



THE
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Press
Release

June 13, 2005

Public Library of Cincinnati & Hamilton County Launches New Materials Recovery Plan

For him that stealeth, or borroweth and returneth not, this book from its owner, let it change into a serpent in his hand and rend him. Let him be stuck with palsy, and all his members blasted. Let him languish in pain crying aloud for mercy, and let there be no surcease to this agony till he sing in dissolution. Let bookworms gnaw his entrails...and when at last he goeth to his final punishment, let the flames of Hell consume him forever.

—A colorful example of how to get books back promptly in the Middle Ages from the monastery of San Pedro in Barcelona

Beginning July 5, the Public Library of Cincinnati & Hamilton County will have another tool available to get materials back into the hands of the public more quickly. No, the Library is not resorting to snakes, pestilence, annelids, or fires. To handle overdue materials or fines exceeding \$25 or more, it will use the services of Unique Management Services, which partners with over 650 libraries nationwide to recover overdues and monies.

“This is extremely critical during a time when the Library’s budget has been cut by the state,” said the Library’s Executive Director Kimber L. Fender. “Since we’ve reduced our materials budget by 10% this year, it is even more important that our customers return borrowed books and other items when due.”

Based on Unique’s nationwide experience with library materials recovery, the vast majority of long overdue materials tend to be the newer, most popular items. Returning them to the shelves better meets the needs of the community, while at the same time helps the Library substantially reduce its expenses for collection replacement.

In order to offset the cost of the service the Library will add a \$10 processing fee to every customer's fines when the account is turned over to Unique. In the past, the Library has worked with the Prosecutor's Office and Small Claims Court to recover materials and overdue fines but this has been a very time-consuming and staff intensive process. "We are optimistic that this new materials recovery plan can maintain patron goodwill, return a high percentage of materials to circulation, minimize library staff time required with their electronic process, and reach budget neutrality," continued Ms. Fender. No capital expenditure is required by the Library to use the material recovery service.

"Unlike many traditional collection agencies, our gentle yet effective approach yields results without alienating customers," said Melissa Fenton of Unique. "We work exclusively with libraries and understand their special needs. Our partnerships with automation vendors make it easy for libraries to use our service with minimal commitment of staff time."

"Our return on investment averages \$4.00 in returned materials and cash for each \$1.00 invested among all of our 650 Library customers across the United States and Canada," said Ms. Fenton. "This is a very powerful return on the Library's, and taxpayers', investment."

Q & A

1) What Is the Process When an Item Becomes Overdue?

Public Library of Cincinnati & Hamilton County:

- When items are checked out, you receive a printed receipt of your entire account.
- If you are signed up for email notification, you receive a courtesy notice two days before items are due.
- Day 10: You are notified of overdue items either through telephone or email by the Public Library of Cincinnati & Hamilton County, depending on which option you chose for your account.
- Day 20: Second overdue notice sent.
- Day 60: Account turned over to Unique Management if fines or value of items is \$25 or more. A \$10 processing fee is also added to the account.

2) How Does Materials Recovery Work?

Unique Management:

- Day 60 (Day of Submission): 1st Letter
- Day 82: 2nd Letter
- Day 96-109: Initial Placement Phone Calls
- Day 124 (Secondary Placement): 3rd Letter
- Day 138-151: Secondary Placement Phone Calls
- Day 180-211: Credit Reported

3) What Is the Return on Investment (ROI) for Similar Library Systems?

- Columbus Metropolitan Library (Ohio) has recovered \$1,236,367.50 (ROI: 6:1).
- Cuyahoga County Public Library (Ohio) has recovered \$655,885.09 (ROI: 10:1).
- King County Library System (Washington) has a total recovery of \$8,521,706.83 (ROI: 12:1).

“The average response rate is 66% — a very strong recovery percentage,” said Paul Burch, Circulation Services Manager. “If your Library card is in good standing, it’s easy to renew items you have checked out, simply by calling your local branch, or going online and accessing your account. We also provide a printed receipt each time you check out items that lists all items you have borrowed. We hope this will encourage our customers to return items promptly so that others can enjoy them.”

“The Library hopes that this practice will encourage all borrowers to return items by the date due,” said Ms. Fender. “Items can be renewed by phone or online and book depositories for returning material when the Library is closed are available at every library location.”

✓ **Information about events at the Main Library and 41 branch libraries is available on the Internet site: www.CincinnatiLibrary.org.**