**Michigan library polices regarding the effect of fines on the use of computers**

Oct 2014

Michlib-L Listserv Comments

1. Northville Public: We use SAM to control our public computers. Whenever an account reaches the fine limit, SAM reads the fine limit reached, and blocks access to Public Internet accordingly. It does not block access to OPACs.   
   This is in line with how a when a patron reaches a fine limit, they can't check out new materials. Access to the Public Internet is treated in the same fashion.
2. This is a Harper Woods computer use procedure and not a policy:

Computer privileges will be suspended for card holders who owe $5.00 or more on their

library account. The account must be paid in full and all materials returned prior to

reinstatement.

1. Here in Coopersville the policy is set at a $5.00 fine limit. If a patron has over $5.00 in fines they cannot use the computer.   
   We use mConsole time management software that interfaces with our shared ILS system which tracks patron fines and prohibits the patron from logging on to the computer if the fines are over $5.00  
   LaVonnee Marshall, Director  
   Coopersville Area District Library
2. At MacDonald Public Library we use software that requires patron to use   
   their library card to log onto the public computers.  Our policy is that all fines/bills must be paid and their account have a zero balance   
   before they can use the computer or check-out item(s).  We are a class 4 library. Annette M. Goike, Assistant Director
3. Absolutely.  :)A patron must owe less than $5 to have access to any of our services, including Internet access.Shauna Lea Swantek, Director  
   Putnam District Library
4. Interesting concept, Jaema.  I would be interested in hearing the results of this question.Have a great day,Diane Greiner, Director  
   Croton Township Library,231-652-1615,crodg@llcoop.org
5. Hi,Jaema,We do not connect patron fines with computer access.  
   Hope this helps,Eva Davis, Director  
   Canton Public Library
6. Our policy states that when a patron has any fees or fines, these must be paid before being able to use the library computers. Ann Trierweiler  
   Elsie Public Library
7. GARC does not allow computer access to patrons who are blocked from checking out or who have an expired card.  Envisionware handles this rule for us automatically.
8. Jaema:  Coldwater doesn't scan barcodes before computer use so we have   
   no way of knowing if a patron using the computer has a fine. Interesting that some libraries do track that.  Loretta, Branch District
9. Unofficially and from my alumni account.

It is too bad the funds owed amount doesn't give us the information - "this is a scofflaw" and "this is a financially stressed patron."

On the former, it may be appropriate and useful to give consequences, including denial of computer access. In the later, denial of access could well be the last straw that keeps someone who doesn't own their own computer, or have internet access, from completing an online job application or request for aid. Also alienating.   
In that case the role of public library as an equalizer and a support to bootstrapping, is seriously impaired. In practical terms, we don't do this at my library (yet), not only for these idealistic concerns, but because we make guest access available -- rather freely. Fine-penalized access would simply result in more local "guests."

Erm..,not to stir the pot -- but would you deny them wi-fi access as well?  
https://webmail.merit.edu/service/home/~/?id=66540&part=1.2&auth=co[**Mary Carleton**](mailto:mary.carleton@farmlib.org) **MLIS** Coordinator of Technology [Farmington Community Library](http://www.farmlib.org/)

