

Green Libraries Coming Up! National and international initiatives fostering environmental sustainable libraries and library services

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***Abstract:** The paper will give an overview of worldwide international and national initiatives for “Greening Libraries” in order to draw attention and to raise awareness to both public as well as scholarly libraries to take a clear stand and create a visible green image for the library as an important part of their social responsibility. The paper will promote the idea that the mission of libraries should include the taking on of a leading role in teaching environmental responsibility to the public. Because a “green” image is a good image libraries should use their way of “going green” to promote a powerful green image towards their stakeholders, customers and sponsors. The upcoming LIS future generation should be encouraged to spread the “Green library movement” in their home libraries, their home library associations and their home countries.*

***Keywords:** Green library, Ecological sustainability in libraries, Environmental sustainability movement*

Introduction

The debate about the responsibility of libraries and librarians as leaders in the worldwide ecological sustainability movement began in the 1970s (Armstrong 1971). It developed rather slowly, although there have been many efforts to promote the mission of libraries to accept and finally to take over a leading role in environmentally friendly buildings, management, services as well as in teaching environmental responsibility to the public (Boyden & Weiner 2000). Meanwhile efforts in “greening libraries” can be noticed all over the world from the United States to Australia, from China to Russia, from Germany to Croatia, to name but a few. Beside the international level with ENSULIB, the IFLA Environmental Sustainability Special Interest Group there are few national initiatives like in the US and in Australia, but many local initiatives from mostly public libraries but also national libraries starting and fostering the “Green library movement”.

Purpose

The goal of the paper is to sensitize and to encourage the LIS future generation to think about environmental sustainability and libraries, to “go green” in their home libraries, and to spread the “Green library movement” in their local library associations and their home countries. It is not only about library collection development with ecological literature and/or formation of special ecological collections, not only about designing databases containing ecological information. It is about taking care of library ecological space arrangement on the local level. It is also about educational and/or cultural work with library populations such as arranging public events with

known ecologists. It is about implementing the elements of ecodesign and ecology **in** everyday library practice. It is – in sum – adopting library and librarians responsibility as well as visible leadership through ecological sustainable buildings and equipment, operations and education.

Method

Within a book project at the Berlin LIS School a bibliography was undertaken to find out where and how in the library world green library initiatives are on the agenda. Based on the literature, a checklist was compiled on all aspects of a “green library”: buildings, management and services.¹

In addition a survey was undertaken asking national library associations, library schools and other library organizations how the issue of “green libraries” is currently handled in their countries and which initiatives are already undertaken or planned.

We asked:

- Are there any national Green Library initiatives in your country by the national library association: a working group, round table, or Green Library policies?
- Are there any regional/local Green Library initiatives, public or academic libraries going green? Regional/local Green Library networks?
- Are there any institutions fostering the Green Library movement - library schools teaching "The Green Library", library conferences going green etc.?
- Are there any Green Library websites, journals, or networks?
- Are there any other Green Library initiatives of which you are aware?

Findings

What is a Green Library? A checklist

For any public building project a checklist can be useful to ensure that everything has been considered to come to a successful solution. Sustainability has become more and more important in the field of public building programs. Therefore library building or renewal projects are more often expected to be “green“.

Of course no checklist can ever be complete when it comes to complex tasks but it can help to make the recipient aware of important facts to think of. The following checklist tries to give a general overview about the topics that have to be considered when planning and running a „green“ library.

The list consists of 12 major points. (1) The first point is “project planning and finances”. It is crucial to bring the factor „sustainability“ into the project as early as possible. (2) The second point is „tendering“. Especially in the field of public buildings there should be a sense of role modeling for other building projects. (3) The third point is to choose the right location. Ecologic aspects such as contamination of the ground, emissions, climactic conditions but also factors such as noise or place for personal or public transport play an important role when building a “green library”. (4) The construction process and (5) the building structure must meet the standards that have been set for the project (facades, climatization, energy supply, materials etc.).

