

# BARRINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

## *Policy & Procedure: Overdue Items and Fines*

- A patron is not allowed to check out any materials if they have an overdue item or owe an outstanding fine. (If a patron has a fine under \$2.00 you may allow them to check out materials with the fine owing). They will then owe the fine next time they come in, and it will appear on the printed slip they receive.
- If the computer shows that a patron has a very overdue book (over 4 weeks), please bring it to the patron's attention. If they still have the material, they cannot check out any more items until it is returned, or the fines paid and the item is renewed.
- If the item is under 4 weeks overdue, they may renew the overdue item and pay off any fines owed on it currently. If they call to renew over the phone you may add the fine to the card, renew the item, and the patron will owe that amount when they return the item. You will have to override the warnings in Atrium to do this. Renewal of items over 1 month overdue is not permitted over the phone. They must come in with the materials, pay the current fines, and then they may renew the item if no one is waiting for it.
- If they claim to have returned the book, please **check the shelf immediately (also check the outdoor book drop thoroughly)**. If we have made an error and the item is on the shelf, please **apologize and REMOVE any fines** that the item accrued on the patron card. If the item is not on the shelf, please ask the patron to look again and keep the item on their card as overdue. If the patron is insistent that they returned the item and they have made an effort to check around their home, you may change the item status to "lost", manually waive the fee the system assesses, and notate the situation in the patron note box on their account. This allows them to borrow again and shows us they had an issue so if it occurs again, we can question it further.
- Patrons who are consistently on the overdue list may have their borrowing privileges curtailed, or in extreme cases, completely revoked. This decision is at the discretion of the staff member who oversees the list in conjunction with the Director.

## Tracking Over Due Materials

- An overdue list will be generated weekly. Calls/automated emails will be made to all patrons with recently overdue items to try to obtain the materials. Multiple calls/automated emails will be made over 30 days if they are not returned. If e-mail fails or the number is disconnected, an overdue notice will be sent to the patron's address immediately. All patrons who fail to return items after 30 days will be sent a physical overdue notice through the mail containing all items owed, with titles, and any current fines and fees. The shelves will be checked for these items before the letter is sent.
- After 60 days a bill will be sent to the patron, or listed guardian, and items will be deemed lost. Titles on children's account for lost materials will not be included on this bill unless the child has given permission for the guardian to view their account. The legal guardian(s) will be listed on the bill and are responsible for paying any fines accrued for children. The patron may call to get titles if they are not listed.
- Items billed after 60 days that are subsequently returned will be charged the maximum overdue fee per item plus postage fees for notices; all other fees for replacement costs will be deleted.
- Any items that reach 90 days overdue will be billed a second and final time. After which, if no payment is received, the fees will be kept on the patrons' card and all privileges' revoked. The library may deem these items irretrievable after 6 months and delete them from the collection, but all fines will remain on the patron record.
- Item or accounts that have over \$100 worth of materials considered lost will have their account turned over to the Barrington Police Department in hopes of collecting the material or payment. If the item is a piece of equipment or a large ticket item, the library may request the police to pursue the matter further than a certified letter.
- Billed items that remain outstanding will be kept on the patron card and all library borrowing privileges will be forfeited by that patron until such time as the material is returned or the replacement fee is paid.
- We will try to retrieve items with calls and e-mails so as to limit spending on postage.
- Household cards may be limited if another household member has overdue fees or outstanding items. Therefore, anyone living in the household may have borrowing privileges revoked until such fines are paid or overdue materials returned. This keeps households from simply shifting items to "fine free" cards within the household unit, thus avoiding fines or returning items.

## Fines

- DVDs and Video games are fined at the rate of \$1.00 per day/ per item. These fines max out at \$10.00. No grace period is given.
- Fines for other materials are \$.10 per day/per item and no grace period is given. We max fines at \$6.00 per item.
- Equipment such as E-Readers, tablets, any other devices the library adds for circulation will be fined at \$1.00 per day with no grace period and a max fine of \$25.00. Lost equipment will be charged a full replacement fee.
- If an item is lost, the fee will be the cost of the item plus a \$2.00 processing fee and any fines owed. All postage for overdue notices will also be added to the patron card for them to pay.
- ILL items are fined at .25 per day, no grace period, with a total \$20.00 fine limit.

\*\*\*\*\*Judgment should be used by staff to give some leeway for special situations. Staff may forgive a patron fine for reasons such as a recent death in the family, recent birth, which keeps them from getting to the library, or other catastrophes such as fire, accidents, and illness. Please be aware of the patron's past record with fines and do not forgive fines again and again for those who have had a history of overdue materials. Please check the patron computer record for past fine history. Always notate on the record if you forgave a fine, for what reason, and the date. This will allow us to track patrons who might use the same excuse repeatedly in order to try to get out of fines. Should patrons claim financial hardship, have them speak to the Director and a payment plan, or fee suspension, may be worked out. If the Director is not present, staff may use their judgment to allow for fine forgiveness or payment plans. Simply notate what you have done on the patron record so others know what is expected at the next check out. We don't want anyone to stop using our library because they cannot afford a fine.

## Taking In Fine Money

The following procedures must be followed by all staff at every transaction in order for this system to work correctly.

- Whenever you take in fine money from a patron you **MUST** access their computer record and **decrease the balance** they are carrying by the amount they are paying you. This should be done while the patron is in front of you and a printed receipt should be produced. This applies to all fines no matter how large or small. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL LATER TO DO THIS PROCESS.** If it is busy, ask another staff member to help while you finish this transaction.
- Staff should then ring the transaction into the register under FINES, attach the receipt from the circulation system to the receipt from the register, and put both in the cash drawer. Give the patron the required change.
- **Any money that a patron gives above the requested fine should be taken as a donation and put in the change box on the desk, not listed as a credit on their account, or left in the register.**
- The fines taken in during the day will show in the daily circulation report. Your register receipt under the Fine category should match with this amount. If not, closers need to go over receipts to find the error. Staff should check the PayPal report in Atrium to check from any at home payments if there is a discrepancy.
- Always make sure you are choosing PAY when taking in fine money. Check the receipt to make sure the correct balance is showing before you attach it to the register receipt. You may print a second copy of the register receipt if the patron wishes to have a copy.
- Out of town fees should be added to the patron card in the system then **WAIVED** so they appear in the system but do not show as fines paid at the close of business. Enter the money into the register under OT Fee, not fines.