
Volume 13
Number 4
*Going Green: Libraries and Sustainability
(Winter 2007)*

July 2014

Green Reading: Resources for the Sustainability-Minded

Diane Sotak
University of Portland

Annie Zeidman-Karpinski
University of Oregon

Recommended Citation

Sotak, D., & Zeidman-Karpinski, A. (2014). Green Reading: Resources for the Sustainability-Minded. *OLA Quarterly*, 13(4), 25-28. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7710/1093-7374.1181>

© 2014 by the author(s).

OLA Quarterly is an official publication of the Oregon Library Association | ISSN 1093-7374

Going Green: Libraries and Sustainability

Many of us in the Oregon library community have an interest in, or even a passion for, the environment. In my case, that interest guided my undergraduate studies. I attended the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources (SNR) in the 1980s. It was the Reagan era, the environmental movement was becoming marginalized, and most students just wanted good paying jobs after they graduated. The SNR students were nicknamed "crunchy granolas" by others on campus and the school was almost eliminated due to low enrollment. Fortunately, the school survived that period and now offers a graduate degree in Sustainable Systems, among many others. Consideration of the environment is mainstream again, and this time there are stable careers and decent-paying jobs to be had. Even though my career path eventually led me into the library world, I have been fortunate to maintain my connection as an Environmental Studies subject specialist. Having the chance to guest edit an issue of the *Quarterly* provided a great opportunity to take that interest further and discover how the library community has been "going green."

Sustainable, sustainability, sustainably: the usage of these words is on the rise in many sectors of our society. The terminology sounds vague, but it

captures the idea that humans are taking conscious actions to minimize their impact on the environment. According to the online Oxford English Dictionary (OED), it wasn't until 1980 that an ecology-oriented meaning of sustainable emerged. A 2001 draft addition to the OED defines sustainable as: "Of, relating to, or designating forms of human economic activity and culture that do not lead to environmental degradation, esp. avoiding the long-term depletion of natural resources."

Though relatively new, this definition of sustainable is affecting the decision-making and planning activities of individuals and institutions. Not surprisingly, the library community in Oregon is already a part of this trend—translating the meaning of sustainability into a variety of actions. In fact, as this issue developed, it seemed timely to propose a way that the Oregon Library Association could put sustainability into practice. Happily, at its October meeting, the OLA Board voted in favor of switching the *OLA Quarterly* to recycled paper. The ink was already vegetable-based, but now the paper is Green Seal® certified and contains 30 percent recycled post-consumer fiber.

The articles in this issue illustrate the many ways that sustainability concepts can be applied in the library

realm. At the macro-level, Connie Bennett discusses institutionalizing sustainability and where the Eugene Public Library fits into that trend. Judith Norton educates us about different types of environmental audits and how libraries might incorporate them into their planning. June Mikkelsen provides a close-up view of what was involved in creating a green library building and how that building is performing today. Jey Wann taps into the wisdom of Oregon library employees with her survey of alternative transportation commuting methods. Maureen Cole offers an on-the-ground look at implementing a sustainable recycling process within a library's workflow. Last, Annie Zeidman-Karpinski and I provide a bibliography of resources for further guidance and inspiration.

Libraries are respected institutions and often take on a leadership role in their communities. My hope is that these articles will educate and empower us, and our libraries, to incorporate sustainability into our practices, our collections, our services—in other words, to keep leading by example.

Guest editor

Diane Sotak
University of Portland

OLAQ
