

How to become / How to identify a Green Library? Standards for Certification

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Abstract:

Over the last decades there are libraries all over the world following the “green way”. In the US some are certified by LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), constructed and designed to fulfill these high standards for certification as a “green” building through the rating system. But there are additional criteria for libraries to fulfill the ideas and ideals of environmental sustainability. Besides being an environmental friendly building the library can act as educator and leader through driving an eco-friendly office management, eco-friendly user services, exemplary eco-friendly activities and offering information and courses in and eco-friendly lifestyle.

Drawing upon a recently defended master thesis in Germany, the purpose of the paper is to propose the development of a sector-specific certificate to award libraries as a “Green library”. The certificate is awarded not only for building aspects but specifically for services and management systems.

The objective of this paper, presented at the IFLA conference, is to define systematically all aspects of an environmentally sustainable library through a certification system. And additionally, to recommend Environmental Sustainability and Libraries SIG (ENSULIB), as the only official worldwide initiative for promoting (awarding?) green libraries with an “ENSULIB Green Library Certificate”.

Keywords: Green Library, Environmental Sustainability, Certification System

Introduction

Green Libraries are traditionally defined through building aspects such as minimizing “negative impact on the natural environment” and maximizing “indoor environmental quality by means of careful site selection, use of natural construction materials and biodegradable products, conservation of resources (water, energy, paper), and responsible waste disposal

(recycling, etc.)” etc. on the other hand.¹ Green Library blogs like Maria Antonelli’s blog dedicated to documenting the greening of libraries in North America focus on libraries that are constructing green buildings.²

But “a green library does not necessarily entail only a green building, but also involves a green mission.”³ This paper argues the term “green library” should also include any library promoting sustainability through education, operations, and outreach.⁴

Best practice examples

While not all existing libraries have the opportunity to build a new building⁵, many have increased opportunities to act environmentally friendly. In fact some are awarded for their “Green Office” activities like the Northwestern University Library in Evanston, Illinois. The Green Office Program “helps faculty and staff identify simple opportunities that align with their goal, not drastically change their work lives, but rather asking them to assess existing practices in the workplace and identify opportunities to save time, energy, and environmental resources.”⁶

Another example: The Clarksville Montgomery County Public Library in Tennessee received the Clarksville-Montgomery County Green Certification. “The library has expanded its recycling program, reduced their use of paper, increased energy efficiency practices such as using sleep mode and shutting down all computers, printers and copiers at the end of the day and adjusting the thermostats for optimum efficiency, updating to a floor cleaning system that uses less water and energy, hiring a laundry service to wash cleaning rags rather than disposing of them and replacing old computers with energy efficient versions”.⁷

A third example is the “Green Library of the Neighbourhood”⁸ in Berlin, Germany, which offers programs in “urban gardening”, DIY projects, fostering sustainable lifestyle, language and reading activities, bee mastering, and manufacturing herbage products.

The nationwide Green Library project in Croatia, presented in this session by Ivan Kraljević and Petar Lukačić, illustrates how small and locally oriented projects are working effectively on educating the public, spreading the awareness of a sustainable society and the necessity of nature protection. They do not focus necessarily on only building issues but on Green library web pages, documentary projections, lectures, public discussions and book promotions with ecological topics etc.

There are of course Green Library initiatives in many countries that are not awarded in any way but remarkable and by all means appropriate for certification.

But how to identify, how to measure a Green Library?

Currently there are already lots of certification systems, rating systems and labels⁹ and some of these could be appropriate for Green Libraries initiatives such as green building

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_library. Accessed on 24 July 2015.

² Green Libraries. <http://www.greenlibraries.org>. Accessed on 24 July 2015.

³ See also: Aulisio (2013).

⁴ See also: Genovese & Albanese (2011).

⁵ See also: Hauke & Werner (2012).

⁶ <http://www.northwestern.edu/sustainability/news/2014/articles/the-library-is-green-office-certified.html>. Accessed on 24 July 2015.

⁷ <http://clarksvillenow.com/local/library-receives-green-certification/>. Accessed on 24 July 2015.

⁸ Koll (2015). – <https://wachsenlassen.wordpress.com/category/die-grune-bibliothek/>.

certifications.¹⁰ These include LEED¹¹, BREEAM (BRE Environmental Assessment Method)¹², Energy Star for Buildings program¹³ and others. But none of these do focus directly on Green Libraries.

