

Action Item 3: Adjust 'dvd-mid' Fine Level

Proposed Change to Circulation Matrix:

Submitted by: Susan Stephens, Director of Chattooga County Library System

I would like to propose that the "dvd-mid" default recurring fine level be changed from 0.50 / day to 0.20 / day.

We feel like we are losing a lot of DVDs to overdues because the fines mount up rapidly on 15 DVDs. In our poverty-stricken area when large fines accumulate in a few days, some patrons decide it is not worth bringing the items back at all because they can't pay the fines off. I would like to ask for the fines to be reduced to .20 a day just like books, especially since most of our DVDs cost less than a popular novel.

PINES Note:

An alternative would be to add a "Recurring Fine (Low)" option of 0.20 / day to dvd-mid, but this could make it confusing for patrons to determine what level of fine they would owe if they check out DVDs from multiple systems with different fine levels and are late returning their items.

For additional reference, see the PINES Circulation Matrix at:

https://pines.georgialibraries.org/dokuwiki/doku.php?id=cat:circulation_matrix

Survey Results:

The following summary is based on survey results from 38 PINES Subcommittee members and Directors representing 28 library systems. One question was asked:

Do you approve of this proposed change?

Summary of All Responses:

| | Responses | Percentage |
|----------|------------------|-------------------|
| Yes | 19 | 50% |
| No | 16 | 42% |
| Not Sure | 3 | 8% |

Responses from Cataloging Subcommittee Members:

| | Responses | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 7 | 64% |
| No | 4 | 36% |
| Not Sure | 0 | 0% |

Responses from Other Subcommittee Members:

| | Responses | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 6 | 55% |
| No | 4 | 36% |
| Not Sure | 1 | 9% |

Responses from Directors who are not Subcommittee Members:

| | Responses | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 6 | 38% |
| No | 8 | 50% |
| Not Sure | 2 | 12% |

Comments in Favor of the Change

- On its face value, I agree with Susan. But, I would like to hear the argument(s), (also known as discussion), as to why there currently exists a fines payment difference between books and DVDs. I'm just curious...Could it be a "difference" that has outlived its usefulness???
- Voting for the alternative option. On a separate note, we may find a better solution in finding ways to encourage patrons to return their materials on time, rather than lowering fines to alleviate possible financial burden.
- Our DVD late fees are \$.20 per day, and the checkout time is 2 weeks. I think that is sufficient. I have encountered this difference from other systems' policies, and it causes consternation on the part of the patron.
- The original change to the circulation matrix lowered the checkout period from 14 days to 7 days and increased the fines to 50 cents per day with the creation of dvd-mid. Dvd-long has the checkout permissions (14 days | 2 renewals | 20 cents per day) which is similar to the initial checkout permissions for visuals prior to the updated circ matrix. Under the circumstances of late fines for patrons in this specific library system the items

for the specific library system should instead be changed to dvd-long to increase the amount of time patrons have the items while giving their patrons the advantage of a lower fine level. Patrons (in my humble opinion) in the long run will continue to accrue the same amount of fines regardless of the fines level, they will have the items out longer in an overdue status in order to do so. I do not think lowering just the fines in this particular circumstance will solve the greater issue. Lower fines would be beneficial to all patrons of PINES who check out DVDs and create less confusion overall (and since it has been several years since the circulation matrix was updated a current change could possibly create happier patrons in the short-term) but the issue of returning items on time will still be an ongoing issue regardless. If the fines for dvd and dvd-mid is updated to 20 cents per day then the circ modifier for vhs for those libraries who have vhs still (video and video-mid) should also be changed to .20 cents per day. I would prefer to vote no on this but I am voting YES for the greater benefit of the public. Even in the current economic circumstances for libraries I personally think we would get more patrons active in the library if we decreased the number of items permitted per account and did away with fines altogether but that is whole different topic of discussion.

Comments Against the Change

- We use dvd-mid and it would require a policy change for us. I think adding the low fine option would be ok, but still not ideal. Patrons have so many ways to renew items, and the libraries can always forgive fines at their discretion. Maybe, if patrons don't have enough time with the items, that library system should consider using dvd-long, which is already at 20 cents per day and gives patrons 2 weeks per checkout and renewal.
- If a system is using dvd-mid as their primary circ modifier for DVDs, staff should be encouraged to remind patrons the many ways they can renew (online, by phone, in person) at the end of each transaction. With a possible three weeks on the circ, it seems that the system is allowing the patrons more than enough time to return DVDs in a timely manner.
- I believe a better solution would be to change to "dvd long" if a library is in an impoverished area that might have trouble with .50 fines. We've always used "dvd long" here.
- We agree with the PINES note to add a "Recurring Fine (Low)" option of 0.20 / day to dvd-mid" and follow the pattern set by "bestseller".
- I serve a very poor population, but I think that the basic principles of library service still apply. We offer free materials to everyone in our community. And as long as you return those materials on time and in good condition, we will offer you more free materials. Trying to adjust our policies to fit different socioeconomic communities would just make maintaining a state wide library card even harder.
- There needs to be consistency for circ staff. If we change the fine amount, it needs to be the same across the board. .20/day is too little. Another option might be to make all fines - books, movies, etc. at .25/day.
- I think that the \$0.50 per day is an incentive to return the DVDs on time. The circ staff can make sure the customer is informed of the late fee and stress the necessity of returning on time.

- Let's stop it with the fines, please. Eliminate altogether we're being unnecessary punitive in a time when our usage is down statewide. Let's not inadvertently accelerate that.

Other Comments

- Our system uses dvd-long so I feel it wouldn't be right for me to say yes or no since it won't apply to us.
- Follow PINES note and add a "Recurring Fine (Low)" option of 0.20 / day to dvd-mid. Sure, there might be confusion about which "kind" of DVD a patron has checked out (accrues \$0.50 versus those accruing \$0.20) BUT it would be consistent (ideally) across an individual library system. Patrons in our area are already primed for differences in DVD circulation when they leave our system: we allow renewals and our neighbors in Newton County do not.