

The Book Nook - late or missing books? Don't worry!

by Kate Oland

"I'm late, I'm late, for a very important date!" The poor old White Rabbit from Alice in Wonderland spent an entire film (and book!) in a state of panic and anxiety. Unfortunately, this is also the state many library patrons get themselves into over due dates and late fines. Some people add a major helping of shame and embarrassment to the mix - and end up

figuring that borrowing from the library just isn't worth it.

I can certainly relate to this stew of feelings. When I was a child, I would lurk outside the main entrance of my local library, stack of overdue books in hand, waiting for just the right librarian to be at the desk. If the wrong librarian was on duty, I was liable to get a stern look and a lengthy lecture. All for the

crime of loving those books just a bit too much, and keeping them just a bit too long!

Let me set the record straight about overdue books, late fines, the library, and you. While it's true that we do want to have materials back on time, library staff do NOT sit around throwing darts at pictures of patrons whose books are overdue. We (being quite fallible human beings) understand that sometimes, despite people's best intentions, "life happens" and books are returned late. If you are a bit late bringing your books back, you need not tremble at the door awaiting the wrath of the librarian.

"Ahah," you say, "But I'm not just a little bit late, I'm a lot late! I just found a book that was due around the time the Beatles were causing teenage girls to faint. They're SURE to hate me at the library!"

Actually, we're just glad to have the book back. The best approach, when you've kept a book too long or realize you owe some serious fines, is just to deal with it. We all make mistakes. Library staff know this, and we're happy to help set things right.

"But wait," you add. "I'm not just late returning my book. I've lost it! My rottweiler ate it! I accidentally ran over it with my Skidoo!"

Yes, we've seen it all. Obviously, we prefer it when people take good care of borrowed materials, keep them in good condition, and return them on time. But I repeat - "life happens." If a disaster happens to you and your library materials, just let us know. If a book is lost or dam-

aged, you do have to pay for it - but nobody is going to hate you.

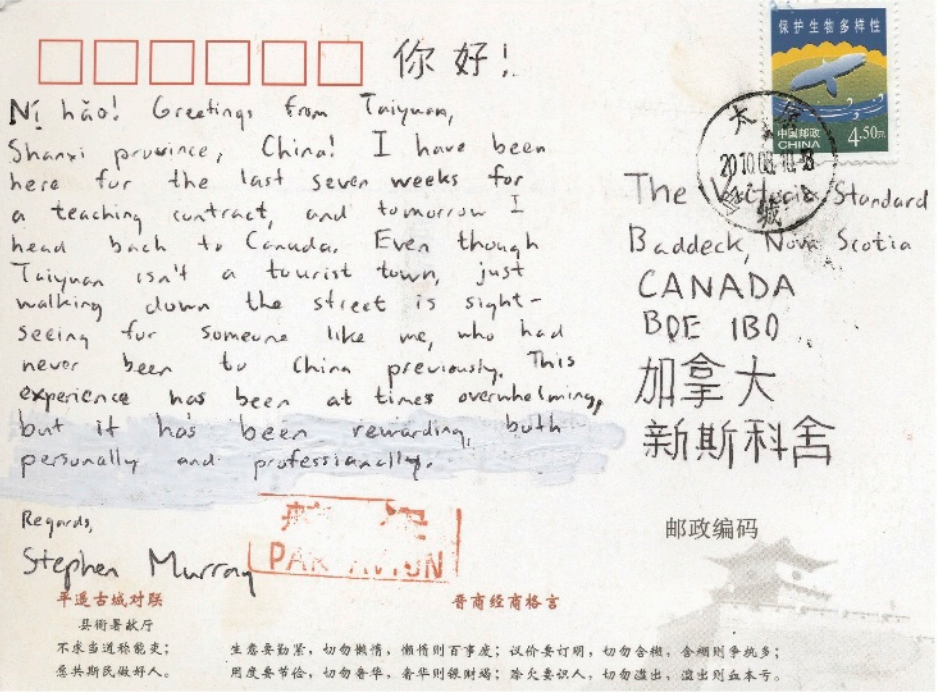
Of course, there are many convenient ways to avoid having overdue books to begin with. If you know you can't return the book on time, you can call us and ask to have the book renewed for an extra two weeks. As long as no other patron has requested the book, we can renew things up to ten times. You can drop books in the library's drop box if you're passing by when we're closed. And you can renew your own books online by visiting www.cbri.ca and clicking on "My Account." You'll need your library card number (on the back of your card) and your PIN number (the last four digits of your phone number).

Some people develop borrowing habits that help them keep better track of their materials and due dates. I know of some folks who have a "book sack" or "library box" in their home, where all borrowed materials are kept when not in use. Others make it a habit to write the due date on their kitchen calendar when they return home from the library. And increasingly, patrons are using their online account to keep track of what they've borrowed, what they've ordered, and what's due when.

Great strategies aside, "late happens." If it happens to you, don't panic! A small late fine (15 cents a day for late books) isn't the end of the world. Consider it a donation to your local library.

Kate Oland, Baddeck Branch/Victoria County Bookmobile - 295-2055
Leona Stockley, Victoria North Regional Branch (Ingonish) - 285-2544

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