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Greening the Mothership: Growing the Environmental Sustainability Group at the University of California, San Diego Library

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Greening the Mothership: Growing the Environmental Sustainability Group at the University of California, San Diego Library

Kim Kane and Annelise Sklar

Abstract

Using the University of California (UC) San Diego Library's Environmental Sustainability Group as a case study, this chapter walks readers through establishing a need for sustainability efforts within an academic library, communicating that need to the library's administration and other stakeholders, and launching an official library group to work on those issues. It also describes sustainability activities an academic library can undertake, and the resources needed—or not—to accomplish them and measure their success. This chapter is aimed at libraries just starting to plan environmental sustainability activities, or those who want to formalize their current endeavors into their library organization.

Introduction

It takes commitment from the organization, along with people and time, to accomplish a library's green initiatives. In this chapter, the authors profile the UC San Diego Library's Environmental Sustainability Group (ESG) and discuss the creation of an official group within a library to carry out the actual work associated with a library's sustainability efforts.

Sustainability in Universities

Green initiatives in the academic setting are certainly nothing new, dating back at least as far as the 1960s, when Middlebury College launched the United States' first Environmental Studies major. Today, green activities and sustainable initiatives are an integral part of many college campus cultures. The Princeton Review notes that among the 12,000 college applicants surveyed for the 2010 College Hopes & Worries Survey, 64 percent of respondents said they

would value having information about a college's commitment to the environment and 23 percent said such information would "very much" impact their decision to apply to or attend the school (2011). In fact, there are now at least five separate green and sustainability ratings of universities and colleges (Galbraith, 2009).

As of early 2013, 665 colleges and universities have signed onto the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment (ACUPCC). It is:

"...a high-visibility effort to address global climate disruption undertaken by a network of colleges and universities that have made institutional commitments to eliminate net greenhouse gas emissions from specified campus operations, and to promote the research and educational efforts of higher education to equip society to re-stabilize the earth's climate" (Presidents' Climate Commitment, 2013a).

The commitment was started at the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) conference in October 2006. This commitment encourages campuses who sign on to find ways to achieve climate neutrality at their campus and asks universities and colleges who sign to create a Campus Action Plan (CAP) for their campus. So far, 516 colleges and universities have submitted their Climate Action Plans (Presidents' Climate Commitment, 2013b).

Sustainability in Academic Libraries

Libraries, on the other hand, began talking about green initiatives in earnest in the 1990s. Antonelli (2008) traces the earliest articles on green libraries to the early 1990s and then a second wave of green library scholarship to 2003. Common green themes in the library literature include building green (generally meaning LEED-certified) library buildings and making already existing buildings more sustainable, offering green library programs to library users, and greening library associations. Jankowska and Marcum (2010) identify four major categories of sustainability and green library issues commonly discussed in the literature since the 1990s: (1) sustainability of scholarship and collections, (2) green library operations and practices, (3) green library buildings, and (4) measuring and improving sustainability. They also note that even in providing paperless, born-digital information to users, libraries continue to consume large amounts of nonrenewable resources such as energy, water, computer paper, and electronic equipment. Nationally, library environmental sustainability issues such as these are addressed by

the American Library Association's Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT)'s Task Force on the Environment (TFOE), which was founded in 1989 (2013) and newly formed Sustainability Round Table (2013). However, a quick Google search for the terms like "green libraries" also returns hundreds of results for individual library- and librarian-run blogs, Libguides, etc., with titles like "Going Green at Your Library," "The Green Library," and "Green Libraries" that promote green activities on a local library level.

Sustainability on the UC San Diego Campus

Even with the current trends toward being green, UC San Diego is perhaps more committed to sustainability than many other institutions because of its history. Back in 1957, UC San Diego's founder and Scripps Institute of Oceanography Director Roger Revelle warned that greenhouse gases from industrialization could endanger the planet (UC San Diego Sustainability, 2013). The following year, UC San Diego geochemist Charles Keeling began his precise measurement of atmospheric carbon dioxide, and by 1961, he had proved that atmospheric CO₂ was rising dramatically (Our Heritage of Sustainability, 2013). In 1967, the university named its second (of now six) colleges after environmentalist and Sierra Club founder John Muir.

