In recent years, libraries have started to examine their fines policy more critically to see the effects on patrons, workflow, and staff, as well as to see how their policies can be changed, or in some cases, removed. This study looks at the overdue fines policy at the Undergraduate Library at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, specifically analyzing how experiences with the fines policy among undergraduate students affects their use of the library, as well as how the experiences of staff members with fines affects their workflow. The results of the study show that while many students feel that fines are an effective means of incentivizing book return, the financial burden does play a role in producing a negative impression of the libraries and can dissuade some patrons from using its services.

Headings:

Library circulation & loans -- library overdues

Library finance – library fines

Academic libraries - undergraduate libraries

Library use studies – Academic library use studies

Libraries & schools – Libraries & students

Library employees
OVERDUE FINES IN THE ACADEMIC LIBRARY: UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT AND STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF OVERDUE FINES AT THE UNC UNDERGRADUATE LIBRARY

by
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A Master's paper submitted to the faculty of the School of Information and Library Science of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Library Science.

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Introduction

This past fiscal year, the Chapel Hill Public Library (CHPL), NC, submitted a proposal to get rid of its overdue fines system in order to lower barriers to access for the public. While the motion was ultimately unsuccessful, CHPL’s proposal itself is a sign of changing times in the library world, a world where previously sacrosanct rules like overdue materials fines may not be as sacred anymore. In recent years in particular, there has been a flurry of opinion pieces, studies, and articles put forth by various institutions that show a lively debate between those who think that fines should be abolished, embraced, or revised. This debate is not just limited to the public library world, however. Many academic libraries have started to look more closely at their overdue fines policy, and more and more research is being done on the effects of fines on patrons, library use, library attitudes, and general library practice. Particularly in the past decade or so, there has been a spate of studies focused on individual academic libraries across the world that have sought to provide a clearer and more detailed picture of overdue fines in the academic library context.

Beyond providing a better picture of how overdue fines systems work within academic library institutions, these studies also often provide suggestions on how to improve upon existing systems. Most academic libraries seem more inclined to a revision of existing fines policy, rather than outright abolishment, and many are interested in making sure that the fines policy best accommodates both library goals and patron needs. While adjustments to certain rules and policies are often made ad hoc in daily library
work, taking a step back and looking systemically at the fines policy overall has often led to interesting insights in areas such as patron perceptions of the library, effects of fines on usage, and staff experiences with fines. It is to this part of the overdue fines conversation that I hope to contribute to with my research.

This project focuses on overdue fines in the academic library context, specifically at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Data collection and research is localized around the Undergraduate Library (UL) branch of the UNC Libraries, with the aim of analyzing how undergraduate students view the overdue fines policy at the UL, how their experiences with the overdue fines policy affects their use of the library, and also how that contrasts with UL staff member perceptions of the fines policy.

**Literature Review**

**Fines in the Library: A Short Overview**

A fine, as defined by the Merriam Webster Dictionary, is a, “sum imposed as punishment for an offense,” and is often thought as part and parcel of the traditional library system, particularly in the context of overdue materials. It has an established presence in the history of American libraries – a Madison, Nebraska library from 1911 has “Library Fines” recorded as part of its operating budget and costs – and are often an assumed part of many library circulation policies across many different types of libraries. (Bobinski, 1968) The American Library Association has a Fines and Overdues page where they state:

“Most public and college libraries do collect fees, which is usually part of their circulation policy toward maintaining the collection. As far as collecting the fees themselves, it depends on the individual library and their own individual resources for collecting the fees.” (Association, 2014)
Delving further beyond generalizations, a recent study that surveyed circulation policies among the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) found that 163 of 165 academic libraries charged overdue fines. (Wilson, Frazier, & Harter, 2015) However, as library practices and services change over time, even such firmly established traditions as fines are being subjected to revision and scrutiny to make sure policy is matching up with institutional goals and user needs. In the next section, I will be discussing the background of fines at the Undergraduate Library at UNC Chapel Hill, what research has been done regarding fines in the academic library in general, as well as how my research will address some of the gaps in the existing literature.

Fines in Libraries: Early Research

The conversation around fines in academic libraries has gone through a slow metamorphosis over the years. Early research and articles tended to approach the topic of overdue fines from a one-dimensional point of view, one in which it is assumed that overdue fines are charged, and the big question is how to manage fines more efficiently, and to get a better idea of what common practice is among libraries for collecting fines. One of the earlier books that addresses overdues in the library stated that the purpose of their book is an attempt to:

“…bring together…statistical data on overdues, systematic presentations of overdues procedures from various libraries, a closer look at certain reactions of libraries to the overdues problem…and a consideration of the theory behind many of our overdues practices.” (Burgin & Hansel, 1984)

Additionally, there is a distinct negative attitude when discussing overdues from library practitioners. A chapter in the aforementioned book that discusses academic library overdue materials states that, “overdue books are the bane of the circulation librarian’s
existence”, and are “undoubtedly one of the biggest circulation problems for academic libraries.” (Farrington, 1984) Overdue materials and fines are painted as an administrative burden, but a necessary evil in order to maintain egalitarian access of the collection.

Other early articles went in a different direction and give a brief overview of the two opposing positions, to fine or not to fine, and list a few philosophical points to support each view. Another earlier article, from 1974, written on the topic of fines in the academic library wrote:

“This effort to keep its materials under control may give a library greater strength in the community served, but it could also make for bad publicity resulting from reader’s reactions to fines… it is general felt that the only person deterred in their use is the person who cannot afford the fine, and he may be the one who badly requires library materials.” (Nwamefor, 1974)

This quote rather succinctly summarizes much of the discussion in early debates surrounding fines – the desire of the library to provide access to all by making the collection as available as possible warring against the desire to encourage use and inspire good relations with patrons. However, while Nwamefor frames fines as a way to make collection materials available, others portray fines in a more punitive light:

“The threat of a fine provides the patron with an incentive for returning materials on time, a penalty for returning materials late, and an education in being a responsible citizen.” (B. Anderson, 1984)

Though there is not whole-hearted consensus on the intrinsic nature of fines, there is agreement in early literature that fines can deter use of the library in a way that is not desirable, a theme that is echoed and expanded upon in subsequent research throughout the years.
As for the research conducted in these early articles, while some of the points mentioned are supported by specific studies, some of the points are supported by anecdotal stories and generalizations. Both Nwamefor and Anderson use questionnaire studies conducted in the public library realm for figures and statistics quoted in their papers, and the Library Overdues book also mentions a thorough questionnaire of North Carolina libraries that was conducted in the 80s. However, the studies mentioned are used to compare what different libraries are doing in terms of fines and to discern what trends and patterns exist in library practices. As such, the research at this point does not delve beyond general questions and broad policy and is heavily intertwined with personal experience and opinion.

Exploring Fines More In Depth: Localized Studies at University Libraries

After this initial group of general discussions regarding fines in the academic library, there was a spate of more research-based articles that focused on a variety of aspects regarding fines in the library, with a large group of them happening internationally. Though these studies are similar in that they were conducted with a more formal research structure in mind, they focus on different aspects of overdue fines, and can be split up into various themes.

