

# **FINE FREE IS HERE!**

The Tehama County Library will no longer be charging late fees. We believe in providing access to books/digital resources for all. Eliminating the barrier of late fees means that more of our patrons will be able to use our services.

## **Why did the library go fine-free?**

### **COVID-19**

The pandemic has changed many things for the library. Part of our limited reopening strategy included not charging late fees. This was to promote social distancing and self-service models. As the uncertain nature of COVID-19 continues, we need to officially be fine-free.

### **It is equitable.**

Tehama County is better when everyone has access to our programs, services, and materials in order to pursue their dreams.

### **Effectiveness**

Late fines are only effective at encouraging people to stop using the library...not to return materials on time. Studies have shown that fines have no impact on return rates. According to [“Removing Barriers to Access,”](#) a Colorado State Library whitepaper: “The scant research on the impact of library fines and fees does not indicate a clear benefit to administering these policies and may be costly to enforce.” What we do know is this: of our 15,000 patrons, 5,000 have accounts that are blocked and have not used the library in over a year.

### **Fiscal Responsibility**

It isn't financially responsible. Last year, the library collected \$6,000 from overdue fines. This represents less than 1.9% of the Library's overall annual operating budget. We estimate that going fine-free would result in a reduction of staff time to collect and process overdue fines; it will also encourage the return of library materials, so many items will not have to be repurchased. Once implemented at the Tehama County Library, a fine-free program is estimated to save \$7,280 annually.

### **Health and Safety**

It promotes the health and safety of patrons and staff. Having late fees requires considerable contact between our patrons and staff. It can create lines at service counters. Without late fees, we have been able to exclusively use our self-service kiosk at the Red Bluff library. The reality of COVID 19 is that we need to have as simple of a transaction model as possible. Removing late fees promotes this value.

## **What does this mean for our patrons?**

You might be wondering if there will be an added cost to taxpayers? Absolutely not! We plan on adjusting our printing charges to cover any losses and if need be, adjusting other areas of our budget. Our plan is that going fine-free will get more people using the library without any net cost.

*You will no longer receive a daily late fine on overdue items.*

*You are still responsible for returning your items. We do want all items back! The library will still send you a series of reminders to return your items. If you damage a book or do not return it you will still need to pay for it.*

## **Going fine-free is a big change for the library community.**

Our hope is that removing this barrier will encourage usage and help our community recover from the challenges of COVID-19. Most importantly we want to remove the shame that being late with a library book can cause.

From <http://www.tehamacountylibrary.org/services/fine-free/> Accessed 7/2/2021.