

Public Library Management in The Era of Environmental Sustainability.

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Public libraries have taken a very important role in addressing environmental sustainability in their practices and policies that make an impact in the world today. Climate change and urbanization of areas have set forth libraries to develop resources and have an impact in community building and civic engagement. The American Library Association has urged libraries to adopt green collections, educate patrons on environmental issues and support projects based on green building designs. This call for action has begun to make a big impact on patrons of all ages participating in sustainability programs in their local libraries. With the overall efforts made by librarians and libraries around the world it is evident this is an initiative that is not going away. Strategic planning implementations and budget allocations can prove to be an obstacle in addressing and implementing environmental sustainability practices, but many librarians and libraries have tackled these obstacles by involving communities in the process. Library administration and management could greatly benefit from adopting sustainability practices in urban areas because of the opportunity it creates for communities in education, civic engagement and community empowerment.

Urbanization is a top trend that is affecting urban libraries in many areas. It is projected that 66% by 2050 about 66% of the world population will live in urban areas (World Urbanization Prospects, 2014). The services libraries provide change due to the demand population growth will have in job development and opportunities, and this may include prospects related to sustainability planning, environmentally friendly buildings, and recycling initiatives (Center for The Future of Libraries, 2016). Since urban areas are shown to have more environmental health problems constituting from biological pathogens and chemical pollutants,

programs that educate communities in environmental issues and sustainability could serve a greater purpose for the future of the community it serves (WHO, 2000).

In their beginnings libraries were seen at the forefront of sustainability through the concept of borrowing books repeatedly to cut down on costs and paper use. It was not until the 1990s that librarians and libraries began to formally map out ways to address library's impacts on the environment with The Green Library Movement. In 2003, The American Library Association realized a larger involvement when the association formed a Task Force on the Environment (TFOE) to address issues of sustainability and greening libraries (Cornell, 2016). Other efforts on green practices and programming have taken an interest in New York where the Metropolitan New York Library Council created a Green Librarianship Special Interest Group (SIG) to keep forming initiatives to address libraries and sustainability. In Vancouver, British Columbia a goal has been set to be the greenest city in the world by 2020 and has recruited their Public Library to provide "environmental literacy" for their residents (Baron, 2015). The VPL has transformed the way traditional library services do things for instance green building operation, recycling and waste management, focus on online reference tools and green eco-friendly programming. Their environmental sustainability efforts have also included the VPL staff to lead by example by creating a sustainability working group, staff biking program and fun activities like National Sweater Day to promote lowering the thermostat to save energy. These practices show that not only does VPL provide sustainable programs to their patrons but also include their staff to create a complete sustainable effort.

There has also been a focus in greening collection developments with an environmental impact lens. Virginia Connell (2010) explored collection development in three areas different

areas including the selection of material, de-selection of material, and selecting new material formats. All areas were examined to conclude the most sustainable collections should have a higher ratio of print over electronic resources. However, it is important to consider print collections can become outdated overtime and the cost of preserving materials. Duke University Medical Center Library implemented very creative ways in delivering information to its patrons in efforts to become carbon neutral by 2024. Examples of sustainability actions that addressed print material consumption were offering scanning to flash drives, making journal subscriptions to electronic, and desktop delivery of PDF copies of articles (Person, 2014). Based on these practices and creative ways of addressing the problem the University was awarded the University Green Workplace Certification. These practices took an all staff effort and it proved to be a challenge many times but the goal was set and clear for the staff to follow. It might be up to the manager to keep the morale up and the staff enthusiastic about green practices in their location.

It is important to recognize that if libraries want to implement environmental sustainability initiatives management has to play an active role in advocating for these practices. Multiple angles should be taken into account in managing libraries in a sustainable way, including community context, strategies of sustainable management, and consequences of adopting sustainability frameworks (Ghorbani et. al., 2016). In order for upper management to work effectively in the context of environmental sustainability other aspects should be put in consideration. One example can be how comfortable library staff feels about greening their location. If this proves to be an obstacle management needs to have the necessary tools to address these obstacles. This is not new to most managers in libraries because of the constant change that libraries continue to face.

An area that should be addressed when looking at management and environmental sustainability is training staff on environmental subjects. Elina Karioja (2013) conducted a study to find the differences and similarities between Finnish and foreign public libraries in relation to ecological sustainability. The study found room for improvement in environmental management, environmental practices and reduction of environmental burden both internationally and in Finland. With more training for librarians and upper management, green practices could be more openly welcome and seen as normal practice rather than non-traditional programming.