One major theme within this research focuses on patron attitudes towards overdue fines. One of the more prominently cited studies within these theme is Esharenana Adomi’s study on “Attitudes of university library users towards overdue fines in Nigeria”, conducted in 2003. Adomi created a survey that she sent out to students at two separate university libraries in Nigeria and analyzed those results. A surprising
conclusion of her research showed that “60.5% of the respondents would not like the collection of overdue fines to be discontinued,” and that many respondents believed overdue fines were an effective system to keeping as many books as possible available for use. (Adomi, 2003) Many of the other international studies found similar results from the data they collected. In some cases, the similarity of results might be explained because a handful of studies after Adomi’s used a very similar survey. (Edewor, 2010) In others, however, such as Anderson’s dissertation “Are Fines Fine?” at the University of Canterbury Library in New Zealand, similar results were found through a mixed-methods approach of survey that had both qualitative and quantitative questions. Her analysis noted that “the majority of respondents to the questionnaire did not think library fines should be abolished.” (C. V. Anderson, 2008) Another important study done in 2013 compared two libraries and patron return behavior and found that:

“…fines indeed make a difference in patron book return behavior. Patrons who borrowed books under a fines policy returned books before due dates at a statistically significantly higher rate. As a result of this study, it is determined that a fines policy is an effective tool to ensure that books are returned on time and available to the maximum number of library users.” (Sung & Tolppanen, 2013)

Despite the fact that patrons do not necessarily relish the experience of paying an overdue fine, the above-mentioned studies found that patrons do believe it is an effective system in encouraging users to return items on time. It is important to keep in mind, however, that while these international studies do show general trends regarding overdue fines, patron responses might be also affected by different cultural attitudes and might be another area of exploration for further research.

Another theme of fines research focuses on why people incur fines and why they return books late. A study at Leeds University looked at the various reasons why students
return books late, and proposed improvements to their overdues policy as a result. This was one of the few studies that looked at both student and staff perspective, as the researchers conducted a questionnaire with students and qualitative interviews with the library staff members. Another study looked at a medical library, and analyzed the reasons for overdues. (Shontz, 1999) However, that study might be slightly outdated as most of their suggestions, such as sending multiple overdue notices, are now staples in automated library systems today.

Revising Fines: Striking a Compromise

The last major theme within this area of research focuses on the broader circulation policies in academic libraries, of which fines are included. Many library users, patrons and staff alike, do not like fines, but many seem them as a necessary evil. As David McMenemy states:

“It is utterly perverse to me that a punitive action that is designed to prevent inefficient use of the service…is essential to the functioning of the library…however, despite the calls to abandon fines altogether, it seems to me that they serve a vital function for any library that requires efficient and equitable circulation of stock.” (Mcmenemy, 2003)

Another study that surveyed 165 academic libraries reported that while a majority of libraries thought that fines help get overdue materials back, some staff members also noted that fines do not have positive effects, or they have negative effects for employees. (Wilson et al., 2015) As such, many people seem to aim for a compromise between the two sides of the fine debate resulting in a revision of the fines policy that still has monetary rules in place to ensure greatest efficiency and availability of the collection and decreases the likelihood of individual patrons incurring fines. Examples of this include
Brigham Young University’s series of studies that examined their circulation and loan policies to see how they could change things to better fit user needs, the University of Arizona Library’s decision to use peer institution data to help them decide circulation policy changes, the College of William and Mary’s study that proposed changes to their circulation policy, as well as the NYU Bobst Library study that examined statistical data and anecdotal evidence to make a new fines and circulation policy for current patron needs. (Boyce, 2014; Hartse & Lee, 1993; Mosley, 2004; Rupp, Sweetman, & Perry, 2010; Wilson, 2014) Many of these libraries used a variety of data and methodologies to make these decisions – in some cases, the libraries conducted surveys among patrons, such as with BYU, and in other cases, libraries relied on peer institution data, such as with the College of William and Mary and the University of Arizona. (Boyce, 2014; Hartse & Lee, 1993; Wilson, 2014) Yet others merely looked internally in their department, through their records and the money trails to get a better sense of how patrons were using their services, such as with Texas A&M. (Mosley, 2004)

While each library prioritized change in different parts of their policies, the effects have largely reported to be positive, and the authors have encouraged other institutions to follow suit and reexamine their circulation policies to make sure they are still effective and appropriate for patrons.

**Fines at UNC: A Brief Overview**

While it is difficult to determine the exact history of overdue fines at the UNC Libraries, given the established practice of overdue fines in librarianship in general, it is safe to assume that overdue fines have been a part of UNC Library policy for many years.
Records from 1939 summarizing overdue fines from the past seven years support this idea, as it shows that fines were a well-documented and well-practiced policy in UNC library administration at that time, with data habitually collected and readily available for comparisons. (Fines in the Library During the Past Seven Years, Wilson Library, 1939)

In general, records in the University Archives show fines to be an administrative routine, fairly uncontroversial and faithfully done, but a few letters of correspondence here and there also showed that the fines policy was occasionally revisited and suggestions proposed. Some of the suggestions were more administrative in nature, such as a series of letters from 1942 that discuss whether or not the Library, or the Cashier’s office should be in charge of fine collection, and how to best clear or hold student accounts with overdue fines. (Collecting Fines, Wilson Library, 1942) Other suggestions were more radical, such as the suggestions put forth by a concerned faculty member in a document from the Adhoc Committee on Fines, proposed sometime in the early 70s. A Dr. Daniel Eisenberg proposed that the present fine system “be replaced with a two-step fine system of 5 cents per day for the first week a book is overdue and 25 cents per day for each day after the first week.” UNC Libraries said in response:

“The committee recommends that the present fine system remain unchanged for the following reasons. The present fine system was approved unanimously by the Administrative Board of Library in October, 1969, and has been in operation for over two years with little or no objection. Mr. Crawford has discussed the matter with a number of students and reports that he has encountered little interest in a change in the present system. The library levies fines only to promote the prompt return of library materials for the benefit of all borrowers. The fine must be significant, otherwise it will be ignored.” (Adhoc Committee on Fines, Wilson Library, n.d.)

It is interesting to note the main motivation behind not changing the fines policy is the belief that higher fines allow for greater access to the collection for all borrowers. The
emphasis is on the general benefit of all library users, as opposed to punishing those to keep books overdue.

**Fines at UNC: The Undergraduate Library**

The UL papers in the UNC Archives had administrative records of fines, particularly from the Annual Reports that gave statistics on how many overdue notices were sent, from what parts of the UL collection were materials most overdue, and how much money was billed vs. how much money was collected. Notable mentions include the fact that the UL began to process its own fines sometime during the 1967–1968 school year (Annual Report, Undergraduate Library, Wilson Library, 1967–1968), and a mention that most of the fines processing in the early years of the UL was done by students. (Contingency Plan for Reduced Student Assistant Budget for Undergraduate Library, Wilson Library, February 1983)

Delving into the Undergraduate Library papers at the UNC Archives also showed a much more colorful side to fines history at UNC. The UL periodically did student surveys to supplement the statistics provided in the Annual reports, and one of the comments from this survey comments on the exorbitant nature of fines. (Annual Report, Undergraduate Library, Wilson Library, 1964–1965) Also included were numerous patron-staff interactions regarding fine disputes, such as the UL sending a hefty overdue bill to a student who had passed away in the Vietnam War (Letter from Mrs. David B. Snelling, Wilson Library, 1965), a very unhappy patron who felt he was both unfairly charged for lost books, and unfairly treated by UL staff (Letter from Phillip Koltun, Wilson Library, 1981), as well as a $20 theft from the fines cash box in August 1983.
where the thief left a note saying “It took a while to figure out how to repay you people for unfair fines.” (Memorandum, Wilson Library, 1983) Clearly, while perhaps many overdue fines transactions happened with little to no fuss, there were a few instances where patron displeasure was readily felt and made loudly known.

