



**APRIL 13-15**



# **Strength in Consistency:** A Consortium's Journey Toward Uniform Settings

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Systems Librarian



# Agenda

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About GMILCS

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The NH Library Landscape

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Collections

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Embargo on New Materials

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Fine Codes

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Patron Codes

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Auto-Renew

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Loan Periods

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Challenges and Lessons Learned

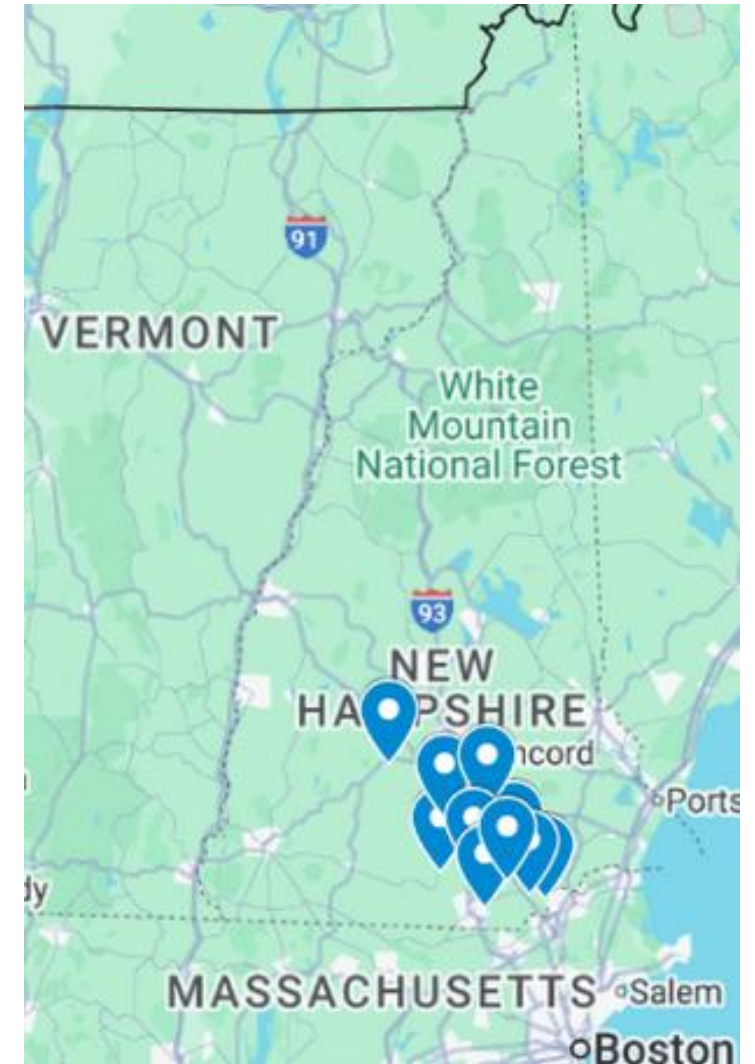
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# About GMILCS, Inc.

*GMILCS, Inc. is a nonprofit consortium of 13 libraries in New Hampshire, managed by two staff.*

- Polaris ILS since 2008
  - Moved to hosted in November 2023
- Aspen Discovery Layer
  - August 2023



# The NH Library Landscape

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- Funded by cities/towns
  - No income tax
  - No sales tax
  - Relies on property taxes
  - No funding from the State Library
- Governed by Board of Trustees



