

## **Recent Fines Information at CPL**

### **February 2026**

In April 2020 the library closed its physical presence due to the pandemic. At that point we paused the collection agency contract and froze all fines and fees for patrons. CPL was one of the first libraries to reopen with a curbside model only six weeks after we closed.

From April 2020 to September 2020 we offered curbside service for item pickups on both Green St and Prince St.

We reopened the building to the public October 2020, while adhering to social distancing and health guidelines from local, state and federal officials. By June 2021 Governor Sununu ended the executive order on the pandemic. We continued to keep fines/fees/collection agency all frozen.

In January 2022, we had 301 overdue titles. By May 2023 overdue items had ballooned to 1,275 overdue titles (324% increase), and we decided that we had to make a change as perhaps patrons got too comfortable with long overdue items. We still decided not to reinstitute a collection agency and have no plans to bring that back, however, we did turn fines back on with a grace period. The items quickly returned, wait times dropped, and a current snapshot for February 2026, only 218 items are overdue titles.

Over the last twenty years the revenue from library fines has gradually decreased for several reasons: we have tried to be more empathetic with patrons on fines so they don't lose library service, we are more accommodating in waiving fines due to "life happens" obstacles, we have changed ILS companies over time which required record purging for accuracy, and we have held numerous food for fine amnesty events for the human services food pantry. Fine revenue at the library peaked around 2009 at \$50,000 and in 2025 was closer to \$15,000.

Staff are instructed to try and work with patrons so that they are not denied library service, if at all possible. Patrons who express concern at paying fines (regardless of socioeconomic status which we do not ask or track) may be offered, for example, a long-term payment plan, so they can keep accessing library services. On the flip side there will always be a percentage of patrons that are habitually late with returns and a policy change will not improve their behavior. Only a handful of patrons in the last few years have expressed concern over fines at CPL. I've heard more about fines in the past few months than I have heard in many years, and part of that is definitely the trend for libraries to go "fine free."

If the library ends up Fine-free there is also the unknown response by City Council to losing \$15,000 in city revenue to the budget, we do not know how that will be offset, if at all.

For many years we have tried to work with our ILS vendor to add a credit card payment option but we have been unhappy with the results, including the fees passed onto patrons. Due to the amount of underprivileged and their children who may have library cards, and who do not have credit cards, we would still need to keep cash payment available for the foreseeable future even if we add a credit card payment option.

As a response to the library fines topic, there are several options on fines moving forward that the Concord Public Library Trustees may want to consider:

- A. Make no changes, no recommendation to City Council.
- B. Eliminate fines on all juvenile titles only, keep replacement fees for juvenile titles LOT/museum passes, etc....
- C. Eliminate fines for all, keep replacement fees for all titles/LOT/museum passes, etc...