



City of Arts & Innovation

Board of Library Trustees

TO: BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES **DATE: NOVEMBER 8, 2021**

FROM: RIVERSIDE PUBLIC LIBRARY **WARDS: WARD 1**

SUBJECT: INFORMATIONAL REPORT ON LATE FINES ELIMINATED AT LOS ANGELES COUNTY LIBRARY AND NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

ISSUE:

That the Board of Library Trustees receive and file the informational report on late fines eliminated at Los Angeles County Library and New York Public Library.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board of Library Trustees receive and file the informational report on late fines eliminated at Los Angeles County Library and New York Public Library.

BACKGROUND:

On August 26, 2019, the Board of Library Trustees received and filed an informational report on an article from The Mercury News (mercurynews.com) dated May 31, 2019 titled "Are Library Late Fines on the Verge of Extinction?" Written by Patrick May.

The article identified a number of library jurisdictions that have eliminated overdue fees for library materials including books, audiobooks, CDs and DVDs. Specifically, it focuses on the Oakland Public Library as the jurisdiction was set to eliminate fines on July 1, 2019. The article also looks at a partnership in San Francisco between the Library and the Financial Justice Project that looked at how best to assess and reform the overdue fines. In both locations one of the key findings was that fines create unequal barriers to library access within the communities served.

DISCUSSION:

Recently, Los Angeles County Library and New York Public Library have eliminated late fines. Los Angeles county stated that fines for overdue library materials were originally implemented as a source of revenue, but the fines make up a small percentage of the library's revenue. Additionally, staffing costs associated with the collection of late fees exceeded the fee revenue collected in the past two fiscal years. Other library systems such as San Diego, San Francisco, Chicago and Denver have also adopted a fine free model.

The New York Public Library introduced a fine free model on October 4, 2021, and noted it was because the potential for inequity evident among their young population. Thirty percent of blocked library cards belonged to patrons younger than 18.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This item contributes to Strategic Priority No. 1 *Arts, Culture & Recreation* and Goal No. 1.1 - Strengthen Riverside's portfolio of arts, culture, recreation, senior and lifelong learning programs and amenities through expanded community partnerships, shared use opportunities and fund development

This item aligns with each of the five Cross-Cutting Threads as follows:

1. **Community Trust** – This report is transparent in providing information on the late fines elimination at Los Angeles county libraries and New York public libraries for inclusive community engagement, involvement of City Boards and Commissions, and timely reliable information.
2. **Equity** – This informational report provides members of the community equal access to share the benefits of community progress.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – The informational report on late fines eliminated at Los Angeles county libraries provides insight of library trends where libraries are waiving or eliminating fines and fees for overdue library materials.
4. **Innovation** – This report identifies methods and trends the library industry is using to meet the community's changing needs through collaborative partnerships and adaptive processes.
5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – This informational report on late fines eliminated at Los Angeles county libraries and New York public libraries relates to meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future and ensuring the City's capacity to persevere, adapt and grow during good and difficult times alike.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with the informational report on late fines eliminated at Los Angeles County Library and New York Public Library.

Prepared by: Erin Christmas, Library Director
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Attachments:

1. Article Titled Are library late fees on the verge of extinction? Dated June 3, 2019
2. Article Titled Late Fines Eliminated at LA County Libraries Dated August 12, 2021
3. Article Titled New York Public Libraries Ending Late Fees, Waiving Fines in Equity Push Dated October 6, 2021