Independent  
Communities

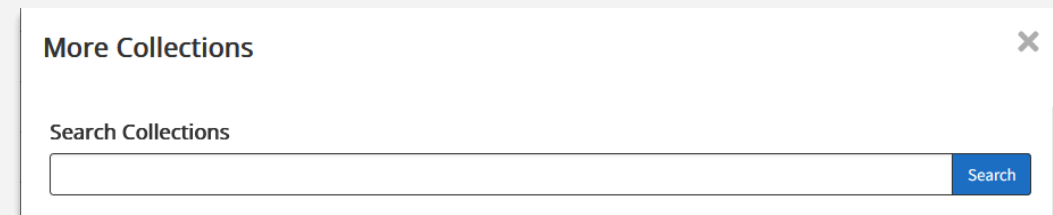


Shared  
System

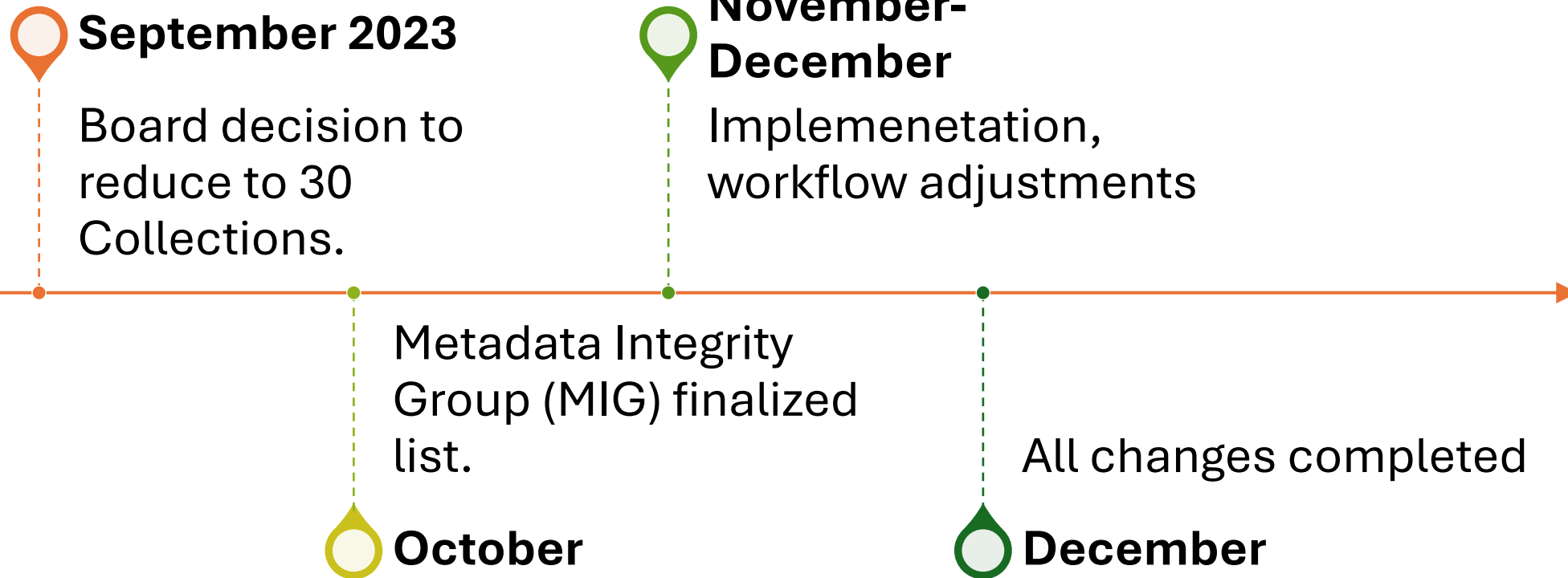


# It all started with Collections

- Aspen Discovery Layer only showed 30 collections in the filter before needing to search.
- Patrons don't know what they don't know.



