FSU Libraries Fines Policy and Procedures Changes

- FSU Libraries is changing its overdue fines model to a patron-centered model. The first stage in the patron-centered model was to increase number of renewals from three to five. The next stage has been to eliminate cumulative overdue fines for General Collection materials (e.g., no $0.25 fines for overdue Gen materials). The new policy will not fine the patron overdue fines, but after 60 days the item will go to Lost status, and the patron will be charged for the full price of the item and a processing fee. The processing fee is as yet undetermined, but it will be calculated from the staff time spent researching price of book/processing the replacement item.

- Patron-centered model: This model is intended to be more forgiving. The amount of time and money spent processing overdue items is more than the amount received. Additionally, the revenue collected from overdue fines does not actually go to the libraries’ budget. By eliminating overdue fines, FSU Libraries hopes to free the Fines Management department to focus on more important matters, such as replacing lost and damaged books. FSU Libraries will still have overdue fines for ILL items, UBorrow items, and recalled materials to encourage returns of time-sensitive materials.

- Question: What specific aspects of staff time are currently involved with overdue fines processing? Answer: Management of patrons contesting overdue fines takes up a lot of time.

- Question: Is the majority of time spent in management of complaints about fines, or is the majority spent in dealing with a system that doesn’t work (e.g., Aleph, etc.). Answer: The majority of time spent goes to reviewing cases for returned item claims and managing upset patrons who have been charged minimal fines but can’t register for classes, graduate, receive separation package, etc. As the libraries are running out of physical space and focusing more on electronic access to resources, the goal is to reduce the amount of books on the shelves. If a book is checked out to a patron and no one needs the book, it will be dedicated to other projects. Currently, FSU Libraries have a 24-hour grace period before overdue materials are sent to billing.

- Solution for materials returned during unstaffed times such as the weekend:
  - Library staff can backdate in Aleph and check in items as if they were returned on the last business day rather than the current day. For example, if a patron returned an item into a book drop on a Friday but the item was not received until the following Monday, library staff can backdate Aleph to Friday before checking the item in.

- Has FSU Libraries considered increasing grace periods in general?
  - There is no grace period for reserve and media items. Currently, there is a 24-hour grace period for General Collection items. The libraries are now implementing a 60-day grace period for General Collection items.

- It has been proposed to waive the replacement cost of an item if it returned or replaced, but the borrower is still responsible for a processing fee. FSU Libraries is still trying to develop a figure for the processing fee.

- The new fines model rollout: The new model is still getting approval, and there is no official rollout date yet.
  - There will be a soft launch in which FSU Libraries will evaluate where system/policy errors are. After this beta period, FSU Libraries will broadcast the new policy more broadly with an official announcement.
Where does the processing fee revenue go? It is still going to University Center in lieu of the lost revenue stream that they had previously received from fines.

FSU Libraries is considering implementing a $25-$40 processing fee.

The Music Library has a tiered billing system with $50 tiers for lost items and an exact price charge for items worth $150 and more. The Music Library believes revenue evens out from item to item as compared to what is lost in staff time spent and processing replacement materials.

Is FSU Libraries considering increasing the maximum overdue fine from $5? No, FSU Libraries want to be more forgiving to patrons and don’t want them to give them the perception that the libraries are asking for more money from them. FSU Libraries want to promote the idea that FSU is a research institution, and that they understand that people make mistakes during their research time. This will be communicated via an increase in number of renewals and elimination of late fees.

The Music Library believes its current fines policy has caused a shift in the College of Music’s culture and library use. In general, there is more concern about delinquency re: lateness and lost items.

In general, patrons are more annoyed by the online convenience fee payment in addition to overdue fines.

The importance of implementing overdue fines depends on the rarity of the library collection. For example, Music’s collection contains many rare physical items, whereas FSU Libraries are shifting focus to digital collections.

Patrick Fulton will send the committee a research paper he recently read that fines and their impact on loan returns.

UBorrow Overdue/Lost Item Policy

UBorrow overdue fines/lost item replacement charges: Within the current UBorrow system, all UBorrow materials are considered a temporary part of the borrowing university collection. The borrower is billed according to the pickup location’s fines policy. The idea is that fines should balance out, but this is not necessarily the case as some universities’ borrowers are timely in returning items and some are not. CSUL is currently re-evaluating this policy and will be sending out a survey to university libraries soon.

As part of the claim return process at FSU Libraries, a patron can contest an overdue fine or replacement fee if an item gets lost in the mail. However, as part of the UBorrow process, UBorrow items are discharged at least twice in two different departments before shipment in order to ensure that an item is still not on a patron’s record before delivery to the lending library.

Does the elimination of overdue fines need to go through the Board of Trustees? This is unknown. It seems as though it is different for each university.

Library Updates

The Maguire Medical Library will be hosting an event for World Diabetes Day at the College of Medicine. The event will be held on November 14 at 9:00 a.m. in the College of Medicine Atrium. The MML will be making a special announcement about its newest initiative: The PLaid Journal, a diabetes-focused, open-access, peer-reviewed journal. The Campus Circulation Committee is invited, as well as any colleagues members wish to extend the invitation to.

The Law Library will be reserved for law students only in the upcoming several weeks.

Meeting adjourned at 1:54 p.m.

Next meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 3 at 1 p.m. in Dirac Science Library.