We believe an additional certificate which includes more than buildings is valuable. A “Green Library Certification” which acknowledges more than green buildings offers libraries a significant marketing edge.¹⁴ Such a certificate demonstrates their significant role as leaders and educators within their communities regarding the importance of a sustainable society. But what measures should be included in the Green Library certificate?

More examples. Students of Masaryk-University in Brno, Czech Republic, identified public libraries are already “going green”. They generated a test indicating that a library with more than 80% positive answers to the survey should be identified as a “Green Library” and should be designated by an appropriate logo for the library website as well as for any other promotional material.¹⁵

In Germany, Melanie Padilla Segarra, masters’ student from Stuttgart Media University, wrote her thesis on „Let’s go green“ – *Developing a certificate for „Green Libraries“ using the practical example of the Stuttgart Public Library.*¹⁶ The purpose of her paper is to develop a sector-specific certificate which allows libraries to prove their “green” identity in an effective way for branding and marketing. The certificate not only deals with building aspects but also with the services and processes of a library and its management system. The author developed a system rating issues like building – water – transport – workflows – events – and management defining sustainability criteria that might be put into practice by public libraries:

Theme	Item
Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solar energy • Window glazing quality (thermal insulation) • Use of daylight • Light bulb recycling: fluorescent and energy saving lamps, also LED • Structural protection from sunlight • Lighting system with movement sensors • Power supply: proportion of electricity from renewable energy sources
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water saving features (WCs, wash basin equipment)
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bicycle rack • Connection to public transport
Workflows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste separation • No more plastic bags • Library café: china and glass bottles instead of plastics, fair trade products • Switch off light and electronic equipment at night and in empty offices

⁹ <https://www.go-gba.org/resources/building-product-certifications/>. Accessed on 26 July 2015.

¹⁰ <http://inhabitat.com/demystifying-eco-labels/>. Accessed on 24 July 2015.

¹¹ <http://www.usgbc.org/LEED/>. Accessed on 24 July 2015.

¹² <http://www.breeam.org/>. Accessed on 24 July 2015.

¹³ <https://www.energystar.gov/>. Accessed on 26 July 2015.

¹⁴ Hauke & Werner (2013).

¹⁵ Prucková (2015). – <http://zelena.knihovna.cz/>. Accessed on 24 July 2015.

¹⁶ Padilla Segarra (2015).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable stationary • Ecological products for cleaning the building • Reduction of printouts • Recycling of stationery
Events and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lectures about ecological themes • Do-it-Yourself events and exhibitions • Books and other materials on sustainability • Loan of e-media and appropriate readers
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • „Green vision“ / guidelines • Target planning in terms of „green“ issues • Press work as to sustainable issues • Library staff eco-team • Further education for library staff

This suggestion for a rating system focuses on German requirements that might not be transferable to libraries e.g. in Africa, Asia or Australia because of different climate conditions or totally different social circumstances etc. For more internationally suitable items the checklist *Sustainable buildings, equipment, and management*, published within the IFLA publication *The Green Library* may be helpful.¹⁷

Padilla's system could be used to stimulate consideration about a rating system to be developed by ENSULIB for libraries that fulfill a catalogue of certain sustainability conditions in order to receive a certification that says: "Green Library – confirmed by ENSULIB". To develop a more detailed rating system ENSULIB should collaborate with those who have already presented their ideas like the LIS students in Germany and Croatia and/or with members from the IFLA New Professionals SIG.

The rating system installed could work as in Croatia -- self-rating system or in collaboration with the library association of the respective country.

Outlook

With a certification system in the background to foster Green Library initiatives worldwide ENSULIB must collaborate with the IFLA Management of Library Associations Section. There are few but national library associations supporting the Green Library movement, including the United States, Australia, Croatia, and Austria. These library associations offer examples to the others and encourage and foster the idea of Green Libraries in their respective countries. Furthermore ENSULIB should collaborate e.g. with the IFLA Public Libraries Section, IFLA School Libraries Section etc. to promote the idea of identifying and certifying Green Libraries initiatives.

A Green Library certification system, powered by ENSULIB, will both convince and encourage more libraries as well as library associations to follow the Green Library movement.

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¹⁷ Werner (2013).

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