



Sunnyvale

Approve the Elimination of Fines on Overdue Library Materials

Study Issue # LCS 19-02

City Council Meeting, May 5, 2020

Overview

- Rational for change
- Review Study Session feedback
- Recommendation



Purpose of Fines and Fees

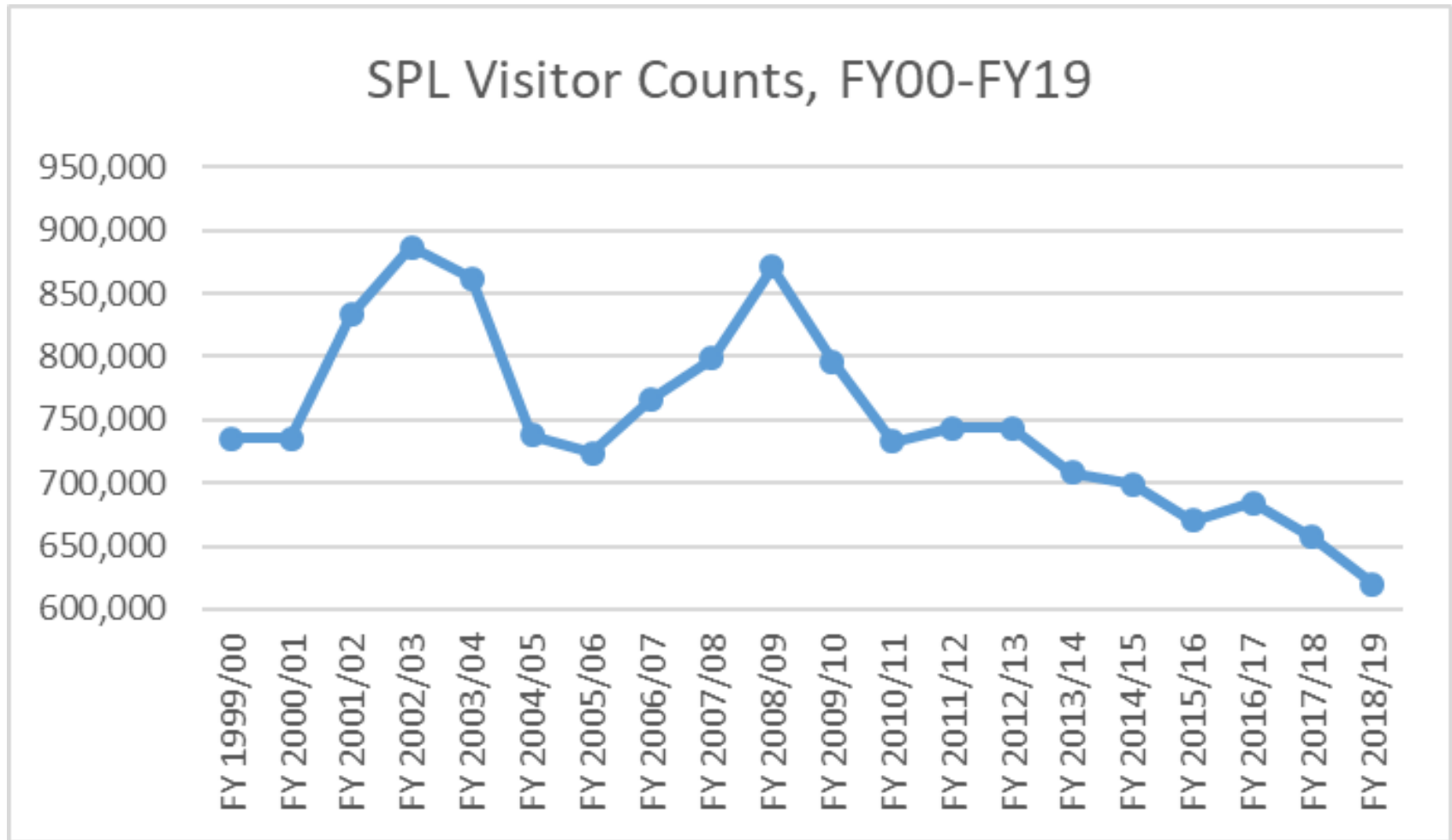
- Library materials are shared community assets
- **Fines** help provide equitable access to materials
- **Fees** recover costs for lost or damaged materials



