West Hartford Public Library Goes Fine-Free

Beginning July 1, 2023, West Hartford Public Library will be fine-free in order to fulfill the Library's mission and support the Town's efforts to provide equitable services to all residents. Here are answers to some questions you may have about this change. If you have any additional questions, please see a staff member or email reference@westhartfordlibrary.org.

What does fine-free mean?

Going fine-free means that the library will no longer collect overdue fines on all books and most other materials returned after their due date. Replacement charges for lost items and some late fees for equipment or specialty loans will still apply.

Why is the library no longer charging overdue fines?

The primary reason for this change is to reduce barriers to library services, especially for low-income residents, children and families, and seniors on fixed incomes. Fines can discourage patrons from borrowing materials or using the library entirely, impacting those who could benefit the most from the library's resources. We want all members of the community to use the library equally.

Libraries across Connecticut and nationwide are going "fine-free" to foster equity and promote easy access to lifelong learning for all.

Any other reasons?

Yes! We want our interactions with you, our patrons, to be pleasant and productive. Rather than reminding you of small fees when you're in the library, we would prefer to spend that time recommending great new reads, planning events, and opening a world of possibilities for our community.

Our community is stronger and healthier when all people have access to the programs, services, and materials they need to pursue their educational, career, family, and life goals, regardless of their ability to pay for them.

Will everything be free from overdue fines?

No overdue fines will be charged for most item types. Materials that are never returned, or returned in a damaged condition, will be charged the replacement cost of the item. Once materials are returned in good condition, the replacement cost will be removed from your account.

What if I have old overdue fines on my account?

Overdue fines have already been wiped clean for a fresh start; however, you are still expected to return all overdue items that are on your card or pay the replacement cost for any lost items. As long

as we get back the materials from you in good condition, the replacement fees are removed from your account.

What if I have fines from another library?
You are still responsible for paying overdue fines to other libraries that charge them. All items borrowed from other libraries are subject to the lending policies of the owning library.

If you check out or renew items while visiting another library in the Library Connection, Inc. (LCI) consortium, you could still be charged fines based on that library's fine policy.

Will I still have to pay for printing and photocopying?
Yes. While overdue fines are punitive, fees for printing, faxing, and photocopying help us to recoup the cost of providing those services and associated materials such as printers, copiers, paper, and toner.

Won't the library lose a lot of revenue?
Fine revenue accounted for a negligible portion of the library's total revenue. The end of fine collection will not affect the library's ability to deliver outstanding programs, collections, and services.

Won't people just check things out and never return them?
"No overdue fines" does not mean "no responsibility". If your item is overdue more than one loan period (plus two additional automatic renewal periods, if the item has no holds), then the item will be assumed lost, and you will be charged the full replacement cost of the item. If the total replacement cost of one or more item(s) is $25 or over, your card privileges will be suspended until you return the item(s) in good condition OR pay the replacement cost.

Don't overdue fines encourage people to return items on time?
There is no evidence that shows this to be true. Hundreds of libraries in Connecticut and across the US have eliminated overdue fines and seen either minimal change or even a noticeable increase in the number of items returned.