

# Negative Balances and Refunds

There are several scenarios that may result in a patron account showing a negative balance or credit. PINES policy states that patrons are not allowed to carry a credit balance on their account, so accounts that show negative balances should be reviewed regularly and balanced. In some cases, the patron is due a refund, and in other cases they are not.

## Obtaining a List of Patrons with Negative Balances

Open the Evergreen Staff Client and go to: *Administration > Local Administration > Patrons with Negative Balances*

This screen may take some time to load. It will default to the library location that your workstation is registered to. After it loads, you may select a different library location.

Double-click on any resulting patron to open that patron's record.

## Investigating a Negative Balance

1. Open the patron's account in the Evergreen Staff Client and click on Bills.
2. Review the bills to determine the cause of the negative balance.
3. Right-click on a line item and View Full Details to see detailed information about that bill number. This shows each charge (including voided charges) and each payment that was applied to that bill number. If an item has been both voided and forgiven, or voided and paid for, or forgiven and paid for, you should see evidence of it on this screen.
4. You may also wish to look at the history (from the main Bills screen, click the History button). From here you may view all Transactions or limit to all Payments for any specified time period.

## Correcting a Negative Balance Caused by a Bill Being Forgiven and Voided

If you see that charges were voided under the Bills section, but also paid or forgiven under the Payments section, then that would explain how the bill number ended up with a credit that should not be there. In this scenario, the patron is not due a refund. To correct this, add a bill to that bill number for the amount of the incorrect credit:

1. From the patron's account, open the Bills screen.
2. Right-click on a listed bill and click Full Details to confirm that the problem is that a bill was both voided and forgiven.
3. Return to the main Bills screen.

4. Right-click on the bill and click Add Billing.
5. A pop-up window will open.
6. Choose Miscellaneous as the Billing Type.
7. Enter the Amount needed to balance the bill (if the balance owed showed -2.60, then enter 2.60).
8. Enter a detailed Note explaining the added bill (for example, "Bill #12345 - Fines were forgiven and voided in error. Adding bill for \$2.60 to balance the account. TMcCanna STATELIB-A 1/25/2018")
9. Click Submit Bill.
10. Click the Refresh button to refresh the main Bills screen to see the balanced account - this is sometimes cached and you may need to close the patron account and reopen it to see the balanced account.

See Also:

- Walkthrough - Negative balance caused by a bill being forgiven and voided
- Walkthrough - Correcting problems caused by an incorrect attempt to fix a negative balance

## Refunds

PINES policy states that if a lost item is paid for in full, but then found and returned by the patron within six months (180 days) of payment, then the owning library should refund the payment minus any overdue fees that had been automatically voided when the item was marked lost, and minus any processing fees which had been applied.

### 1) Verify that the refund is due.

1. From the main Bills screen on the patron's account, right-click on the bill that is incorrectly showing a negative balance and click Full Details.
2. Confirm that the problem is that an item was paid for (the payment information should be in the Payments section) and then voided (in the Bills section, Voided will be 'Yes' and the Note will say 'VOIDED FOR LOST ITEM RETURNED' on the charge for Lost Materials).
3. Review the payment date and the Voided date to confirm that the item was returned within 6 months (180 days) of payment. If the item was returned after that date, then no refund is due to the patron. If it was within that 6 months, then the patron is due the amount they paid minus any overdue charges that had been voided, minus any processing fee. Make a note of how much money is actually owed to the patron for a refund.
4. Return to the main Bills screen.

### 2) Confirm the amount of the refund.

1. Confirm that the amount showing as owed to the patron matches what you have calculated in your investigation. If the displayed number is incorrect due to other billing issues or errors, correct each of them until the amount shown is correct.

### 3) Process the refund.

1. From the Bills screen, place a check mark in the box on the billing line with the negative amount owed.

Check Out Items Out (0) Holds (0 / 0) Bills **4.75** Messages Edit Other Patron Search

**Total Owed:** -4.75      **Refunds Available:** \$4.75  
**Total Billed:** \$11.40      **Session Voided:** \$0.00  
**Total Paid/Credited:** \$16.15

**Owed for Selected:** \$0.00      **Pending Payment:** \$0.00  
**Billed for Selected:** \$0.00      **Pending Change:** \$0.00  
**Paid/Credited for Selected:** \$0.00

