SWAN EXPO 2026 · ROUNDTABLE · AUGUST 21

# Tracking Patron Payments at the Circulation Desk

*What's working at your library?*

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# Why I proposed this session

Every library in this room takes money from patrons every single day. Almost none of us have a finance system built to track it.

**What transactions are included?**

**How do you record transactions?**

**How do you reconcile?**

*I am not here with the answer. I am here with the question.*

1. **The ILS is not an accounting system**

   It tells you a fine was waived. It does not tell you why, or who approved it.

2. **The desk is not a cashier's window**

   Circulation staff are hired to serve patrons, not to balance a drawer.

3. **Nobody audits it until someone does**

   The gap usually surfaces during the annual audit, or when a number stops making sense.

# Where the money actually comes in

*Show of hands as we go. Which of these does your library collect at the desk?*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Overdue fines** | **Lost & damaged items** | **Printing & copies** | **Fax & scanning** |
| **Replacement cards** | **Meeting room fees** | **Notary & passport** | **Book sale & donations** |

Each one may hit a different drawer, a different receipt, a different person, and a different line on the treasurer's report. The tracking problem is rarely one big leak. It is eight small ones.

# Four questions for the room

*About ten minutes each. Anyone can start.*

1. **What happens to a $2 bill between the patron's hand and the bank deposit?**

   *Walk us through it. Who touches it, what gets written down, and when.*

2. **Who is allowed to waive a fine, and how would you know if they did?**

   *Waivers and overrides are where most of the untraceable money lives.*

3. **What does your end-of-day reconciliation actually look like?**

   *Paper log, spreadsheet, ILS report, nothing at all. No judgment here.*

4. **What has your auditor or board asked for that you could not produce?**

   *The gap you already know about is the most useful thing you can share.*

# Before you leave

## One idea

Name the one thing you heard today that you want to try at your library.

## One contact

Find the person whose setup sounded closest to yours. Trade emails.

## One list

I will type up everything on the flip chart and send it to everyone who signs in.

*Sign-in sheet is going around. Thank you for talking honestly about money.*