

“My patron isn't getting their email notices...”

‘This is a complaint that I’m sure you are all too familiar with. So, what can we do when your patron says that they are not getting their email notices?’

Our first assumption is that, unless there is a general failure of notices to run on a particular day, email notices are being sent out. This isn’t to say that errors are not possible. And it certainly is not saying that patrons are not NOT getting their email notices.

In most cases, however, notices run and emails are sent.

There are numerous reasons why a patron might not get an email notice. Spam or junk filters on their end are likely the most common reasons, or their mailbox may be full.

We have no way of knowing if a notice was delivered to the patron’s in box. What we can tell from our mail log files is if a message was sent to a specific email address at a specific date and time and if the patron’s email provider accepted the message. Once the message is “handed off” to the patron’s mail provider, we have no control over what happens after that.

What to do if a Patron says they are not getting email messages.

- Confirm that we have the correct email address in Sierra.
- Ask if they are getting some messages but not others?
- Make sure they check their spam and junk folders etc.

Do you want OWLS to follow up?

Email OWLSnet help with the following information:

- The patron card number.
- Is the patron not getting any notices or just not getting some?
- What notices did that patron not get. If you can tell us the item, all the better.
- Provide a likely date range – our mail log only goes back 1 month.
- If the item is still on hold, take a screen shot of the item record if possible, or call Evan.

What will OWLS do?

- We can check our mail log to see if the patron has been sent any email in the past month.
- We cannot see the actual message. We can tell the date and time a message was sent to a particular email address and if it was successfully received by the patrons email provider. Based on the time we can most likely tell what type of notice was sent.
- We can also see cases where Sierra attempted to send the notice but it was rejected by the patron’s mail provider.
- IF helpful, we can send log file information for you to share with your patrons. Depending on their email provider, this information may be able to help them.

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What if we cannot find a record in our mail log file?

This is where it gets tricky. Because this is a complaint that often comes after the fact, it can be difficult to piece together enough information to demonstrate that there is a real problem in Sierra. To do this, ideally, we would need to show clearly an example of an item in Sierra on hold for a patron (set to receive email notices) and no record in the log file.

If a patron says they didn't get a notice, and you still have the item on the hold shelf take a screen shot of the item record in Sierra if possible or call Evan. This is the best way we could actually show that notices were not sent.

Remember, our first assumption is that notices are being sent. This will also be Innovative's first assumption. There is little we or they can do unless we can provide good evidence to the contrary.

Suggestions

Our options are limited, but here are a few things you can suggest.

1. If the patron has another email account, you can list two email addresses in the Sierra email field, separated by a comma:

Email	ebend@mail.owls.lib.wi.us , ebend@wherearemynotices.com
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This might help determine if the problem is with a particular provider. If a library wanted to, and a patron was willing, you could, temporarily, add the library address to receive the email. You would then have a record of if/when a notice was sent. This is not a good long term solution, but it could help you either show a patron that the messages are being sent or help us determine if there is a real problem.

2. For Patrons with smartphones, recommend Shoutbomb. Patrons can use Shoutbomb in conjunction with email notices. This doubles their odds of getting their notices. One selling point for Shoutbomb is that hold pickup notices go out in the morning and in the afternoon (around 4:30). Holds coming in before 4:00 pm will trigger an afternoon notice. What's not to like about that!

3. Recommend that they check their InfoSoup account once a week.

But Seriously...

We understand that this can be very frustrating for patrons and staff. We will gladly do what we can to help determine if notices are being sent or if there is a reason they are not getting through. Our tools, however, are limited and the way email works, much is out of our control.