# Collections Timeline



# Collections Snapshot

*Over 250 Collections*

Children's Holiday

Children's Holiday Fiction

Children's Holiday Nonfiction

Holiday

Holiday Fiction

Holiday Nonfiction

Juvenile Holiday



# Collections Snapshot

*Over 250 Collections*

Science Fiction

Science Fiction/Fantasy

Science Fiction/Fantasy Paperback



# Collections Snapshot

*Over 250 Collections*

History Room

New Hampshire Rare Books

New Hampshire Room

New Hampshireiana



# Collections Consolidation

## Children's

- Children's
- Junior
- Juvenile
- Middle Grade

## Teen

- Teen
- Tween
- Young Adult



# Collections: General Purpose



**Special Collections**



**NEC Main Collection**



# Final 30 Collections



# Collections - Implementation

No spine label changes

No physical layout changes

Internal language can still be used

Added Shelf Locations

Added Item Statistical Codes

Aspen Browse Categories limited by:

- Shelf Location
- Call Number



# Collections – Implementation

## *Acquisitions workflow adjustments*

### On-order Item Templates match on:

- Assigned Branch
- Material Type
- Collection

### Item bulk changes needed

- POLI notes
- Separate POs

### Using the 970 \$h for specific Item Templates

- Issues when not using 970



# Collections – Benefits



Aspen display and  
functionality



Circulation by Collection  
more useful



Expansion of Item Statistical  
Codes for stats



# Embargo on New Materials

Embargo periods ranged from  
