



# Assessment Annual Report

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**Service or Collection:** Borrowing @ Valley Library: General Collection

**Fiscal Year**

FY20 (June 2019 – July 2021) - FY23 (July 2022 – June 2023)

**Overview**

Although declining for many years, the borrowing of the physical collections at Valley Library still continues to be an important way for users of the library access information (Figure 1). In fall of 2020 (FY21), OSULP eliminated overdue fines for all OSU owned material. The only items still charged an overdue fine are thing borrowed from other libraries.

At the end of FY 20 and the beginning of FY21 - from March -September 2020 (the beginning and first summer of the pandemic) - the library paused in-person circulation of the physical collection and physical access to the library while simultaneously allowing for home delivery of items for all patrons (previously limited to Ecampus patrons); home delivery was offered almost the entire duration of the pandemic. Valley Library resumed limited in-person visits and circulation in fall 2020. In spite of the dramatic drop in circulation for FY21 (Figure 1), compared to before the pandemic, the fact that almost 10,000 books were checked out during FY21 while almost all classes were taught remotely is evidence of their ongoing usefulness.

Over FY22 and FY23 in-person campus life has been slowly reestablishing itself. Over this time there has been a rebound in the use of the physical collections to many times that of FY21. However, the use is still not much more than a third of FY19 (the last full FY before the pandemic). It is worth noting that campus density and the numbers of visitors to the library is also lower (Figure 2). The last year before the pandemic that the library has a full year of data for visitor counts is FY18 with 1,125,729. In FY23 Valley had 818,585 visitors, a significant increase from the 28,033 visitors in FY21.

**Strategic Significance:**

Although the library has devoted significant resources and focus to increasing digital access to information, the general collection’s print copies continue to play a significant role in preserving and disseminating knowledge. Since many things are unavailable in any format other than print and because print is still the gold standard for long term preservation, this continued investment in circulating, preserving and purchasing print materials makes strategic sense.

**Takeaways:**

- Although Valley library has been increasing physical circulation of the general collection since a significant decline during COVID, it is still well below pre-COVID numbers (Figure 1), even accounting for the longstanding more gradual decline in physical circulation that most academic libraries have experienced for some time. One possible reason for this difference is the fact that in-person visitors to the library are 73% of those for FY18 (most current pre-pandemic visitor numbers available) (Figure 2). It may also be some proof of the success of several OSULP strategic opportunities identified in the strategic plan that focus on creating and acquiring digitized collections.
- Before the elimination of overdue fines for OSU-owned items, undergraduates were by far the main user group charged these fines both for the general collection and for the library as a whole. Now no one is being charged fines for items in the general collection, and where fines are still being charged for items borrowed from other libraries, the bulk of the charges are assessed to faculty and GTAs.
- Both Figure 3 and 4 show a measurable change over time with a higher percentage of loans entering lost status and recalls declining almost as significantly. The unusually high percentage of lost items in FY21 is almost certainly the result of COVID disruption. However, it is worth noting that these changes started before COVID and before OSULP's decision in FY21 to eliminate fines for OSU-owned material.
- Figure 5 shows a striking increase in the amount billed for lost items during FY22 with a similar increase in credits issued for the return of billed items. FY23 seems to be more similar to the amounts in previous years, again reflecting the return to more "normal" borrowing patterns.

**Key Decisions:**

The two key decisions that concern the physical circulation of the Valley Library general collection are the elimination of fines on OSU-owned items and the strategic focus on transferring and collecting digital collections; both happened prior to FY23. However, they do continue to be important considerations when deciding how to evaluate the circulation or the physical collection and its importance.

No changes were made this FY that impacted general collection borrowing.

**Next Steps:**

We are just getting to a point where we have enough data to start teasing out the effects of eliminating fines from the effects of COVID on the circulation of the general collection. Depending on the other priorities of OSULP it could be worth deeper investigation into user behavior in relation to this policy change. The effect on individual users, in particular students who are no longer penalized for most late returns, is unquestionable. Although the evidence is anecdotal, this change has also improved the quality of interactions between staff and users. It's possible that promoting the libraries' fine-free policies, and the related affordability and

social justice implications, would be a better use of limited staff resources that seeking to reduce or better understand late returns.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Weber  
Signature of the person (or persons) who prepared this report

8/3/23  
Date submitted

## Attachments

Assessment Data

Figure 1: Selected circulation related statistic for Valley Library

	FY-23	FY-22	FY-21	FY-20	FY-19	FY-18
Loans	57,141	43,984	9,881	101,769	154,959	163,557
Returns	52,956	42,405	9,649	101,026	154,241	162,826
Lost	1,286	1,026	428	1,518	1,259	1,728
Recalls	539	591	159	1,417	2,725	3,200

Figure 2: Total people entering Valley Library

Fiscal Year	Total Visitors
FY 18	1,125,729
FY19 – FY20 Incomplete data	
FY 21	28,033
FY 22	615,650
FY 23	818,585

Figure 3: Lost items as a percentage of overall circulation for Valley Library.

	FY-23	FY-22	FY-21	FY-20	FY-19	FY-18
Loans	57,141	43,984	9,881	101,769	154,959	163,557
Lost	1,286	1,026	428	1,518	1,259	1,728
Percentage	2.3%	2.3%	4.3%	1.5%	0.8%	1.1%

Figure 4: Recalled items as a percentage of overall circulation for Valley Library.

	FY-23	FY-22	FY-21	FY-20	FY-19	FY-18
Loans	57,141	43,984	9,881	101,769	154,959	163,557

Recalls	539	591	159	1,417	2,725	3,200
Percentage	0.9%	1.3%	1.6%	1.4%	1.8%	2%

Figure 5: Replacement fees and credits issued for Valley Library General Collection

