

# **10 REASONS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN (PUBLIC) LIBRARIES**

## **10 Reasons for Environmental Sustainability in (Public) Libraries**

It takes only five minutes to claim the importance of environmental commitment for public libraries – but these minutes make a real difference. Public libraries should not and cannot ignore green librarianship any longer.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY MEANS RESPONSIBILITY AND IS AT THE CORE OF LIBRARIANSHIP**

1. Librarians are skillful information professionals, responsible at their work and committed to their communities' positive development. This is what environmental sustainability is all about: responsibility, information skills and community engagement.
2. Librarians should make a strong statement of their environmental sustainability and social responsibility. This strengthens the positive image public libraries have. Being quiet changes nothing.
3. Librarians can tell the difference between fiction and non-fiction, between facts and alternative facts. Climate change and environmental threat are facts. Librarians should adhere reliable information. This demand is in the core of green librarianship.
4. Librarians should maintain reliable and updated collections and offer an open and easy access to information. The same holds for environmental information.
5. Rational and liable decisions require enough reliable information. Many have difficulties in finding this information when the amount of information increases, and information is published in digital format in the web. Green librarians should offer green information services to assist environmentally sustainable decision-making.

These five reasons form a strong argument why public libraries are needed in democratic and positively developing societies. Librarians should remind their communities and decision makers of this fact.

**A GREEN LIBRARY IS NOT ONLY THE GREEN BUILDING AND GREEN OFFICE ROUTINES** (although these are important). **ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS DESIGN GREEN LIBRARY BUILDINGS – LIBRARIANS RUN GREEN LIBRARIES AND SHOULD DO WHAT THEY DO BEST** (and not what property managers and cleaning companies should do).

6. Public libraries offer shared collection and devices, like computers, printers, scanners and even tools or other equipment (and assist in their use).

7. Public libraries offer shared working utilities and community spaces.

These advocate the idea of sharing – all things need not to be owned. This might also have an environmental impact, although it is difficult to measure the exact number.

**PUBLIC LIBRARIES ARE A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION FOR THEIR COMMUNITIES AND OFFER A POSSIBILITY FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.**

8. Public libraries are committed to their communities and trusted by their users – which expect libraries to be sustainable actors.

9. Public libraries are where the people are, but can also go outside the library walls and share information and inspiration. Public libraries can reach and engage people who are not reached otherwise on environmental issues. Public libraries can give voice to those who are not usually heard.

Public libraries can and should be proactive on environmental sustainability because they can make a real difference.

## **PUBLIC LIBRARIES LOOK AT THE FUTURE**

10. Climate change and environmental threats are the greatest source of distress for young people. Public libraries cannot afford to ignore this fact or the new generation's need for information.

Our future relies on the youth and public libraries should not arrogantly claim that they have already done their share and ignore the need for change. It is time to begin the environmental work seriously.

Harri Sahavirta,  
ENSULIB convener 2015 – 2019,  
Helsinki City Library  
[Harri.Sahavirta@hel.fi](mailto:Harri.Sahavirta@hel.fi)