Western Libraries Sustainability Evaluation

ESTU 575: March 2013
by Clarissa Mansfield

Artistic rendering of Green Energy Fee Grant Proposal Hydration Station project at Western Libraries by Gerald Kitsis
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sustainability education and the necessity of developing sustainable practices on an institutional level have become increasingly important to academic organizations. While higher education institutions are encouraging the use of “sustainability” as a guiding principle, it is difficult to come up with an exact plan of what is needed, (Miller, 2012). Likewise, one particular aspect of sustainability that seems to be growing in popularity is ecological sustainability, and this is emphasized by the expectations of new students entering the university, (Maragakis, 2013).

Western Washington University (WWU) has demonstrated a commitment to sustainability though the signing of the University Presidents’ Climate Commitment, and the establishment of a campus Office of Sustainability (OS). WWU is also a member of the American Association of the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE), and home of the highly-regarded Huxley College of the Environment. Consequently, Western Libraries’ involvement with sustainability efforts supports the organizational goals of the University, and contributes to the cultivation of Western’s institutional identity.

Because Western Libraries’ “Sustainability Team” is in its early stages of development, this is a “formative” and “proactive” evaluation, designed to inform “front-end decision-making.” As such, a formative approach is fitting since planning is in its developmental stage. Additionally, this evaluation uses aspects of the “research synthesis” approach, in that research is used to highlight the trends common to similar “programs,” or in this case, academic institutions and libraries, (Owen, 2007). Likewise, a proactive approach allows the evaluation to present significant information that indicates that there is an organizational need for sustainability work, while also clarifying the relevant trends or possible obstacles that should be examined. Proactive evaluations often include the evaluator as advisor, and in this particular case, the literature review and the evaluator’s interpretation of significant information based on research related to sustainability in libraries and higher education provides the framework for this evaluation.

One of the most commonly identified barriers to creating long-lasting successful development of sustainable practices in higher education is a lack of communication resulting from “silo thinking” that originates because of the many disconnected areas throughout campus that develop their own separate cultures and individualized methods for decision-making (Barlett, 2004). Many universities have established offices of sustainability to help manage this difficulty. Since one major purpose of libraries is to facilitate access to information and resources, this evaluation seeks to demonstrate that Western Libraries has a natural role in helping address this problem at Western by supporting Western’s OS. The library at any institution is interdisciplinary in nature, and as such has the potential to bridge the gaps between distinct and separate units that exist in higher education.

Additionally, the physical visibility of Western Libraries is another one of the factors that contributes to its ability to assist in this area. The Libraries’ buildings occupy a very large highly-trafficked public footprint, which means that what Western Libraries chooses to focus on becomes a matter of public attention. Consequently, Western Libraries also has a tremendous opportunity to publically represent the values and goals of its institution in meaningful and highly visible ways. By making access to sustainability resources more pervasive, constructing displays centered on sustainability topics in highly visible areas, and by hosting sustainability education events and
outreach activities for the campus community, Western Libraries can take advantage of their large physical presence to positively influence and develop a campus culture of sustainability.

Likewise, the concept of “Library as Place” is one way libraries contribute to the cultivation of a culture of sustainability. Library buildings and resources often serve as a means and a location for people to explore their connections to other people who are collaborating on common goals. On an organizational level, Western Libraries sees themselves as having a critical role to play in this area, as evidenced by their mission statement: “Western Libraries connects: people to people, people to place, people to learning.” A sustainable community creates strong and lasting bonds between people and institutions, and these relationships and bonds are what ultimately determine how “sustainable” something truly is, (Barbakoff, 2012).

Even though there has been an increase in academic institutions interested in moving in more sustainable directions, typically universities do not assess the specific ecological footprint of academic libraries as distinct entities, which means “there is a lack of sufficient data on sustainable and environmental performances of academic libraries,” despite the fact that libraries typically experience the most daily traffic, have the longest hours of open operation, and both consume and provide a wealth of resources, (Jankowska; Marcum, 2010). Despite this lack of data, Western Libraries should still take advantage of available assessment strategies, whether through data collected by or in conjunction with the OS, or future data collected via plans developed in-house through collaboration with the Libraries’ Sustainability Team.

