Towards Reducing Carbon Footsteps: Small Steps at the SNDTWU Library

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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 that contribute to the problem. There is a need for 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: Carbon Footsteps, Green Library, Academic Library, Sustainable Library

Introduction

There are many ways to define a green library, but there are a number of central themes that run through all of them, including, minimizing the negative impact the building will have on the local environment, and if possible having a positive impact. These include: Reducing the use of water and energy by designing in a way that maximizes the use of natural and renewable resources. Integrating actual greenery and vegetation into the building and site design; Preferably, using drought resistant and/or native vegetation. And, maintaining high standards of indoor air quality to help ensure the health of the people who inhabit the building. (Green library, 2017)

However the fact remains, especially in developing countries, that the Library Information Professional has hardly any say in the architecture of the building. Few exceptions are the Anna Centenary Library in Chennai which is a LEEDS gold rated certified building.

The green library movement emerged in the 1990s and library professionals are trying to create an environment that will minimize electricity consumption, be energy efficient and environment friendly. The Online Dictionary of Library and

Information Science (ODLIS) defines green libraries as "green/sustainable libraries as a library designed to minimize negative impact on the natural environment and maximize indoor environmental quality by means of careful site selection, use of natural construction materials and biodegradable products, conservation of resources like water, energy, paper, and responsible waste disposal recycling, etc."

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. Even to this day of scarcity of open space, new annexes to these libraries are trying to keep up that impression of vast space with the help of clever use of glass as well as the use of expert interior decorators.

Based on this the authors took a look at the measures at the SNDT Women's University Library to reduce the carbon footprints.

The SNDTWU libraries are all built to allow maximum natural light and allow natural flow of air. The building at Pune 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 who recycle) to recycle. All newspapers and such printed material is sold as *raddi* 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 and

thermocole 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 . Throughout the year we showcase different events related to environment. eg. 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.

Suggestions for librarians for increasing awareness

- Librarians can explore and promote practical issues where each individual can make a difference, e.g. in terms of using less paper, recycling etc.

- Exploring opportunities in involving people to generate creative ideas, involving them in

making suggestions on using mobiles and tablets to cut down on the use of paper and photocopies. Also, arranging planning sessions to share ideas.

- 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.

- 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. 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

planning sessions to ensure sustainability. Identify the librarians who are willing to promote green library techniques and encourage them.

Conclusion

Green image is a good image for the libraries and they should use their way of going green to promote a powerful green image towards their and users. Librarians should act as role models 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 exemplified by various practices of "greening libraries" and focus on proactive steps to guarantee future sustainable development of libraries.

The emphasis of existing literature seems to focus on doing what is feasible for the local library. Focusing on that, the first step is coming up with a plan incorporating green policies and activities. Eventually, this plan could be included in the mission, vision, or strategic plans of the library (McElrath & Sutherland, 2015)

There are many opportunities for the LIS community to contribute - even in a small way - while looking for working towards the bigger picture. The first step is to seek more information, to gain insight then to put information to use. LIS professionals also have to find green ways to share and disseminate information

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. Any step however small is worthwhile taking and any means towards this however small is worth doing.

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