0 days to 6 months



# Embargo on New Materials: Concerns

- How to define “new”
- New/hot items going out to other library patrons first
- No items on the shelf for browsers
- Limited new titles for outreach services
- Patron complaints
- Different ordering ratios creating undue burden



## Embargo on New Materials:

## Counter Concerns

- Creating an Express/Hot Books collection for browsers
- More copies filling holds = holds queue decrease more rapidly
- Library owned copies fill holds for their patrons first
- Provide consistency for patrons
- Support front line staff



# Embargo on New Materials 6 Month Trial

- How to address the concerns?
  - 6 month trial
    - Lending of new materials at 2 months or less
      - Track statistics during trial
        - Compare to prior 6 months



# Embargo on New Materials 6 Month Trial

- Statistics gathered from canned reports:
  - Circulation by Items Assigned Branch
  - Circulation by Items Loaning Branch
  - Request Time to Fill
  - Turnover Rate by Collection



# Embargo on New Materials - Trial Results



No significant change in statistics



No negative feedback from patrons



Staff saw more benefits than concerns



# Embargo on New Materials – Implementation

## “Days past first available” setting

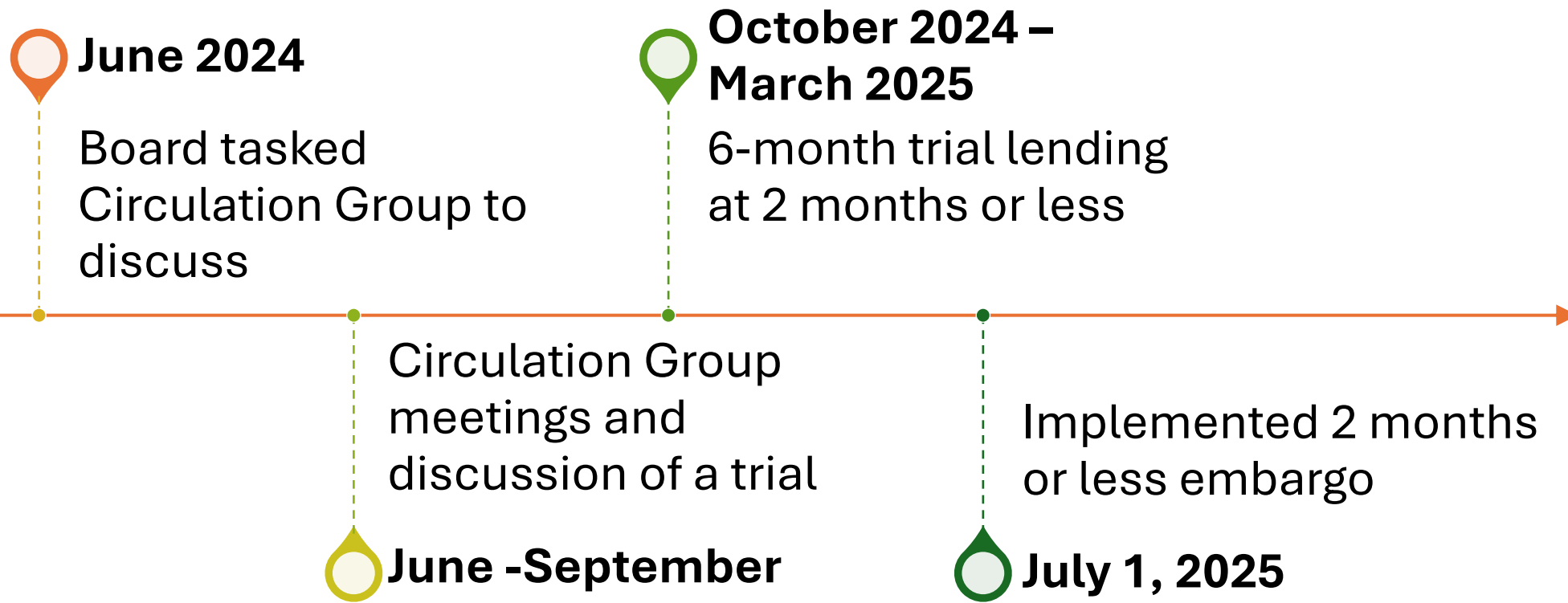
- Patrons can place holds within embargo period
- Automatically lend at time frame
- Identifies more items your patrons have holds on that you don't own

