



Bangor – Bloomingdale – Covert – Decatur – Gobles – Lawrence - Mattawan
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PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

17 December 2019

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VBDL GOES FINE FREE

DECATUR, MICHIGAN - - - The list grows longer every day. From the Sno-Isle Libraries in Washington’s Snohomish and Island counties to Queen Anne’s County Library in Maryland, the number of libraries eliminating overdue fines continues to increase.

Since November 1, Van Buren District Library (VBDL), which serves approximately 45,000 people in Van Buren County, has joined the ranks of the fine-free.

According to Library Director Dan Hutchins, “Library fines were originally intended to encourage people to bring items back so others might use them. However, the growing body of evidence suggests that assessing fines has the opposite effect and actually keeps people from using the Library.”

The debate over going fine-free is not new, but the discussions have become more frequent and more public over the past ten years. Articles in *The Library Journal* and *American Libraries Magazine*, and even on *Slate.com*, have begged the question, “To fine or not to fine?”

The definitive answer may have come from the American Library Association (ALA), which issued a resolution at its 2019 mid-winter meeting that states “that the ALA, on behalf of its members, adds a statement to the Policy Manual that establishes that ‘The American Library Association asserts that imposition of monetary library fines is discriminatory in publicly supported institutions providing library and information services.’”

The resolution goes on to urge “libraries of all types to stop imposing fines on library patrons.”

Fortunately for VBDL, overdue fines account for less than 1% of the District’s annual revenue. The elimination of such fees will not cause great stress on the annual budget. However, the District will continue to charge for items that are lost or damaged.

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For more information, contact the nearest VBDL branch, phone 269.423.4771 or email info@vbdl.org.

VBDL is headquartered in Decatur with branches in Bangor, Bloomingdale, Covert, Gobles, Lawrence and Mattawan.

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