

*primary - set down policy  
quest -*

TO: DALNET Board  
FROM: DALNET Circulation Standards Committee  
SUBJECT: Committee's Review of Board-Referred Issues  
DATE: March 29, 1995

Attached is the Committee's review of the two issues referred to it by the Board. The Committee identified positive and negative aspects of implementing these policies. These were then reviewed by DALNET libraries to determine the degree of support at the DALNET sites. All DALNET libraries currently using the NOTIS Circulation Module responded, as follows:

**ISSUE 1: Honoring financial blocks when the block is exceeded due to money owed to another DALNET library.**

Three DALNET sites support honoring financial blocks on a "discretionary basis" for their primary customers. The other nine sites did not support this policy. The major reasons cited were:

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- the legality of enforcing this policy with patrons who have a contract with an institution, e.g. students who have paid tuition (negative #1 on page 1 of attachment)
- the inability of patrons to immediately discharge their debt (negative #3 on page 1 of attachment).

Some libraries not supporting this policy might choose to do so in "extreme" cases, e.g. a patron owes an exorbitant sum to one institution or owes a large sum to many institutions.

Enforcing this policy for other than "primary" clientele is a more complicated matter as DALNET sites have varying borrowing policies for guest borrowers, etc.

**ISSUE 2: Confiscating materials not charged out from another DALNET site**

*DPL communicates  
- call library manager  
- proactive step  
- communicate*

Two DALNET sites support confiscating other DALNET libraries' materials (or at least contacting the other DALNET library). The remaining ten sites did not support this policy. The two major reasons cited were:

- the legality of this policy (negative #1 on page 2 of the attachment)
- the potential hostility towards Circulation Desk Staff this policy might provoke (negative #2 on page 2 of attachment).

During the course of discussion, the word "policing" was mentioned by several sites as a way of describing their reservation about these policies. These policies were also not viewed as being "customer friendly."

The majority of the Committee felt the negatives outweighed the positives and did not recommend these policies be adopted.

**DALNET Circulation Standards Committee's Review of DALNET  
Board-Referred Issues**

**Issue 1:** Enforcing financial blocks when an institution's financial block is exceeded because of money owed to another DALNET library.

**Scenario:** WSU student financial threshold is \$50.  
WSU student is blocked because the total owed to ALL DALNET libraries is over \$50.  
WSU student owes less than \$50 to WSU (i.e. anywhere from nothing to \$49.99).  
Should WSU student be blocked from charging WSU materials?

**POSITIVE ASPECTS:**

1. Encourages payment of fines to DALNET libraries.
2. Stops library "shopping," i.e. patrons moving from library to library looking for a library with a higher financial threshold.
3. Prevents libraries from loaning to patrons who have historically been "bad risks."
4. Reduces need for staff to check patron record to determine to which library money is owed and do overrides.
5. Honoring blocks would promote DALNET cooperative policies and system-wide standardization.

**NEGATIVE ASPECTS:**

1. Is this legal? Would it expose institutions to law suits? Can we legally prevent patrons who are in "good standing" with one DALNET institution from borrowing materials from that institution because of monies owed to another DALNET institution?
2. Some patrons might view one library being aware of his/her library fines at another library as being a violation of his/her privacy.
3. Patrons may be unable to immediately discharge their debts because:
  - a. the lack of system-wide payment ability prevents patrons from paying anywhere except where the money is owed, and
  - b. patrons may not have immediate access to the library at which money is owed due to differing hours of operation or transportation problems.
4. Library staff enforcing the block may be unaware and unable to verify that money owed at another institution is being disputed by the patron.
5. Implementing this would not take in account the possibility of mechanical or procedural errors at other libraries.
6. Patrons are likely to become hostile. Students and/or part-time staff may be unprepared and untrained to make such judgments.
7. Lack of uniformity of threshold fines and circulation policies could result in unequal treatment of patrons whereby patrons may be blocked at one institution and not at another due to differing threshold blocks.

**ISSUE 2:** If a library discovers that a patron has material from another DALNET library that is not charged out, should that library confiscate that material?

**POSITIVE ASPECTS:**

1. Would assist in the retrieval of stolen library materials.
2. Confiscating materials would promote DALNET cooperative policies.

**NEGATIVE ASPECTS:**

1. Is this legal? Would it expose institutions to law suits? Would this be considered "illegal search and seizure?"
2. Patrons are likely to become hostile if materials were confiscated. Students and/or part-time staff may be unprepared and untrained to make such judgments.
3. Confiscation of materials would not take into account the possibility of mechanical or procedural errors at other libraries.