Additionally, it should be noted that libraries are founded on principles of sustainability in that they seek to provide equal access to information to all people, and they do this by sharing and re-using resources. Western Libraries should recognize how they are already supporting sustainability so that such work is regarded as the norm and does not seem daunting. Simultaneously, Western Libraries should seek out new opportunities for improving their sustainable practices and communicating their efforts to the campus community, while cultivating further opportunities for collaboration. Consequently, one purpose of this evaluation is to help Western Libraries, (and by extension, Western Washington University), further enhance its culture of sustainability so that sustainability becomes a substantial component of the collective identity, thereby creating a strong foundation of support that will make future sustainability work more successful.

INTRODUCTION: ORGANIZATIONAL DESCRIPTION

Not including student employees, Western Libraries currently have fifty-nine administrative, faculty, and staff members that work collectively to help Western Washington University’s community meet their teaching, learning, researching, and collaboration needs. Western Libraries consist of numerous departments, including: Instruction and Research Services, Collection Services (which includes Collection Development, Acquisitions, and Cataloging), Circulation Services, Special Collections, Stacks Management, Library Administration, Archives and Records, the Center for Pacific Northwest Studies, Library IT, the Teaching and Learning Academy (TLA), the Writing Instruction Program, the Learning Commons, and the Writing Center.

In addition, there are other positions and departments assigned to specific services, such as InterLibrary Loan (ILL), Course Reserves, Government Information, and the Map Collection. There
are also other individualized positions that fill various organizational needs, such as an Assessment Coordinator, an Organizational Development Coordinator, and a Marketing and Communication Coordinator. And, in addition to providing Reference and Instruction services, many of the reference librarians have distinct specializations, such as working with Extended Education, Instructional Design, Diversity Services, or as departmental liaisons to the variety of departments and programs that Western offers. (see Appendix 1 for organizational chart).

Western Libraries are also part of the “Learning Commons,” (LC) which consists of eight different partners working together to share resources and offer services to “advance teaching and learning, online across the physical space of Western Libraries,” (Western Libraries, 2012). Learning Commons’ partners include:

- Circulation Services
- Information and Research Help
- Student Technology Center
- Teaching-Learning Academy
- Tutoring Center
- Viking Village
- Writing Center
- Writing Instruction Support

Western Libraries are committed to acting in alignment with their strategic plan, and using assessment to guide their decision-making processes and prioritization of goals. The current strategic plan covers the period between 2012 and 2015, and was the result of an extensive, organized, and thoughtful process that involved research and gathering input from the university community and from library employees. Working with the assistance of Tina Janni, a strategic planning consultant from Bates Technical College Business and Management Training Center, Western Libraries’ Strategic Planning Committee developed a compact plan that is also in alignment with Western Washington University’s strategic plan, (see Appendix 2 for Western Libraries’ strategic plan).

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The premise of this report is that activities that support sustainability should be part of Western Libraries’ cultural identity and strategic planning. Libraries, by their nature, are founded on principles of providing equal and shared access to information to all people, while meeting diverse research needs, in order to contribute to the creation of an informed citizenry who can consequently understand complex problems and make educated decisions. Since WWU has demonstrated a commitment to sustainability, Western Libraries’ involvement with such efforts also supports the larger institutional goals of the University, and positively contributes to the cultivation of Western’s institutional identity.

The purpose of this evaluation is to illustrate the need for evaluating both past and current projects that contribute to the ecological sustainability of Western Libraries in order for the Libraries to clarify future goals that will help them further integrate the ecological pillar of sustainability with the economic and social pillars of sustainability. This evaluation should also identify current trends in academic libraries related to sustainability, and situate the work that Western Libraries has already
participated in doing within this context. In addition, this report should articulate how these efforts contribute to the sustainability of Western Libraries as a healthy organization, as a successful academic library, and also as part of the larger context of WWU, (and consequently, the larger world). Additionally, this evaluation should identify opportunities for collaboration with partners both internal and external to the Libraries.

Ultimately, this report should assist Western Libraries (and by extension, WWU), further construct a culture of sustainability that exists as a natural part of the collective identity, while helping members of the organization recognize the benefits of participating in this work. One way of doing this is to use the evaluation process itself as a means for the Libraries to reap the collective benefits that may come from participation in the actual evaluation process. For example, the process included numerous opportunities for internal environmental education because it required the evaluator to initiate conversations with Libraries’ and Learning Commons’ administrators, faculty, and staff about the subject of ecological sustainability, and the Libraries’ role in this area. One major goal of this evaluation is to help the Libraries articulate and understand that its potential role in contributing to sustainability efforts on campus is significant. Consequently, the initiation of conversations that draw attention to this perspective have the ability to foster further communication that can influence and shape the collective social norms of the organization.

