

CPSLD Reponses to Questions Regarding Long Overdue Procedures for Material Signed Out to Employees

Questions:

- **Could you please let us know what steps your institution takes in regard to long overdue material out to employees?**
- **Do you distinguish between current employees and employees who no longer work for the institution?**
- **If you do send to a Collections Agency what criteria do you use (e.g. number of items, length of time overdue, value of material on loan to the employee?)**

Institutions who are looking to revise procedures:

- As budgets get tight, we are going to be more direct.
- It is my hope that we will be revisiting these policies in the near future as we have a number of Sessional Faculty with expired accounts who are no longer working at our institution.
- Just in the process of reviewing how we handle employee long overdue.
- Had a discussion about this issue at our Library Advisory Committee a number of years ago, and I was surprised by how strongly the faculty at that table felt about their colleagues who do not return items or pay bills for long overdue materials. As a result of that discussion, we came up with.....current procedures.

Who Does What:

Procedures for Current employees:

Collection Agency:

- Do not use collection agency for employees: of all responding institutions none sent employees to a Collection Agency, although a couple had it in their procedures to do so; a sampling of the comments follows:
 - Do not send current employees' bills to a collection agency. Although our policy would allow us to send former employees' bills to a collection agency, we've never done so.
 - Have never sent an employee, or a former employee, to the collection agency.
 - Haven't sent anything to Collection agency for years.
 - We don't send to collections or hold back wages (I mention that because we actually did this once a long time ago, when a part-time faculty member was leaving, it wasn't worth the aggravation)
 - Faculty accounts are not reported to the Credit Bureau even if their account has expired.

- We don't use a collection agency at all anymore. We used to send students to collections, but stopped this in 2010 (in our view, the practice caused much more relational damage than it was worth for getting bills paid or materials back from the relatively small number of offenders.) We have never sent employees to collections.
- Up to this point we have not sent any employee to the collection agency.
- We don't have a collections agency.

Hold Back Wages

No (1); no other institution mentioned so I am assuming no one does

Cut off offsite access to research databases

- Senate Lib Cttee thinks cutting off online access would be a good idea but we're reluctant. I think we will discuss again at SLC
- Once their record is changed to delinquent, the instructor cannot borrow or access the online databases until the matter is resolved.
- Planning to implement cutting off offsite access to research databases until material returned or replacement costs paid.

Overdue Fines

- No overdue fines for employees (2)
- Fines for all borrowers including Faculty and Staff
- Fines for Recalled Material for Faculty and Staff
- No overdue fines for employees and students except for course reserves

Billing for Replacement

- Do not bill employees for replacement
- Employees are not automatically billed for replacement at 25 days overdue the way students are.
- Do not manually bill employees for replacement or block their records except in extremely rare circumstances.
- The borrower will be invoiced for the replacement cost of any lost or damaged items which need to be withdrawn from the collection.
- Faculty and staff are notified of overdue items through a series of e-mails, beginning with 1 day prior to the due date. Further notices are sent at 30 days, 60 days, 90 days and 120 days. If an item is not returned in 120 days, the borrower will be invoiced for the replacement cost.
- Employee is billed for the replacement cost at 4 months overdue (initial loan is 4 months).
- We do bill them if we don't get the materials back. We send them overdue emails every week and then bill them after four weeks. Most of the time they return the materials since we have such a short billing period. Some pay, some don't. Depends on the explanation (they returned

it, they gave it to a student and s/he is the one who has it, etc. Sometimes it's hard to track them down.

Accepting Replacement Copies

- While it is not our practice to accept replacement copies of lost books, I have seen the exception made for staff members.
- Since we are so small, I will let them purchase the material and give it to us.

Block Borrowing (eight No; four yes)

- Do not block borrowing
- Do not block borrowing, except in rare cases
- Don't currently block employee privileges, but will look at that in the future as we are more proactive in notifying and following up with employees.
- We have never blocked borrowing to employees.
- Do not block their records except in extremely rare circumstances.
- Send courtesy notices and overdue notices, followed by bills; we do not block their library accounts
- We do not block faculty library accounts, because of the toll that takes on our front-line circulation staff and, in theory at least, the quality of teaching and learning at our institution.
- In four years we have done this only once: we both billed and blocked an employee with many years' history of library privilege abuse involving both local loans and interlibrary loans. Again we would do this on a case-by-case basis.
- Fines are enforced for staff members, and we also **suspend borrowing privileges** when fines total \$10+. The invoices (42 days overdue) include the replacement cost of the book(s) plus a processing fee of \$20.
- **All Patron accounts are blocked when their fines owing total \$50.00 or over.** Once this occurs they may renew the books they currently have signed out but they may not sign out any new material. We suspend all accounts (except Faculty) for any unpaid fines owing from the previous academic year every October. Fines must be paid in full at this time to have the suspension lifted. Statements of fines owing go out to all Borrowers by e-mail three times a year. There has been some discussion about sending them out monthly. But nothing has been decided as yet. We send out follow up letters to Borrowers reminding them that they have the following fines or materials outstanding. This is labour intensive and is done as a time allows basis only. The focus of this project is Borrowers with current accounts particularly Faculty
- All employees with overdue materials receive overdue notices and then at the end of the semester a replacement bill. If the materials are still not returnedan email is sent to the instructor requesting that the material be returned by a specific date or paid for. If it isn't, then library will bill the instructors department for the outstanding material. If there is no action taken by the instructor we send a bill for the material to the instructor's department, and change the instructor's record in Sierra to 'delinquent'. **Once their record is changed to**

delinquent the instructor cannot borrow or access the online databases until the matter is resolved.

