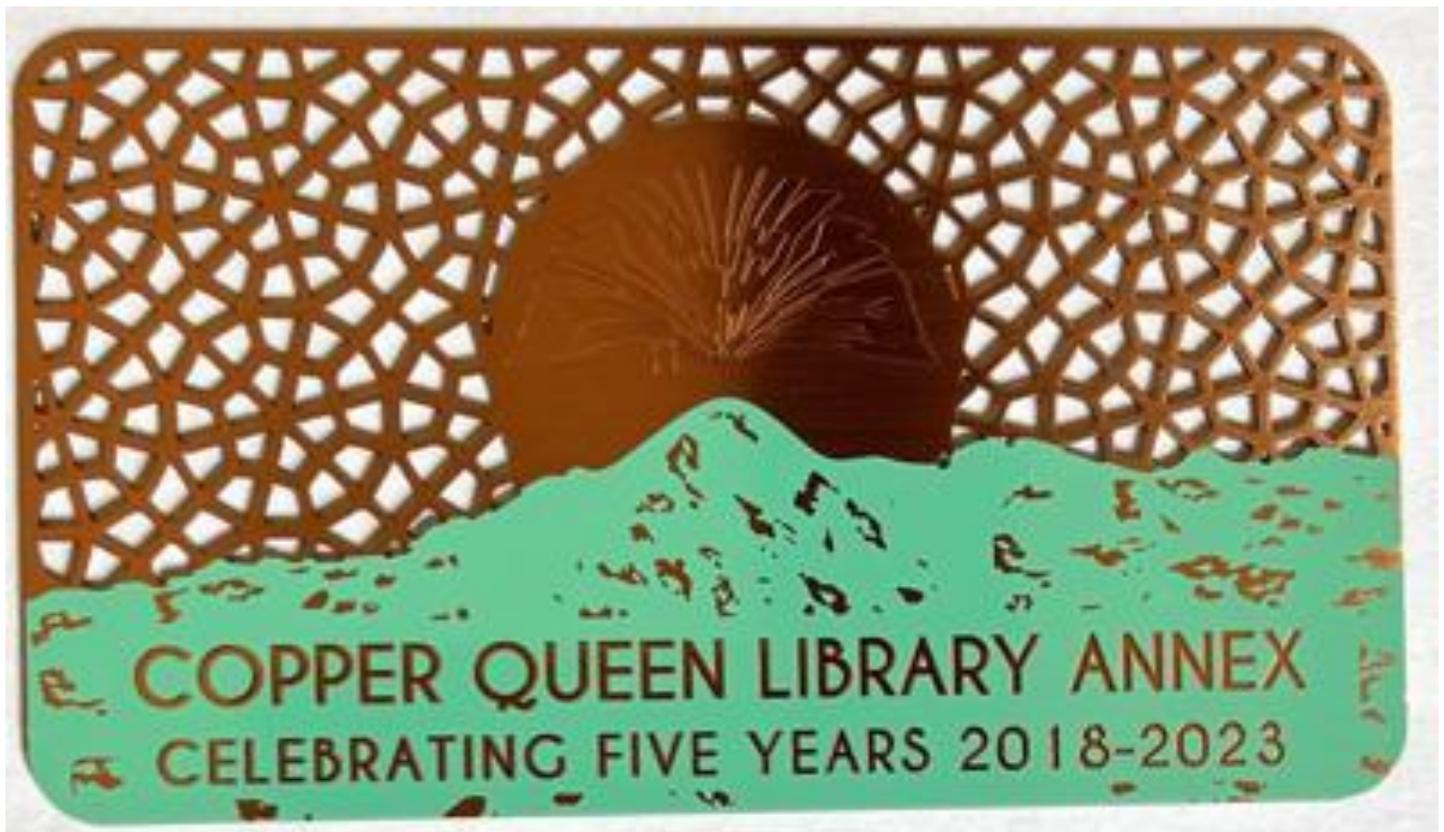


Bisbee libraries end late fees

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This commemorative library card in copper celebrates the fifth anniversary of the opening of the San Jose annex. The number of cards are limited and cost \$10.

BISBEE — After a test run on eliminating overdue late fees at the Copper Queen Library, the mayor and city council passed a resolution on Tuesday to end them.

The county libraries have already dropped the fees. So did Sierra Vista in 2020, but they do hold anyone who damages or loses books or materials responsible for replacement.

Council concerns of losing money on books people do not return were somewhat allayed as Alison Williams, library program coordinator, reported on the six-month test period which showed the plan was successful in bringing back library property and patrons.

The adoption permanently eliminates overdue fees on CQL materials and removes another barrier so patrons can freely access the library's important collections, she explained

“This affects low-income households,” she said. “Ten cents a day may not sound like much, but it can mean a family may have to choose between milk or pay the fee. We are dedicated to removing barriers.”

While the end of fees may have a slight impact on the library's bottom line, the print and fax services now offered provide more than enough to cover the loss of overdue fines.

This will bring those who owe late fees back to the library to participate in library activities and programs and continue access to books, DVDs and the myriad services through the Main Street location and the satellite library in San Jose, Williams said.

Library manager Jason Macoviak reported the libraries' patron number has increased and there are now 4,000 people of diverse ages on the roster. He wants to reach 5,000 this year.

The fine fee was lifted in February and since that time items kept beyond the due date have significantly declined, he said.

The popularity of e-books continues to grow and so far in 2023 there were 4,200-plus patrons who have used the service. Audio books also continue to climb and to a level almost neck-and-neck with e-books.

The number of children who attend the library programs has increased significantly from a low of 200 in 2021 to 1,600 in 2023. The library started more children's programs to focus on early childhood literacy and the numbers show it is gaining popularity with parents and their children.

Greenway Elementary School has stated in the past that teachers can tell who has been participating in the early childhood literacy program when they enter kindergarten.

“Jason brought the library into the 21st century,” Councilman Frank Davis said. “They know what should be done and we should listen to them.”

City Manager Steve Pauken and Mayor Ken Budge were a bit leery of ending the fines due to the cost of replacing the books and other offered items.

“I think they need to shoulder some of the responsibility,” Pauken said.

Councilwoman Anna Cline also was hesitant and noted, “If we see the reverse of people not bringing back books, we can change it.”

Friends of the Copper Queen Library is offering limited edition, commemorative, copper library cards celebrating the fifth anniversary of the annex on Melody Lane for \$10 as a fundraiser. The members support both libraries by purchasing materials and sponsoring programs and events like the Altered Books.

For information, visit the website on Facebook or the city website at: <https://www.bisbeeaz.gov/2155/Copper-Queen-Library> or call 520-432-4232