The role of social norms in influencing behavior should not be underestimated. People are more likely to act in ways that are similar to how those around them are behaving, partly because of the social rewards that come from supporting socially acceptable or expected behaviors. As such, social norms can have a very strong effect on the culture of an institution. Likewise, group identification can often foster an increased sense of empowerment and strengthened identity, which can lead to further positive environmental action. Additionally, while behavioral choices take place on an individual level, collective behaviors have greater potential for impacting the environment in both positive and negative ways, (Clayton; Myers, 2009). That being said, it is hoped that this evaluation will contribute to the organizational development of Western Libraries by creating opportunities for future conversations related to sustainability that can subsequently positively impact the collective culture.

Western Libraries have multiple stakeholders who will benefit from this plan including:

- Rick Osen, (Interim Dean of Libraries)
- The future Dean of Libraries
- Western Libraries’ Sustainability Team (Rob Lopresti and Clarissa Mansfield)
- Frank Haulgren, (Libraries’ Assessment Coordinator)
- Carmen Werder, (Director of the Learning Commons, the Teaching and Learning Academy, and Writing Instruction Support)
- Martha Mautino, (Organizational Development Coordinator)
- Western Libraries / Learning Commons Faculty, Staff, and Administration
- Carol Berry, Seth Vidana, and Western’s Office of Sustainability
- The community (staff, faculty, students, and administration) of Western Washington University
Some of the questions this evaluation seeks to address include:

- What is the role of the academic library in the realm of environmental sustainability?
- What is the role of Western Libraries within this context?
- How does sustainability work fit with Western Libraries’ mission and strategic plan? And how would the Libraries’ efforts in this area align with WWU’s organizational mission?
- What have the Libraries already done to foster ecological sustainability in the Libraries?
- What are the benefits of pursuing sustainability planning, education, and outreach on an organizational level, both individually and collectively?

**EVALUATION DESIGN: METHODS AND TOOLS**

This evaluation was designed to promote the continuation of deliberate practices and programs that support integrating ecological sustainability with the economic and social aspects of sustainability. Western Libraries’ “Sustainability Team” is in its early stages of development, and recently team members have begun actively exploring opportunities for promotion and growth. Likewise, many Libraries’ employees and Learning Commons partners, (such as Circulation Services, the TLA, and the Archives and Records / Center for Pacific Northwest Studies), have begun participating in the Sustainable Office Certification (SOC) program. However, there has been no formal plan or even an informal evaluation to help Western Libraries identify how to proceed in this area as an organization until now. Consequently, this is a “formative” and “proactive” evaluation designed to inform “front-end decision-making,” (Owen, 2007).

Formative or proactive evaluations are typically used before a “program” is designed. The primary purpose of such an evaluation is to demonstrate that there is a need for the program, and also to identify information that can be used when planning what kind of program should be developed, (Owen, 2007). As such, a formative approach is fitting in this particular case since such planning is in its very early developmental stages.

This evaluation uses aspects of the “research synthesis” approach, in that research is used to highlight the trends common to similar “programs,” (or in this case, academic institutions and libraries). Throughout this evaluation, these trends are examined within the parameters of a contextual analysis of academic libraries, and then applied to Western Libraries specifically, in order to identify needs and develop recommendations that can be used in future planning.

Often with proactive evaluations, the evaluator also acts as advisor, offering recommendations for what information should be considered, and providing input on how questions should be addressed, (Owen, 2007). Consequently, the literature review and the evaluator’s interpretation of significant information based on research related to sustainability in libraries and higher education provides the framework for this evaluation. As such, this evaluation relies more heavily on the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data than on the results of quantitative data.

Subsequently, this evaluation includes an overview of some of the key features of Western Libraries on an organizational level, an exploration of the role of academic libraries in sustainability education on an institutional level (as a campus partner), and a discussion about the logistics of
“measuring” sustainability. Additionally, information taken from conversations or email exchanges with stakeholders, combined with research regarding libraries’ consumption and sustainability efforts, will be applied specifically to Western Libraries.

Also included in this evaluation is a waste audit of both of the buildings that constitute Western Libraries, (Haggard Hall and Wilson Library) conducted by the OS during Fall Quarter 2011. This audit provides key information required for determining what areas of waste and consumption can be targeted for maximum reduction and effect.

