



FINE FREE KFL

*THE MISSION OF THE KENNEBUNK FREE LIBRARY IS
TO INSPIRE AND ENABLE OUR COMMUNITIES TO
DISCOVER, LEARN, AND CONNECT*

It is likely that every one of us here can agree that a public library belongs to the community it serves and that everyone deserves equal access to it. In our years of experience working with this community, KFL staff has seen over and over again how library fines work against the goal of equal access.

The richest and poorest of our patrons accrue fines at the same rates – occasional overdue library items are a universal experience. The difference is the effect of those fines. Many patrons can hand over \$5 or \$10 without thinking twice about it and resume borrowing. Some have to wait weeks for another paycheck before paying their fines. Others give up on using the library altogether because they simply cannot afford the fines. That library fines are equal for everyone does not mean that they are fair or equitable.

The American Library Association and other professional organizations are urging as many libraries as possible to go fine free. Recognizing that fines have the effect of barring access to our most vulnerable populations, many libraries around Maine and around the country have followed that advice. KFL staff unanimously believes that it is time for us to do the same. Eliminating fines will truly enable everyone in our communities to discover, learn, and connect.

Equality



Equity





KFL/COMMUNITY INFORMATION

BOOK FINES

\$.15 per item, per day

Up to a \$5 per item maximum

DVD FINES

\$.60 per item, per day

Up to a \$5 per item maximum

When charges on an account exceed \$5.00, patrons are no longer able to check items out from the library or use online services.

1. The first overdue notice is sent when the item(s) is 5 days overdue.
2. A second notice is sent when item(s) is 10 days overdue.
3. A bill is sent when item(s) is 20 days overdue.
4. A phone call is made to patron when item(s) is 25 days overdue.
5. If there is no response to the above requests, a letter from the director will be mailed.

LOST, DAMAGED, UNRETURNED BOOKS

Patron charged replacement cost of
the item.

KFL Fines Snapshot

KFL TOTAL PATRONS: 8,405

BLOCKED PATRONS

Total: 700

Children: 121

Adults: 579

PATRONS WITH FINES

Total: 2333

Children: 324

Adult: 2009

TOTAL AMOUNT OWED IN FINES*

Total: \$9591.07

On Blocked Accounts: \$6582.77

On Unblocked Accounts: \$3008.30

TOTAL AMOUNT OWED IN LOST/DAMAGED*

Total: \$6396.32

On Blocked Accounts: \$6391.34

On Unblocked Accounts: \$4.98

Since 2014, KFL has collected \$12,389.29 in billed items, an average of \$1,769.90/year.

Since the start of the pandemic closure, KFL has waived a total of \$5,410 in fines.

As of March 2021

*Accruing since 2014

Poverty in Kennebunk

Though median household income in Kennebunk is higher than Maine averages, there is still significant poverty.

- 8.6 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. For a married couple, that's an annual income of \$17,240.
- About 12 Percent of the population lives on less than \$24,999 per year.
- Of 2,535 students enrolled in RSU21, 506 (19.96 percent) are

eligible for Free & Reduced Lunch. Of those, 15.54% eligible for free lunch, 4.42% eligible for reduced lunch.

Fine Free Libraries In Maine

Based on a Feb. 2021 survey of library directors.

CURRENTLY FINE FREE

Bangor Public Library
Baxter (Gorham)
Bass Harbor Memorial Library
Curtis (Brunswick)
Berwick Public Library
Boothbay Harbor Memorial Library
Casco Public Library
Ellsworth Public Library
Fort Fairfield Public Library
Guilford Memorial Library
Henry D. Moore Library (Steuben)
Julia Harris Morse Public Library (Greene)
Maine State Library
Merrill Memorial Library (Yarmouth)
Norway Memorial Library
Pittsfield Public Library
Portland Public

Rangeley Public Library
Scarborough
Searsmont Town Library
Springvale
Thomas Memorial Library (Cape Elizabeth)
Vose Library (Union)
Walker Memorial Library
Windham Public Library
York Public Library

PLAN TO BE FINE FREE

Auburn Public Library
Farmington Public Library
Jesup (Bar Harbor)
Lewiston Public Library
McArthur Library (Biddeford)
South Berwick Public Library
Southwest Harbor Public Library
Strong Public Library
Wells Public Library

With 256 public libraries in Maine, at least 13.7 percent of libraries are fine free or planning to become fine free.