(6) Furthermore the interior needs have to be planned as well. Especially the materials used and the design should create a „green“ and natural atmosphere. (7) Also, the use of „green“ information technology has to be discussed as well as (8) adapted user services that provide reprographic services in a sustainable way (scanning instead of printing etc.). (9) Another important point is library management. (10) Librarian tasks (shipping, archiving etc.) have to be

¹ The bibliography as well as the checklist are online available at <http://www.ibi.huberlin.de/studium/studprojekte/buchidee/2012-13> (retr. Dec 12, 2013).

reconsidered under a „green“ focus as well as running the building itself (green cleaning, recycling of waste etc.). Also strategic goals must be taken into account. Monitoring energy costs and controlling the savings create a transparent atmosphere and influence others to join the example. (11) Marketing and PR, together with (12) „Certificates“ make sure that all the efforts that have been put into constructing and running a sustainable building are communicated to the public. It is not just about self-indulgence but more importantly about informing about what is possible to make public buildings in general and libraries in specific more sustainable.

All in all a “green” library is more than just the sum of its parts. It needs to be run sustainably as well. Therefore this checklist shall help to encourage and give advice to librarians all around the world to think about “greening” their libraries at a suitable level.

International initiatives

From about 2000 on, a “green library movement” developed (Antonelli 2008). This green library movement was obviously inspired by the US American Sustainable Communities Movement (Long 2000). But most of the efforts focused on ecological sustainable buildings when discussing the green library movement, e. g. “a new century in public library architecture” (Tseng 2007). Initiatives were developed promoting increased environmental awareness and ecological sustainable design as well as services in libraries and were published in journals, books and more and more online on “green” webpages (Coyle 2008).

Also library associations and organizations like SLA (Special Libraries Association, Davis 2008) became aware of “green conferences”, supporting their member libraries by launching specific groups like the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA Sustainable Libraries Group 2010). Conferences on “green” themes like the 16th Seminar of the LIBER Architecture Group were held in Prague, Czech Republic 2011 (Sommer & Feldsien-Sudhaus 2012). The American Library Association has been involved with this issue since the 1990s (Link 1992) and in 2013 started a petition for a new Sustainability Round Table² to foster in the advancement and dissemination of sustainable services and practices.

On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of IFLA, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions implemented sustainability issues in their “Statement on libraries and sustainable development”, published in 2002. The statement does not focus directly on environmental sustainability, but this issue should be considered included. The IFLA Library Buildings and Equipment Section³ picked up IFLA’s directive on sustainable development in their IFLA Library Building Guidelines (Wagner et al. 2007). During the 75th IFLA World Library and Information Congress 2009 in Milan, Italy, the newly formed IFLA Special Interest Group ENSULIB (Environmental Sustainability and Libraries)⁴, sponsored by the IFLA Preservation and Conservation Section⁵, offered their first conference session “Libraries and awareness about sustainability”⁶, followed by related sessions in 2010–2013. From 2009 on, articles on environmental sustainability and libraries were also published in the International Preservation News, by the IFLA Preservation and Conservation Core Activity PAC.⁷

At the 77th IFLA Congress 2011 in San Juan, Puerto Rico, the IFLA Library Buildings and Equipment Section hosted a conference session on “Sustainability issues in the design of libraries:

² Retr. Sept 14, 2013 from <http://greeningyourlibrary.wordpress.com/2013/01/11/petition-to-start-a-new-sustainability-round-table-through-ala/>.

³ Retr. Sept 14, 2013 from <http://www.ifla.org/ES/library-buildings-and-equipment>.

⁴ Retr. Sept 14, 2013 from <http://www.ifla.org/environmental-sustainability-and-libraries>.

⁵ Retr. Sept 14, 2013 from <http://www.ifla.org/preservation-and-conservation>.

⁶ Retr. Sept 14, 2013 from <http://www.ifla.org/node/6202>.

