
Green Libraries Towards Green Sustainable Development

Best Practice Examples from IFLA Green Library Award 2016–2019

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Abstract:

This paper gives a broader definition of a “Green Library”, followed by an overview of the aims and intentions of the IFLA Green Library Award including the criteria for the award. It highlights some outstanding projects submitted to the IFLA Green Library Award competitions 2016–2019. The very different selected examples come from (1) Ireland, (2) Kenya, (3) Ukraine, (4) Germany, (5) Croatia, and (6) Colombia.

Keywords: IFLA Green Library Award; Green Library; Sustainable Development

Introduction

“The consideration of the role of humanity in climate change and the notion of sustainable development are core concerns of society, and consequently of libraries.”¹

According to the Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science (ODLIS), the term “green libraries” is synonymous with “sustainable library”. The sustainable library is defined as “designed to minimize negative impact on the natural environment and maximize 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.)”.² But the term “green library” cannot be limited to buildings. Green libraries also focus on services, activities, events, literature and projects related to any kind of sustainability that follows the United Nations Agenda 2030, demonstrating the social role and responsibility of libraries as leaders in sustainability education.

¹ <https://www.ifla.org/node/10159>

² https://www.abc-clio.com/ODLIS/odlis_s.aspx#sustainablelib

The IFLA Green Library Award was established in 2015 by ENSULIB, IFLA's Environment, Sustainability and Libraries Special Interest Group³, and generously sponsored by the German publishing house de Gruyter Saur⁴.

Objectives of the IFLA Green Library Award are:⁵

- To reward the best Green Library submission that communicates the library's commitment to environmental sustainability,
- To create awareness of libraries' social responsibility and leadership in environmental education. Libraries of all types are encouraged to participate,
- To support the worldwide Green Library movement, concerned with
 - environmentally sustainable buildings,
 - environmentally sustainable information resources and programming,
 - conservation of resources and energy,
- To promote the development of Green Libraries initiatives locally and worldwide,
- To encourage Green Libraries to actively present their activities to an international audience

Following the IFLA Statement on Libraries and Sustainable Development, the award will help to advance the profession through illuminating the role of libraries and librarians in the advancement of sustainability standards and the promotion of specialized knowledge within professional practice.

The IFLA Green Library Award was advertised for 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019. Every year ENSULIB received more than 30 applications coming from all around the world. The winners are selected by the ENSULIB reviewing committee of LIS professionals from public libraries and from academic libraries, of LIS students, and an architect from different countries and continents. Beside the winner with the best submission the ENSULIB reviewing committee chooses up to five runners up for their outstanding projects. A selection of Best Practice examples is listed below.

(1) University College Cork, Ireland

“Love Our Library”

“UCC was one of the first campuses in Ireland to gain a Green Flag, from the Foundation for Environmental Education. As part of the universities commitment to sustainability the Library was approached by the UCC Energy Manager to ascertain our interest in helping to grow the green agenda. As one of the biggest users of energy on campus we were eager to be involved. Money saved on energy could be reinvested in further energy or green initiatives.

The Library as a building and a space has a huge impact on the environment of the university. We felt that it was our responsibility to create awareness among staff and students and to create a positive influence in relation to sustainability. As well as educating students within their chosen disciplines, it is recognised that universities have a duty to instil a sense of global citizenship ensuring that students are prepared to tackle the major challenges of our time. This

³ <https://www.ifla.org/environment-sustainability-and-libraries>

⁴ <https://www.degruyter.com/dg/page/1464>

⁵ <https://www.ifla.org/node/10159>

can be achieved through both formal and informal learning experiences. The Library campaign is an example of the latter.

A team of staff from all areas within the Library was set up to help create awareness in all sections. The campaign has led to a number of notable accomplishments in energy conservation.

During the process of energy saving we began to look at other impacts of our building – in particular the amount of waste generated by staff and students and the number of plastic bottles and paper cups which were dumped each day. Awareness raising has been key to the work we are doing in the hope to eventually make our building as close to “Zero Waste” as possible. During the course of the campaign recycling rates have improved from almost negligible to 70 %.”⁶



Fig. 1: University College Cork Library © UCC.

Some examples:

- In collaboration with the university energy team and library staff a “Green Team” was formed that started a sustainability campaign “Love Our Library”.
- The initial remit was to monitor energy usage and identify areas for improvement. It was ensured that any monetary savings made from improving efficiency would remain within the Library, to be reinvested in future environmental projects. This led to a number of changes, i.e.:
 - Re-balanced air ventilation and heating systems to improve the office and reading room environmental conditions.
 - Turned off lights centrally in low occupancy areas during the summer months.
- When it became apparent that focusing on energy alone was not enough the team broadened its remit to look at all areas of library life and to see how they could reduce its environmental footprint.
- Water fountains in the library have been upgraded over the last year. Students are encouraged to refill their water bottles at the fountains.
- A “binless” office system was introduced: All small bins were removed from all offices and public spaces within the Library. Two waste recycling stations were established.

