



New York public libraries ending late fees, waiving fines in equity push

BY MONIQUE BEALS - 10/05/21 01:20 PM EDT

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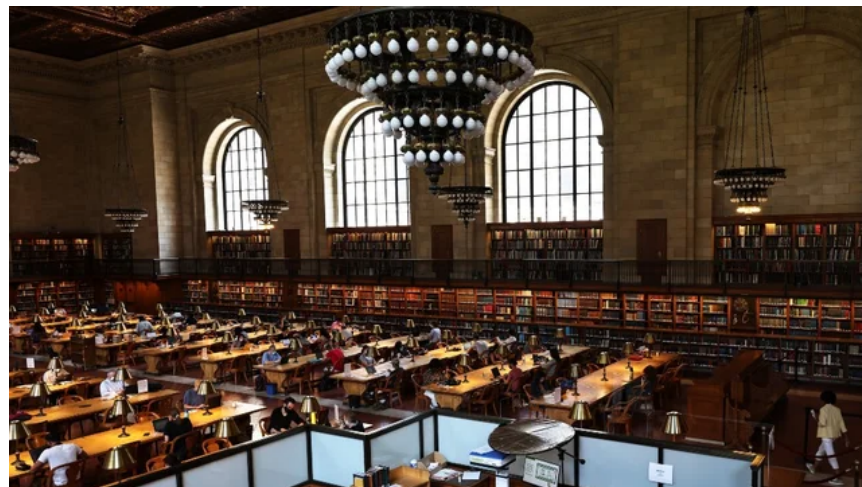
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New York officials announced Monday that public libraries will stop charging late fees and fines related to overdue books in an effort to reduce inequities in the city.

The New York Public Library [said in the announcement](#) that in addition to no longer fining patrons for overdue books, all existing fees would be waived as well.

The [library system's policy](#) noted that some replacement fees would still be charged after 30 days, but if the book borrower finds and returns lost books within 90 days, that fee would be refunded.

The library's policy change was motivated by the system's pursuit of a more equitable community after the pandemic exposed what the library referred to as "a Tale of Two Cities."

Some of New York's more vulnerable communities feared the possibility of being fined — or were previously blocked from using the library because of unpaid fees, the announcement said.

The potential for inequity was particularly evident among New York's young population, as 30 percent of blocked library cards belonged to patrons younger than 18, the library noted.

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"As New York grapples with the inequities laid bare by the pandemic, it is all the more urgent that we ensure the public library is open and freely available to all," Tony Marx, president of the New York Public Library, said in the announcement.

Marx noted that fines were "not effective in ensuring book returns," according to existing research.

"But, unfortunately, fines are quite effective at preventing our most vulnerable communities from using our branches, services, and books," he said, adding that prohibiting library access would be "the antithesis of our mission."

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