The University of California system was also an early signatory on the ACUPCC, President Robert C. Dynes having signed in March 2007. In December 2008, UC San Diego launched its campus wide Climate Action Plan, which outlines the various sustainable activities and initiatives the university, will undertake to achieve climate neutrality and provides campus departments with guidance for achieving those goals. UC San Diego strives to be climate neutral by 2025. The university is also a member of the AASHE, which administers the Sustainability Tracking Assessment and Rating System (STARS) survey that evaluates institutions in a variety of areas related to sustainability. In 2011, UC San Diego was one of the first ten colleges and universities to receive a "gold" rating in STARS (Graham, 2011).

The campus currently claims initiatives and research on clean energy, climate, green education, fuel alternatives, green building, alternative transportation, waste diversion, and water. It also has its own natural gas cogeneration plant and has installed photovoltaic panels on some of the rooftops on campus; between them the university generates about 85% of its electrical needs (Clean Energy, 2013). Approximately 59% of campus commuters use some sort of alternative transportation including walking and bicycling to campus (Alternative

Transportation, 2013). According to the STARS report submitted in 2011, UC San Diego has 257 sustainability related courses, out of 6,319 courses offered (Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System, 2011). The campus also has approximately 20 student organizations with sustainability in their mission statements and a Sustainability Resource Center (SRC) that “serves as a hub for materials and initiatives related to local, national and global sustainability. The SRC is a partnership between the Sustainability Program Office and the Student Sustainability Collective dedicated to balancing environmental, social and economic stewardship” (UC San Diego Sustainability Resource Center, 2013).

The UC San Diego Library

The UC San Diego Library considers itself the “intellectual foundation for the dynamic and innovative UC San Diego campus” (A Message from the University Librarian, 2010). The Library is a member of the Association of Research Libraries, among other consortia, and highly dedicated to innovation and digital initiatives, providing “access to more than 7 million digital and print volumes, journals, and multimedia materials to meet the knowledge demands of scholars, students, and members of the public” (About the UC San Diego Library, 2010).

The Library at UC San Diego currently consists of two buildings, Geisel Library and the Biomedical Library building, and has approximately 250 staff and librarians. The campus has an enrollment of approximately 29,000 students (Campus Profile, 2011), and the libraries, both of which have prime central locations on campus, are vibrant places that overflow with library users throughout the day and evening. With an annual gate count of over two million (A Message from the University Librarian, 2010), the library buildings are so busy, in fact, that one section of the Geisel Library building has recently been designated as a 24/5-hour study area for students.

The Environmental Sustainability Group (ESG) at the Library

Given the library locale, it is not surprising that several individual UC San Diego Library staff members have long been interested in sustainability. Local library legend has it that many years before the formation of the current Environmental Sustainability Group, the Library actually had another green team that, among other things, encouraged staff to recycle and to conserve water and electricity in the building, but no current staff remember why or how it ceased to exist.

It should be noted that, even on a campus as green as UC San Diego, the creation of the current Environmental Sustainability Group was staff-initiated. One of the authors of this chapter, Kim Kane, approached the Director of Library Administrative Services with the idea of creating an internal sustainability group. The Library Administration approved the request to form the group and appointed a group chair. They provided the following official charge, which shows the work the group was encouraged to do, including development of best practices.

The ESG is charged with developing and recommending comprehensive strategies and institutional practices that promote sustainability, including measures to make more efficient use of resources as well as decrease production of waste (see Appendix I with advices on creating sustainability group at your library).