⁶ Project description, submitted for the IFLA Green Library Award 2019.

Everybody must now take their waste from their desks upon leaving the Library, and dispose of it in at the waste stations.

- A dishwasher has been installed and all events no longer use paper cups and plates. This has made savings of up to 1,000 paper cups & plates per month. This is a first step at introducing “green conferencing” guidelines that can be rolled out university-wide.
- A major element of the campaign is communications, with large posters, pull-ups and banners across the library and in key locations, everyone is exposed to the message that the library is going “green”.
- Work is ongoing on an online UCC Library LibGuide which is updated regularly with information on the project and useful material relating to sustainability.⁷



Fig. 2: A strong and consistent communications strategy that keeps all stakeholders updated and involved © UCC.

This project was submitted to the IFLA Green Library Award competition in 2019 and awarded as runner up. The submission included a well-illustrated paper. The reviewers pointed out: “For this project, the University College Cork Library receives a special recognition of excellence! The Boole Library at University College Cork has made real and provable “green” changes to their organization, i.e., sparked real changes in the behaviour of people using and working in the library – over 1 000 students signed a pledge to support the changes at the very beginning. Thus, this initiative offered practical solutions to pervasive waste problems and generating a major impact that can be scaled and shared by libraries around the world. The library has developed an excellent road map for other organizations to follow. An additional feature of the project is its strong and consistent communications strategy that keeps all stakeholders updated and involved.”⁸

⁷ <https://libguides.ucc.ie/librarysustainability>

⁸ <https://www.ifla.org/node/92213>

(2) USIU-Africa Library, Kenya, Nairobi

“USIU-Africa: Garden in the library”

Libraries are by nature “green” but the USIU-Africa (United States International University-Africa) Library has extended the environmental benefit by a green building as well as sustainable practices.

The building is 10,000 sq m, with sitting capacity of over 1200, and houses up to 300,000 books on four floors. It has an admirable entrance that leads to an exhibition area and an open lounge. The garden is a focal point in the building. It is at the center with a stairway running between the two “gardens” that have trees and flowers giving the library an outdoor effect. Benches are strategically placed to provide library users with a place to relax and unwind or hold discussions due to the open set-up.



Fig. 3: Slide from the IFLA Green Library Award submission
© USIU-Africa Library.

Some examples:

- Full advantage of natural air movement in, through and out of the top of the building.
- Atrium designed to allow natural light to easily penetrate all corners of the library including the lower floor.
- Well ventilated building with mechanized windows at the roof.
- Carpeted floors muffle noise.
- Double glazed solar windows that embrace aesthetic reflections and green energy by glazing to provide sunlight, shading and security.
- Indoor gardens improve the air quality by absorbing gases and emitting oxygen.
- Clean oxygen-rich air keeps the library users healthier and happier.
- Plants are not only pleasing to the eye but help to reduce stress – both for staff and library users.
- Flat roof enables rain water harvesting which is stored and used for irrigating the lawns all year round.



Fig. 4: The Garden Today – View from the Top Floor
© USIU-Africa Library.

This project was submitted to the IFLA Green Library Award competition in 2018 and awarded as runner up. The submission included a set of slides. The reviewers pointed out: “The USIU-Africa Library is an enormously large green building with a library garden with trees, plants and everything for a green environment that also provides a good air for users and staff. The flat roof gives the harvest of rainwater to water the garden with. The gardens are giving the library an outdoor effect. The plants give the library an ambience and homely feeling. The paper gives a more practical in approach to building and practices within tough economic realities. It shows libraries in Africa have also embraced the green movement, it is applicable in new buildings and can be used as a good benchmark. The concept is original and shows innovativeness in the library practice in Africa.”⁹

(3) Lviv Regional Children’s Library, Lviv, Ukraine

Garbage HERO – ECOeducation project «Library ECOstyle»¹⁰

The project addresses children 4–10 years old, parents, preschools, and school teachers. The aim and objectives of the project are as follows: During the project the librarians teach children in eco-thinking; to take care for natural resources; to reduce waste; in notions of garbage sorting and recycling, and to share their knowledge among relatives and friends. All project activities are interactive, using the latest technologies. All is about drawing attention of preschool and school teachers to the issue of environmental education and to conduct joint activities.

⁹ <https://www.ifla.org/node/60935?og=479>

¹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/GarbageHero/>



Fig. 5: Lviv’s big environmental problem: waste removal and recycling
 © Lviv Regional Children’s Library.