Strategic planning is important for libraries to set missions, goals and values by listening to their staff and the patrons they serve. Strategic plans serve to inform the public of their intended future plans and can incorporate sustainability practices that overall address the needs of the community. Vancouver Memorial Library in British Columbia cites “sustainability” as a core value in their strategic plan, which was done after 1,500 patrons expressed sustainability as a priority in the library (Aldrich, 2016). If a community believes sustainability is a major issue that a library should address, then it is important to include it in the strategic plan. Not only does this show that the library is listening to its patrons but that it also cares about empowering the community to reduce the carbon foot print.

In 2012 the San Diego County Library in California was recognized as the Gale Library Journal Library of the Year by putting priority in community needs. The library incorporated five program areas in their strategic plan that provided an action plan to address housing, education and professional training (Becker, 2012). Administration and management are seen as leaders in the library system and they can use their leadership roles to create positive outcomes in communities. Libraries have used their leadership roles in communities to raise awareness of

civics and start conversations about critical issues. Arlington Public Library in Virginia incorporated their read programs to support the local agenda in sustainability by forming community partnerships that demonstrated education on producing food in urban spaces to over three thousand people visiting the library (Becker, 2012). Civic engagement can be an aspect administration and management set as a priority in strategic plans because it serves a significant role in community progress and engagement. This is important because many community's libraries serve as a hub for patrons to learn and to be participants in a larger movement when it comes to environmental sustainability.

As urban areas increase in population, one such movement that communities have accessed through libraries is urban farming. Libraries that started community gardens inspired their patrons to appreciate nature and grow a garden in innovative ways because of the lack of space. For instance, in the article "Can You Dig It," over a dozen libraries in Illinois connected with their communities in experiential learning, outdoor events and participatory nature programming (McCammond-Watts, H, 2015). The findings flourished with people of all ages connecting with each other through a great interest in urban gardening and environmental awareness.

In terms of environmental sustainability, Alexandria Library and Alexandria's Eco-City Charter and Environmental Action Plan made efforts where they installed solar panels in its Beatley Central Branch. The solar panels helped offset electricity consumption and reduce the branch's greenhouse gas emissions and energy usage, but it has also provided the community with educational opportunities in renewable energy, sustainability and the library's green initiatives (Young, 2012). Solar panels are just one option when it comes to reducing the carbon

footprint. Other simpler green practices include adopting green cleaning supplies, paper reduction, recyclable library cards, and remodeling with green materials and finishes (Shaper, 2011). These are a few practices libraries can take if they want to start a green initiative in their location. In “Our Zero-Carbon Campaign,” Louise Shaper calls for a national campaign for all libraries to make it their responsibility for zero-carbon use by 2025 in their mission (Shaper, 2011). Shaper invites opponents by providing an estimate of 33 million dollars saved if energy efficient technology was used in all U.S. libraries. This estimate proves to be another reason for administration and management to begin implementing green practices in their locations or structural agenda.

One might argue that greening spaces costs more when it comes to maintaining the technology buildings use to save energy. A report by the General Services Administration which leases space in 9,600 buildings in over 2,200 communities in the United States found high performing green buildings have the best value for the taxpayer both in cost benefits, performance and human health (Aldrich, 2016). When it comes to budget costs and allocating for new expenses, administrators should look at the long term benefits green buildings can have not just for the patrons coming in but the library system as a whole. It can also mean positive exposure for libraries, as some examples of environmentally sustainable building designs have provided libraries recognition as leaders in providing communities a new framework. The Chinatown Branch of the Chicago Public Library was awarded the American Institute of Architects and the American Library Association Library Building Award for exceptional library architecture and a model that exemplifies the future of libraries (Chicago Public Library, 2016). In the span of four months, the library had over 95,000 visitors with about 55,000 items checked

out this was an increase of 20,000 visitors and 23,000 items checked out compared to the previous year (Chicago Public Library, 2016). With this increase of service utilization, the library has earned its recognition for efforts made in sustainable design features that provide opportunities for visitors to learn more about sustainability. Some of the features are radiant cooling and heating, in-ground thermal storage tanks, a green roof and in-ground storm water retention system, and natural daylight technologies (Chicago Public Library, 2016).

There have been many libraries that have incorporated environmental sustainability in their programs and building design in efforts to educate and empower communities they reside in. This has been shown to be effective in creating a meaningful impact in communities and provide new outlets for urban areas to learn about sustainability and green movements. If libraries are agents of change in communities, then administrators and management have a responsibility to advocate for environmental issues and motivate communities to actively participate in efforts that address them. Many domestic and international examples of strategic planning, training efforts and budget cost implementations have provided a framework to provide environmental sustainability programming and planning. For many libraries, environmental sustainability can mean simple recycling initiatives, bicycle sharing or gardening programs. Other library systems can learn from these examples and the role management has played in engaging communities to participate in and create initiatives that have a positive impact on their urban environments.

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