Functions of the ESG

- Detail our sustainability practices and evaluate their effectiveness.
- Draft policies intended to maximize the Libraries' activities in the following areas:
 - Products/equipment made from sustainable items;
 - Recycling and otherwise decreasing waste;
 - Water conservation;
 - Energy efficiency;
- Share sustainability information and best practices with Library employees.

The original members were volunteers plus one designated representative from the Library's Facilities Management Department. However, the Library has since begun a lengthy organizational restructuring process that will move people and units around. In the meantime, members who leave the group have been replaced by volunteers from anywhere within the Library. The group meets monthly, and, as an official Library committee, posts agendas and takes minutes to document action items. The group has a folder on the Library's shared drive to store working documents and communicates via email in between meetings. While the group has no allotted budget, it can submit requests to the Library Administration for consideration. However, most projects the ESG undertakes require very little to no funding and generally have a minimal impact on Library resources and staff time.

Projects of the ESG

The ESG members serve as sustainability experts for the Library and staff. The ESG is made up of green-minded library staff members who have a variety of ideas for projects to work

on throughout the year. The ideas are discussed in the monthly meetings, and then the group decides which ideas will be developed and who will take the lead on the project. Each member brings to the group a set of talents and skills that always seem to compliment the others in the group.

One popular idea has been the annual Fruit and Vegetable Exchange that ESG started hosting in 2009. Since many of the library staff, including several ESG members, are prolific gardeners, the ESG created an exchange event for when fruits and veggies are at their peak every summer. The exchange has grown into an exchange of not only fruits and vegetables, but seeds, seedlings, cutting from plants, flowers and even food that people make from items in their gardens. The group reserves a room in the library, and the exchange is scheduled from approximately 11:30 am -1:30 pm so that staff have a chance to stop by during their lunch hour. This event is open to all library employees, and one does not need to contribute anything to share in order to participate. In 2012, approximately 25 staff attended the exchange, and many staff members have asked that the exchange be held two or three times a year, since many people garden all year in Southern California. In the future, the ESG members have discussed expanding the exchange to invite the student groups who have started community gardens on campus.

The ESG members also regularly contributed a sustainability page to the Library staff newsletter. It featured a different topic every month, such as electric vehicles and composting, new titles in the collection, green events on campus and in the community, and a sustainable craft suggestion. In addition, the group created a Holiday Sustainable/Fair Trade Gift Giving Guide that provides readers with ideas for sustainable gifts to purchase. The guide includes a description of each item and links to the websites where items can be purchased. It also provides information about sustainability events in the local area, a link to a list of thrift stores, gift-wrapping and other sustainable suggestions for cleaning up after the holidays (for example, a link to where to recycle your tree in the city). Each ESG member chose an area of the guide to work on but could also provide content for other sections if they had information to share. The guide was sent out to all library staff via email at the end of November 2012 and also posted on the library's website and on the Environmental Studies Research Guide Libguide for library users. The link was also posted to the Library's Facebook and Twitter accounts. The ESG received many positive comments from staff, thanking them for creating the guide. The ESG is

currently working on creating a Sustainable Living Guide to provide staff and library users with more information on a variety of sustainability topics.

Yet another low-resource intensive initiative ESG sponsored was in response to a staff suggestion that it would be useful if the Library could provide trash pick-up sticks for individual staff who want to use them to clean up the campus on their breaks and at lunch. The ESG sent a quick email inquiry to the campus Facilities Management department to find out how to go about obtaining some, and Facilities Management responded by providing the Library with four pick-up sticks, as well as trash bags, for free. Working with another department on campus not only helped the ESG avoid having to purchase these materials themselves, but also demonstrated how collaboration can be an impetus for campus-wide sustainability efforts.

Collaborating with Campus Groups

Being involved with various sustainable campus groups helps to increase the visibility of the Library as being a committed partner in furthering the sustainability efforts on campus. By collaborating with campus groups and continuing to network with non-library staff, faculty and student groups on campus, ESG continues to connect with the larger campus and their sustainable efforts. The ESG members have also found that the various campus departments may have resources and items that the Library can use, as with the pick-up sticks the Library received from the Facilities Management department and in working during Earth Week with the Sustainability Resource Center, who help publicize the library events. Good relationships are built and in turn the Library is seen as a sustainability partner on the campus community.