Fines at UNC: Research Focus of This Study

This research study focuses on overdue fines among undergraduate students at UNC, specifically within the context of the Undergraduate Library. Similar to how many studies have taken a closer look at their circulation policies and proposed revisions, this research project will do the same at UNC as this type of systematic research regarding overdue fines has not been conducted here before. Especially given the rather separated nature of overdue fines as administrative processes vs. the effects of fines on patrons and staff in the UNC Archive papers, this research will provide a bridge between the two entities and give both patron and staff perspectives on fines policies. Below are the specific research questions:

1. What experiences do undergraduate students at UNC have with the UL fines policy, and how do those experiences affect their perceptions of the UL fines policy?

2. How do those perceptions and experiences affect undergraduate student use of the UL and its services?

3. What experiences do UL staff members have with the UL fines policy, and how do those experiences affect their perceptions of the UL fines policy?
Fines at UNC: Justification for Research Focus

Although all sections of the UNC population are avid users of the Undergraduate Library, due to the time constraints of this research project, the area of focus of this study will be the undergraduate student population at UNC. Additionally, this study was further limited to the Undergraduate Library in order to provide one, definite fines policy to guide data collection and research, as opposed to figuring out ways to account for all the different fines policies of UNC’s branch libraries. Finally, within the Undergraduate Library, the focus has been narrowed to exclude the Media Resources Center (MRC) as they have a separate fines policy and fines department, and in the view of this paper, acts like a separate branch library from the Undergraduate Library. While the use of MRC materials, for example electronic equipment, computer adapters, etc., do result in many opportunities for overdue fines research, the UL also provides electronic equipment and technology for students to borrow. As such, even though the MRC is excluded from the scope of this study, those patterns of use for electronic equipment would still be included. For further details on the current UL overdue fines policy, please see Appendix 1.

Methods Used in this Study

Overview

This research paper employed a mixed methods data collection approach, combining semi-structured interviews and survey responses to inform the analysis. The first stage of research consisted of sending out a Qualtrics survey to the UNC student population using UNC’s mass email system. The second stage consisted of semi-
structured interviews conducted with both UNC undergraduate students and UNC UL staff members. The data analysis for the interviews and the free-response survey questions involved hand-coding and noting general trends and patterns in answers, as well as noting general trends from the quantitative data. In order to conduct the survey and the interviews, this research study was submitted to the UNC IRB, and was approved on January 26th, 2018 with an assigned study number of 17-2654. Conclusions were drawn from synthesizing the two groups of data trends together and discussing the implications for fines at the UL, and overdue fines at UNC in general.

Part 1: Survey and Distribution

The Qualtrics survey used in this study consisted of 11 multiple choice questions and 4 free response questions, with the free response questions being optional. Not all questions were displayed to respondents, as there was some display logic and skip logic depending on what answers were selected. As such, before it was sent out, the survey was pre-tested eight times to make sure the display and skip logic worked properly for respondents. The survey is comprised of three different sections, with the first section asking for information regarding general use of the UL, the second section asking questions about personal experiences with fines, and the last section asking about overdue fines as a concept.

For distribution, the survey was sent to UNC’s mass email system, along with an email describing the study and its purpose. Once the message was approved by administrators, it was sent out to all students subscribed to UNC’s mass email notification system which consisted of 2757 students, both undergraduates and graduates. Originally
when this study was designed and proposed, it was possible to send emails through the UNC mass email system to segmented populations, for example only to undergraduates, or only to graduate students. However, due to parts of the UNC system breaking, the segmenting option was no longer available, and the only two options were to send the survey to no students, or to all students. To account for this and ensure that only undergraduate student responses were used in the data analysis, the first question asked what year the respondent was. In this way, it was possible to filter for undergraduate responses only. To incentivize response, all survey participants were entered into a raffle for two $50 Amazon gift cards which were awarded at the end of the survey collection period.

After the survey collection period finished, all of the names of respondents who wished to be considered for the raffle were entered into an Excel spreadsheet and assigned a number. Using a random number generator, two winners were selected and notified. After this, and after the semi-structured interviews were set up, all names were deleted from Qualtrics, and a PDF report of the results were downloaded, with only the undergraduate student responses displayed.

Part 2: Semi-structured Interviews

The second part of this study’s data collection involved conducting semi-structured interviews with both undergraduate students and UL staff members. Each interview was conducted individually, and consisted of five questions, plus additional questions that were asked as the interview progressed. To see the baseline questions asked, please refer to Appendix 5.
Recruitment for the undergraduate interviews was conducted through the Qualtrics survey which asked for volunteers to participate in the semi-structured interview. Twenty-four students indicated their interest by submitting their names and contact information. These names were then assigned a specific number, and ten numbers were randomly drawn to determine which students to interview. The participant’s survey responses did not factor into the decision to interview them or not – the only deciding factors were whether they were willing and available during the interview time-frame.

This section of the semi-structured interviews was incentivized by promising $10 Amazon gift cards for participating in the survey. The study planned to have ten student interviews total, and while ten students were originally selected for the semi-structured interviews, seventeen students were contacted overall due to unresponsiveness, inability to meet, or other unforeseen circumstances that prevented a handful of students from participating. Student participants were contacted via email to set up an interview time, and the interview, with student consent, was audio recorded. All students agreed to be recorded, and none asked that parts of their interview be redacted or not used in the study.

Recruitment for the UL staff interviews was channeled through UL administration. The researcher sent a recruitment email with the list of questions, consent form, and general information to UL admin, who then sent it to their staff list serv. From there, interested staff members directly contacted the researcher via email to set up an interview time or to ask questions. Originally, this study planned to have five staff interviews, but upon further investigation, only a handful of UL staff members work in-depth with overdue fines. As such, many people did not feel like they could contribute
significantly to the research study, and only two staff members ended up volunteering for the interview.

Data Analysis

For the survey information, data analysis was split up into the qualitative and quantitative parts. For the quantitative data, general trends and patterns were observed and discussed, noting which parts were unexpected and surprising. For the qualitative data (i.e. the free-response questions), respondent answers were hand-coded in Excel. The coding of the free-response questions happened over multiple stages, where the researcher went through and coded individual responses, and then drew out the main themes from those codes with each subsequent pass. As the datasets tended to have only two or three main code categories that had significant numbers of responses, with a handful of others that had one or two responses, only the top three code categories were discussed for this section.

For the semi-structured interviews, the data was also hand-coded in a similar manner. As responses varied more with the interviews compared to the survey answers, all code categories were discussed and analyzed.

Limitations of the Study

There were numerous limitations with this study, the most prominent of which was the sample size. Due to the time constraints and restrictions of this project, the
sample size is only a fraction of the undergraduate population at UNC and is not
generalizable to the entire population.

Additionally, a significant amount of the people who participated in the survey, as
well as the interviews, did not check out materials from the UL, and as such did not have
any experience with fines from the UL. Although this is an important section of the user
population to study, some skewing probably happened due to the large percentage of
respondents who fell into this specific category. Future research should take the potential
for overrepresentation of certain perspectives into consideration in order to attain a more
holistic view.

**Data Results and Discussion**

**Part 1: Survey Results – Quantitative Data**

The following section describes the results of the quantitative survey questions
from the undergraduate participants. The survey was sent to 2757 students, with 115
responses within the week-long collection period. Within those 115 responses, 89 were
from undergraduates. The 26 responses that were from graduate students were deleted
from the Qualtrics survey. To view the complete list of questions asked in the survey,
please see Appendix 4.

