ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS: SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BMK KRC PUNE

* Varsha Varma

* Librarian, SNDT College of Education, Pune, Maharashtra, India.

Abstract:

When we talk of global warming and climate change, libraries probably do not come foremost into our thoughts. Libraries, however, consume large amounts of energy, and produce large amount of paper waste that contribute to the problem. Libraries, as an information literacy centres, recognize their role in advocating sustainability and promoting environmentally conscious behaviours. By adopting sustainable practices, libraries can reduce their environmental impact, conserve resources, and foster environmental awareness among their patrons There is a need for sustainable, green libraries and this article tries to highlight how small changes can also make a difference. It outlines what the SNDT Women's University Library is trying to do, and gives suggestions for librarians for increasing awareness of reducing their carbon footprint.

Keywords: *Academic Library, Sustainable Library, Green Library, Environmental Education*

Introduction: Libraries have traditionally served as centres for knowledge and learning, knowledge dissemination, and cultural exchange. However, in recent years, there has been a notable shift towards recognizing their potential in promoting sustainability and environmentally conscious behaviours. With the increasing emphasis on environmental sustainability, libraries are evolving to incorporate more eco-friendly practices to reduce their ecological footprint. The concept of "green libraries" is gaining popularity globally, with many libraries adopting practices that are not only environmentally responsible but also financially sustainable and socially equitable.

What is a Green Library? The Definition from the IFLA ENSULIB Section is self-explanatory. A green and sustainable library is a library which takes into account environmental, economic and social sustainability. Green and sustainable libraries may be of any size, but they should have a clear sustainability agenda which includes: green buildings and equipment, green office principles, sustainable economy, sustainable library services, social sustainability, environmental management, commitment to general environmental goals and programmes. (IFLA *ENSULIB, 2023)*

As stated by Sudhakar Mishra, Green libraries also play a crucial role in promoting environmental awareness and education within their communities. By offering workshops, educational programs, and interactive initiatives, these libraries raise awareness about sustainable practices, climate change, and the importance of preserving the environment for future generations. The transformation of libraries into green libraries goes beyond physical infrastructure and operational practices. It involves a shift in mind-set, where libraries actively

engage with their communities, collaborate with local organizations, and advocate for sustainable policies and initiatives. Green libraries strive to become sustainability leaders, demonstrating how libraries can be agents of positive change and contribute to a more sustainable future. (Mishra,2023)

Chakraborty (2013) in her paper talks about four famous university libraries of India which are built in the traditionally eco-friendly way with great heights, widths, open space, thick walls, use of sunshades, etc. Skylights are a common feature of these antique buildings for ushering natural lights. Most of the buildings have the ventilation system as is required in a tropical country like India. Very recently, Indian libraries started to have provisions for natural lights as much as possible, energy saving bulbs in the reading rooms and other places within library premises, provision of natural air, emphasis on cleanliness, hygienic toilets, adequate provision of waste bins at appropriate places, proper disposal policies for weeded library materials/equipment, etc.

Based on this the author took a look at the measures at the SNDT Women's University Library to develop environmental awareness,

The BMK KRC libraries building allow maximum natural light and allow natural flow of air. The building is built partly of stone allowing for a cooler atmosphere. These are very important in a tropical country like India. This also reduces the necessity of using electrical lights and fans for a major portion of the day resulting in energy saving here. Simple measures like removing the curtains in the winter months ensure that natural light is used to the optimum. There is thick plantation near library.

Even our readers and outsiders appreciate our garden. We always encourage our gardener to plant and maintain trees, which helps in maintaining a cooler environment and helps reduce dust and noise near the library. The leaves from these plants are used for composting Reducing, reusing, and recycling paper tends to be the first thing to do when a library tries to go green. To reduce the use of paper, readers are discouraged to print from computers, by charging patrons per page and by asking them to email / or take pictures from the screen directly. The Acquisition and Periodicals Departments both look at the ordering of e-material in addition to print materials, thus trying to reduce the use of paper. The current practices for production and distribution of printed knowledge products generate an enormous amount of CO_2. It is estimated that the book industry in the UK and USA alone produce about 1.8 million tonnes and about 11.27 million tonnes of CO_2 respectively. CO_2 emission for the worldwide journal publishing industry is estimated to be about 12 million tonnes. It is shown that the production and distribution costs of digital knowledge products are negligible compared to the environmental costs of production and distribution of printed knowledge products (Chowdhury, 2010). The Climate Group Report (2008) suggests that replacing physical information products and services with their digital equivalents can help in the reduction of environmental impacts and this can be achieved by using the appropriate IT and online information service models.

Shifting from paper newsletters and postcards to e-newsletters and e-mail announcements is an increasingly common paper-reduction strategy. There is less use and more 're-use' of paper. Most of the time, we use e-mails for sending reminders, sending invitations, minor official work. We do not just throw away old flyers, printed material, magazine covers and used envelops. The second side is used for rough work. After the second side is

used, the paper waste is given to SWATCH (a non-profit organization in Pune who recycle waste) to recycle. All newspapers and such printed material are sold as scrap which again goes for recycling.

The card catalogue in the library was phased out making way for the OPAC. The cards in the card catalogue were not thrown away but used for rough work by staff and students. The cards were cut into half and used at the reference and other counters, then recycled once used.