The project started in May 2016. During the first year 38 events were held with 971 children and adult participants. The project meets the objectives of sustainable development: clean water and sanitation, “eco-friendly city”, and responsible use of resources.



Fig. 6: Project “Library ECOstyle” © Lviv Regional Children’s Library.

Some examples:

- Educational and entertaining presentations on environmental topics
- Workshops on garbage sorting
- Environmental children's drawing contests
- Workshops for handmade products using waste materials
- Teaching children to produce advertising, which explains the necessity of garbage sorting
- Events for collecting used batteries, plastic bottle corks, and waste paper
- ECO corner at the library
- Event with planting greenery at the library and at the balcony, designing a winter-garden in the library

- Teaching children how to clean the territory of the park near the library
- Computer game «Garbage hero»¹¹ applied for learning garbage sorting (provided by project partners)



Fig. 7: Facebook “Garbage Hero” © Lviv Regional Children’s Library.

This project was submitted to the IFLA Green Library Award competition in 2017 and awarded as runner up.¹² The submission included a set of slides. The reviewers were impressed that despite the poor conditions, enthusiasm and creativity rule the day. The library is building an awareness of sustainable development and environmental protection among the local youth of all ages.

(4) Stadtbibliothek Bad Oldesloe, Germany

“Ernte deine Stadt – Harvest Your City: Three Years of Green and Sustainable Library Commitment in the Stadtbibliothek Bad Oldesloe”

In our digitized world people are looking for places and rooms to meet and interact, i.e. through using learning habits like DIY- and Maker culture. As a reaction, the public library in Bad Oldesloe (app. 25 000 inhabitants) developed a service, which shows its relevance by connecting the aims of public libraries with issues on environment and sustainability. It gives a broader notion of public library services to local society and politics and shows new ideas on the significance of German public libraries. By tying in on the trend of urban gardening and the ideas of makerspaces and community building, the Stadtbibliothek Bad Oldesloe wanted to make it clear to its community, that libraries are more than book-lending-stations. They have to take on new roles as easy access learning spaces and low-intensive meeting places. The public library Bad Oldesloe tested new forms of cooperation with the civic society, “out of the box”-acting and a concept of transforming the library’s space into a platform and a civic hub for issues on environment and sustainability.¹³

¹¹ <https://www.shadowmastersgames.com/games/garbage-hero/>

¹² <https://www.ifla.org/node/11523?og=479>

¹³ Project description, submitted for the IFLA Green Library Award 2017.



Fig. 8: Poster for action day “Harvest Your City 2016” © Stadtbibliothek Bad Oldesloe.

Some examples:

- “Harvest Your City”: A series of events and a makerspace on the topics of Urban Gardening
- Exhibition of books and media on Urban Gardening
- Lecture by a scientist, specialized in Urban Gardening worldwide
- Workshop and seed savers exchange by the “Gartendeck“, a community garden in Hamburg-St.Pauli
- Children’s competition “the quickest bean in town“
- Insect hotel makerspace organized for a class of the neighboring elementary school
- Guided walking tour about natural herbs in parks and on roadsides
- Cycling tour to local trees and bushes in public domain to harvest their fruits
- Local foodsharing-group offered their ‘rescued food‘ from the local market
- Finally: “Harvest your City“ remains as annual event



Fig. 9: Proudly presented self-made insect hotels © Stadtbibliothek Bad Oldesloe.

This project was submitted to the IFLA Green Library Award competition in 2017 with a set of slides and awarded as first IFLA Green Library Award 2017 winner. The reviewers pointed out: “Their project, “Ernte deine Stadt – Harvest Your City: Three Years of Green and Sustainable Library Commitment in the Stadtbibliothek Bad Oldesloe” combines urban gardening with makerspaces and community building efforts, demonstrating that libraries are more than just book-lending-stations. Another byproduct has been the launching of the regions' first Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)¹⁴.”¹⁵

(5) The National and University Library, Zagreb, Croatia “Green Festival – Let’s Go Green”

The National and University Library’s “Green Festival” took place from 6 to 8 September 2017, as part of “Green Library for Green Croatia”. It was launched for the purpose of educating its users and popularising among them, as well as among the wider public. Various programmes were offered conducted by organizations operating in the field of the protection and preservation of nature and presenting the results of their projects, findings published in the related research papers, etc. The festival was organized in cooperation with the Croatian Library Association’s Working Group for Green Libraries.