The first section of the survey asked about general use of the UL, specifically
regarding what materials students check out most, and how often. Surprisingly, a
significant portion, 40 students, said that they don’t check out materials from the UL. 36
students said that they check out materials 1 – 3 times a semester, 9 students said they
check out materials 1 – 3 times a month, and 1 student said they check out materials 1 – 3
times a week, and 3 students said they check out materials once or twice a year, as described in Figure 1.

Regarding the types of materials that students check out, students were able to select all choices that applied to their library usage. Physical print materials were by far the most popular with 37 counts, with electronic equipment at 23, the Media Resource Center at 21, reserve materials at 14, and other at 2, as described in Figure 2.
The second section consisted of questions regarding personal student experiences with fines. Regarding the number of times a fine was incurred from the UL, excluding the MRC, most students did not have personal experiences with fines as 27 students responded with 0 times, 20 students responded with 1 – 5 times, and 2 students responded with 6 – 10 times. Figure 3 represents these results. Further analyzing the fines breakdown, Figure 4 displays the monetary effects of fines and shows how within the 45% of students who had incurred fines, 12 students incurred fines within the range of $1 - $10, 5 students incurred fines within the range of $11 - $20, 1 student incurred fines within the range of $21 - $30, 2 students incurred fines within the range of $31 - $40, and 2 students incurred fines totaling over $50. Of the 22 students who had incurred fines, all
of them chose “overdue materials” as the reason for their fine, as shown in Figure 5, even though there were five other choices to select from.

**FIGURE 3**
How many times have you received a library fine from the UL? Please exclude the MRC (Media Resource Center) from your answer.

**FIGURE 4**
As an estimate, what is the TOTAL of your combined UL fines? Please exclude the MRC (Media Resource Center) from your answer.
Regarding the fines, the survey also asked questions regarding payment and appeals. Figure 6 shows that of the 22 students who had incurred fines, 4 students paid their fine in person at the UL, 1 student paid their fine through the Cashier’s office in person, 16 students paid their fine online through the Cashier’s office, and 1 student selected “Other” and wrote that their fine had been appealed. The next question asked for specifics on student experiences with appeals, and whether they were successful in their appeal or not. The results were shown in Figure 7, where 3 students said they had appealed and were successful, 1 student said they had appealed and were not successful, and 18 students have never appealed.
The last section of quantitative data questions from the survey asked about student understanding and perceptions of the UL fines policy, as well as student experiences with the fines policy. When asked what they think the goal of the UL overdue fines policy is,
Figure 8 shows that the most popular response was “to encourage patrons to bring back overdue materials.” When asked about how they felt when they received a fine from the library in, Figure 9 shows that most students responded with “irritated at myself”, and “irritated at the library.” Finally, when asked about their satisfaction with the current fines policy, Figure 10 shows that 53 students said they felt “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied”, 11 students felt extremely satisfied, 11 students felt moderately satisfied, 5 students felt slightly satisfied, 5 students felt moderately dissatisfied, 2 students felt extremely dissatisfied, and 1 student felt slightly dissatisfied.
Overall, these results show that students primarily view the UL as a source of print and electronic equipment, although many students don’t use the UL for checking
out materials. As electronic equipment is the second-most popular item used by the students surveyed, this may have interesting implications for student experiences with fines and their perceptions as electronic equipment has a higher fine, ranging from a dollar to thirty dollars an hour rate, rather than the daily rate of $0.50 with regular printed material.

In regards to feelings towards the fines policy and the UL, students generally seemed to feel neutral to satisfied about the overdue fines policy as only 8 students total selected negative choices when asked about satisfaction. Additionally, rather than viewing the fines policy as a punishment or a tool to shame users, most students reported that they thought the goal of the UL overdue fines policy was “to encourage patrons to bring back overdue materials,” implying that students view the policy as a defensive measure rather than offensive. However, these perceptions contrast slightly with the question that asked how students felt when they received a fine, as the most popular choices were “irritated at myself” and “irritated at the library”. Even though students in general may perceive the library and the fines policy positively on a broad level, when confronted with the actual experience of incurring a fine, their reaction is more negative.

Part 2: Survey Results – Qualitative Data

The free-response section of the survey consisted of five different questions that asked students to explain more about their fines experience. The responses were coded into different themes for each question, and the general trends and patterns are described below.
For the first free-response question, students were asked why they appealed their fine. Only four students responded to this, and each gave a different answer, saying that the fine was unfair, that they had failed at renewing the item, that they forgot to renew the item, or that they were unable to return the item.

For the second free-response question, students were asked what emotions they felt when getting a fine, and while most students selected one of the multiple-choice options, one student mentioned in the “other” category that they felt discouraged from using the library again.

For the third free-response question, students were asked why they had selected the emotions they did about receiving a fine. This question had a wide variety of responses, with many responses having multiple parts. The three most popular themes of the responses were 1) personal responsibility, 2) paying money, and 3) inconvenience. When discussing personal responsibility, many students discussed feeling angry, disappointed, or annoyed with themselves for having forgotten to renew or turn in an item. Many mentioned that they should have planned better or should have remembered the due dates. When discussing money, many students lamented the size of the fine as well as having to pay a fine at all. The financial burden of textbooks and school in general were both mentioned, and it should be noted that responses dealing with money tended to be the most emotional and passionate. Lastly, when discussing inconvenience, students mentioned one of two things. Many students commented on how inconvenient the return process for materials or how inconvenient it was to pay for such a small fine. Other students commented on the inconvenience of having to return materials before they were finished.
For the fourth free-response question, students were asked to explain their level of satisfaction with the fines policy. The top three themes for these responses were 1) student unfamiliarity with the fines policy, 2) students thinking the fines policy is reasonable, and 3) students not having direct experience with the fines policy.

For the last free-response question, students were asked about general suggestions or changes they had for the overdue fines policy. The top three themes for these responses were 1) no suggestions to make, 2) lowering fine rates, and 3) changing the fines policy structure. Many students who said they had no suggestions to make mentioned that they did not know current policies and did not feel like they could make useful or knowledgeable suggestions. For students who responded with lowering fine rates, most did not go into specifics. However, a handful did mention that having a lower daily fee or putting a cap on daily overdue charges would still provide the financial incentive to get patrons to return books without putting excessive burden on them. For changing the fines policy structure, many students mentioned that the per hour fines were undesirable and were not understanding of student situations, where they are often in class and can’t immediately make it to the library to return items.

When looking at the quantitative and qualitative data together, it seems like a majority of respondents have a neutral to positive view of fines, especially from a general standpoint. When asked about the concept of a fines policy, most students agreed that it was a reasonable and useful system that served as a reminder and encouraged patrons to bring back materials. However, it should also be noted that many students did not have personal knowledge or experience with the fines policy, and in cases where students were actually confronted with a fine, some of them had emotional reactions to the experience.
In particular, students who thought that the fines were too high had the most emotional responses, and in some extreme cases stated that they thought they were being taken advantage of by the library. In these cases, while these same students agreed that some sort of fine should be charged, they also had suggestions for changes to the fines policy structure that will still provide that financial incentive without the burden. Interestingly enough, the theme of personal responsibility came up more often than expected. Though students were rarely ever happy about paying fines, many of them stated that the fine resulted from their own lack of care and foresight and that they understood why they had received the fine. The actual payment of the fine was undesirable, but students did not begrudge the library for charging.

