Chapter 2
What If Your Library Can't Go Green?
Promoting Wellness in Libraries

Laura Bohuski

Western Kentucky University, USA

ABSTRACT

Environmentalism and climate change are hot topics of conversation in society today, but libraries have long been a supporter of the environmental movement and going green. Often libraries have shown their agreement with green movement ideas through the construction or renovation of green libraries. However, with decreasing budgets, many libraries cannot afford new construction or the fees associated with becoming green certified. How then can libraries continue to support the green movement while on a budget? This chapter argues that while green certification is a good goal to have, if libraries would switch their focus to the wellness of their employees and patrons instead, then libraries could still have a positive impact on the well-being of their communities and enact healthy and environmentally sound initiatives, while also staying within their budget.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last century the green movement has grown in importance among the library community. For many libraries the main goal of this movement has been the construction of green libraries. However, with budgets falling drastically many libraries cannot afford the cost of building green. Luckily there are many changes, from increases in natural lighting to the creation of meditative spaces, that libraries can introduce that will encourage healthful changes within their communities for less than the cost of going green. This author argues that instead of focusing solely on creating environmentally green buildings, libraries should endeavour, through whatever means are available, to promote wellness in libraries. It is through the use of various aspects of the green movement, like green architecture, and other ideas such as wellness initiatives, that libraries can help the environment and support their community all while staying within reduced budgets.

This chapter discusses green buildings and the green movement, including a brief history of the environmental movement, its development within the library science field, while also taking a look at some of the literature on green buildings, wellness, and sustainability. Further, the author discusses the benefits of creating green libraries, along with the limitations that hamper such green initiatives. Included in this discussion will be an examination of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification and the standards a library must meet to become LEED certified, as well as examining other official forms of green certification. The examination of LEED and other certification standards will provide information on what improvements are considered important by these programs and the costs associated with official certification. Finally, this chapter discusses small steps that libraries can take to improve the overall wellness of their libraries. These steps are less extensive and more cost-effective than renovating to green standards or building a new library, while still creating a more inviting and productive atmosphere inside the library for students, employees, and patrons. A library does not have to be certified to green standards to promote both environmental health and community wellness.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GREEN MOVEMENT AND LIBRARIES

The earliest predecessors of the modern green movement in the United States can be found at the end of the nineteenth century with the rise of the conservation movement. The conservation movement focused on the protection of wildlife areas, the creation of national parks and forests, and urban expansion. The first governmental regulations on air and water quality would not exist until after World War II with the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1948, which was followed almost a decade later by the Air Pollution Control Act of 1955 (WGBH Education Foundation [WGBH], n.d.). In 1970 the US government established the Environmental Protection Agency [EPA] to regulate environmental policy at the federal level. The creation of the EPA also heralded the creation of other government agencies meant to protect the environment. While the government was creating new agencies for environmental regulation, numerous green movements were growing within different areas of the US population, and the library community was one such area.

Antonelli discusses the history of the green library movement in her article "The Green Library Movement: An Overview and Beyond" (2008). Antonelli's article states that the first articles on green libraries appeared in the 1990s in a special 1999 edition of the *Wilson Library Bulletin*. These five articles were followed by the creation of the *Green Library Journal,* a professional journal focused on the promotion of environmental literacy in the library profession. According to Antonelli, the first issue, released in January 1992, was contributed to by members of the American Library Association's Task Force on the Environment, which had been formed four years earlier in 1989 (American Library Association [APA], 2006, Antonelli, 2008). Antonelli's article provides a thorough background on the growth of green library literature from the early 1990s through 2008. She then moves on to discuss what constitutes a green library, focusing on LEED certification and green architecture, before addressing green library programming, green education, and steps that libraries can take to continue promoting the green library movement. Another scholar who provides background on both the environmental movement and the rise of green library literature is Stoss. In his article "Libraries Taking the LEED: Green Libraries in Energy and Environmental Design," Stoss (2010) gives a brief overview of LEEDs certification, the growth of green databases such as GreenFILE and Environment Complete from EBSCO, and briefly discusses how the green movement in libraries extends beyond green buildings.

12 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/what-if-your-library-cant-go-green/241550

Related Content

General Library Management
 (2013). *Public Law Librarianship: Objectives, Challenges, and Solutions (pp. 72-96).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/general-library-management/69941

SWOT Analysis of Internet of Things in the Library and Information Science Environment
Anna Kaushik (2020). *Handbook of Research on Emerging Trends and Technologies in Library and Information Science (pp. 1-12).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/swot-analysis-of-internet-of-things-in-the-library-and-information-science-environment/241549

Technical Services
 (2013). *Public Law Librarianship: Objectives, Challenges, and Solutions (pp. 197-216).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/technical-services/69946

UX Work in Libraries: How (and Why) to Do It
Houda El Mimouni, Jennifer Anderson, Nadaleen F. Tempelman-Kluitand Alexandra Dolan-Mescal (2018). *Developing In-House Digital Tools in Library Spaces (pp. 1-36).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/ux-work-in-libraries/188096

Governance and Organizational Structures
 (2013). *Public Law Librarianship: Objectives, Challenges, and Solutions (pp. 41-71).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/governance-organizational-structures/69940