

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LIFE HAPPENS, FINES DON'T

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is fine free; restores access
to more than 150,000 Mecklenburg residents

Charlotte, NC – July 1, 2021 – Charlotte Mecklenburg Library announces it is fine free starting July 1, 2021, and cardholders are no longer assessed late (or overdue) fines for materials. Cardholders who have outstanding Library materials are encouraged to return all items to their local branch. Learn more at cmlibrary.org/finefree

“This is a historic day for our community as we launch our new fine free policy. Now that we’ve removed this economic barrier, we’re proud to truly provide equitable access to our services and collections for everyone,” said Marcellus “MT” Turner, CEO and chief librarian for Charlotte Mecklenburg Library. “Restoring access to Library materials for all suspended cardholders, especially those most in need of Library resources, is critical to our mission of improving lives.”

The Library’s new borrower’s policy is:

- Cardholders can renew items up to three times before the due date. Exceptions include items that have holds waiting and Interlibrary loans.
- If an item is overdue by two weeks (14 days), the borrower will be blocked from checking out materials until that item is returned.
- An item is automatically declared lost by the Library if it has been overdue for 30 days and a replacement charge will be placed on the borrower’s account.
- Lost charges will be waived upon return of the material to any Library location (within 12 months). No late (or overdue) fines are assessed when the item is returned.
- Customer accounts are blocked when fees or charges exceed \$10.00, which means they are unable to check out books or renew materials. Customers with balances over \$10.00 can still use Library computers and access Library electronic resources.
- Customers will still be charged fees for the following services: InterLibrary Loans, non-resident Library cards, photocopies, printing (B&W and color), room rentals and Wi-Fi hotspots.

With this policy change, the Library is also instituting a one-time amnesty to remove fines and fees on all customers’ accounts, returning balances to zero. More than 150,000 cardholders who carried a balance of \$10 or more were blocked from using Library resources, with 40,000 of these accounts blocked in just the last three years. All accounts are now reset and the Library is preparing for the return of customers.

“Our staff is excited to welcome back many customers who stayed away from the Library because of financial barriers. It’s time to rediscover Charlotte Mecklenburg Library and all we offer to our community, from books and digital resources and job-hunting services to programs advancing literacy, technology skills and college and career connections,” said Caitlin Moen, library director and chief customer officer for Charlotte Mecklenburg Library.

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library joins hundreds of library systems across the United States who have already gone fine free, including several in North Carolina: Chapel Hill Public Library, Durham County Library, Greensboro Public Library, Hickory Public Library and Wake County Libraries.

The Library is currently in its Level 3 re-opening services due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Customers are returning to branch locations for expanded seating, computer and copier/scanner use, as well as scheduling in-person appointments in the Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room.

More information on the Library and services available can be found at cmlibrary.org.

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About Charlotte Mecklenburg Library:

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is one of America’s leading urban public libraries, serving a community of more than one million citizens in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. Through 20 locations, targeted outreach and online resources, the Library delivers exceptional services and programs, with a mission to improve lives and build a stronger community. For more, visit cmlibrary.org.

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Charlotte Mecklenburg Library newsroom: cmlibrary.org/library-news

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