Part 3: Semi-Structured Interviews with Students

The ten semi-structured interviews that were conducted with students consisted of five questions that were asked to all students, and then a few additional questions depending on student responses. The questions that were asked to all students covered topics such as use of the UL, personal experience with fines, opinions of the fines policy, and whether these factors affected student use of the UL. To see a full list of the questions asked, please see Appendix 5.

At the top level, responses were divided up into four different categories: 1) money, 2) complaints and suggestions, 3) perceptions and feelings, and 4) perception and use of the UL. While much of the information stated in these interviews were restatements of sentiments expressed in the survey, the semi-structured interview context
allowed for much more explanation of participant responses and a much more holistic view of student perceptions of fines.

In responses coded under money, some students again mentioned the financial burden of paying fines, especially in combination with the fees that many students pay for textbooks, tuition, and other expenses. In some cases, some students expressed feeling like the library was profiting off of fines, which seemed unfair to them. However, one student had the exact opposite opinion, where they believed that the fines were not a big monetary impact at all and created little financial stress with their presence. One area that students did seem to be in agreement, however, was that the fine payment process was inconvenient and confusing. Students described going to the library to pay their fine, only to be told to go to the Cashier’s office to pay in person, or that the fine would post to their Connect Carolina account. There didn’t seem to be clear understanding as to what the exact process was for paying, which added to the annoyance of some students at having the fine.

In responses coded under complaints and suggestions, many students reiterated that they thought per hour fines were bad and unreasonable. Additionally, many students noted how the fine policies are not well-communicated at all. This is further supported by the fact that most of the suggestions that students made were things that are already part of the fines policy, such as sending out reminder emails for due dates, having a grace period for overdue items, and being able to appeal fines. All of these features exist already, but many students were completely unaware of these features, as well as the fine rates that different items have. There were some suggestions made that did not exist in the current fines policy, such as extending lending periods for electronic items, and
taking school breaks into consideration with due dates. One surprising suggestion that stood out from all the others was one student suggesting that the fines rates should be increased in order to make more patrons return books. While such a suggestion would probably be very unpopular with many other students, it does show that some students, although they may be a small minority, think that the current policy is too lenient and is not as effective as it could be.

The code category with the most amount of responses and information was the perceptions and feelings category. The feelings section was subdivided into negative, neutral/positive, mixed, and other feelings, and the perceptions section was subdivided into fine benefits, effects, and purposes. In regards to feelings about the fines policy, most responses were neutral to positive, with matches with the results from the survey above. The most often used words to describe the policy were “reasonable”, “fair”, and “makes sense.” Most people were in support of having a fines policy, and in some cases, students commented how it was necessary, otherwise the library would not have as many resources available for everyone to use.

One student made a rather telling comment about how they hadn’t really thought about the fines policy because they hadn’t received one yet. In combination with the survey responses from above, where there were high counts of students who had never incurred a fine and students who felt neutral to positive about the fines policy, it’s unclear if student feelings would stay neutral to positive after they did incur a fine. This idea is further supported by the fact that the people who expressed the most negative feelings about the fines were people who did have personal experiences with fines, both in the
interviews and in the survey. However, there were some students in the interview who did express a positive view of the fines policy, even after having to pay one themselves.

A few people did not have a binary view of the fines policy and expressed mixed feelings in their interview. As mentioned from the survey analysis above, some students disliked having to pay money, but didn’t want to take away from other patron access and understood the necessity of the fines system. Other students mentioned the idea of personal responsibility and being surprised that they had forgotten a due date, and in a very unique opinion, one student commented on how they thought the fines should be higher, as many times the books that they needed were listed as unavailable and overdue in the catalog and so current fine rates were not high enough to get people to return things on time.

Beyond personal feelings that students had about the fines policy, students also expressed what they thought the purpose of the fines policy was. By far, the most popular response was to keep things available for people to use and to ensure that people return things. Many students mentioned how they didn’t think the library was trying to actively punish or penalize people with overdue materials, that they believed the fines system helped to keep things available as much as possible, and that the fines system helped students be responsible and accountable. Additionally, on a more basic level, students said that the fines system helped serve as a reminder to return books as one student said that they would probably never remember when books were due without the financial incentive.

The last section of coded responses dealt with usage and perception of the UL. Overall, most students seemed to use the UL primarily as a study space, with books on
reserve being the second most popular usage. Print materials were third on the list, with computers/printing, and sleeping and tech items coming in at fourth, fifth, and sixth. These results give a clearer picture to the survey question above which asked about which materials students check out from the UL. Many students responded with “I don’t check out materials from the UL”, and their use of the UL as a study space helps explain this.

When asked about their perceptions of the UL, many students said that it was loud, had great services, and was very welcoming. Students enjoyed the 24 hours schedule of the UL, and also liked the variety of materials and spaces it offered. While the overall view of the UL was positive, one or two students mentioned how the UL seemed creepy, or depressing, or small, and that they didn’t like spending that much time in there.

When asked about if their experiences with fines changed how they use the library, most students said there was no change at all, regardless of if they had incurred a fine before or not. A few students mentioned how the fines made them more careful in returning books on time, but one student explicitly said that need of books and materials overrides fear of fines and they would use them regardless of potential fines in the future.

On the other side, however, two students mentioned that their experiences with fines did change the way they used the library. In both cases, the students try to avoid checking out books and only use the materials they need in the library, and they only use the library for class purposes, not for pleasure reading or personal use.

Overall, the semi-structured interviews with students seemed to support the conclusions drawn from the survey and provided a little more insight into student experiences with the fines policy. Many students seem to be unaware of the fines policy
and have not yet had personal experience with a fine at the UL but still view the policy as a whole in a neutral to positive way. Some suggestions were made for changes to the policy, the most popular of which was getting rid of hourly fines, but most students agreed that having a fines policy kept more books available for everyone to use and thought it was a reasonable and necessary system to have.

Part 4: Semi-Structured Interviews with UL Staff

The semi-structured interviews conducted with two UL staff members consisted of five questions. A couple of the questions were similar to the ones asked of the students in the semi-structured interviews, such as how the fines policy affected staff workflow, as well as their general opinion on the fines policy. For a complete list of the questions asked in these interviews, please see Appendix 5.

The first question asked was whether or not the fines policy had changed at all during their time at the UL, and the general consensus was that it hadn’t changed very much. They noted that with the laptops, the per hour fine was changed from 15 dollars for partial hours and 30 dollars for full hours to a flat rate of 30 dollars for both partial and full hours. Besides that, however, everything else has stayed the same in the past three or four years.

The second question asked about how the fines policy affected their work at the UL. Both staff members confirmed that fines do affect their work in that often times patrons are not particularly pleased when they receive a fine, and there is a lot of confusion over why they were fined. Both staff members noted that it was rare for patrons to become aggressive or angry, but displeasure was a common thread in their
responses. Another comment was that it was fairly common to have to explain the fines policy multiple times a week to patrons, as well as explain that unawareness of policies does not excuse patrons from their effect. Often times, once policies were explained to patrons, staff members said that most of them were understanding and saw the reason behind their fine and were satisfied with the explanation. However, one staff member made the interesting observation that patrons seemed to get more upset with the per hour fine, such as getting a dollar fine for turning in a computer charger late, as opposed to a larger monetary fine, such as being charged twenty dollars for turning in 15 books after they were overdue for a week. This seems to suggest that in some cases, the amount of the fine isn’t the main reason for anger; rather, it’s the circumstances and the perceived “price” of the amount of time overdue. This might also explain the high number of complaints over the per hour fines, as well as the many suggestions to get rid of them.

