

When companies make it hard for you to pay money they are owed

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Elissa Ely runs into a bureaucratic wall trying to pay her invalid mother's credit card bill. They won't tell her the outstanding balance on her mother's account because "it seemed to run the risk that a stranger might pay someone else's bill."

My own mother ran into a similar problem. She wanted to find out the balance in an old elementary school bank account of mine that we both had long forgotten about. She went to the bank (this was pre-Internet) to obtain the balance, but the bank wouldn't tell her since she wasn't the account holder. My mother asked if she could make a deposit into the account, and they said that was allowed. She made a one-dollar deposit into the account, and at the bottom of the the receipt was the account balance.

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