The library used to issue twenty pockets to the staff and four pockets to the students. We have changed it to single pocket which is used for 3 – 5 years resulting in major saving of paper. Library identity cards are also issued for five years to the staff and 2-3 years to the students. This has helped us to reduce paper waste as well as our printing and stationery budgets. To promote the reuse of materials that might otherwise be discarded or recycled, the library has started a 'pick –me-up' service. Readers come and give used magazines and books in the libraries which are displayed in the foyer. Other readers are free to pick up and take these materials.

Many students donate old textbooks which are very useful for other students. One event in this journey occurred in late 2014, when the library purchased thin clients instead of regular PCs to save energy. (Thin clients use less power than a regular PC.) All the staff make sure that all devices are shut off every evening. Most days the main power supply is switched off at night.

Our staff put on the lights and fans wherever they are working and students are studying. We put off lights even in the stack area if nobody is there in that area. We have switched over to using thin tube lights and now are planning to replace electric tubes by LED bulbs to further conserve energy. In addition to this, during fumigation, there is an attempt to use organic pesticides by asking the fumigation companies for this, though this has only been partially successful. The library has made a commitment to reduce the use of disposable plates, cups, and utensils for staff and reduce their use at library events. We also have reduced the use of plastic in our surroundings. We use glass cups to drink tea, coffee and water. There is a common drinking water facility for which use stainless steel glasses are used. The glasses are cleaned daily. Staff and students bring their own bottles for water and fill them as and when required. To increase awareness amongst the readers, competitions based on environment related issues, poster competitions on global warming, essay competition on global warming, saving water etc. are arranged during the yearly 'Granthotsav' (Festival of Books). Throughout the year we showcase different events related to environment. e.g. Book exhibition on world environmental day, Newspaper cutting display on global warming, solar energy, waste management, save the river etc. Reducing carbon footsteps means to follow practices that can lead to more environmentally friendly and ecologically responsible decisions and lifestyles, which can help protect the environment and sustain its natural resources for current and future generations. (Murari & Varma,2018)

Framework for Sustainable Library Operations: To achieve sustainable library operations, a comprehensive framework is needed. We should think about energy-efficient building design and infrastructure. It is always advisable to incorporating sustainable design principles in library buildings, such as efficient insulation, natural lighting, and proper ventilation. Adopting energy-efficient technologies for cooling, and lighting systems to optimize energy usage. Exploring and utilizing renewable energy sources like solar panels to power library

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operation. By replacing normal lights to LED lights.

Libraries can reduce carbon footprints by implementing waste management practices, such as waste segregation, composting, and recycling programs. Promoting responsible consumption and reducing the use of single-use materials within the library. Encouraging staff and patrons to adopt sustainable behaviours, such as using reusable water bottles and cloth bags.

We can supplement water needs by implementing rainwater harvesting systems in the library. And by educating staff and users on water conservation practices, such as reporting leaks and using water responsibly. Implementing policies for responsible disposal of electronic waste and hazardous material. Promoting environmental literacy and awareness must be goal of each library. Developing educational programs and workshops on environmental topics for library staff and users. Curating collections and resources related to sustainability, climate change, and eco-friendly lifestyles. Organizing community events and initiatives that raise awareness about environmental issues.

Collaborating with local government agencies, NGOs, and community organizations to promote sustainable initiatives. Also Engaging library staff, patrons, and the wider community in decision-making processes related to sustainability. By adopting this framework, libraries can holistically address various aspects of sustainability, ensuring that their operations align with environmental objectives. Each point contributes to creating a greener and more environmentally responsible library that serves as a model for sustainable practices within the community. (Hasan & Panda,2023)

Suggestions for librarians for increasing awareness: Image of sustainable library is a good image for the libraries. Libraries should use different ways of going green to promote a powerful sustainable image. Librarians should act as a role model for sustainability by providing suitable and relevant information related to green issues and concerns. For the next generation, library professionals should move beyond environmental sustainability by various practicing various ideas of "greening libraries" and focus on proactive steps to guarantee future sustainable development of libraries. Environmental sustainability becomes possible when library staff and library users both are conscious of the consequences of their action on the environment. LIS community can contribute by many ways- even in a small way - while looking for working towards the bigger picture.

- LIS professionals also have to find green ways to share and disseminate information making suggestions on using mobiles and tablets to cut down on the use of paper and photocopies. Also, arranging planning sessions to share ideas.

- Librarians can develop keen interest in promoting environmental sustainability through environmental literacy programmes within the four walls of the libraries and beyond.

- May help by engaging library staff, patrons, and the wider community in decision-making processes related to sustainability. Creating a 'Green Team' in the library

- Libraries can compile reports on what is happening for sustainability and green initiatives in different areas like agriculture, construction, engineering, transportation, and waste management and also display relevant information on green initiatives.

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- Librarians need to improve search skills in identifying information resources on the topic, as well as to explore initiatives taken by other institutions on issues concerning environmentally friendly and sustainable libraries.
- Librarians can spread awareness about the library's green activities through social media or other methods regularly.
- Library professionals should evaluate the library's cleaning and maintenance routine to identify and reduce the use of hazardous chemicals and by using chemical-free products for cleaning.
- Libraries can use a variety of tools to popularize the 'green concept' and educate their patrons about the features of their green buildings. These include in-library displays, publications, and library programs relevant on 'going green'.

Sustainability in library buildings should be included in the syllabus and taught to LIS students so that new generation librarians will adapt these ideas. Libraries can arrange strategic thinking and Encouraging participation from staff and readers in reducing carbon footprints and developing environment friendly, sustainable information systems and services have now become serious issues requiring immediate attention. In spite of budget constraints and other issues, libraries must start seriously to look at any step that they can take to address this issue.

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