The third question asked what UL staff members thought of the fines policy overall. Responses were somewhat mixed over this – both staff members understood the reasons behind the fines policy but still had concerns and suggestions for change. However, the areas of concern were very different. One person had more philosophical concerns with the fines policy, particularly regarding the financial burden that is potentially placed on students and how paying for access, even if it’s a small amount, is not what a library is about. Another person had a more positive view of the fines policy and thought they were important to protecting patron access to items, such as reserve items. Their concerns were more on the structural side as they noted that certain parts of the policy were difficult to explain and understand, such as grace periods with recall fines as opposed to grace periods with a normal overdue fine, and it might make more sense to
simplify those parts of the policy for greater understanding. Additionally, they mentioned that a lesser daily overdue fine, such as 25 cents a day instead of 50 cents, might still provide the financial incentive to get patrons to return books without putting as much of a financial burden on them.

The fourth question asked what staff members thought the purpose of the fines policy was. Both staff members talked about how the fines policy was meant to encourage people to bring things back to the library. One staff member talked about how the fines policy helps to guard against the instinct to think only of yourself, particularly with items that are in high demand. They talked about how there are certain resources that would never be on the shelves if it weren’t for a fines policy, and how demonstrated consequence can help ensure access to everyone. One other thing that staff members noted is that often times, students don’t seem displeased with the fines policy. They noted that it is fairly common for students to ask why they received a fine, but once it was explained to them, their reaction is one of understanding. With a few exceptions, they have not noted negative reactions from students who have received fines.

Part 5: Comparing Staff and Student Responses

When comparing student responses with staff responses, while there are some differences in perspective, the main areas of agreement are that fines are meant to encourage patrons to bring back materials to keep as many resources available for the community to use, and that while the actual experience of paying a fine is not the pleasurable, most people understand why it is done and accept it. Staff perspectives also further emphasized the fact that many students are unaware of the fines policy in general,
given that they have to explain it so often and that many students are surprised or confused as to what they are being fined for. As staff members commented on how unawareness of fines is often what led to more negative emotions in patron reactions, it would be interesting to see what the effects of a more concentrated publicity campaign might be on student perception of fines, as well as patron-staff interactions.

Not surprisingly, students seem to be a little more aware of the financial effects of fines as opposed to staff members. While staff members did comment on the potential for financial burden, students were much more vocal about the effects of fines and how they disliked paying money. In some cases, this was enough to make some students not use the library anymore, although there were also many students who did pay fines and continued to use the library in the same manner. Interestingly enough, some of the suggestions from students who no longer used the library because of fines matched up with some of the staff member suggestions, particularly the one about reducing the daily fine rate. It seems like a lower rate could still provide incentive for people to return without the stress of large fine amounts.

Another observation is that it seems like staff members think much more deeply about fines than students. To many students, the fines policy is invisible and doesn’t exist unless they actually incur a fine, whereas staff members deal with fines on a much more regular basis as part of their daily workflow. As such, they were able to provide much more in-depth description of their experiences and perceptions of the fines policy compared to students, even the students who had incurred fines in the past. Most, if not almost all the students that participated in the interview, were unable to specifically say what the fines policy was exactly beyond that it charged money for overdue fines, and in
some ways, perhaps that limited their ability to talk in more nuanced terms about the fines policy, in comparison to the staff members.

Conclusions

Looking at the data collected above, it is possible to now revisit and answer the research questions put forth at the beginning of this study:

1. What experiences do undergraduate students at UNC have with the UL fines policy, and how do those experiences affect their perceptions of the UL fines policy?

It seems that many undergraduate students are unaware of the UL fines policy and/or do not have direct experience with it. Of the students who do have experience with a fine from the UL, many of them incurred fairly low-amount fines for overdue print or tech items and were able to resolve their fines with ease. For the students who didn’t have any firsthand experience with a fine at the UL, their perception of the fines policy was neutral to positive, with many of them saying that the fines policy helps to encourage people to bring back books so as many materials as possible were accessible to everyone. For the students who did have firsthand experience with fines, many of them still had neutral to positive perceptions of the fines policy, citing the same reasons of encouraging returns and an accessible collection as the reasons why having a fines policy was good. There were a handful of students who did have negative perceptions of the fines policy, and those were often due to firsthand experience where they were given a fine that they thought was unfair or was unjustly high. The example that was cited the most was the per
hour fines, and these students saw the fines policy as a way for the library to make money off of students.

2. How do those perceptions and experiences affect undergraduate student use of the UL and its services?

Almost all of the students interviewed said that their experience with the fines policy did not affect their use of the UL and its services. In some cases, they said that their experiences with fines made them be more careful about returning books on time, but in terms of actually using their library, the fines policy had no effect. Need was cited as more important than the consequence in other cases and many people said the fine amount was small enough where it wasn’t a big deal to pay it if they needed to.

However, a handful of students did say that they no longer used the UL and its services because of their fine experiences. While all of the fine experiences of the students who continued to use the library in the same manner had been fairly neutral, the fine experiences of this group of students was overwhelmingly negative to the point that they no longer check out books and materials.

3. What experiences do UL staff members have with the UL fines policy and how do those experiences affect their perceptions of the UL fines policy?

The staff members experienced the fines policy from a workflow perspective, rather than a patron perspective, and as such had more philosophical viewpoints of the policy. Both staff members agreed that some changes could be made but had different ideas of what those changes should be. One staff member believed that keeping the
collection accessible was most important and the fines policy played a vital role in that, whereas another staff member felt like the fines policy created a barrier to access and perhaps dissuaded use for students. However, it was interesting to note that staff members and students overlapped in one suggestion for change, which was lowering the daily overdue rate so that the financial incentive to return books was still present without creating large fine amounts for students to pay.

**Reflections**

While these results do provide an in-depth look at how undergraduate students and staff members view the fines policy at the UL, there are still many other areas for research that could be pursued in more detail. Questions that are still left unanswered include:

1. What do students consider to be a fair price for a fine? Does this differ between per hour and daily fines?

2. What in particular about the fines experience led students to classify it as a negative or a positive one? Was it the payment process, the notification process, interaction with staff, unawareness of the fines policy beforehand?

3. What specific parts of the fines policy are you happy with, or think should be changed? It would have been helpful to have students look at a copy of the fines policy and analyze it to see what parts they agreed with, and what parts they didn’t, as opposed to only talking about the small section that they had personally encountered or were familiar with.
4. How do results change with larger sample sizes? How do these results change if the project scope included all UNC libraries as opposed to one specific branch library?

5. How do appeals affect student perceptions of the fines policy? Is staff interaction more important in determining if an experience is positive/negative, or is it whether or not an appeal is successful?

These were all threads that emerged throughout the data collection but were not able to be adequately addressed within the limits of this research project.
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Secondary Print Sources


**Primary Sources**

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Fines in the Library During the Last Seven Years. Academic Affairs Library Librarian’s Records, Series 4: Public Service, Subseries 1: Fines and Fees, 1927; 1939 - 1942. The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Letter from Mrs. David B. Snelling to the Chief Librarian. Academic Affairs Library,


Appendices

Appendix 1 – The Undergraduate Library Fines Policy

Loan Periods

General Collection and Popular Reading Collection: 30 days

Media Resources Center Collection: Videos, other media, and MRC equipment vary by format. See MRC Policies for loan periods.

Reserve Materials: Most reserve books can be checked out for 2 hours, overnight, 24 hours, or 7 days. Some items are for use only in the Undergraduate Library. All reserve loans convert to two-hour loans during exams. Alternatively, most reserve books may be used in the Reserve Reading Room. If you wish to use a reserve book outside of this room, you must check it out at the Reserve Desk. A scanner and photocopier are available in the Reserve Reading Room computer area.