## Adjustments

- Custom reports to identify holds within embargo period



# Embargo on New Materials Timeline



Retreat:  
April 2025

GMILCS staff tasked  
with identifying  
settings to be  
consistent

Mindset:

- What if we were forming a library consortium today?



# Retreat: April 2025

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Acknowledge that much has changed since GMILCS was formed in 1992 and the Articles of Agreement were adopted in 2002.

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To step back from “the way we’ve always done it” and ask what makes sense *now*.



# Retreat: April 2025

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- Avoid common decision-making traps:
  - *Status quo bias*
    - Preference for keeping things the way they are
  - *Appeal to tradition*
    - Belief that something is better because it's always been done that way
  - *Loss aversion*
    - Losses feel stronger than equivalent gains
  - *Endowment effect*
    - We value what we already have more than what we don't



# Retreat: April 2025

- Order of priority for recommendations:
  - Patrons
  - Library Staff
  - GMILCS Staff



# Recommendations

Fine  
Codes

Patron  
Codes

Auto-  
renew

Loan  
Periods



# Fine Codes

Majority of libraries are fine free

- 4 libraries still charging fines

Cleanup needed

- Fines Table settings varied by library



# Fine Codes - Implementation

Affected libraries discussed and consolidated

25 Fine Codes reduced to 7

Fines Table Amounts and Maximum Fine match the Fine Code setting



# Fine Codes Timeline



# Fine Codes - Benefits



Patrons charged  
consistent amounts at  
their library



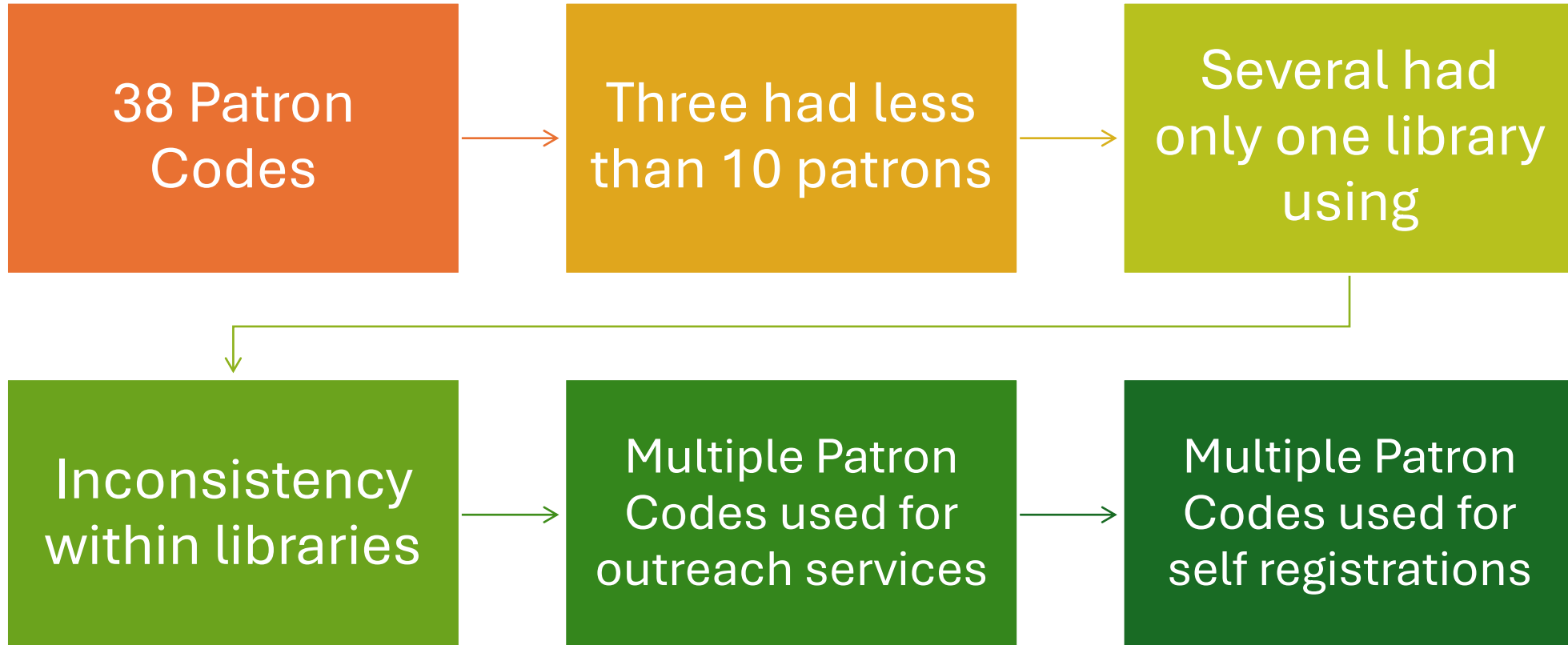
Staff training easier with  
less options



