

'When you borrow and don't return it – that's stealing'
BRFPL cracking down on patrons who don't return library books

By Lori Jayne Carlson
Published by the Banner Journal April 27, 2016

Patrons of the Black River Falls Library (BRFPL) who don't return their books on time could face being cited with theft and incur hefty fines.

According to revisions approved by the BRFPL Board April 19, a first notice will be sent to patrons seven days after material is due, a second notice will be sent 21 days and a third notice and a bill to replace the material will be sent 35 days after the material is due. After 35 days of overdue status, and if no attempt is made to contact the library, the patron's account will be referred for collection to the City of Black River Falls (BRF) Police Department, who will issue a letter to the person with unreturned materials. That letter states that because of a new state statute, failure to contact the library could result in fines of \$263.50 in addition to replacement costs for the over-

due materials. The letter also states that according to State Statute 943.61, not contacting the library could also result in a circuit court citation, a court date and up to nine months in the county jail, along with fines up to \$10,000.

"This isn't about nickel and dime fines for items that are returned late," stated Wisconsin Library Association Executive Director Plumer Lovelace in a recent press release. "This is a serious issue. More than three million dollars worth of taxpayer-owned library materials is simply not being returned to our public libraries each year, despite months of repeated notices and calls from library staff."

BRF Public Library Director Tammy Peasley commented that the recent addition of more hours to her part-time staff, allowing her more time to pursue overdue

materials, and the new statute are the reasons behind the new BRF library policy, which includes law enforcement supported collections.

Peasley commented, "This is about taxpayers' money when people don't return materials. We are very grateful for our police chief being willing to issue the letters."

"After receiving the letter, which will list the materials not returned and replacement costs, people will have 14 days to contact the library to make arrangements. If they fail to contact us, that is when fines and citations could be issued," explained Peasley. "The problem was that people would just not respond to our collection attempts. Really, all people who haven't returned materials need to do is contact us, and we will work something out with them."