

FAQs to be displayed on Library Website

What is the difference between a fine and a fee?

Fines are a daily penalty assessed for the late return of library items. Fees are replacement charges assessed for the original purchase price of loss, unreturned, or damaged items plus \$5 processing fee. Additional fees include \$2.00 card replacement, and the \$10 non-refundable fee resulting from collection referral when items are not returned after 28 days overdue. Fees are still included as part of our return policy.

How is the library able to afford removing overdue fines?

Eliminating fines is less than a half percent of our library budget. No services will be affected by removing overdue fines.

Why did the library not eliminate fines earlier?

Overdue fine elimination is something the library considered but needed time to evaluate the impact. Once it was decided that the overall impact is a positive for the community, the Library Board and Alameda City Council were quick to approve the library proposal.

Which library patrons have had their fines forgiven?

Overdue fines for late returns have been eliminated from ALL patron accounts as of September 1, 2019; however, customers who have lost or damaged materials or collection fees may need to settle their account to reinstate borrowing privileges. The easiest way to find out if you have a remaining balance is to login to your library card account at alamedafree.org or stop into your local branch and talk with a staff member. Please be sure to bring your library card.

How will the library get back library materials when there are no overdue fines?

Patrons will be receiving a few courtesy notifications regarding their overdue status (see notification timeline for details). Reminding people of due dates and consequences of not returning materials is the most effective way to encourage timely returns.

Removing overdue fines send a negative message of personal responsibility to patrons.

The library's role is to provide information and encourage lifelong learning. It is not the library's role to teach responsibility to any age group. That lesson is best left to families and communities to decide on themselves.

Will there be refunds for previously paid fines?

No there will not be refunds to previously paid fines.

Will patrons have to pay for anything?

Patrons won't be charged overdue fines for late returns. However, if the item is not returned within 14 days of the due date, it will be considered lost and you will be charged for the original purchase price of the item and a processing fee of \$5. If the item is 28 days overdue your account might be sent to a collection agency with a \$10 non-refundable collection agency fee.

What happens if a patron does not return items by the due date?

If the item is NOT ON HOLD for another patron, the library will automatically renew the item for an additional three weeks. If there is a HOLD on the material, it cannot be auto-renewed and must be returned to the library ASAP. To find out if an item is eligible for renewal you can log on to your account <http://alameda.polarislibrary.com/polaris/>, click on "items out" and look under the "Renewals Left" column. If you need assistance renewing your account contact the library at 510-747-7777.

No matter how late items are returned there will never be a charge?

If an item is not returned within 28 days past the due date, the library card account may be referred to a collection agency. At that point, a non-refundable \$10 fee and a \$5 lost processing fee is assessed.

Is there a time limit on how long we can continue to accept items that are long overdue?

Generally, items long overdue are removed from the system after 1 year on Lost or Missing status. If patron returns a long overdue item then we can continue to accept it as long as the item has not been deleted from the catalog. When the item is returned the original price of the item and the book processing fee is waived.

Does the library allow refunds for lost items that have been paid?

If a patron finds a lost book that has already been paid for, we will refund the original cost of the book as well as the lost \$5 processing fee as long as it is within one year of payment. Patrons must provide receipt of payment. If account went into collections, the \$10 collection fee is non-refundable.

How will the library handle long standing holds?

When an item is on hold for a patron, the item is not renewable. We are emphasizing the timely return of materials by increasing the number of email notifications we provide patrons. If patrons have materials that are more than 28 days overdue they are subject to being sent to collections.

Will the library be increasing the materials budget?

The materials budget will not be negatively impacted by eliminating overdue fines. If there are gaps in our collection that need to be addressed we will make necessary adjustments over time.