⁷ Retr. Sept 14, 2013 from <http://www.ifla.org/pac>.

the importance of creating environmentally responsible library facilities and spaces in the 21st century”.⁸

Last but not least: Resulting from an LIS students book project undertaken at the Berlin LIS School, volume 161 of the “IFLA publication series”, published in July 2013, titled “The Green Library” (Hauke et al. 2013), written by experts in their field from nearly all over the world, covers subjects and best practice examples not only from the USA but also from Europe and Asia on “how to green” libraries and how and where libraries and librarians demonstrate both ingenuity and ethical leadership in dealing with “green” issues. Beside these articles it offers the already mentioned bi-lingual German-English checklist on “Sustainable buildings, equipment, and management” by K. U. Werner and a bibliography covering publications from 2000 on.⁹

Wikipedia and blogs

More general information can be found in easy to access online sources. One good way to get initial knowledge on Green Libraries is the Wikipedia article.¹⁰ It provides a broad definition about the topic and offers a “how to become green” section, which can be seen as a first glance into the tasks that have to be done to successfully “green” ones library. On top of that the article offers reasons why sustainability has become so important for libraries. The recipient is enabled to understand the necessity to convert their library into a Green Library. Last but not least there are some international examples of Green Libraries. The paper is arranged from general information about Green Libraires to more specific examples leading the reader through the topic.

Another way of getting into the field of sustainability in libraries is through blogs. Two of them are remarkable: The Green Library Blog¹¹ and Going Green @your library¹².

The first blog’s aim is mainly to establish a list of important “activities, events, literature, and projects”¹³ that deal with energy and water consumption of buildings as well as the materials that can be used in Green Libraries to reduce negative influence on the users health and the environment as a whole. The second blog offers in addition a more artistic approach. You will find a lot of information about movies that deal with “green” ideas. Furthermore, of course, there are links to other blogs and conferences.

International survey

We received answers from 39 countries in Africa, Asia, America, Australia, and Europe. A few of them, e.g. from Africa, just told that there are no initiatives as yet, but they are interested in the subject and want to get more information about it. Others like the US and Australia have very active nation-wide initiatives, round tables or library association sub-groups. In most countries there are local initiatives mostly by public libraries. But in many cases the librarians are working hard not only to act locally but to disseminate the idea through reports and conference papers etc. to a broader audience with intent to create a Green Library network in their country.

In the economically weakest countries, the main focus is on the economy, policy and society; therefore, these countries rank low in terms of things like saving energy and resources spent on libraries. That affects especially nations in Africa like Nigeria or Zimbabwe but also found on other continents like Asia with economically weak countries. At the project for a National eBook Library in Bangladesh you can see, that the focus is on developing technique for education and amount to save resources.

⁸ Retr. Sept 14, 2013 from <http://conference.ifla.org/past/ifla77/library-buildings-and-equipment-section.htm>.

⁹ Retr. Dec 5, 2013 from <http://www.ibi.hu-berlin.de/studium/studprojekte/buchidee/2012-13>.

¹⁰ Retr. Dec 5, 2013 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_library.

¹¹ Retr. Dec 5, 2013 from <http://thegreenlibraryblog.blogspot.co.uk/>.

¹² Retr. Dec 5, 2013 from <http://greeningyourlibrary.wordpress.com/>.

¹³ Retr. Dec 5, 2013 from <http://thegreenlibraryblog.blogspot.co.uk/>.

In Asian countries the idea of Green Libraries is just beginning, since the topic how to deal and save resources gets more important worldwide. Especially in China there are reports, papers or group projects for this topic. Until now there are no national Green Library initiatives in Asia and the few ones that exist are part of an existing green environment concept. The exception is Singapore's 'My Tree House', the first Green Library for children, and Thailand's Kasetstart University Library which received the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environment Design)¹⁴ certification.

