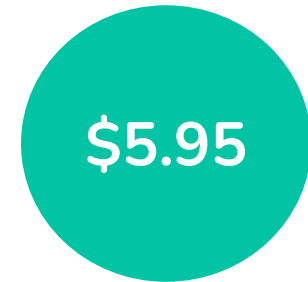


Hidden Costs: Fines Collection isn't free

While fines are a revenue source for public libraries, the cost of collecting those fines can easily outweigh those revenues.



To collect a \$5 fine....



A 10 minute staff interaction would cost \$5.95 in staff wages and mailed notice alone.

Create Your Own Iceberg



Customize the infographic for your library

Use the [template](#) created by the OPLA Research and Evaluations Committee to create your own customized infographic:

1. Learn how to calculate the hidden costs of fines collection at your board
2. Learn how to modify the infographic using Canva
3. Access our template iceberg infographic in Canva

<https://accessola.com/fines-free-libraries/>



How to create your own iceberg to show the hidden costs of fines

Here are some factors to consider when creating an iceberg that works for your library system. We have noted the costs we considered for the infographic, but please do use what makes sense for your library system and situation.

STAFF TIME

- Average frontline staff wage/hr X average length of fines transaction
- How many fines get collected in a given year?
- Does your staff have to count money?
- Does your staff have to print and mail overdue notices?
- Does your staff ever have to call customers about overdue fines?
- Does your staff ever need to take a couple of minutes after a particularly challenging transaction?
- What if staff need to escalate the situation to another staff member?
- What if this transaction needs to be escalated to a collection agency?
 - Note: We used \$25 as an average hourly wage for staff

Political Impact

Maintaining fines as a revenue model is not only bad for the bottom line, it can ultimately harm the program

$$\downarrow \text{Revenue} + \text{Deterred Users} = \uparrow \text{Cost Per Use}$$

Know and understand your cost per use metrics:

http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/libraries/statistics_2020.shtml

Political Impact

As a community service with significant fixed costs, growing membership and increasing circulation are the best methods of decreasing cost per use. Councils are definitely paying attention to that!



Taking steps to increase use and decrease cost per use demonstrates fiscal responsibility to your funders

“Among governments, there is a new appreciation for **citizen centricity**, and a growing movement towards a redefined view of citizens as consumers”

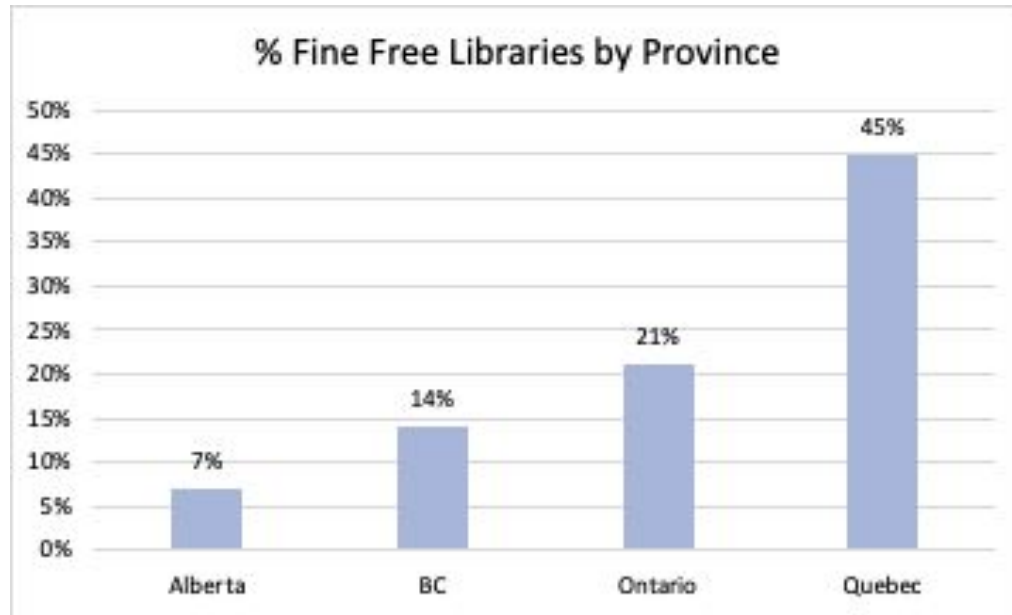
KMPG, 2021

Library fines discourage use and engender fear

Eliminating fines re-centres focus on the Library as a public service and encourages civic engagement and use of a critical municipal resource

<https://home.kpmg/ca/en/home/insights/2021/10/the-future-of-government.html>

You're in good company!



Source: Librarianship.ca

Resources

Find all the OPLA Research & Evaluation Committee tools here: <https://accessola.com/fines-free-libraries/>

[2020 MBNCanada Performance Measurement Report](#)

KPMG: [Services to Local Government](#) & [The future of government - KPMG Canada](#)

Librarianship.ca & Fines-Free. <https://librarianship.ca/features/fine-free-libraries-in-canada/>

Ottawa Public Library. 2020, Oct 13. "Report to Ottawa Public Library Board: Materials Recovery Model. <http://ottwatch.ca/meetings/file/661186>

Peterborough Public Library. 2021, June 28. "Report to Peterborough Public Library Board: Fine Free Service Budgeting, Fine Free Service Budgeting" <https://pub-peterborough.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=29200>

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