What you see in the item  
record is what will be  
charged



# Patron Codes Snapshot



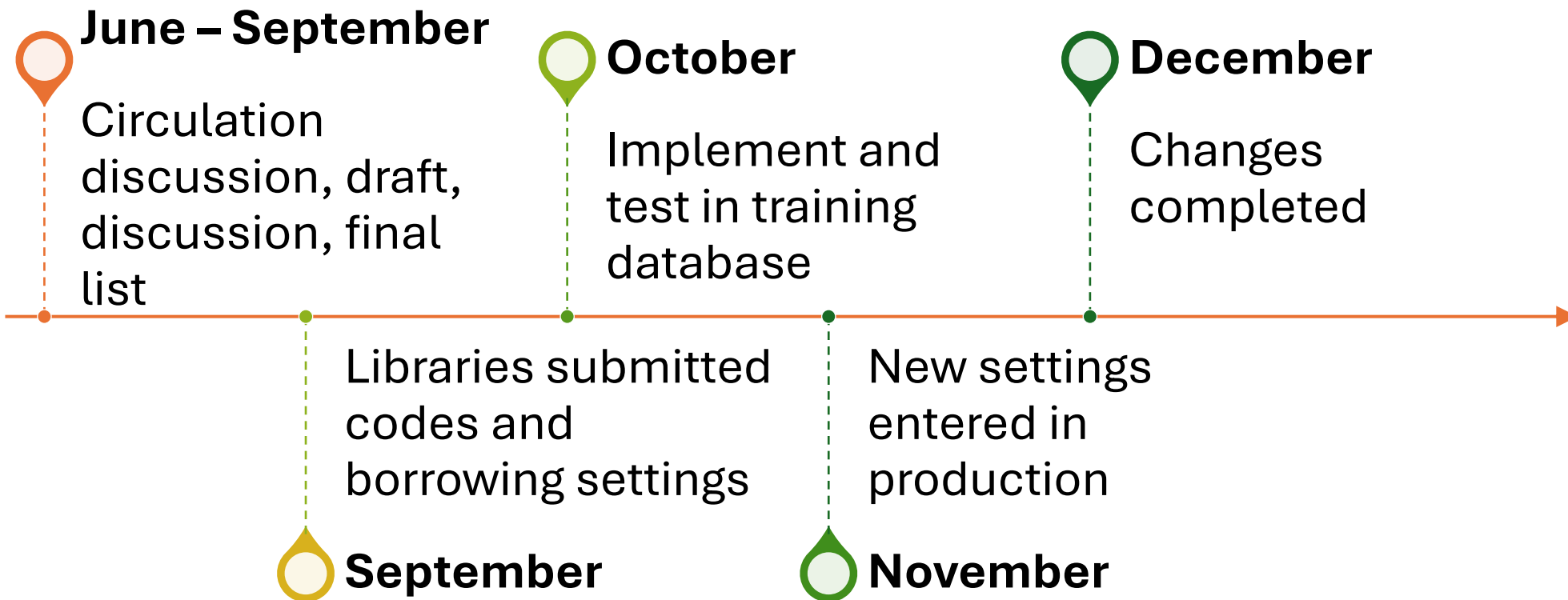
# Patron Codes

Circulation group tasked with consolidating

Focus on functionality and borrowing privileges

- Loan Periods
- Fines
- Material type and hold limits
- Renewal charges
- Database access
- Other restrictions