The UC San Diego Procurement & Contracts (P&C) department started a Writing Instrument Brigade (WIB) project to collect defunct pens and markers on campus to keep them from going into the landfill. This department partnered with TerraCycle, and sends the defunct writing instruments off to be up cycled into other products. In return, TerraCycle pays the campus for each pen or marker it receives. The money received goes to the campus Sustainability Resource Center. Initially, ESG's members decided to collect pens and markers in the staff areas of the libraries. The library staff was enthusiastic and departments made their own collection containers. The ESG members collected the pens and markers and requested a free UPS mailing label from the P&C department for sending materials. In 2012, with the support of the Library's Administration and various library departments, the ESG expanded this program to

the public areas at both Geisel and the Biomedical Library on campus. For the public areas, ESG decided to purchase containers for a more streamlined look and for consistency, since the containers are located throughout the buildings at many of the service desk areas. The group also wanted to encourage students to recycle and make it easy for them to locate the containers. Initially, when the program was expanded to the public areas of the library, the “Recycle Your Used Pens! Look for the bins and just drop ‘em in!” signage on the containers was not explicit enough and some library users thought they could take the recycled pens, not realizing the writing instruments were no longer working. With a suggestion from a staff member, the group re-worded the containers’ labels to read “Pen out of ink? Marker dried out? They can be recycled here!” to clarify how the containers were to be used. This change resulted in ESG collecting more defunct pens and markers, and the pens are no longer being taken out of the containers. One member of the group created images to display on the digital signs at both the Geisel and Biomedical libraries to inform students about the WIB, and one of the outreach librarians blasted the information on Facebook and Twitter at the beginning of fall quarter and continues to do so periodically throughout the year. This program has been a success in both the staff and public areas. The library sends a shipment of defunct pens and markers to TerraCycle approximately 6 times a year. More importantly, in the 2011/2012 school year the entire campus kept approximately 5,000 pens and markers out of the landfill. A new goal was set for 2012/2013 and the Library will continue to contribute writing instruments and help build awareness of what can be recycled (Writing Instrument Brigade, 2013).

The Campus Earth Week Celebration

A member of the ESG has participated on the campus Earth Week planning committee since the ESG’s inception. This planning committee is organized by the Sustainability Resource Center and hosts the Earth Week celebration on campus each year. The group consists of staff, students, and members of community organizations. Over the years, members of the ESG have been active in helping to organize various educational events during the celebration. One year they helped to plan an educational resource fair that included student sustainability groups and community sustainability organizations. In 2012, the Library hosted a display of the environmental features of the Geisel and Biomedical libraries. The group also created an

environmental book display of materials in the various library collections. Throughout the month, the Library's digital signs displayed factoids about water and energy conservation.

In 2013, ESG showed the movie *Bag It*, which explains the impact plastic bags have on our lives and on the environment. To help increase the awareness of reusable products that are available, the group displayed items such as reusable sandwich bags and veggie bags before and after the movie and then raffled them off to attendees. At the Biomedical Library, the ESG partnered with the student group for Roger's Garden (one of the community gardens on campus) and San Diego Coastkeeper (a community water protection group) to create a display in the library. This display had three components: one area highlighting readily-available reusable products that can be substituted for one-time-use items; a second area displaying items that can be recycled on campus; and a third illustrating the effects plastics have on our environment to compliment the *Bag It* screening. Environmental factoids were displayed on the digital signs throughout the month of April at both libraries.

