**As of January 4th, the Cadott Community Library will be going Fine Free! We know that can be confusing –don’t libraries NEED fines to pay for new books? If we don’t charge fines, why would anyone bring anything back? Below we’ll answer those questions and others about our new Fine Free Policy.**

**Q. Why did the library decide to go Fine Free?**

A. The short answer: because it’s the right thing to do.
The longer answer?: We want all of our community members to be able to use the library without worry of fines impeding their use. The library is for everyone, and eliminating fines will enable more people to use our materials and services, improving community wellness.

**Q. How does the library going fine free affect purchasing new materials?**

A. It doesn’t. Fines comprised about 1% of our budget. A literal drop in the bucket, so to speak. The last several years netted less than $2000 dollars from fines. Most of our income comes from printing, copying, and faxing.

**Q. Does getting rid of fines mean a price increase for printing, copying, and faxing?**

A. Absolutely not. For the time being, those prices are remaining the same, and there is no plan to increase them any time soon.

**Q. I LIKED paying fines because I felt like I was helping! How can I help you now?**

A. Your fines only *sort* of helped us. It’s better for the library to NOT have fine and fee monies as part of our budget, because it is unreliable income that it is turned over to the village; not kept within the library.

However! We heartily encourage donations to go to the Friends of the Library instead. You can learn more about the Friends on [our website](https://cadottlibrary.org/2298-2/).

**Q. I can’t make large donations…can I still give you what I would have paid in a fine?**

A. Sure. You can either give your change directly to a staff member, or drop it in to the donation container near the New Book display. Every little bit helps!

**Q. I *can* make a large donation. Should I make that check out to the library?**

A. We have some information about donating up on our website. In general, if you are making a donation in honor of someone or specifically to our building fund: donate to the library. If you are just donating to help us out, please donate to the Friends of the Cadott Community Library. They don’t have the same budget restraints as the library. You can also make donations to the George and Alice Miller Fund at the Chippewa Foundation, so your donation can continue to help us into the future.

**Q. How is going Fine Free going to change my library use?**

A. It shouldn’t! You may notice that overdue notices are sent earlier. A first Overdue notice will be sent at 7 Days, a second at 14 Days, and finally, the item will go into Billed Status at 28 days.

**Q. If I don’t have to pay fines, why would I ever return anything?**

A. Because if you don’t return items, you will be billed at 28 days overdue. At full replacement cost. Billed costs will also prohibit you from checking out more materials, if the costs are over $10.

**Q. I’ve been billed for an item, is it too late to return it?**

A. Nope! We really just want our materials back. Return the book and the bill disappears –no money owed!

**Q. An item was billed and I’m sure it’s lost forever or it’s badly damaged. What happens then?**

A. Then, you’ll have to pay us a full replacement cost. If you feel the replacement cost on the bill is too high, please contact the library director. They can usually find a lower price, or work out a payment plan with you so you can keep using the library.

**Q. I’m still a serial late-returner with a lot of items going into billed status. Is that okay?**

A. If we send you more than 3 Billed Notices in a 6 month period, the Director may limit the number of materials you check out either temporarily or permanently. At 6 Bills in 6 Months, the Director *may* ask for a temporary ban to your library privileges. And, if you exceed 6 bills in 6 months and you \*still\* haven’t returned them, the Library Board may vote to permanently ban you from borrowing library materials.

**Q. Yikes! I don’t want that to happen! How do I avoid it?**

A. Return your materials. You can call us for a renewal. If it’s a popular item, we may not be able to do so for you, but when the item is returned, we can always place another hold on it and it will make its way back to you then.

**Q. I thought I lost a book, I paid for it, and then I found it! …Can I have my money back?**

A. If you let us know within 30 days of previously paying for it, yes! Just return the book to us. If it’s been longer than that, you can keep it. You paid for it, and we’ve probably replaced it.

**Q. My new puppy chewed on the corner of the book. It’s kind of gross, but still readable! Am I going to have to pay for a new one?**

A. Yes, please! Because our materials go to a lot of readers, we need them to be in as good a condition as possible. However, once paid for you, you can keep the one your puppy mistook for their chew toy.

**Q. How many libraries are Fine Free in MORE?**

A. Over a dozen now, including all of the Eau Claire County Libraries. Cadott will be the first Chippewa County Library to go Fine Free! We hope that, one day, all MORE libraries will go fine free.

**Q. Why didn’t you do this sooner?!**

A. I have no idea. Fine Free libraries have been around for a long time!

**Q. Where did you get the idea to go Fine Free?**

A. Samma’s specific answer: When I came to Cadott from Augusta, they had been Fine Free for a couple of years. Coming into a library where I had to remind patrons about paying their fines again is never a conversation I like to have. I want people to feel welcome at the library, not stressed out about paying a fee or losing necessary access. It has been on my list of things to accomplish for the library to go Fine Free, literally since Day One on the job. Two years later, here we are!

A more general answer: The American Library Association put out a statement in 2019 about libraries going Fine Free to promote access to services. We firmly agree with this statement, and want to provide as many services and as much access as we can to our community. It is very important to us that everyone feel welcome, and not hindered by circumstances beyond their control. The library is here to serve you in whatever capacity we can.

**Q. What about the fines on my account now? Do I still have to pay those?**

A. Our Library Board voted at their meeting on December 14th to wipe out all existing fines on patron accounts. This will give many members of our community a completely fresh slate. This does *not* include billed, lost, or damaged items. You will still be responsible for those costs.

**Q. I still have more questions. Who can I ask?**

A. You can call the library during our regular open hours, Monday through Friday, to talk to our director, Samma Johnson. 715-589-4950. You can also send them an e-mail at: johnson@cadottlibrary.org