

# Local libraries still find value in overdue fines

Northeast Oregon libraries bucking nationwide trend of charging late fees

By **SABRINA THOMPSON**  
EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — The majority of local libraries are holding on to the tradition of fines for overdue materials. But for how much longer remains a question.

Returning a book or other items days late means a fee on your library account. Most of these fees do not exceed 10 cents a day, but with each passing day, the cost adds up. Some libraries are dumping overdue fines. According to a survey in the Library Journal, 8% of libraries across the nation have stopped charging patrons for not returning books on time.

“When you have fines, you are making the library less accessible to those who benefit the most from using it,” Cook Memorial Library Director Kip Roberson said. “According to studies that are being published in library journals, fines hurt low-income people and children the most. These are also the people using our



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

The Pendleton Public Library continues to charge late fees for overdue books.

libraries as part of their personal development, and with fines they can't access these services.”

Local libraries cap fines at a maximum of \$5 on the account, and prohibit checking out more materials until the fines go below the threshold.

“There is a fear and stigma around overdue fines,” Roberson said. “People are afraid it will get above an amount they can pay, or that the librarian will yell at them.”

However, Roberson

explained, many librarians are very understanding, and the most important thing to the library is getting back the materials. On a case by case basis, librarians may forgive fines, depending on the circumstance that went into the late return.

La Grande's Cook Memorial Library is considering eliminating late fees in the coming year, Roberson said, a decision that would ultimately come from the La Grande City Council.

Doing away with fines raises the concern people won't return the materials

at all. However, according to a study conducted by the Library Journal, a majority of libraries that have eliminated fines still receive their materials.

The Cove Public Library does not charge overdue fines, while the Union Carnegie Public Library, Elgin Public Library and Cook Memorial Public Library do. The all-volunteer Library Improvement Club runs the library in Cove. Improvement Club member Yvonne Oliver said the volunteers have chosen not to have late book fines for the last 15

years. These libraries still charge fines for lost and damaged books. The North Powder City Library did not respond to inquiries about fines in time for publication.

The public libraries in Pendleton and Hermiston continue to charge fines for overdue items.

“When people have to pay fines, they are more likely to bring their books back on time,” Pendleton Public Library Director Jennifer Costley said.

“Fines can be an encouragement or a punitive punishment,” Hermiston Public Library Director Mark Rose said.

They also said they do not see fines as a barrier for preventing patrons from using the library, and by having the fines, there is a sense of personal responsibility.

For some libraries, the money from fines helps pay for materials, staff and services. The Pendleton Public Library uses the revenue from fines to pay for a part-time position and additional programming. Costley said the library in 2018 collected around \$17,000 in fines and replacement costs. Smaller local libraries do not collect as much, but the money is part of their funding, some relying on it for everyday operations.

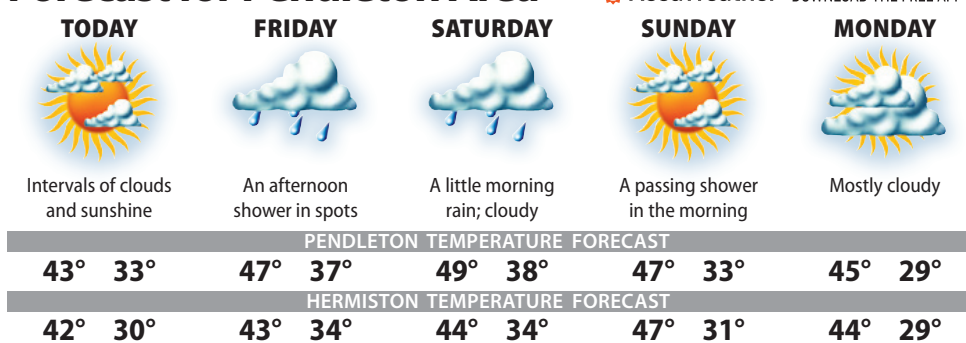
Libraries often lend more than just books, and many libraries have adopted programs for all ages and provide services and materials that help with learning. For people who don't have access to a computer at home, using a computer at the library can be a way to stay in touch with family and friends or look for employment. But overdue fines can block these services.

