

Library on way to zero fines target

By [Samuel Chadwick](#), News Editor (2017/18)

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The Library has nearly a million print books available.
Image credit: Unknown, via Wikipedia.

A Freedom of Information request filed by *Nouse* can reveal that the University Library revenue from issuing student fines has fallen from £31 060 in the academic year 2015/16 to £24 879 in 2016/17. This is despite the total number of student accounts fined increasing from 2 309 in 2015/16 to 2 720 in 2016/17. This fall seems to be part of a wider trend; since the introduction of the new “flexible loans” fines system in 2012/13 (when the total revenue from fines was some £57 462), the amount quickly went below the £35 000 mark in 2014.

The “flexible loans” system means that overdue items are only fined (at £2 per item per day) when requested by another user. The rationale, as described by the Library website, is only to fine students “if they inconvenience other Library users”. However, there is an exception for those texts in high demand (Key Texts) which are fined £1 an hour if re-turned late regardless of whether or not they have been requested.

The current loans system was introduced after the revelation that in 2010/11 only 11 per cent of fines were from loans on items requested by other people, meaning that the accounts fined were seldom the ones inconveniencing other library users. On its website, the Library states its aim as working towards zero fines. They say that “We don’t fine just for the sake of it – if you’re late returning an item that isn’t needed by anyone else, we don’t fine you, because nobody has been inconvenienced.”

The £6 181 decrease in fines revenue from 2015/16 to 2016/17, coinciding with 411 more fined accounts in those past two completed academic years, suggests that the new system of £2 per item per day is incentivising students to return texts earlier. The average fined account incurred £13.45 in 2015/16, but £9.15 in 2016/17.

The respective averages for all accounts, fined or not, was £1.90 then £1.43 across the two years. Furthermore, for lost items, a new administration fee of £20 in addition to the market cost of the book lost was introduced in September. Formerly, there was a £35 flat rate on all items. It remains to be seen how this affects Library fines revenue.

The Library maintains its policy of working towards zero fines. Fine revenue is reinvested back into the

Library, and in the past has been donated to various charitable causes, from Book Aid International to Guide Dogs for the Blind. The figures revealed to *Nouse* also show that in the 2016/17 academic year, 8 756 undergraduate students took out at least one loan, out of a total of 12 840 enrolled. The Library has nearly a million print books available, most of which can be borrowed.



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