Equipment and accessories: Most equipment can be checked out for 3 hours to be used in the Undergraduate Library. See the complete equipment list for more details.

Magazines and Newspapers (Serials/Periodicals): Current and bound periodicals are for in library use only and cannot be checked out. However, scanners and copiers are available for duplication of materials.

Borrowing Limits

General and Popular Reading Collection Books: no limits.
Reserve items: 3 at a time.
Videos and DVDs: 3 DVDs and a total of 3 of any other Media Resources Center items. See MRC Policies for specific information.

Renewals

- Books may be renewed in-person or online for three additional loan periods, with some exceptions.
- Online renewal is not available between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m.
- Items not renewed on or before their due dates may lead to overdue fines, which could disallow further renewals on the account until the fines are paid.
- Renewals may be denied due to outstanding fines, expired borrower’s card, or book recalls (request by another patron or for course reserves).
- Books may be renewed in person by presenting the book and your valid One Card at the circulation desk of any UNC campus library. In person book renewals will be transacted as a new loan and restart the online renewal options.
• Reserve renewals can only be made in person at the Reserve Desk from which it was checked out.
• Only Screenplays can be renewed in person at the Media Resources Center. See MRC Policies.
• Laptops may be renewed once.

Fines

Fines on items borrowed from the Undergraduate Library are $0.50 per day, per item (up to $25 maximum per item) with the following exceptions:

• Recalled items: Additional $0.50 per day each day past the recall adjusted due date.
• Reserve items and computer accessories: $1 per hour per item; up to $50 maximum per item.
• Overdue laptop: $30 per hour, with no maximum overdue charge.
• Media Resources Center materials: $1 a day per item; up to $25 maximum per item.
• Media Resources Center equipment: $30 per hour, with no maximum overdue charge.
• Lost or damaged books. See the libraries’ lost or damaged book policy.
• Lost or damaged Reserve Books: 7 days after due date, patrons are billed replacement cost of $125 ($100 replacement plus $25 processing).
• Lost or damaged media charges vary by item type. See MRC Policies.
• Appeal of Library Charges form
• If you have any questions about fines and billing, please email ulfines@unc.edu.

Recalls

Books currently checked out to another patron may be recalled online via the catalog using Carolina BLU (registration required) or in person by completing a Hold card at the Book Checkout Desk. Recalled books may have adjusted due dates, reducing the original loan period. Recalled items returned overdue will incur additional recall fines of $0.50 per day each day past the adjusted due date without a grace period. The recall fine is applied in addition to regular overdue fines, and can more than double the total fine charged.
Appendix 2 – Adult IRB Consent Form

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Adult Participants

Consent Form Version Date: ______________
IRB Study # 17-2654
Title of Study: Overdue Fines in the Academic Library: Undergraduate Student Perception at the UNC Undergraduate Library and How it Affects Use of Borrowing Services
Principal Investigator: Amelea Kim
Principal Investigator Department: School of Information and Library Science
Principal Investigator Phone number: 636-675-4319
Principal Investigator Email Address: ameleak@email.unc.edu
Faculty Advisor: Mary Grace Flaherty
Faculty Advisor Contact Information: 919-962-5982

What are some general things you should know about research studies?
You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study.

You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researchers named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research study is to determine UNC undergraduate student perceptions of the overdue fines policy at the Undergraduate Library (UL) at UNC. The main goals of this study is to see how undergraduate student experiences with the overdue fines policy affect use of the UL’s materials, as well as analyzing to see if perceptions of the fines policy on the student side differ from perceptions of the fines policy on the administration side.
This research study will collect data from undergraduate students at UNC using a Qualtrics survey, as well as voluntary semi-structured interviews with both undergraduate students and UL staff members.

Are there any reasons you should not be in this study?
You should not be in this study if you are not a current undergraduate student at UNC-Chapel Hill.

How many people will take part in this study?
There will be approximately 200 people in this research study.

How long will your part in this study last?
For undergraduate students: Participation in the Qualtrics survey will require approximately 10 minutes of your time. If you wish to further participate, you can volunteer for a semi-structured interview with the researcher that will take about 30 minutes. There will not be any follow-up for the Qualtrics survey, however, there may be follow-up questions sent via email or in-person to students who participate in the semi-structured interview.

For UL staff members: You can choose to participate in a semi-structured interview with the researcher that will take about 30 minutes. Depending on the interview, there may be follow-up questions that will be sent via email or in-person to participants.

What will happen if you take part in the study?
For undergraduate students who participate in the Qualtrics survey:

- Your participation will be limited to a 10-minute Qualtrics survey that you will access through a link sent to you via email.
- You can choose to write your name or not. If you write your name, you will be entered into a drawing for two $50 prizes that will be awarded once the Qualtrics survey collection finishes in February.
- If you wish to participate in the semi-structured interview, you must write your name so that the researcher can contact you and set up an interview time.
- Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will not made publicly available.
- At any point in time during the survey, you can choose to exit and not finish.

For undergraduate students who participate in the semi-structured interview:

- In order to participate in the semi-structured interview, you must first fill out the Qualtrics survey, described above.
- After you submit your survey, the researcher will contact you via email to set up an interview time. The researcher will schedule a one-hour time slot, though the actual interview itself is only estimated to take 30 minutes.
• The interview will take place on campus.
• The interview, with your consent, will be recorded for the researcher’s reference. If consent for recording is not given, then the researcher will take notes by hand.

For UL staff members who participate in the semi-structured interview:

• Participation in the semi-structured interview is entirely voluntary.
• The researcher will contact you via email to set up an interview time. The researcher will schedule a one-hour time slot, though the actual interview itself is only estimated to take 30 minutes.
• The interview will take place on campus.
• The interview, with your consent, will be recorded for the researcher’s reference. If consent for recording is not given, then the researcher will take notes by hand.

**What are the possible benefits from being in this study?**
Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. You will not benefit personally from being in this research study.

**What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?**
There is little to no risk involved in participating in this study. There may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. You should report any problems to the researcher.

**What if we learn about new findings or information during the study?**
You will be given any new information gained during the course of the study that might affect your willingness to continue your participation.

**How will information about you be protected?**

The researcher has taken care to make sure that the privacy of all study participants will be respected. The Qualtrics survey is onyen-protected and the results will only be accessible to the primary researcher. Participants in the survey can choose whether or not they would like to write their name, and the questions asked in the survey are very broad, so it would be difficult to determine identity from the answers.

For the semi-structured interviews, only the researcher will have access to the notes and transcripts of the interview and will not make those materials publicly available. All materials, including questions, notes, transcripts, and audio files, will be stored in onyen-protected locations to further ensure that only the researcher can access this information. Once the researcher has finished with the study in May 2018, all materials will be deleted and disposed of.

Participants will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some
cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies (for example, the FDA) for purposes such as quality control or safety.

Please note that audio recordings of the semi-structured interviews may be turned off if requested, either before the interview starts or during it. The researcher will remind participants of this option before the interview session begins.

Check the line that best matches your choice:

_____ OK to record me during the study

_____ Not OK to record me during the study

What if you want to stop before your part in the study is complete?
You can withdraw from this study at any time, without penalty. The investigators also have the right to stop your participation at any time. This could be because you have had an unexpected reaction, or have failed to follow instructions, do not fit the target demographic, or because the entire study has been stopped.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?
If you complete the Qualtrics survey and write your name, you will automatically be entered into a raffle for two $50 prizes that will be drawn at the end of the survey collection period.