Only 16 libraries in Maine serve a larger population than KFL. Of those 16, 11 are fine free or planning to become fine free.



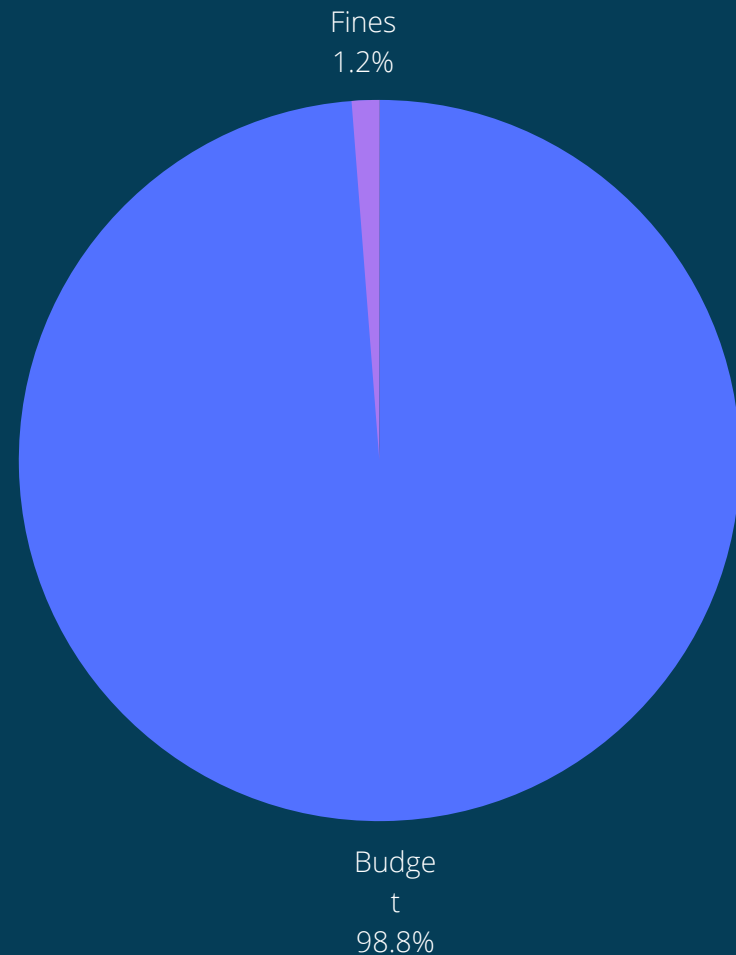
EFFECTS OF GOING FINE FREE

Effect on the Budget

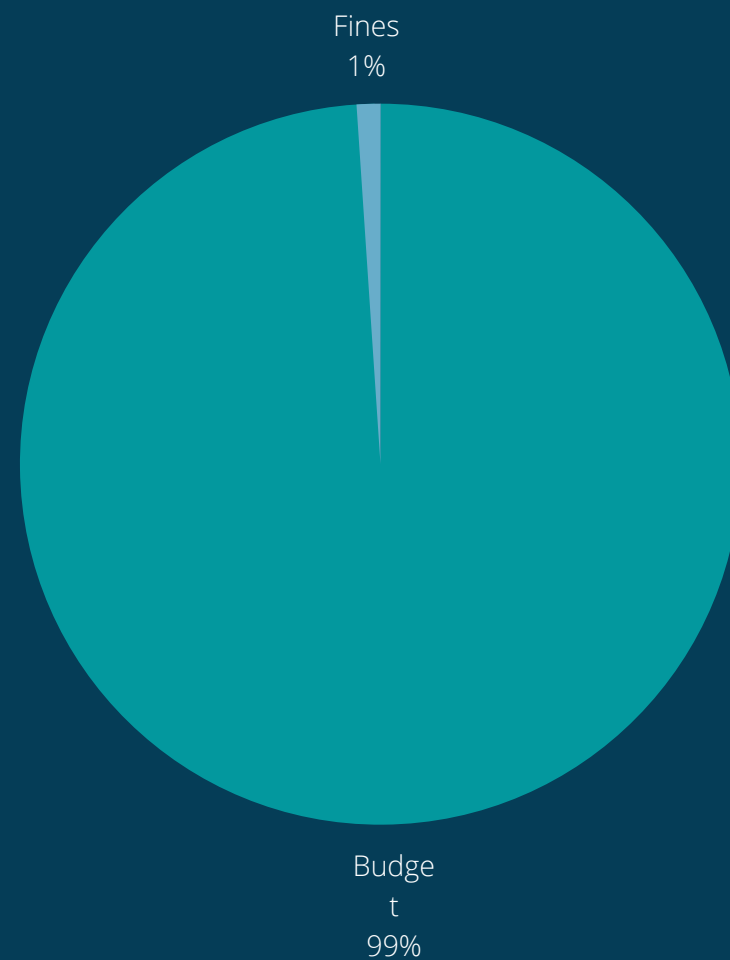
FINES AS A PERCENTAGE OF OVERALL BUDGET FY