1. My personal opinion on this issue, which could start a Mich-lib email storm, but here it is anyway (I get the Mich-lib digest, so maybe there’s already a conversation going that I haven’t yet seen): The purpose of fines and fees is to protect library assets that people check out and do not return timely or do not return at all. I don’t believe accessing the computer has any relation to this issue. So I don’t see a need to prohibit computer use because someone owes fines related to physical materials. We, of course, don’t allow them to check out additional physical materials when they have fines at an egregious level, but that makes perfect sense. Though removal of computer privileges could be a motivation to pay fines, but I don’t believe it’s justified.In the spirit of “creative conflict” dialogue,Kay
2. Southfield Public Library: We require patrons to use their library card number to log in.  If it is not in good standing, they are not able to log in.  Some will then ask for a guest pass.  (Guests have less time per day.)
3. Hi! At Hazel Park Memorial Library, if a patron's fines exceed our limit of $15, they must pay 10% of their fines to use a computer. For example, if a patrons owes $25, they must pay $2.50 to use a computer.  Since our system automatically blocks cards with more than  $15 in fines,  we issue a computer pass until their fines are below the $15 mark. The $2.50  is applied to their fines.
4. Kalamazoo Public Library does not deny computer access to patrons unless they have been reported to collections for lost materials.  We consider computer access similar to attending a library program, thus patrons can use even with fines.
5. In Hastings we do not allow public computer use if there are any fines - this causes the most issues when a WiFi user prints remotely since the person does not encounter the block until they have sent their print item to the release station and they are blocked from releasing it.  Most times it can be worked out - the largest problem being the person does not have enough funds to pay the fines and the print job.Evelyn HolzwarthLibrary Administrator  
   Hastings Public Library
6. We keep them separate in Fife Lake.
7. Charlotte: In general you cannot have a fine that exceeds $5.00, or pay the fine   
   down. For children and teens we are more lenient. As long as the minor   
   pays something towards the fine. A child could have a fine greater than   
   $5.00, but if they want to use a computer then if they can provide a   
   dime or quarter towards the fine, we will let them use a computer. Fines   
   are 10 cents /per day, or $1.50 for an entertainment DVD.
8. No, in fact, we allow them to be in collections and still use the computers.

Of course, an up to date ID or library card is still needed.

Todd Reed, Director, Sturgis District Library

1. If fines are more than $5 people cannot use our computers, Christine Lind Hage, President, United for Libraries Library Director, Rochester Hills Public Library
2. We've had success with letting folks who have fines use computers if they pay $2 each time toward their fines.  The rule is fairly easy for the staff to administer.  It is low enough that they almost always can scrounge up the money.  Eventually- they get their fines paid off and get to checkout videos again!  :) NS
3. Hi Jaema, At Lyon Township we do not tie fines or residency to computer use. We feel computer access has become a basic human need and it is our responsibility to provide it to everyone who needs it. If a person was behind on their water bill, would you turn off their electricity until they pay it? I realize we are in a bedroom community with a fewer problems (and fewer computers) than larger or urban libraries, but I hope our philosophy would stand if our circumstances were different. Pam Quackenbush
4. Bad Axe: If a patron has a fine, they have to pay at least $2 on the fine to use the   
   computer.  If the fine is less than $2, they have to pay it off.
5. Good luck with your review. Capital Area District Libraries in Central Michigan has such a policy. It's online at: <http://www.cadl.org/files/7714/1288/7868/SER_105A_Computer_Use_Policy.pdf>.

Best, Emma Olmstead-Rumsey

1. At our library, patrons' fines **do** block their ability to use our computers. Essentially, what blocks patrons from checking out more materials also blocks them from computers. The only exception to the rule is that we have an Internet Express station that is meant for guests or for short term use that patrons with fines are allowed to use if it is available. Time on the Internet Express station is limited to 15 minutes.
2. We have a policy which allows us to refuse patrons with $5 or more of   
   fines use of the public computers.  However, this is very difficult to   
   enforce as there is no interface between our circulation system. Margaret Bentley  
   Adult Services Librarian, Shiawassee District Library—Owosso
3. We do not link computer usage to patron fines.  Some of our users are not patrons at all.  
   Teresa, Franklin
4. We are a class III library.  As with checking out library material, if a patron's fine exceeds the limit he/she is blocked from using the computer.  Although the internet policy states it in more general terms...   Computer users not in good standing with the Library are not eligible to use any computer workstation.
5. Hi--we are part of a cooperative of 40 libraries and we honor fines at all libraries so that if you have over $10 in fines you cannot use the public computers or check out. Kelli Perkins, Head of Reference Services, Herrick District Library
6. Our policy states that when a patron has any fees or fines, these must be paid before being able to use the library computers. Ann Trierweiler, Elsie Public Library