If you participate in the semi-structured interview, you will receive $10. If you decide to withdraw your information from the study, or if you decide to not participate in the interview, either before or during the interview, you will not receive the $10.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?
It will not cost you anything to be in this study.

What if you are a UNC student?
You may choose not to be in the study or to stop being in the study before it is over at any time. This will not affect your class standing or grades at UNC-Chapel Hill. You will not be offered or receive any special consideration if you take part in this research.

What if you are a UNC employee?
Taking part in this research is not a part of your University duties, and refusing will not affect your job. You will not be offered or receive any special job-related consideration if you take part in this research.

What if you have questions about this study?
You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions about the study (including payments), complaints,
concerns, or if a research-related injury occurs, you should contact the researchers listed on the first page of this form.

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**
All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, or if you would like to obtain information or offer input, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

**Participant’s Agreement:**

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

______________________________
Signature of Research Participant

__________________________
Date

______________________________
Printed Name of Research Participant

______________________________
Signature of Research Team Member Obtaining Consent

__________________________
Date

______________________________
Printed Name of Research Team Member Obtaining Consent

**Appendix 3 – Mass Email List Serv Recruitment Email**

Dear Participant,
My name is Amelea Kim and I am a graduate student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in the School of Information and Library Science. I am conducting a research study on overdue fines in the academic libraries at UNC, specifically at the Undergraduate Library (UL).

As such, I am looking for volunteers to fill out a 10-minute survey asking about their experiences with fines at the UL. If you complete the survey and write your name, you will automatically be entered into a raffle for one of two $50 Amazon gift cards that will be awarded at the end of the survey collection period.

By clicking here [https://unc.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3wIlw3AjpAJlnHT](https://unc.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3wIlw3AjpAJlnHT) and completing the survey, you agree to be a participant in this study.

The survey will ask you questions about your experiences with the UL’s overdue fines policy and is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or stop taking the survey at anytime. All possible measures have been taken to protect the confidentiality of your answers.

I will report only summaries of the aggregated data. This means that your responses will be combined with all of the other responses received and will not be able to be identified as yours. Deductive disclosure which is the discerning of an individual respondent's identity and responses through the use of known characteristics of that individual is also possible but unlikely.

If you have any questions regarding this survey, you may contact me via email at ameleak@email.unc.edu.

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. This non-biomedical study, ID 17 - 2654, was approved on 1/26/2018 by the Office of Human Research Ethics at UNC-Chapel Hill. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at (919) 966-3113 or via email at IRB_subjects@unc.edu with study number 17 – 2654.

Thank you,

Amelea Kim
Appendix 4 – Qualtrics Survey Sent to Undergraduates

1. What year are you?
   a. Freshmen
   b. Sophomore
   c. Junior
   d. Senior
   e. Other

2. How often do you check out materials from the Undergraduate Library (UL)?
   a. I don’t check out materials from the Undergraduate Library (UL)
   b. 1 - 3 times a semester
   c. 1 - 3 times a month
   d. 1 - 3 times a week
   e. Other:

3. [only displayed if Q2’s answer is not a] What types of UNC materials have you checked out from the Undergraduate Library (UL)? (Check all that apply)
   a. Physical Print Materials (Books, magazines, journals, etc)
   b. Reserve Materials (books, articles, materials, etc that are available for shorter periods of time, such as 2 hours, overnight, 24 hours, 7 days, etc)
   c. Electronic Equipment (headphones, phone chargers, laptop chargers, laptops, dongles, etc.)
   d. Media Resource Center (MRC) Materials (DVDs, VHS, CDs, video/audio equipment)
   e. Other:

4. [only displayed if Q2’s answer is not a] How many times have you received a library fine from the Undergraduate Library (UL)?
   a. 0 times
   b. 1 – 5 times
   c. 6 – 10 times
   d. 11 – 15 times
   e. 16+ times
   f. Other:

5. [only displayed if Q2’s answer is not a, and if Q4’s answer is not a] As an estimate, what is the total of your combined Undergraduate Library (UL) fines, both past and present?
   a. $0
   b. $1 - $10
   c. $11 - $20
   d. $21 - $30
   e. $31 - $40
   f. $41 - $50
6. [only displayed if Q2’s answer is not a, and if Q4’s answer is not a] What is the most common reason for your library fine from the Undergraduate Library (UL)?
   a. Overdue materials (returned past the due date)
   b. Recalled materials (another patron requested the material)
   c. Lost materials (anything overdue by 42 days is automatically declared lost)
   d. Damaged materials (material not in good condition when returned)
   e. I don’t remember
   f. Other:

7. [only displayed if Q2’s answer is not a, and if Q4’s answer is not a] How did you pay your library fine?
   a. In person at the Undergraduate Library
   b. Through the Cashier’s Office in person
   c. Through the Cashier’s Office online
   d. Other:

8. [only displayed if Q2’s answer is not a, and if Q4’s answer is not a] Have you ever appealed a fine through UNC? If so, were you successful in your appeal?
   a. Yes, I appealed and was successful,
   b. Yes, I appealed, but my appeal was not successful
   c. No, I have never appealed
   d. Other:

9. [only displayed if Q2’s answer is not a, and if Q4’s answer is not a, and Q8’s answer is not c] Why did you appeal your fine?

10. What do you think the goal of the UNC Undergraduate Library overdue fines policy is? (Check all that you think apply)
    a. To punish patrons who keep materials late
    b. To encourage patrons to bring back overdue materials
    c. To build civic responsibility and community-mindedness
    d. To keep as much of the collection available for maximum use
    e. Other:

11. [only displayed if Q2’s answer is not a, and if Q4’s answer is not a] If you received a library fine from the Undergraduate Library, how did that make you feel?
    a. Irritated at myself
    b. Irritated at the library
    c. Neutral
    d. Appreciative
    e. Guilty
    f. Happy
g. Surprised  
h. Unsurprised  
i. Other:  

12. [only displayed if Q2’s answer is not a, and if Q4’s answer is not a, and if Q11’s answer is any combination of a – i] If you selected an emotion(s) in the question above, why did you feel this way?  

13. How satisfied are you with the current fines policy?  
   a. Very satisfied  
   b. Somewhat satisfied  
   c. Slightly satisfied  
   d. Slightly dissatisfied  
   e. Somewhat dissatisfied  
   f. Very dissatisfied  
   g. Neither satisfied or dissatisfied  

14. Please explain why you chose the answer above.  

15. Do you have any suggestions for the current fines policy?  

16. If you would like to be entered in a raffle to win one of two $50 cash prizes, please write your name and email here.  

17. If you would be willing to be part of a 30 minute semi-structured interview to discuss your experiences with the UNC UL fines policy and receive $10, please write your full name and email here. The researcher will contact you via email to confirm your interest, and set up a time.
Appendix 5 – Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Students and Staff

Semi-structured Interview Questions for Undergraduates
1. How would you describe your use of the Undergraduate Library?
2. What is your general opinion of the Undergraduate Library and its services?
3. What is your general opinion of the Undergraduate Library fines policy?
4. Have library fines affected your use of the Undergraduate Library in any way?
5. What do you think the purpose of the fines policy is?

Semi-structured Interview Questions for UL Staff Members
1. How long have you worked at the Undergraduate Library?
2. How has the UL fines policy changed while you have been at the UL? (if you can remember)
3. How has the fines policy affected your work here at the UL?
4. What is your general opinion of the UL fines policy?
5. What do you think the purpose of the fines policy is?