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LOCAL NEWS



The Multnomah County Central Library, downtown. (Wikipedia Commons)

No More Library Late Fees

New policy clears debts; restores access

Multnomah County Library will permanently stop charging late fines on all library materials, clear all existing fines and restore access to accounts blocked because of fines, effective immediately. Patrons will continue to be billed for unreturned materials.

“Our public libraries exist to provide free and equal access to shared resources for everyone,” Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury announced last week. “And yet, the practice of assessing punitive fines for late returns has locked people out, many of whom are already facing

hardships. The resources, support and sense of belonging found in our libraries are needed urgently during these trying times, and I’m grateful that this change will further open access to this community asset.”

The library will remove fine debt for 72,861 patron accounts in an amount totaling \$730,185 and restore library account access for more than 2,000 people who had their accounts blocked due to fines in excess of \$50.

“We have watched closely as a growing body of research has shown that late fines don’t work, that a large percentage can never be collected and that ending the practice doesn’t increase the number of late returns,” said Director of Libraries Vailey Oehlke. “Other library systems as close

as Vancouver and as far away as Washington, D.C. have ended the practice, and it’s well past time we did the same. This change will help Multnomah County Library truly serve its community in a free and equal way.”

In fiscal year 2019, the library collected about \$548,755 in overdue fines (about 0.5% of its adopted FY21 annual budget). Overdue fine revenue has decreased significantly over time (from nearly \$1 million in 2016), as e-books and audiobooks have grown in popularity and since the library eliminated youth fines in 2016 and educator fines in 2018.

“Late fines cause some patrons to avoid using the library at all because they are unable to

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Black Pioneers Hire Expert

Professional is first to lead group in 27 years

The Oregon Black Pioneers, a group founded in 1993 to research, recognize and commemorate the culture and heritage of African Americans in the state, has hired a professional historian to help guide the organization for the first time in its history.

Zachary A. Stokes started work on July 1. He was hired by the



Zachary A. Stokes

organization’s board of directors who cited his substantial skills and the capacity to strategically guide and advance the organization forward, officials said.

“We are pleased to welcome him aboard,” said Oregon Black Pioneers President Willie Richardson.

In a news release, Stocks said he was “eager to build a sustainable path for the organization’s growth, and build new excitement around Oregon’s unique African American cultural traditions.

“Now is a turbulent time in our

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