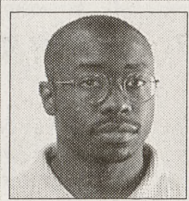


Library fines cause more trouble than needed

Remember that nostalgic, old-fangle phrase, "Indian giver," where a good friend would loan you a pencil and then want it returned within the next 15 seconds? Although this might seem like a childhood situation, the terminology and circumstance of the incident closely resemble an occurrence taking place on the Texas A&M campus.



JAMES FRANCIS
opinion editor

Starting today, individuals will be fined for overdue materials taken from the Sterling C. Evans Library, the West Campus Library and the Evans Library at the George Bush School of Government and Public Service. For every day an item is overdue, a minimum late fee of 25 cents will be appropriated to the student, faculty member or community user in question.

Obviously, this is a good idea; other public libraries charge fines for checking out materials. A&M's facilities should be no different. But there are a few drawbacks to this new policy.

Students are forgetful and too busy to remember to return materials to the facilities by a specified due date. Many times and more times to come, students borrow a great load of materials for a class project, and by the time they are finished using the materials, they are too exhausted to remember that they have to return the materials. This is not an excuse for students to continually have overdue materials in their possession, but it offers them a little leeway in the department of memory loss.

The renewal policy for borrowing materials also is a bit sketchy. Undergraduates must bring their books and other materials back to the library to renew them. In a typed addendum to circulation guidelines that has been issued to various departments on campus, it was stated that "Faculty and graduate students may call the renewal number (845-3807)."

Once again, undergraduates are left out in the cold of new developments at the University. Why make it harder on freshmen, who already will have enough trouble adjusting to college life, to force them to physically go to the library for renewal instead of simply calling a phone number like faculty and graduate students?

Furthermore, if a student is not a mathematics major, he or she might not fully understand the grace period given to overdue materials before a charge is denoted to the student. The addendum said that the Library



ED GOODWIN/THE BATTALION

Council, comprised of representatives of the faculty and student body, "recommended a fourteen-day grace period."

With that in mind, this is how the addendum explains the system would work: "If a regular circulating item is due Friday, September 19, a library user may return it as late as Friday, October 3 without owing a fine. However, on Saturday, October 4, the user would owe 25 cents per day overdue fine retroactive to Saturday, September 20. The fine would be \$3.75." Did everyone understand that? It might take a few minutes to fully grasp the policy's conditions, but these rules have been typed up in black and white for all library users to adhere to. And there are still a couple of other notices which need to be mentioned.

The addendum states, "When an item is 30 days overdue, a final notice is sent, and the user's circulation privileges are blocked. In addition, users who accrue a \$75 fine, or have ten overdue books, will have their circulation privileges suspended until the situation is resolved. The fine limit per book is \$10."

Library fining is a good idea, but if a student's fines reach \$75, something is wrong with both the system and the student. For students who are worried about paying fines when school starts, don't worry too much just

yet. Anything that has been deemed overdue before September 1 will not incur a fine as long as the materials are returned before September 16. And even if students do not return materials on time, think of all the good the money collected from fining can help the University accomplish.

The final statement from the addendum states, "The monies collected as fines for overdue material are used by the University Libraries to purchase additional library books and other material in high demand." This message should send a sigh of relief to all students and faculty who utilize library materials. But the "other material in high demand" might be something to question in the future, somewhere down the road when construction on library drive-thru check-out becomes a reality.

With the idea of an after school special in mind, if you wish to learn more about the A&M library system and its policies, take a look at the University Libraries Web site at <http://www.tamu.edu/library>. But if you are a student who knows that no matter what you do, fines will be charged toward you this semester, enjoy the relief of knowing that you won't be the only one.

James Francis is a junior English major.

EDITORIAL

THE BATTALION

Established in 1893

Editorials appearing in The Battalion reflect the views of the editorials board members. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other Battalion staff members, the Texas A&M student body, regents, administration, faculty or staff. Columns, guest columns, cartoons and letters express the opinions of the authors. Contact the opinion editor for information on submitting guest columns.

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MONEY TALKS

Hopwood prompts minorities to explore financial offerings of private universities

When the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals struck down race-based admission policies, it triggered a chain of repercussions that may never be reversed.

Texas Attorney General Dan Morales interpreted the decision as applicable to any race-based recruiting, enrollment and scholarship policies at all state-run institutions of higher education.

Universities such as Texas A&M will have a tough time recruiting top minority students, because without the attraction of race-based scholarships, these students won't show interest.

And why should they? In the wake of Hopwood, private universities are taking the reins in minority recruitment. Sadly, our university has no choice but to step aside and watch minority enrollment figures plunge.

And the winners in this hardship are undoubtedly private universities. A&M is at a competitive disadvantage with private and out-of-state universities, who are empowered by scholarships and grants aimed at minorities.

Even if the cost of attending USC is three-times that of attending A&M, when a student is awarded \$20,000 a year at USC, the choice is obvious.

The bottom line is that, like most students, minority students will follow the money. Scholarships are the only bargaining tool

universities possess when recruiting these students.

Finances are foremost on their minds, since most minority students do not come from wealthy families.

The typical minority student worked two jobs in high school to save up for college, and will not sacrifice financial stability just because a college offers a state-of-the-art rec center or unique traditions.

In recognizing the detrimental effects of Hopwood, the University of Texas has begun a recruitment plan to encourage diversity within their student body.

UT students will visit high schools to persuade them to remain in-state. While this might offset some of the dramatic declines, efforts to recruit are hollow without the bargaining power of scholarships.

Hopwood will cause universities such as Texas A&M to lose the most talented minority students to private universities. Potential Aggies will find their niche at Pepperdine if the aftershocks of Hopwood persist.

This is a tragedy, especially for an institution that prides itself upon being a "world-class" university. We can welcome minority students with diversity programs and multicultural conferences, but without the funds to back up, the effort is futile.

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Monday •
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