When designing a “program,” it is helpful to have a clear articulation of assumptions and inputs that can inform future plans and help identify program goals. The logic of a program should be clear, and examples of implementation activities should be included. While this evaluation does not deal with a specific program, a logic model can still be useful when conceptualizing and framing the development of plans and objectives to support sustainability in the library. Therefore, a logic model that articulates assumptions, inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts is also included in this evaluation, (see Appendix 3).

Likewise, in developing recommendations to inform future planning, it was apparent that some kind of indicators were needed to provide a structure for analyzing where the Libraries are currently situated, and how Libraries’ and Learning Commons partners could move forward. Consequently, the evaluator created loosely constructed “benchmark” categories based on trends common in the literature on this subject. These benchmarks can be used as a framework for future assessment and planning. The benchmark categories are identified and defined, and then applied specifically to Western Libraries. The categories include: paper printing, energy and water consumption, cleaning, waste, and the dedication of personnel.

In addition, a timeline highlighting the evolution of conscious sustainability development at Western Libraries has been included as an appendix to this evaluation. Items in the timeline were gathered from a variety of data sources including conversations, emails, and the evaluator’s memory. While the evaluator did invite input from all Libraries’ and LC employees, it is possible that this timeline does not include all potentially relevant information. Hopefully the production of this report will lead to further conversations within the organization about any other projects or efforts that may not have been captured here so that Western Libraries can continue in their efforts to highlight and coordinate information about their work, (see Appendix 4).

In any evaluation that is seeking to determine the current state of affairs in order to develop a needs assessment for future activities, it is important to assess existing attitudes and perceptions of the employees who will be involved in instituting changes and improvements. Consequently, in February 2013, as part of this evaluation process, a brief online survey was administered to Western Libraries / LC faculty, staff, and administration. The results of that survey and an overview of those results are also included in this evaluation, (see Appendix 5).
WESTERN LIBRARIES AND SUSTAINABILITY: BACKGROUND

In March 2012, Chris Cox, who was the Dean of Libraries at that time, created a “Sustainability Team” to explore opportunities for participation in the Green Energy Fee (GEF) project proposal grant process. He also referred the team to Carol Berry in the OS to discuss other potential opportunities for collaboration in the hopes that the Library would become more involved in Western’s “sustainability” projects.

Western Libraries’ current strategic plan emphasizes the desire to develop and strengthen opportunities for partnerships throughout the campus and the community, and it also articulates the need for creating and maintaining “sustainable” physical and virtual environments that can “enhance barrier-free access, a diversity of scholarship, and the pursuit of life-long learning by the citizens of Washington State.” This evaluation plan asserts that Western Libraries’ “Sustainability Team” can contribute to the organizational desire of achieving these strategic objectives by creating a means for examining past and present efforts in order to identity future opportunities for continued collaboration that supports the values connected to “sustainability.”

Western Libraries have, over the years, participated in a number of initiatives, changes, projects, and developments that are related to environmental sustainability. They have also acted out of motivation for economic sustainability in ways that have had environmentally sustainable benefits. However, examining the Libraries’ collective actions through a lens of ecological sustainability is not something that has ever been done in a coordinated way, and up until now, there has been no deliberate assessment or analysis of these efforts on a collective level. Additionally, there is currently much happening in this realm of which the majority of the Libraries’ employees are unaware. In order for this organization to plan for the future, there should first be a more thorough understanding of what has already been accomplished.

As previously discussed, Western Libraries are made up of numerous departments, areas, programs, and specialized positions. Consequently, the need for effective communication that brings together the wide range of work being done is strong. These efforts also need to be situated in a framework that identifies the complexities of the organizational structure, and how those complexities could be viewed not as problematic, but as providing opportunities for innovation and collaboration.

For example, the Learning Commons is located in the Libraries, and is made up of multiple partners, yet not every partner reports to Western Libraries, has to rely on the Libraries’ budget, and is “part of” the Libraries’ collective structure. How do these different groups function independently yet collectively? How can they collaborate and share resources and space most effectively? How can they foster a culture that values sustainable practices when they are separate and yet together? What have they already done to foster sustainability, and what more might they do in the future?

Additionally, Western Libraries should also understand the need for sustainability work within the current context of academic libraries in general, and at WWU specifically, and this understanding should inform collective planning efforts. That being said, it is helpful to begin with an exploration of the word “sustainability,” since there are numerous interpretations commonly applied to it.
THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is a term frequently used in a variety of contexts; sometimes defined as “the capacity to endure,” (Wilson, 2012), sustainability is often discussed in relation to preservation and durability. In addition, the heavily-quoted Brundtland Commission of the United Nations defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs,” (Brundtland, 1987).