- Their **library borrowing privileges are barred**, including the borrowing of audiovisual equipment, until the material is returned or paid for.

Library Notifies Employee and concurrently or subsequently Dean/Director/ Administrator of employee

- We escalate the issue to the Director or Program Manager in their division. They have almost always got the employee to return the book. If not, they will pay the bill.
- If they don't return after 6-9 months or if material is really expensive we contact their department head/Associate Dean/HR. If the material is still not returned the Librarian for the subject area looks at the items in question and determines if it is worth pursuing. If the items are valuable then we will bill them for it. This has only happened one or two times and often either the department pays for the items or the instructor uses their PD funds to pay.
- If the material has not been returned within a reasonable length of time, the campus librarian contacts the employee. If an item is still not returned, the campus librarian informs the Library Director; the Library Director informs the delinquent employee's supervisor (usually a Dean), who uses her/his superpowers to convince the employee to return the material or pay for the lost item. We've had good success with this method, but I'm not sure how we'd proceed if the delinquent employee were a VP or the President.
- After all the regular email notices have been sent, if there is no response, the University Librarian sends a personal email to the employee, explaining the importance of returning the materials or paying the bill, and warning the employee that the next reminder email will include a cc to their department head or administrator. A second email from the UL is sent, copied to the department head, again asking for a return of the material or payment of the bill for replacement, and warning the employee that the next step will be a request for funds to be transferred from their departmental budget to the Library for replacement. The Library completes an Account Transfer form for the amount of the billed item/s, and sends it to the department head of the employee's department. If the form doesn't get signed (and I've been surprised that most often it does), then the UL decides whether to just drop it or take the issue to the Dean. Fortunately, this happens infrequently, especially since we went to 4-month employee loan periods with two online renewals.
- At 90 days overdue, librarian gets a report and contacts the employee. If the employee still does not respond or return the materials, the Library Director may contact the administrator to whom the employee reports. This is very, very rare and we don't have set procedures for these situations, but rather deal with them on a case-by-case basis.

Library Director/University Librarian/Librarian Notifies Employee (but not Department)

- All long overdue materials from staff comes to CEO whose office will send a personal email to the individual (to this point they only get the system generated emails).
- Our instructors get the materials for the whole semester. If they are not returned, we email, phone and personally discuss the overdue materials with the instructor and advise them that if it is not returned that they will be responsible for replacing the item. Since we are so small, I will let them purchase the material and give it to us.
- Because of our size, I think we have more direct and personal contact with people and generally take a softer approach. We offer employees 'their choice' of loan period, anything up to a semester, and some take advantage of that. If it's not returned, we contact them. If they want to extend again, we may or may not say yes (depending on the circumstances, e.g. if they are just finishing up some research and need a month more, that's fine; sometimes if someone is work on a course development project they need another semester and we have said ok to that on a few occasions). We don't have many that keep things "forever" – mostly they lose items because they can't remember where they left them, or loaned out to a student or colleague, whatever... we end up marking the item MISSING or LOST and seeking replacements if needed. There's usually a lot of "good guilt" attached to these and we have a grateful customer for life.... Only current employees get the loan extensions and forgiveness.
- A report on employees with material 25 days overdue is run daily ... If the material doesn't have any holds placed on it, the LA renews the item(s) and contacts the employee by email and/or phone to gently suggest they bring it back by the new due date. Most of the time they do! If the material has holds, the LA contacts the employee to let them know the material is needed by other library users and that we'd appreciate its prompt return. Our sense is that knowing others are waiting for material is the best possible motivator for returns. At 90 days overdue, the User Experience / Collections librarian gets a report and contacts the employee. If the employee still does not respond or return the materials, the Library Director may contact the administrator to whom the employee reports. This is very, very rare and we don't have set procedures for these situations, but rather deal with them on a case-by-case basis.
- After billing the employee for the replacement cost, if the material is not returned the employee is called by the Circulation Librarian to let them know that their privileges are going to be barred unless they return or pay for their long overdue material. An email is sent to the employee confirming the phone call.

Miscellaneous

- On the recommendation of Auditors, we are finally instituting reg blocks for students but nothing yet for faculty/staff.
- For students we forward outstanding fines to Students Finances people after the end of term. They will/can collect on our behalf. We don't have a similar process for employees.

Procedures for Employees who retire or leave the institution:

- Before the employee receives final paycheck all institutional bills must be cleared, so University Librarian/delegate must sign off on a form of no outstanding debts.
- If instructor leaves we don't pursue and just write off the item as the cost of doing business.
- When an employee with outstanding bills on their account leaves the College, their status in the ILS is changed to Community Borrower and they are subject to the same policies and procedures as other community borrowers. This includes blocking their library account and, according to policy, sending their bills to a collection agency. In practice, however, I'm told that we have never sent a former employee's library bill to a collection agency. We grant free community borrower status to former employees and they would have to deal with their bill if they ever wanted to use the library after they'd left.
- I can only think of one situation where a former employee left with some of the Library's materials. If my memory serves, I think we asked the department to reimburse the Library but they did not. So we just considered it a loss.
- Past employees would either be classified as Retirees or Community Borrowers, depending on how they left the institution. Retirees have the same privilege profile as employees but the difference would be in Step 3 – at this step we would put a replacement bill on their record which would block their account. It is worth noting that this has not come up since we changed our fines and loans practices 2 years ago. Community borrowers are automatically billed for replacement at 25 days overdue (they are also subject to overdue fines.)
- Employees who no longer work at the institution get billed. But I would say that most people who continue to use us are responsible. Can't think of any particular trouble we've had with past employees.
- Whenever an employee leave the college, HR sends me an email and I check their record to see if they owe anything. I've only had one person who owed anything so far.