During the winter, Cook Memorial Library offers an opportunity to pay off fines using food donations. Patrons can donate up to 10 food items to pay off their fines, with each item taking a dollar off their total.

“It's a way to help patrons out during this time of year when money is tight,” program organizer Carrie Bushman said. “And it helps those in the community by stocking the sharing pantry for those who can't afford food.”

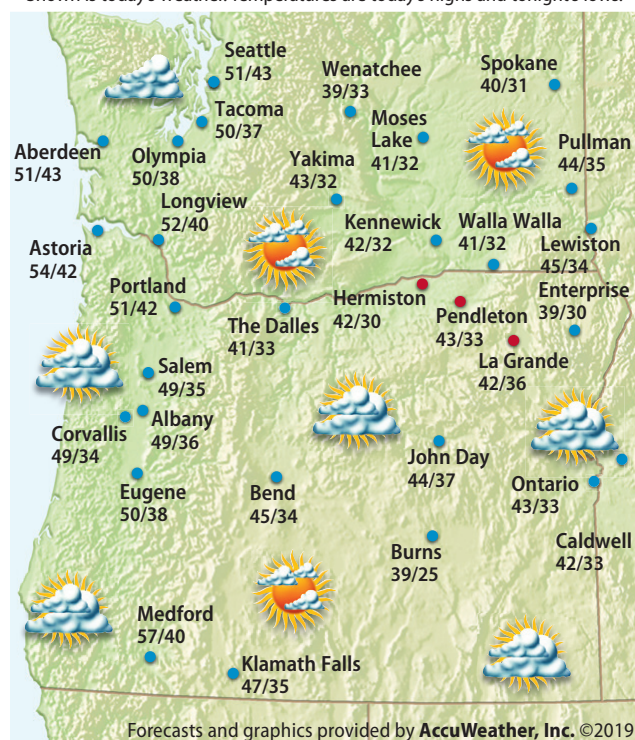
Other alternatives for reducing library fines include amnesty periods where books can be returned and slates wiped clean; donation boxes where people who might feel guilty about returning a book late can donate money; and pay-it-forward options in which a person can donate to cover the cost of another patron's fines.

## Forecast for Pendleton Area



## OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



## ALMANAC

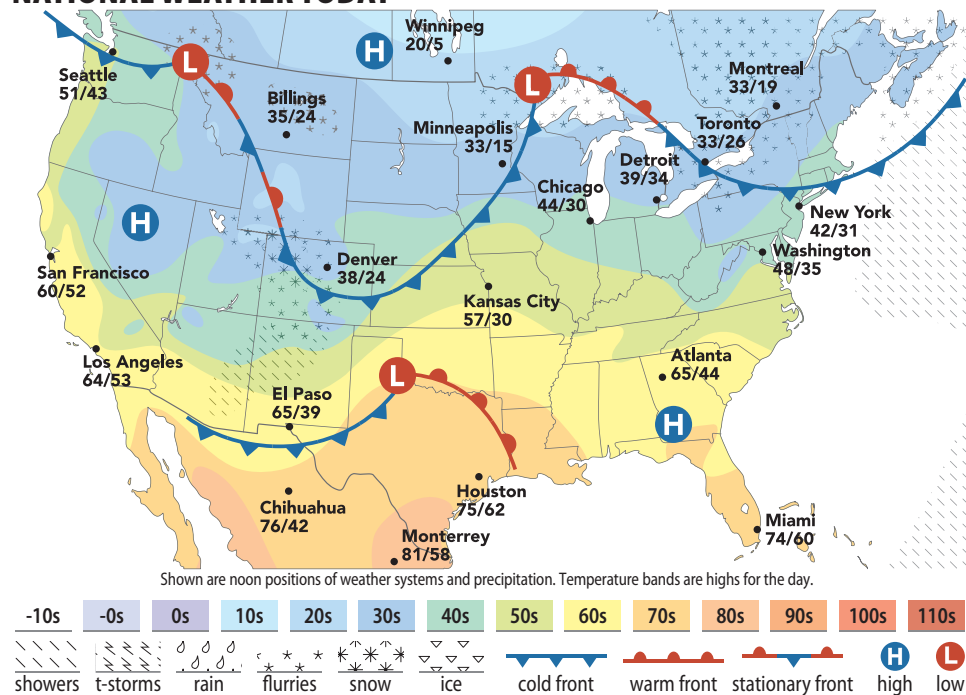
PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	51°	27°
Normals	41°	28°
Records	70° (1923)	-1° (1972)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"	
Month to date	0.01"	
Normal month to date	0.18"	
Year to date	11.59"	
Last year to date	8.88"	
Normal year to date	11.65"	
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	37°	28°
Normals	42°	29°
Records	67° (1982)	2° (2013)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"	
Month to date	Trace	
Normal month to date	0.22"	
Year to date	4.95"	
Last year to date	6.97"	
Normal year to date	8.69"	
WINDS (in mph)		
Today	Fri.	
Boardman	ENE 3-6 NNE 3-6	
Pendleton	E 4-8 ESE 6-12	
SUN AND MOON		
Sunrise today	7:19 a.m.	
Sunset tonight	4:12 p.m.	
Moonrise today	1:27 p.m.	
Moonset today	12:18 a.m.	

