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Board of supervisors unanimously eliminates fines on late library books



Garrett Ward works on a computer Tuesday at the Red Bluff Library. (Jake Hutchison — Daily News)

By **JAKE HUTCHISON** | jhutchison@redbluffdailynews.com | Red Bluff Daily News

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Deck said the decision would be more equitable as it would allow for more people to use the library's services.

"I think it's a reflection of the whole understanding of the library and how ultimately our goal is to provide access to as many people as possible," Deck said.

Supervisor and Chairman Bob Williams raised concern over the 40-item checkout limit and asked that Deck address how late items in mass would work.

Deck explained that too many late books at once would result in the patron being blocked from further checkouts. The individual would then risk having to pay for the items if they weren't returned at a certain point.



The back half of the Red Bluff Library as seen Tuesday lined with rows of books. (Jake Hutchison — Daily News)

While other libraries across the country have adopted similar models, the Tehama County Library system is the first in the North State to have taken this stance.

"I think it's important for everybody to think about barriers to service and figure out ways to make it work," Deck said.

Deck said, while the 15-cent late fee would be eliminated for the foreseeable future, those returning books in disrepair will still be responsible for a fine. To offset any loss, the library will start charging 10 cents a page for printing rather than the original 5 cents.

It's possible the library could save money by cutting the fines. As Deck stated in his agenda report, the Tehama County Library brought in roughly \$6,000 from fines, less than 2 percent of its annual budget, during the 2019/2020 fiscal year. The year before it was estimated that the cost of processing the fees was more than \$7,000.

Reference Librarian Georgia Scott, who had previously dealt with these fines, said the elimination of the fees would be especially helpful during the pandemic as it would reduce the threat of spread through money handling.



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more books due to minuscule amounts of money.

“It opens up the library to all of these people,” Scott said. “They feel so much better. Realistically they can utilize the library and do what they need to do because that was a real detriment. They wouldn’t be able to use computers. They wouldn’t be able to check out books. And it’s not as if they damaged or lost anything, they just turned something in late. I see it as a really positive thing for the library and the community.”

Eddie Proctor, a library science major and a clerk for the local library, said he had previously seen people avoid coming to the library when they have fees on their account.

“It’s a really good thing for our community right now,” Proctor said.

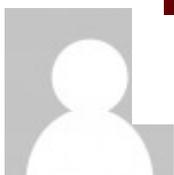


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Jake is a reporter by day, musician and craft beer enthusiast by night. He spends his weekends hiking and biking around Chico as well as hanging out with his family and friends.

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