Future Plans for Projects

The ESG members are always considering ways to promote and support the sustainable initiatives on campus. Many of the students would like to reduce or entirely eliminate bottled water on campus, and one way to accomplish this is to provide free filtered water so members of the campus community can refill their reusable containers. Some buildings on campus have already installed separate bottle filling capabilities in their drinking fountains. The ESG has already spoken to our Administration Team liaison to recommend the installation of these stations in the public areas of the library and note that they will compliment not only the students' goals of elimination of disposable water bottles but ESG's as well. (Group Moves Forward Plastic Water Bottle Ban, 2011) The group has also investigated the costs of equipment and plumbing work involved with retrofitting a drinking fountain for a water bottle filling station and then laid the groundwork for future action by bringing the options to the attention of the head of Library Facilities.

The Library is also on the list for the campus-wide Green Office Certification assessment process. The Library staff is already diligent about recycling, and keep recycling and trash bins at their desks, but there are other areas that staff can work on to improve sustainability at the

libraries. Working with the campus Sustainability Resource Center and other library staff members, the ESG wants to continue to work towards greening departments within the library.

Lessons Learned

Not all projects that ESG has worked on have been implemented in the Library. Some of the original ESG members wanted to attain Leading Energy and Efficiency Design for Existing Buildings (LEED-EB) certification for the Geisel Library. After months of ESG members researching this initiative and talking with the campus Facilities Management department, who were very supportive of the idea, Library Administration decided at this time, they did not want to devote the resources to pursue this project. All of the research and planning that went into LEED-EB, however, was not wasted. The notes and meeting minutes were saved and will be used as a building block if the library ever decides to go forward with this idea in the future. Additionally, with their new knowledge of LEED standards, the ESG members continue to work on smaller scale projects that will enhance the building's efficiency and its occupants' comfort now and possibly help the Library attain LEED points should it pursue formal certification in the future. Researching LEED-EB also helped the Library and ESG lay the groundwork with campus Facilities Management so they know the Library is interested in LEED-EB certification should campus funding become available.

Since the UC San Diego campus is so actively involved in sustainability, it is important that the Library, as "the intellectual heart of the campus," (Give to the UC San Diego Library, 2010) supports these ideals and values. By creating a group specifically tasked with sustainability projects, the Library's Administration team actively demonstrates its support of these campus efforts and the Library's commitment to serving our campus community's needs and interests. By networking with the various sustainability groups on campus, the ESG members have expanded their support system and increased their awareness of practical resources that can benefit the Library. The group also continues to make allies both on campus and off when it comes to sustainability issues.

ESG's members are library staff interested in sustainability in both their personal and professional lives, and they seek to encourage others to be green at work as well. The group provides members with an outlet for their sustainability actions. The group's activities also benefit the work-lives of the individual staff who are more engaged with their daily work when

they can also work on the various sustainability projects and share their expertise with their colleagues. Sustainable activities within the library buildings save the campus and Library's resources and money.

Conclusion

Support for sustainability can be found across all levels of higher education. As Tom Kimmerer, executive director of the AASHE, stated:

“There's leadership from the top: college presidents and university chancellors. Then, leadership from the middle – the operations people are practical folks, many of them well educated in sustainability – who often see that LEED-certified buildings or better lighting have a short [economic] payback. And then there's leadership from the bottom, where student and faculty engagement are linked to one another. The most successful sustainability gains occur when all three levels of leadership work in concert”

(Buttenwieser, 2008).

As the hub of their campus communities, libraries are well positioned to lead from the middle. UC San Diego Library's ESG and groups like it (see Appendix II) have a prime opportunity to educate library staff and users about sustainable best practices as well as developing their own for library public and workspaces.

For libraries staff who dream of greening their libraries, the first thing to do is to determine how to obtain the resources (people, space, funding, etc.) to make those dreams a reality. Each institution has its own particular quirks, between organizational structure, staffing, funding, and space availability, and a successful program will take those local limitations into account. Likewise, a successful program will build on local strengths, needs, and interests, whether it is the role the library plays in campus life or natural institutional partnerships.