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 84° in Falfurrias, Texas Low -11° in Daniel, Wyo.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



# Knute Buehler gives up \$22,500 in donations from Gordon Sondland

By **JEFF MAPES**  
Oregon Public Broadcasting



Buehler Sondland

BEND — Republican Knute Buehler, who unsuccessfully ran for Oregon governor last year, on Tuesday became the third politician to get rid of campaign donations from Gordon Sondland.

Sondland, a Portland businessman-turned-diplomat now at the center of the House impeachment hearings, was accused last week of sexual misconduct by three Portland-area women in a story published by Portland Monthly and ProPublica.

Buehler said in a statement that “upon learning of the serious allegations against Mr. Sondland” that he and his wife, Patty, decided to donate to charity the \$22,500 that Sondland had given to Buehler's gubernatorial campaign.

The action comes as Buehler is considering a race for the 2nd Congressional District seat that will be vacated by retiring GOP Rep. Greg Walden.

The sexual misconduct allegations also prompted Portland Commissioner Nick Fish to donate the \$1,500 in campaign contributions he had received from Sondland, who ran a Portland-based hotel chain before becoming U.S. ambassador to the European Union.

Even before those allegations, Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler had announced earlier in November that he would

give up \$16,000 in donations he had received from Sondland between 2012 and 2016. At the time, Wheeler's campaign manager, Jennifer Arguinzoni, said questions had been raised about Sondland's role in pressuring Ukrainian officials to conduct politically motivated investigations in exchange for U.S. military aid.

Sondland said the accounts by the three women are all untrue and said in a statement “I categorically deny them.”

Buehler said his former campaign gubernatorial committee, which still operates as a political committee, will donate \$11,250 each to the Bethlehem Inn homeless shelter in Bend and CASA of Central Oregon. The latter group provides court-appointed special advocates for children in foster care.

## BRIEFLY

### Man arrested after allegedly assaulting his mother

BAKER CITY — A Baker County man was arrested Monday morning after he allegedly assaulted his mother during an argument at the family's home along Highway 86 about 25 miles east of Baker City.

Kevin Joseph Eber, 30, was arrested about 3:08 p.m. outside the home, which is along the Powder River.

He was taken to the Baker County Jail and is charged with fourth-degree assault, menacing and strangulation.

His mother, Lisa Eber, reported the incident Monday evening after she left

the home.

Lisa Eber told the dispatcher that she thought she heard a gunshot after she fled the home, said Ashley McClay, public information officer for the Baker County Sheriff's Office.

Due to that report, deputies upon arriving watched the home as a precaution, since there was no phone in the residence and they couldn't contact Kevin Eber, McClay said.

He eventually walked out of the home and deputies arrested him without incident.

They didn't find any evidence that Eber had fired a gun, McClay said.

— EO Media Group

**CORRECTION:** In a brief published Dec. 3, 2019, on page A6, incorrect information was given about a benefit of joining the Pendleton Air Museum as a volunteer or board member. Those joining the group will receive a free gift as part of their membership.

The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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