# Patron Codes – Timeline 2025



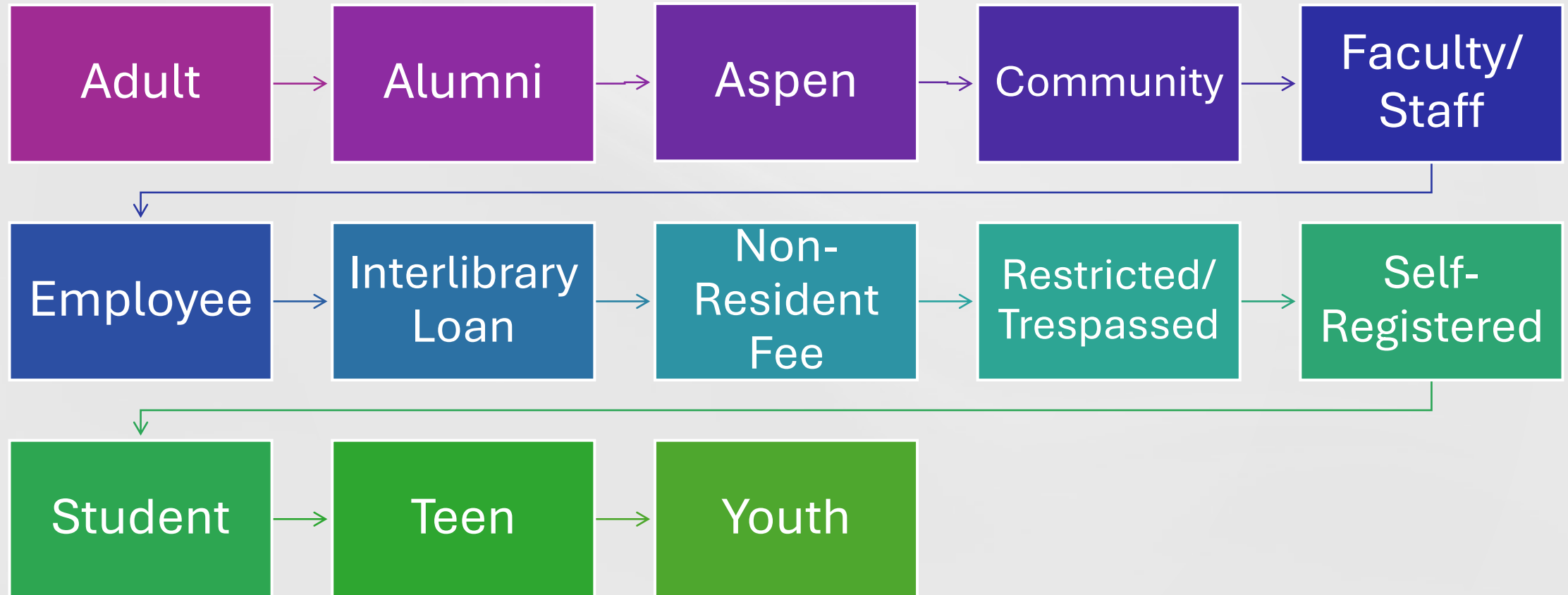
# Patron Codes - Implementation

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- Use of Patron Statistical Class Codes
- Each library can determine their own settings for the same Patron Code
- Polaris 8.0 supports Patron Code Aging Process



# Patron Codes – Final List



# Patron Code/Statistical Class Code Example Combinations

Adult	Youth	Student	Employee
Book Group	Book Group	Alumni	Former
Business/Property Owner	Non-resident student	Graduate Student	Staff
Employed in Town	Resident	Non-consortium ILL	Town Employee
Non-resident	Staff	Online undergraduate	Trustee
Resident	Student	Undergraduate	
School employee			
Student			
Teacher			
Temporary Resident			



# Patron Code Benefits



**Minimal improvement  
to patron experience**

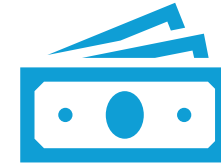


**Libraries**

Cleanup

More efficient

Less mistakes



**Table management for  
GMILCS staff**

Fines, Loans

Patron/Material Type

Loan Limit Blocks



# Automatic Renewals



Patron confusion due to inconsistent auto renewals



Frequent explanations required by library staff



Questions from library staff



Majority of libraries fine free



# Automatic Renewals - Benefits

Consistency for patrons

Auto-renew won't occur if:

- Item has no more renewals
- There are holds



# Loan Periods and Renewals

## Settings for libraries were different

- Many scenarios
- Exceptions

## Patron Confusion

- Material types
- Borrowing location
- Number of renewals

## Library and GMILCS staff's time

- Answering questions
- Investigating scenarios



# Loan Period Codes

0 day	1 day	1 week	14 day	2 hour	2 week
21 day	24 hour-Special	28 day	3 day	35 day	4 hour
	42 day	60 day	7 day	ILL	



# Loan Periods & Renewals

- Board discussion
  - Regular items
  - New items
  - Material types
  - Number of renewals
  - Special Collections
    - Library of Things
    - Items that only circulate at your library



# Loan Periods & Renewals

Decision to circulate everything for....

21 days

1  
renewal



# Loan Periods & Renewals - Implementation

- Exceptions:
  - Collections that are not available for holds for pickup at other libraries
  - Embargoed new materials
  - Patron Codes:
    - Community
    - Faculty/Staff
    - Interlibrary Loan
    - Restricted/Trespassed



