

UC San Diego

Books and Book Chapters

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It Takes a Village Sustainability Starter

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Authors

Myers, Rachel Ann

Kane, Kim

Singh, Gayatri

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Peer reviewed

It Takes a Village Sustainability Starter

Kim Kane, Serials Specialist, UC San Diego Library, kmkane@ucsd.edu; Rachel Myers, Information Services Specialist, UC San Diego Library, RAMyers@ucsd.edu; Gayatri Singh, Reference & Information Services Coordinator and Librarian for Communication, UC San Diego Library, gasingh@ucsd.edu

NUTRITION INFORMATION

We all believe in sustainability and work to be green as individuals, but there's power in sharing our knowledge and values and working together. Grow your sustainability efforts beyond single events by creating an advisory, education, and outreach group.

An ongoing, institutionally supported sustainability group jump-starts your efforts to develop a culture of sustainability in your library and community. Shared experience, institutional knowledge, and the ability to sustain your efforts across the years come from having a top-notch dedicated kitchen crew. As folks rotate on and off the group, new ideas get percolating and time-honored recipes are perfected. So gather your staff, set up your kitchen, and get cooking. A library sustainability group is a no-fail recipe for success and continuity in all of your sustainability efforts.

OUTCOMES

A dedicated library sustainability committee

- Furthers the goals of the campus, community, or school district
- Offers a built-in resource when the library is contacted to be involved in sustainability projects by community leaders

- Builds campus, community, and student partnerships
- Educates library users and the community
- Promotes library resources
- Boosts morale and engages staff
- Saves the library money

NUMBER SERVED

A core group of 3 or more can cook up events and projects enough to sustain your entire library and community.

COOKING TIME

60 minutes per month, plus added time for projects and publications as needed, will easily serve your library and community for years to come.

INGREDIENTS AND EQUIPMENT

- 3–10 library workers who care about sustainability and collective practice
- Proposal and group charter to present to library administration
- Dedicated work time for meetings, sustainability projects, and events
- Administrative support
- Progress reports
- Yearly sustainability goals
- A healthy dollop of dedication
- Annual budget for events and outreach (optional)

PREPARATION

Gather a dedicated team of coworkers, volunteers, or community members who are passionate about sustainability efforts in your library. Discuss your goals, and brainstorm events and initiatives that will help your library and community fulfill those goals.

Assess the skills, interests, and talents of the group members. Individuals in the group can propose projects and choose what they would like to work on as well as collaborating with the wider community. Working as a group, prioritize your projects and delegate tasks for both long-range and immediate projects. A group leader, though optional, is helpful for organizing meetings, coordinating with library administrators, and assisting in community outreach. Once the committee is an established part of library culture, members may rotate on and off depending on their interest and time, but the work of the committee will continue.

Continuity matters. A sustainability group works best with institutional support. This translates into dedicated work time for planning, projects, and events; a budget; and visibility as a resource for the library.

Strategize ways to garner that support. One is to locate documents that show how a sustainability group furthers the goals of your campus, school district, city, or surrounding area. Another is to just get going and keep going.

While working on longer-term goals, develop regular programming and publications that keep sustainability front and center within your library. Stay visible, be inclusive, collaborate with the wider community, share knowledge and information freely, and celebrate your accomplishments. Be a visible and active resource within your community.

As the years go by, the work of a sustainability committee builds on itself. As your group plans projects, sponsors events, and creates publications, its value to the library and the community continues to grow. The continuity created by tradition and institutional support provides for sustained pursuit of long-term goals, substantive collaborations, and a menu of annual events and publications that are beloved and much-anticipated traditions within your library.

CHEF'S NOTES

If you build it, they will come. Don't worry if there is no immediate administrative buy-in as far as dedicated work time and a budget. Get going, work together, and make things happen. As the fruits of your efforts blossom and grow, your institution's administration will recognize the value of an officially sanctioned, permanent sustainability group.

A bit about the UC San Diego Library sustainability committee. The UC San Diego Library Sustainability Group sponsors annual events that have become beloved traditions for the staff and community. UC San Diego's Library Sustainability Group also produces a host of publications that offer up information to encourage individual choices. And over the years we have been able to focus on long-term goals and campus collaborations. While members have rotated on and off the committee, the vision and work of the group continue.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Kane, Kim, and Annelise Sklar. "Greening the Mothership: Growing the Environmental Sustainability Group at the University of California, San Diego Library." In *Focus on Educating for Sustainability: Toolkit for Academic Libraries*. Edited by Maria A. Jankowska, 211–26. Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press, 2014. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8nt5h1rj>.

An excellent and detailed article about the founding and first years of the UC San Diego Library's Sustainability Committee (originally called the Environmental Sustainability Group) was cowritten by one of our founding members who continues to be an inspiration to us all.