

## Action Item 5: Money Owed Between Libraries

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### Overview:

Current PINES policy is that all payments for Lost items, Lost processing fees, Long Overdue items, and Long Overdue processing fees taken by a library other than the owning library be remitted to the owning library. Other types of payments (for late fees, replacement library cards, etc.) are kept by whichever library accepts the payment.

### Proposal:

Policy Change Proposal by J. Sara Paulk, Houston County Library System:

Given that fines stay at the library where paid, please consider this to extend to all processing fees and lost book fees. Adding another level of complexity about returning money (processing fees for long overdue books) to other libraries may be an exercise in futility when the existing structure is cumbersome and faulty.

### Survey Results:

The following summary is based on survey results from 33 PINES Subcommittee Members and Directors representing 29 library systems.

### Should libraries keep payments made for LOST ITEMS and LOST ITEM PROCESSING FEES made at their libraries regardless of the item's owning library?

#### Responses from Subcommittee Members:

Should libraries keep payments made for LOST ITEMS and LOST ITEM PROCESSING FEES made at their libraries regardless of the item's owning library?	Responses	Percentage
Yes	6	40%
No	9	60%
Undecided	0	0%

#### Responses from Directors who are not Subcommittee Members:

Should libraries keep payments made for LOST ITEMS and LOST ITEM PROCESSING FEES made at their libraries regardless of the item's owning library?	Responses	Percentage
Yes	5	28%
No	13	72%
Undecided	0	0%

## Should libraries keep payments made for LONG OVERDUE ITEMS and LONG OVERDUE PROCESSING FEES made at their libraries regardless of the item's owning library?

### Responses from Subcommittee Members:

Should libraries keep payments made for LONG OVERDUE ITEMS and LONG OVERDUE PROCESSING FEES made at their libraries regardless of the item's owning library?	Responses	Percentage
Yes	8	53%
No	7	47%
Undecided	0	0%

### Responses from Directors who are not Subcommittee Members:

Should libraries keep payments made for LONG OVERDUE ITEMS and LONG OVERDUE PROCESSING FEES made at their libraries regardless of the item's owning library?	Responses	Percentage
Yes	6	33%
No	11	61%
Undecided	1	6%

## Additional Comments

### Comments From People In Favor of the Change:

- 1) It will create less paper work as a whole
- 2) It will encourage libraries to accept payment and to encourage patrons to pay off or make payments towards their accounts
- 3) Since reports show items that have been paid for there is no need for additional contact between libraries about items paid - catalogers can have this report run and then either have the item replaced or remove the record from the catalog
- 4) Patrons will still need to be held accountable for their materials - if they say they turned it in at a certain library then it should be the responsibility of the patron to contact that library to find out what happened to the library -- libraries should only step in as part of this process only right before the moment payment is about to be made (verifying the item is actually LOST/LONGOVERDUE/DAMAGED)
- 5) As with PINES procedures accounts need to properly and thoroughly annotated as to what is going on with that particular item (when items are damaged for example)
- Currently policy states that payments (on lost items) must be remitted monthly. So if a patron makes a partial payment on her/his balance and \$1 of that payment is on a lost item, that partial payment still counts as an amount that must be remitted monthly.  
Regardless, the PINES policy on money owed between libraries should be practical, easy to implement, and not require a large investment in staff time.
- It is more trouble than it is worth to send payments from patrons to other PINES libraries. I think the director that really wanted her money has retired. Libraries share. Let's stop the madness.

- The money we owe and is owed to us mostly breaks even - this will save time not having to cut checks.

#### **Comments From People Against the Change:**

- I believe this practice would be a detriment to the PINES system and holds process. PINES currently offers a level of security that our investment (meaning cost of book & processing) will be either returned to us or recovered. Ending this financial reassurance would mean a higher level of risk for systems who show a higher level of lending versus receiving hold items. Any challenging aspects in this process can be addressed with sound workflows and accountability.
- I feel that those fees belong to the book's owning library and should be sent to them. How else will they be able to afford replacement?
- I have a report that runs automatically every month that goes straight to the accounting office. My accounting office sends checks on a monthly basis.  
This policy requires that library staff at each library monitor and review payments received to ensure that checks have been sent for all debts owed to other libraries, and can be very time consuming to do properly. I believe this statement to be false and with proper setup, this can be done at one location and be completely streamlined.  
Money paid for a lost/damaged items that does not belong to you should be returned to the owning library."
- If books that were paid for with tax money from my county are lost by someone in another system then the money plus the associated fees should be returned to the budget of my county library system. Our funding agency would look very harshly on money paid for HCLS books being kept by another library system. (I would think that auditors would not look favorably on that either.)  
When we became part of PINES, one of the questions asked was what happens when an-out-of county person gets one of our books and it is lost or damaged. We were able to tell them that HCLS was paid for that item and that we used the money to replace that item. Some systems have never met their obligation and returned the money but we have always tried to send the money to the owning library. I suppose that the amounts are very probably equal but the perception would be that other PINES libraries are "ripping us off" and that we were short-changing our citizens.
- The owning library should receive payments for lost/longoverdue items so that they may apply the funds to the purchase of materials to replace what is gone from their collection.  
Overdue fines are a different matter- these fines are not usually applied toward replacing items in a collection.
- The solution to the problem is better staff training and an easily understandable procedure. My libraries need the monies paid for lost items and the processing fees to replace the lost item.
- This is a training issue. All front line staff should know how to handle lost and long overdue items. A process should be in place to alert the bookkeeping staff when items are paid for that belong to other libraries so he/she may issue a check to the owning libraries.
- This would not work for those of us who use a collection agency. If all the libraries in GA. used the same collection agency, it might work and be a wash, but they don't. We are charged \$ 8.95 for each patron sent to the collection agency to try to get our money for our lost items and the processing fee. On a monthly basis we get an invoice for the amount of money paid to "supposedly our library," but the computer doesn't tell Unique where the money was paid ----just that a patron has been cleared. Staff must go deeper in the record to find out which library received the money. We have a special report sent to us each month to tell

us which library in our six branch system actually received the money. On a rare occasion now I may see that someone has "waived" forgive debt for the patron. On further research I find that the money was actually paid at another library and I have to contact them about returning our money. It is just not fair that a small branch library like Irwin or Turner has to pay for a debt paid at another library, who "kept" their money.

- Uncle Remus is thoroughly against this.
- We have set up procedures in such a way that by the time the business manager receives the paperwork she pays it just like any other invoice or bill we owe.
- We use a collection agent and need to recap these fees. Since some PINES libraries do not do collections, their keeping those fees seems inequitable.
- While, I agree that returning fines and fees to other libraries is cumbersome, I think that the purchasing library deserves to have the monies returned to their library. Money from lost books in particular is used to purchase additional books (either replacements or new books). I think that the additional processing is worthwhile when the end result is monies being returned to the purchasing library.