Environmental disasters such as the earthquake and tsunami in Japan can also be a chance for Green Libraries even when it is not specifically intended for libraries. Since the great earthquake in 2011 the nuclear plants were stopped and the country has a shortage of electricity which is a serious problem in summer. For this reason, some libraries grow plants by their windows and try to reduce the rate of electrical consumption.

Some European countries recognize responsible handlings of resources are necessary for the image and future of libraries. For this it is important to educate the public, hold workshops, teach about proper handling of waste, using the new media as well as using rooftop plantings to reduce CO₂.

The commitment among European countries is different. The Librarians' Association of Istria, Croatia, established in 2011 a National Green Library project. Aim of the project was to educate the public, raising the awareness about sustainable development and environment protection. They organized lectures, workshops and public discussions. Different libraries and institutions participated at that project, with good feedback from the public.

Some of the Scandinavian countries have no specific national initiatives for Green Libraries but in general have programs for making cities greener. Public libraries are part of the municipal services which have common regulations and guidance for sustainable development. 2012 the Helsinki City Library had a nation-wide project, working with libraries and publishing guidelines on the internet.¹⁵ There are also regional or local projects like the Albertslund Public Library in Denmark where the user can borrow free electric or water save-metres and the director visits local institutions to inform about green development and other issues.

On the national level beside the ALA Green Library Round Table, the Australian Library Association established the ALIA Sustainable Libraries Group¹⁶ to inform and educate colleagues on issues of sustainability. Australia has one of the most developed programs for Green Libraries. 'Tomorrow's green library'¹⁷ is a regional comprehensive guideline with the focus on building and running a library in a responsible way. It discusses the most opportune way how to use natural resources for the building like integration of daylight, airtight envelopment building design or using rooftops as gardens, and in addition offers resources online like e-book's, e-journals', and websites but also CD's or DVD's.

Marketing the Green Library

There are many public libraries carrying out activities on ecological education, designing databases containing ecological information, taking care for sustainability in many aspects, but do not advertise their projects. As it was already pointed out (Hauke & Werner 2013) ecological sustainability is very often an undervalued aspect for the marketing strategy of the library, but it has more impact on users as well as on stakeholders than one might expect. Library clients are calling on libraries not just to provide common services but to communicate a visible green

¹⁴ Retr. Dec. 12 from <http://www.lead.net/>.

¹⁵ Retr. Dec 8, 2013 from <http://www.kirjastot.fi/kestavakehitys/>.

¹⁶ Retr. Dec 8, 2013 from <http://alia.org.au/groups/alia-sustainable-libraries>.

¹⁷ Retr. Dec 8, 2013 from http://www.libraries.vic.gov.au/downloads/Shared_Leadership_Presentations_2012/report_tomorrows_green_library.pdf.

identity. Therefore ecological sustainability should be part of the marketing strategy of the library as a socially responsible body. Even small steps in going green can have a big impact for the library's image. There are infinite possibilities how to green and how to market the library.

Through following the "green library movement" (Antonelli 2008) libraries will undoubtedly meet their customers' demands. Creating "... a visible green image for the library is an important part of the environmental work (Sahavirta 2013, 330)". Therefore it should be incorporated into a successful marketing strategy, like in Croatia¹⁸ and Finland¹⁹.

Conclusion and outlook

There are many national and international efforts to promote the idea of "Green Libraries", but nevertheless there are still many countries in which libraries and national library associations have not recognized this development concept. They need to be informed and advised on this relevant trend and encouraged to participate in the collective environmental responsibility in an increasingly globalized and complex world.

The upcoming LIS generation, the future librarians are called to take over the "Tomorrow's Green Library" (Logan et al. [2012]) initiatives and to catch the chance of marketing the library in a new, customer orientated, sustainable way.

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¹⁸ Retr. Dec 8, 2013 from <http://de.scribd.com/doc/189176157/Project-%E2%80%9EGreen-library%E2%80%9C-of-the-Public-library-%E2%80%9EFran-Galovic%E2%80%9C-Koprivnica-CROATIA-Acitivites-2012-2013>.
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