# Loan Period – Exceptions

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0 days

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7 days

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14 days

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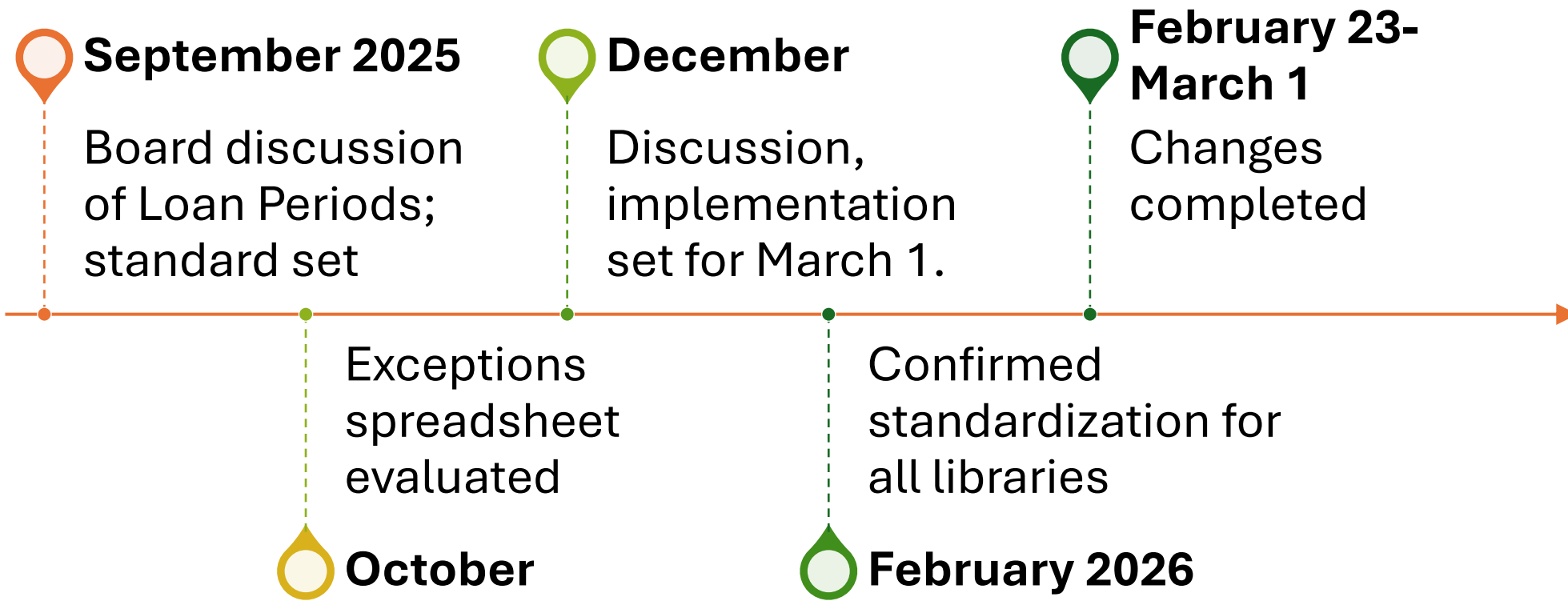
60 days

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ILL



# Loan Period & Renewals – Timeline



# Loan Period & Renewal – Benefits



Consistency for patrons



Less frustration, less explaining



Circulation time matched Loan Period



# Timeline of All Changes



# Challenges

## Mindset & Autonomy

- “My patrons are different than yours”
- Reluctance to give up local control

## Change Resistance

- Skepticism of auto-renew and shared policies
- Fear of consequences



# Challenges

## Communication and Roles

- Communication gaps within libraries
- Who made the decision

## Implementation Pressure

- Coordinating changes across all libraries
- Balancing support vs. enforcement



# Lessons Learned

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Standardization requires trust, not just policy

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Data helps, but doesn't replace concerns

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Clear roles, expectations, and communication can only go so far

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The impact of changes was often less disruptive than expected

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One change does not look the same in every library



# Key Takeaways

1

Local control and shared systems can coexist

2

Changes were more about mindset than patron impact

3

Consistency improves both patron experience and staff efficiency



# Questions?

## Thank you!

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