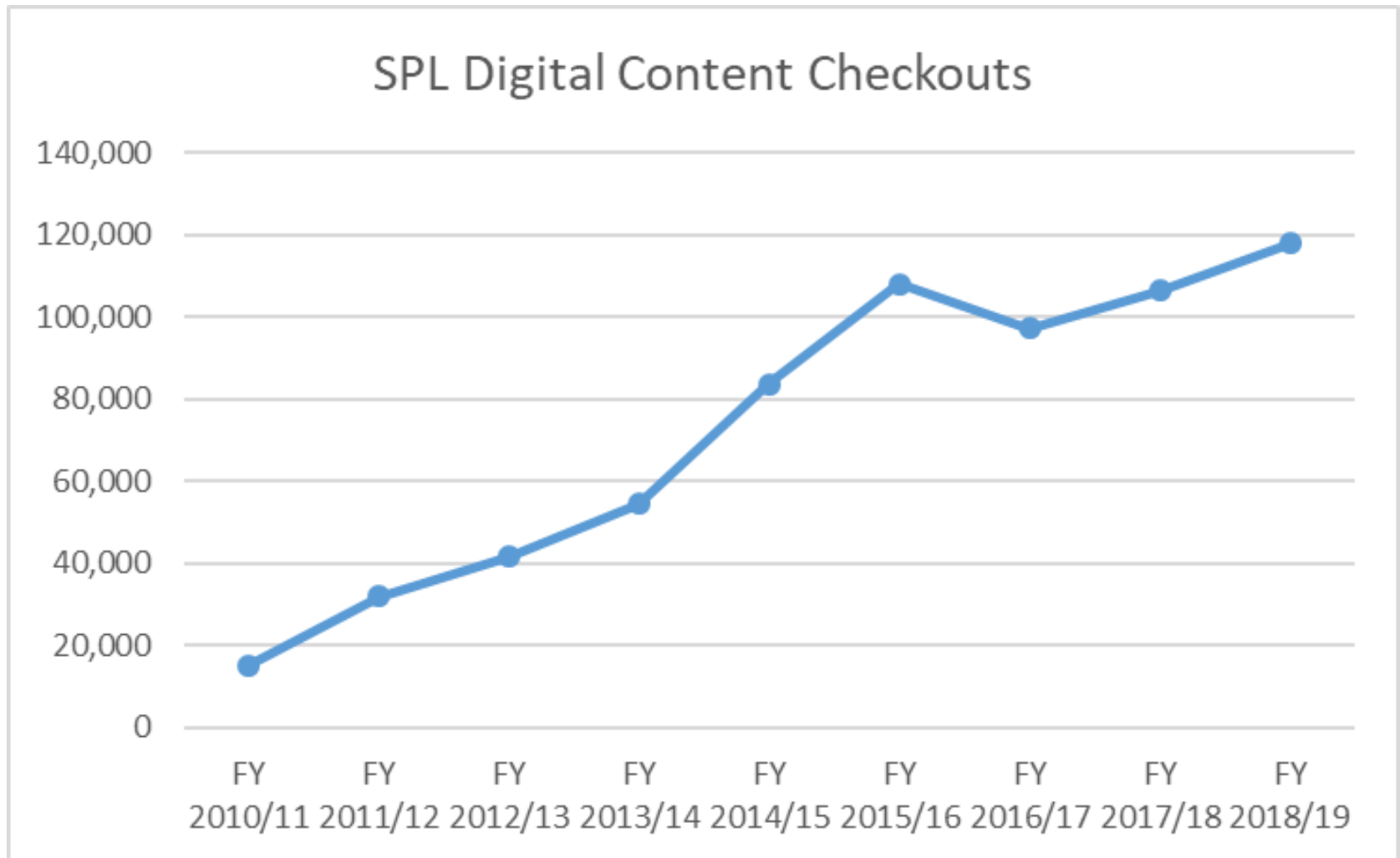
Studies of Effectiveness of Fines

- No difference in return rates between libraries that charge fines and those that don't
- Fines prevent low-income people from using libraries
- Fines disproportionately impact low-income, minorities and those without degrees
- Public libraries across the world are now “fines-free” including many area libraries

Sunnyvale Public Library Usage Trends: Visitors



Sunnyvale Public Library Usage Trends: Digital Circulation



Suspended Accounts

- Adults 9500
- Youth 1300



Financial Implications of Eliminating Fines

- Anticipated revenue loss of about \$160,000 for FY 20/21 from elimination of fines on ALL materials
 - ◆ Children's materials only: \$90,000
 - ◆ Adult materials only: \$70,000
- Since SLP -- not charging fines on any materials
- Loss of about \$12,000 a month
- Uncertain revenue loss in the coming FY
- Propose balancing with decrease in physical materials

Study Session Options

- Department Policy changes
- Fines Amnesty Programs
- Changes to Council Policy
 - ◆ Fee Schedule changes
 - ◆ Policy changes



Department Policy Changes

- Threshold amount triggering account suspension or referral to collection agency
- Adjustment of dates for when accounts are referred to collection agency
- Adjustment of timing for purging accounts with accumulated debt to restore access earlier

Study Session Results

- Support for “Fresh Start” amnesty program to remove past fine debt
- Support for Council Policy revision to authorize Director of Library and Community Services to resolve fines issues
- Mixed support for Amending the fee schedule to eliminate fines
 - ◆ Option 1: eliminating all fines
 - ◆ Option 2: eliminating fines on children’s materials
 - ◆ Option 3: either of the above as a pilot



Recommendation



- Council approve a Fresh Start Amnesty Program
- Council amend fee schedule to eliminate fines on all overdue materials
- Revise Council Policy to allow LCS Director to waive fees
- Receive a report on impact of changes by October, 2021