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BUFFALO & ERIE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES ARE GOING FINE FREE!

The Buffalo & Erie County Public Libraries are excited to announce the elimination of overdue fines to ensure equitable access to library resources to the residents of Erie County. Overdue fines create a barrier to library access because when patrons are unable to pay fines, they are less likely to visit the library. The fine free initiative will allow more residents the ability to experience and enjoy everything our 37 libraries and two bookmobiles have to offer.

To kick off a fine free future, every library cardholder will notice their account has been cleared of past overdue fines and hold fees.

Here are additional details...

FINE FREE FAQs (FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS)

- *Do I still have to pay charges that are on my account prior to libraries going fine free?*
If you have returned all materials, fines have been removed from your account. Charges for lost or damaged materials and other miscellaneous charges will remain.
- *What fines are being waived?*
Fines/fees for all patrons at all libraries with the following reasons:
 - Daily late (overdue) charges
 - Hold charges for requested material
 - Unclaimed hold charges for requested material not picked up

- Lost library card charges
- ***Why do I still have a balance on my account?***
While the Library is waiving most charges, those for lost or damaged materials and other miscellaneous charges will remain.
- ***How will the Library get people to return borrowed materials?***
“No fines” does not mean “no responsibility.” Materials will still have due dates and patrons are expected to return materials on time. Other libraries who have removed overdue fines have reported no significant impact on material return rates. **Additionally, materials that are 21 days (change from 35 days) overdue are assumed lost and patrons will be charged for replacement and processing costs.**
- ***When are patron accounts BLOCKED?***
Patron accounts will be blocked when they reach \$50.01 in charges and/or when 15 or more items become overdue.
- ***Will I still receive reminders about returning materials?***
Yes, via email or phone, based on your preferred method of contact.
The Library will now be implementing three (3) autorenewals for eligible items:
 - The Library will send an email/phone message to indicate whether a renewal has been successful or has failed. Failed renewals mean that the 3 time renewal limit has been reached and/or the material has a waiting list and cannot be renewed.
 - Items will be renewed from due date rather than date of renewal.
 - Patrons can renew items (by phone, online, etc.) **ONLY** within 2 days of due date.
 - Staff can continue to renew items for patrons anytime.
- ***What library charges remain?***
Charges for library services and products such as copying, printing, material replacement costs, and other miscellaneous charges remain.
- ***I've always thought of paying my fines as my donation to the Library. Can I still donate?***
Yes! Now and in the future, donations to the Library can be made through the [Buffalo & Erie County Public Library website](#). Donations will support critical Library programs and services.
- ***Why now?***
In recent years, Library System Administration has studied fine free programs already in place in other parts of the state and country. A major study of the

practice was done by the San Francisco Public Library in 2019 where they found the rate of late return was equal across all populations they served, but those in low-income neighborhoods were more likely to have their accounts blocked due to overdue fines. They also conducted interviews and assessments of libraries who had already implemented fine free policies and ultimately decided to eliminate all overdue fees in their library system.

Library Journal has conducted multiple surveys to assess trends in fine removal and published often on the subject. The Urban Libraries Council now estimates there are 500 libraries in North America that have gone fine free.

Based on this research, interviews with colleagues from other libraries, and an analysis of our financial and circulation statistics, the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library System Board of Trustees voted to eliminate late fines at their April 21, 2022 board meeting.

VISIT YOUR LIBRARY TODAY FOR MORE DETAILS!

We hope to encourage patrons to return to using local libraries while simultaneously attracting new users to benefit from the outstanding print and digital collections, onsite and virtual programming and training, public computers and WiFi - as well as the all-ages informational resources.

[Library System Circulation Policy](#)

[Library Locations](#)

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[Borrower Information and Renewal Notice Details](#)

[Additional Reading and the Library System Board *Fine Free* Resolution](#)

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