19

BUDGETED



ACTUAL



AT KFL, FINES REPRESENT A VERY SMALL PORTION OF THE BUDGET - ABOUT 1% - WHICH IS CONSISTENT WITH OTHER PUBLIC LIBRARIES' EXPERIENCES.

Fiscal Year	Dates	Income	Budget	Total Budget	% of Total
FY22	7/1/21 – 6/30/22	NA	\$6,000	\$847,476	0.71
FY21	7/1/20 – 6/30/21	\$924.57	\$8,000	\$833,147	0.96
FY20	7/1/19 – 6/30/20	\$5,792.03	\$9,755	\$804,351	1.2
FY19	7/1/18 – 6/30/19	\$8,191.17	\$9,600	\$782,979	1.2
FY18	7/1/17 – 6/30/18	\$8,443.88	\$10,600	\$757,895	1.4
FY17	7/1/16 – 6/30/17	\$8,368.63	\$10,600	\$751,493	1.4
FY16	7/1/15 – 6/30/16	\$8,750.32	\$12,600	\$738,958	1.7

Effect on Returns

FINE FREE LIBRARIES REPORT

NO IMPACT OR POSITIVE IMPACT ON NUMBER OF OVERDUE ITEMS

For most libraries, materials were returned on time at approximately the same rate.

Some libraries saw an increase in on-time returns. Additionally, libraries saw an increase in returns of long overdue items. The Chicago Public Library reported that in the months after they eliminated fines, the number of items that were six months or more overdue being returned to the library nearly doubled. KFL has had a similar experience with amnesty weeks. Patrons are more likely to return very late items when they do not fear the consequences.

Effect on Patron Responsibility

THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT FINES HAVE ANY
IMPACT ON PATRON RESPONSIBILITY



Most people return library items simply because it is the right thing to do.

Eliminating fines does not eliminate patron responsibility for library items. Patrons will still be billed for lost, damaged, or very overdue books. Accounts will be blocked until items are returned. The only difference will be that once items are safely back in the library, there will be no ongoing punitive effect.

In some cases, fines may work against patron responsibility. We have seen many people who can afford it use paying the fine as justification for keeping a book out a bit longer to finish the last few chapters.



ACCESS

"Places like the public library ... are crucial to the day-to-day survival of the [very] poor. They offer a warm place to sit, a clean and safe bathroom, and a way to get online to complete a job application. *Perhaps most important, they can help struggling families feel they are a part of society instead of cast aside by it.*"

-\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America by Kathryn Edin

How Fines Accrue: A Hypothetical

A parent with three children allows each child to pick out 6 picture books and 2 DVDs; the parent takes two adult books and two DVDs.

The books are due but the kids have the flu and the parent forgets to call the library.

The items come back two days late.

20 books X \$.15 fine X 2 days = 6.00

8 DVDs X \$.60 fine X 2 days = 9.60

Total Fine = 15.60

If the parent was single and working full time at minimum wage, those 2 days of fines would represent 3.2 percent of their gross pay for the week.

If the family was making \$100,000 annually, those 2 days of fines would cost .8 percent of their gross pay for the week.