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Appendix I: Advice on Creating Sustainability Group at Your Library

While every institution is different, here are some suggestions based on the ESG's experience:

- Find out whether the college or university has signed on to the American College and University President's Climate Commitment.
 - If yes, has the campus created a climate action plan? It may be easier to build support for sustainability activities from the library's administration if one can demonstrate that establishing a group within the library will help further the campus initiatives.
- Determine whether there is a sustainability champion in the library's administration who might be supportive of these ideas and would work with staff to create the group.
- Once the internal support is established, define the charge for the group and decide if specific departments should be represented on the committee or if a general request will go out for volunteers. By recruiting volunteers, the group will consist of staff passionate about sustainability instead of someone who has merely been assigned to be on the committee and does not have any interest in the subject. Decide how the group will be structured. Does the group have a formal place in the library's organizational structure? To whom does the group report? Will serving on the group be an official part of anyone's job description? If not, how will the members ensure that they have the allotted time they need to work on projects? How often will the group meet? Will public minutes be recorded and posted?
- At the first group meeting, ask members to talk about why they wanted to be on the group and what ideas they would like to work on in the upcoming year.
- Select a few projects and decide how to divide the work. Start small at first and build on local strengths. Try to start with projects that will get the most buy-in or require the least effort on the part of the target audience. (In other words, make it easy to recycle items or fun to learn about reusable products.)
- Seek out other people on campus who are involved in sustainability efforts to create allies and possibly partner on future projects. Serving on any campus-wide groups is extremely useful for networking.

Appendix II: Sustainability Committees in Other Libraries

Many libraries have Sustainability Committees that work on various issues related to sustainability. Some examples are:

New York University Libraries - Sustainability at Bobst Library

<http://nyu.libguides.com/content.php?pid=56666&sid=415112>

This guide has a wealth of information for both students and staff such as information about purchasing recycled-content supplies for the office and suggestions for reusing various items that libraries often throw away (e.g., acquisitions can give the bubble wrap they receive with books to ILL for shipping).

University Library University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

The Energy Conservation and Sustainability Working Group (ECS)

<http://www.library.illinois.edu/committee/energy/charge.html>

This group is charged with leading the University Library's efforts at achieving a more energy efficient and environmentally sustainable workplace. Through a combination of collaboration, direct action, and advocacy, the ECS seeks to identify and promote policies and practices that will help minimize the Library's environmental impact, reduce energy consumption, and promote a more sustainable library. Outcomes may include:

- Increased use of energy efficient, refillable, reusable, recycled, and recyclable supplies and equipment
- Reduced use of plastics
- Reduced paper consumption
- Decreased resource consumption
- Increased level of recycling
- Promoting and achieving more energy efficient meetings, travel, and personal transportation
- Advocacy for more sustainable practices among our users
- Increased collaboration with campus and university bodies promoting conservation and sustainability (Energy Conservation and Sustainability Working Group Charge, 2009).

The Michigan State University - Library Environmental Committee

<http://www.lib.msu.edu/lec>

This committee focuses on the Libraries' use of natural resources with an eye toward sustainability, while maintaining and improving our overall working and learning environment.

The categories of resources include such items as paper, printing and copier use; energy--

lighting, PC's, heating and cooling; cleaning supplies and chemicals; office supplies; recycling and waste reduction; parking and transportation; noise; and general design issues that have an ecological impact. The committee has these functions:

1) Advise library administration and staff; 2) Provide educational information and programming; 3) Maintain resources related to these issues; 4) Act as liaison with the Office of Campus Sustainability and the MSU Surplus Store and Recycling Center; and 5) Contact other units as required and approved (The Michigan State University Library Environmental Committee, 2012).

East Carolina University - Joyner Library Green Task Force

<http://libguides.ecu.edu/content.php?pid=158647&sid=1344540>

Mission:

1. To research, propose, implement, and promote green education and sustainable environmental practices in the university library environment.
2. To raise awareness of green initiatives in Joyner Library, other libraries in the ECU system, and the local community (Green Task Force, 2012).