

Proposal to eliminate library overdue fines at SMC

February 7, 2022

“The American Library Association asserts that imposition of monetary library fines creates a barrier to the provision of library and information services.” -- [ALA Resolution on Monetary Library Fines as a Form of Social Inequity \(2019\)](#)

A recent trend in academic and public libraries is the elimination of overdue fines for library materials. There are several factors contributing to this change. There is greater concern about equity and access to materials and to an education, and awareness of the role that library fine practices may play in this. Libraries are moving to more electronic information sources for which there is no checkout or overdue fines. California law changed in 2020 and colleges and universities are no longer allowed to withhold grades or transcripts for unpaid fines/fees ([AB 1313](#).) Lastly, the Covid pandemic has caused changes in library operations for many libraries, including suspension of fines.

We propose that the SMC Library stop charging overdue fines for late library materials and forgive existing overdue fines in our system. Fees for lost or damaged items would remain.

Here is a partial list of California community college libraries that have eliminated overdue fines:

- Pasadena City College
- Long Beach City College
- Mt. San Antonio College
- College of the Canyons
- Ventura College
- Sierra College
- Allan Hancock College.
- Copper Mountain College
- Cabrillo College
- Compton College

CCC libraries are eliminating overdue fines, seeing this as an equity issue. We should do the same.

We stopped charging overdue fines during the shutdown due to the pandemic. Library policies on Lost items would remain; students will still be charged for replacement cost and processing fee for items that are not returned at all.

Prior to passage of AB1313 our practice was to put holds on student registration for unpaid library fines or fees (if they were \$50 or more.) After passage of AB 1313 we stopped this practice on the advice of VP Chris Bonvenuto. In addition, it was his opinion that these fines and fees are not collectible and shouldn't be regarded as monies owed the District.

We would rather have students attending classes than barred from registering. We are also concerned about equity issues, where some students are able to get waivers of their registration holds but others might not think to request one.

Financial impact: loss of overdue fines. Possibly some loss of library materials; we will replace long-term overdue materials in a timely manner so that student access is not adversely impacted.

Other documents

[SMC Library current overdue fine policy](#)

[Fine Free Library Research](#) compiled by Aloha Sargent, librarian at Cabrillo College Library.

[More colleges following California's lead in no longer holding transcripts hostage over unpaid bills](#) by Jon Marcus, The Hechinger Report/LA Schools Report. July 6, 2021.