**Payment Type:** Cash  
**Check Number:**   
**Payment Received:**   
 **Annotate**     

Bill Patron    History    Check All Refunds      << < > >> Actions Rows 25 Page 1

#	Status	Payment Pending	Billing Location	Barcode	Title	Owning Library	Type	Total Paid	Total Billed	Start	Bill #	Balance Owed
1		\$0.00	HOU-CV	3102800581...	Easter..story...	HOU-CV	circulation	\$16.15	\$11.40	09/29/2018 1...	195186462	-4.75

Receipt On Payment    # Items 1

Bill Patron    History    Check All Refunds      << < > >> Actions Rows 25 Page 1

#	Status	Payment Pending	Billing Location	Barcode	Title	Owning Library	Type	Total Paid	Total Billed	Start	Bill #	Balance Owed
1		-4.75	HOU-CV	3102800581...	Easter..story...	HOU-CV	circulation	\$16.15	\$11.40	09/29/2018 1...	195186462	-4.75

Receipt On Payment    # Items 1

2. Check the Annotate Payment box.
3. Enter the amount of the refund in the "Payment Received" box. This is because this is the payment the *patron will receive* from the library. The system understands that a refund is being processed and that the library is not receiving any money from the patron.

**Pay Bill**

**Payment Type:** Cash  
**Check Number:**   
**Payment Received:** 4.75  
 **Annotate**     

<< < > >> Actions Rows 25 Page 1

Total Paid	Total Billed	Start	Bill #	Balance Owed
\$16.15	\$11.40	09/29/2018 1...	195186462	-4.75

Receipt On Payment    # Items 1

4. Change the number of receipts to the number you will need for your libraries processes. (The test server shows # item instead of # receipts as it should.)

### Pay Bill

**Payment Type**

**Check Number**

**Payment Received**

**Annotate**

**Actions** ▾ **Rows** 25 ▾ **Page** 1 ▾

Item Number	Type	Total Paid	Total Billed	Start	Bill #	Balance Ow
ABC R...	circulation	\$16.15	\$11.40	09/29/201...	19518646...	-4.75

Receipt On Payment **# Items**

5. Click Apply Payment.

### Pay Bill

**Payment Type**

**Check Number**

**Payment Received**

**Annotate**

**Actions** ▾ **Rows** 25 ▾ **Page** 1 ▾

Total Paid	Total Billed	Start	Bill #	Balance Owed
\$16.15	\$11.40	09/29/2018 1...	195186462	-4.75

Receipt On Payment **# Items**

- Enter annotation (for example, "Refund check request for \$9.99 sent to business office on 6/25/2020 JDoe").
- Click OK.
- If cash reports are used a copy of the receipt will need to be placed in the register to account for the difference in the actual cash and the cash report. Another copy of the receipt should be sent to the business office with the check request as justification for the request. If the patron is present a copy of the receipt can be given stating how much they will receive in the form of a check.
- Click the Refresh button to refresh the main Bills screen to see the balanced account - this is sometimes cached and you may need to close the patron account and reopen it to see the balanced account.

Currently there is a bug in the refund process. If there is more than one billing line that has a negative amount due, each billing line must be processed as a separate refund. The system will not process them together.

Also, if a patron owes money and has a refund, the refund must be sorted to the top of the bills to be processed. Once the refund is processed, the fines due can be paid with the refund amount. The patron will then receive a check for the difference in the fines owed and the refund if there is any negative amount still due the patron. Multiple receipts for the fines paid would need to be printed to account for the difference in the amount of the refund receipt and the actual refund amount.

## Sources of Confusion

There are a few options you might encounter in the Evergreen Staff Client that do not work the way you might expect them to for PINES, so we recommend that you do not use them.

- If you right-click on a bill and click Refund, it will add the dollar amount to the Payment Pending column, but does not complete the Refund. You would still need to click Apply Payment to complete the process. For PINES libraries doing refunds, it is usually better to click Check All Refunds and then Apply Payment.
- If you right-click on a bill and click Add Billing, one of the Billing Types is Refund: Lost Item Returned. If you use this, it may appear to balance the account (unless there are other fines and fees on the account), but the transactions will not show up under Bill History. For PINES libraries doing refunds, it is usually better to click Check All Refunds and then Apply Payment.

## Help Desk

If you are unable to identify the cause of the negative balance or unable to correct it, please submit a detailed Help Desk ticket.

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<https://pines.georgialibraries.org/dokuwiki/> - **PINES Documentation**

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