



San Francisco Public Library

100 Larkin Street, San Francisco, CA 94102

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 19, 2019

TO: All Staff

FROM: Michael Lambert, City Librarian *ML*

RE: **Interim Suspension of Overdue Fine Collections**

As many libraries across the country eliminate fines for overdue materials, the San Francisco Public Library partnered with the San Francisco Financial Justice Project of the Treasurer's Office to study whether San Francisco should go fine free. The study found that library fines are a barrier to equitable access of resources and services, disproportionately affect low-income San Franciscans, create conflict between patrons and the library, require an inefficient use of staff time and do not consistently ensure borrowed materials end up back on library shelves.

After reviewing these findings, on January 17, 2019, the San Francisco Public Library Commission voted to approve a resolution urging the Board of Supervisors to amend the Library's fines and fees schedule, eliminating all overdue fines.

On March 21, 2019, the San Francisco Public Library Commission voted to approve a resolution urging the Board of Supervisors to, if they approve the resolution to eliminate all overdue fees, also pass an ordinance to forgive all outstanding overdue fines owed to the Library and authorizing the San Francisco Public Library to write-off all overdue fines from patron accounts.

Those two resolutions will go before the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor for possible adoption in the coming months. While we await these decisions, the San Francisco Public Library has decided that patron records should not be blocked from borrowing physical materials from the Library because they have accrued fines associated with overdue items.

For that reason effective April 22, 2019, patrons will be unable to check out additional physical materials only if they have billed items on their Library record.

While we await a decision from the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor, fines accrued by patrons - even in excess of \$10 - will not restrict a patron from borrowing items from the Library. Patrons who have billed items on their library accounts will continue to be automatically blocked from checking out further materials through Sierra, the Library's Integrated Library System (patron database).

Note that **fines** are accrued from books and materials returned after the due date while **billed items** are costs associated with the replacement of lost or damaged books and other materials.

At the service desk, Library staff will not collect overdue fines from community members unless the patron insists upon paying their overdue fines. Library staff are encouraged to let patrons know that at this time the Library is awaiting a decision from our City's leaders about whether the San Francisco Public Library will go fine free.

In the case that the Board of Supervisors and/or the Mayor determine that the Library will *not* go fine free, the Library will resume collecting overdue fines per the Library's established [Fines and Fees Schedule](#).

The Library continues to focus on encouraging community members to return books in a responsible and timely fashion to the Library so others may enjoy the shared resources of their Library.