Under the slogan “Let’s Go Green”, the festival programme brought closer to the library’s users and interested general public the latest issues and developments in this area, presenting alternatives to current widespread economic and other practices not in line with the principles

¹⁴ <https://www.ifoam.bio/en/community-supported-agriculture-csa>

¹⁵ <https://www.ifla.org/node/11523?og=479>

of sustainable development and nature friendly programmes and initiatives advocated by researchers and specialists across different scientific fields based on their most recent insights.¹⁶



Fig. 10: Impressions of “Let’s go Green Festival” © NUL Zagreb.

The festival was realized through three different dimensions, i.e.:

- Educational, which consisted of lectures and talks presenting relevant insights and the latest results of scientific research in this area,
- Presentational, which featured products, services and programmes conforming to environmental and sustainable development standards,
- Promotional, which included the screening of documentary films and presentations through other media.

Considering the width of the theme, the festival programme focused on speakers and exhibitors active in the fields of green energy, sustainable building, green technology and innovations, sustainable agriculture and food science, as well as in organizations operating in the field of protection and preservation of nature.

Some examples:

- During the three days of the festival, forty lectures and discussions were held,
- twenty organizations and companies presented their work and products,
- two exhibitions and more than twenty documentary were displayed.

This project was submitted to the IFLA Green Library Award competition in 2018 and awarded as runner up. The reviewers pointed out: “The National and University Library in Zagreb and its Green Festival shows great leadership across many sectors. The Let’s Go Green Festival

¹⁶ Project description, submitted for the IFLA Green Library Award 2018.

presented the latest scientific research in sustainability issues through lectures and talks and allowed green businesses to introduce their products and services to a wider audience. The festival promoted sustainable agriculture and food science, green technology, green energy and green building design and methods and materials.”¹⁷

(6) Biblioteca Pública Municipal Daniel Guillard, Cali, Colombia

“Gaia – En mi biblioteca la tierra también es de todos” / “Gaia – In my library the land belongs to everyone”

The Daniel Guillard Public Library is one of sixty-one libraries that built the Public Library Network of the city of Cali, Colombia. The Gaia project emerges from the library with the objective of generating leadership and empowerment of sustainable actions in the community, tools that help reduce pollution, in turn rebuild educational guidelines on environmental care, as a common responsibility and a necessary habit so that the human being does not destroy but rebuild his environment



Fig. 10: “Gaia – En mi biblioteca la tierra también es de todos”

© Daniel Guillard Public Library, Cali, Colombia.

The Library runs six environmental projects: Growing Readers, Ecological Artists, Discovering Eco Stories, Radio Crea, Tree of Life and the Bio-reborn Theater Club. Each activity is aimed at different population groups from early childhood to adults, in which more

¹⁷ <https://www.ifla.org/node/60935?og=479>

than thirty people participate per project and in which they are also learning about sustainable development goals, through manual activities and reading.

Some examples:

- Students from the local school are taught how to plant a tree and how to look after it. In this way they learn to understand better the environment and the people living in it – because it is their future and the future of next generations.
- The leader of the elderly’s people group complemented the librarians on helping them “to become wiser” so they can take actions to improve the environment in their lives, in their community and in their homes.
- The teacher of the community mother’s initiative found, that the library’s projects helped mothers to become committed to look after their parks and to love their green spaces. They have also learned how to reuse recyclable materials.
- A young neighbor appreciated environmental projects like cleaning up the park which leads to better relations between neighbors and the community. He had taken part in several workshops on waste disposal and events to repair the children’s playground which has improved relationships amongst the group.
- The children’s “Friends of the Library” group was taught about the UN Nations Sustainable Development Goals, e.g. “Partnership for the goals”. One young participant explained: “It means that, even someone has resources and support, they still need the help of other people who may not have economic or social resources, and do need support.”



Fig. 11: Members of the Friends of the Library group explaining the SDGs
© Daniel Guillard Public Library, Cali.

This project was submitted to the IFLA Green Library Award competition in 2019 and awarded as first winner. The submission included a video and a set of slides. The reviewers pointed out: “This initiative involves all ages and all the community in generating awareness on sustainability and green practice with visible impact. Thus, the library has innovative projects

for all ages, from babies to seniors, including vulnerable people, and these projects combine information literacy, eco-literacy and reading. The library is focused on empowering their community that faces many social and economic problems to help rebuild the neighborhood to make it eco-friendlier, while also improving social and economic conditions – without great economic means.”¹⁸

Conclusion

The IFLA Green Library Award, running since 2016, gives libraries the opportunity to present their sustainable projects in the spirit of Agenda 2030 to a worldwide public. On the one hand, they inspire other libraries to follow their example, on the other hand, they make clear the important contribution of libraries to the achievement of sustainability goals.

The examples shown make it clear that "green" is not just about ecological concepts, but about the awareness of the care and preservation of life on our planet in all its facets. Libraries as education partners with social responsibility play an important role here.

¹⁸ <https://www.ifla.org/node/92213>