

Green Library Projects Underway

I recently asked fellow law librarians to describe green or sustainability projects that have been implemented in their libraries across the United States. I would like to share short descriptions of a few projects, as well as discuss some of the barriers we face that prevent more vigorous action. I think it is important to remind ourselves that any action taken represents progress and can result in significant environmental protection and budget savings. One thing I noticed in my discussions with other librarians was the pride they felt in taking action and making a little extra effort for sustainability. It just feels good! Our display of compassion and the feeling of interconnectedness with all living things is our biggest reward. Isn't it?



more than 20 years!) LEDs use 90 percent less electricity than incandescent bulbs. Each bulb replaced saves the library about \$20 per year in electricity costs. Annual electricity savings for 300 bulbs would be about \$6,000, and carbon dioxide greenhouse gases would be reduced by about 28.5 tons.

For more ideas for pursuing sustainability in your libraries, *True Green @ Work: 100 ways you can make the environment your business*, by Kim McKay, Jenny Bonnin, and Tim Wallace, and *The Business Guide to Sustainability: Practical Strategies and Tools for Organizations*, by Darcy Hitchcock and Marsha Willard, are good sources. For academics, check out stars.aashe.org.

Barriers to Sustainability Action

As Kermit the Frog likes to say: "It's not easy being green."

Sometimes efforts to implement sustainability actions are challenging. It may be easy to do a lot of small but impactful things, such as printing on both sides of paper; replacing incandescent light bulbs with CFLs; using power management functions on your PC; and maybe even programming your heating, cooling, and lighting systems to save energy when the library space is not occupied. However, things can get complicated if, for example, you want to start a zero-waste program or a carbon offset purchasing program for travel, replace your lighting systems, add insulation to your building, or try to reduce your library's carbon footprint 20 percent by 2020. You might experience problems because your library is a small portion of a larger building at the law school or law firm and/or you must rely on the support of your organization's management and facilities teams to achieve your goals.

Help is often available if you know where to look. You may find that your university already has a sustainability coordinator or your landlord or property manager may be willing to work with you on energy-efficiency projects. In addition, you may have trouble

determining your library's energy use so you can create a baseline of energy use, waste, etc., in order to track and measure improvements. In a nutshell, my advice is to try to join or start a sustainability committee within your larger organization so you can work with your community—managers, facilities personnel, and other stakeholders.

It might not be easy being green, but by taking a leadership role you can reap big rewards. In addition, if initial funding is available (you will likely be able to recover all costs through energy savings), hire or seek RFPs from a sustainability consultant or obtain free or low-cost advice from your city or utilities to guide your library or organization throughout the process. (See my previous *Spectrum* columns for more practical advice.)

Additionally, a new AALL caucus has been developed relating to sustainability—the Environmental Libraries Caucus. This caucus will provide a forum to share ideas on sustainability.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Continue to Rise

Recently, reports have provided a clearer picture of worldwide progress on mitigating climate change. Although the European Community, the Kyoto Protocol, and voluntary efforts worldwide have had a beneficial impact on our current and future climates, greenhouse gases have continued to rise since 1990 and are lingering in our atmosphere.

Most scientists recommend at least an 80 percent reduction of 1990 greenhouse gas levels worldwide by 2050 to avoid a possible tipping point and the most catastrophic changes to our environments. Although news about our climate future may sound depressing, taking the first steps toward sustainability can help both your budget and soul. ■

David Selden (dselden@narf.org) is law librarian at the National Indian Law Library/Native American Rights Fund in Boulder, Colorado.

Sustainability in Action

Following are a few examples of sustainability in action in libraries around the country.

Nicole Belbin at Western New England University in Springfield, Massachusetts, reports that her library has a book recycling program. To be able to recycle books, student workers are trained on how to remove hard book covers from books.

Cheryl L. Niemeier at Bose McKinney & Evans LLP in Washington, D.C., says her law firm recently was able to overcome some barriers to green projects by working with building management services.

Maria Sosnowski at Clark County Law Library in Vancouver, Washington, reports that her library's organization policy does not allow employees to turn off their PCs at night because of IT maintenance issues. However, they still save energy by turning off all monitors. In addition, they have reduced consumption of paper and packaging materials by consciously cutting down on their printing and reuse of most shipping materials.

Linda Fariss, acting director at the Maurer School of Law at Indiana University in Bloomington, reports that the school recently replaced 300 incandescent light bulbs with LED bulbs in 300 study carrels. The maintenance crew was grateful to not have to keep changing the light bulbs. (LEDs last