As an expansion of this concept, the three conventional aspects of sustainability that make up the typical “triple bottom line” are: ecological, economic, and social. Consequently, sustainability has often been regarded as difficult to define because of the complexity of trying to understand it on each of these three levels simultaneously. Since no clear and singular definition of “sustainability” exists, it is common for one of the three “pillars” to take precedence over another when attempting to apply the concept of sustainability or sustainable practices to a program or organization. Part of the problem lies with viewing the three pillars of sustainability as intersecting rather than integrated, and one solution might be to fully integrate the ecological, economic, and social aspects of sustainability in order to arrive at a more complete understanding of its meaning and application, (Gibson, 2006).

For example, in the world of libraries, it is typical to encounter the word “sustainability” as referring mainly to issues of financial sustainability, or preservation of resources. In discussing how to create a sustainable future for academic libraries, Lizabeth Wilson (2012) poses the question:

“Ultimately, how might libraries increase revenue, engender flexibility, foster collaboration, align activities, reduce costs, strengthen infrastructure, and encourage innovation within the framework of a sustainable academic business plan?”

In an age when budget cuts are now the norm, it makes sense that academic libraries would be asking themselves this question. While economic sustainability is at the heart of this question, the answer might be to integrate the principles of social and ecological sustainability into the solution. For example, through conserving energy and resources by adopting ecologically sustainable behaviors, policies, and practices, could libraries reduce costs and strengthen infrastructure? In working to achieve ecologically sustainable goals, could Western Libraries foster opportunities for collaboration and encourage innovation? Or perhaps is some of the work they are already doing in order to address some of these challenges, (such as developing and strengthening consortial relationships in order to leverage our joint resources), one way of integrating all three pillars of sustainability?

In formulating any kind of plan for development and advancement, it is of course necessary to assess past successes and failures in order to make informed decisions in the future. In this regard, a qualitative and contextual, evaluation can be beneficial when trying to create a plan for assessing sustainability efforts within an academic library; this is because so much of what academic libraries are already doing naturally aligns with the goals and values of sustainability, but often library employees lack the lens of ecological sustainability with which to view this work. In clearly identifying how the work libraries are currently doing contributes to a more holistic understanding of sustainability, academic libraries can strengthen their infrastructure and further develop a more comprehensive plan that integrates all of the various aspects of sustainability.
While higher education institutions are increasingly beginning to encourage the use of “sustainability” as a guiding principle, it is difficult to come up with an exact plan of what is needed in order to facilitate the change that is necessary on an organizational and holistic level, (Miller, 2012). Likewise, in institutions of higher education, one particular aspect of sustainability that seems to be growing in popularity and comprehension is ecological sustainability; or rather sustainability as it is understood within the context of environmental education. This emphasis on ecological sustainability is emphasized by the expectations of new students entering the university. (Maragakis, 2013) In light of this context, some librarians have been asking themselves:

“What responsibility do librarians have for the current decline in biological systems around the globe? How might we rethink what we do and how we do it? And where do libraries, which were once considered the heart of the university, fit into these questions?” (Link, 2000).

Even though there has been an increase in universities interested in moving in more sustainable directions in recent years, typically universities do not evaluate the ecological footprint of academic libraries as specific units on campus, which means “there is a lack of sufficient data on sustainable and environmental performances of academic libraries.” (Jankowska; Marcum, 2010). Most literature about sustainable college campuses does not focus on libraries as distinct entities, although libraries often experience the most daily traffic, have the longest hours of open operation, and both consume and provide a wealth of campus resources. There is growing support, however, for libraries to establish a “multidimensional measurement framework for libraries and information services that focuses on economic sustainability,” and since this is the case, then libraries could also “easily adopt already well-established sustainability assessment tools used in higher education.” Even if there is currently a lack of research on the feasibility of transferring tools designed to assess sustainability on the university level to the library level, that does not mean there is not a need for advancement in this area, (Jankowska; Marcum, 2010).

SUSTAINABILITY AND LIBRARIES: AN OVERVIEW

What is now known as the “Green Library Movement” originated in the early 1990s, and is currently growing in participation and popularity. The movement is now made up of both public and academic libraries that are part of communities committed to reducing their impact on the environment. (Antonelli, 2008). The American Library Association (ALA) has played a major role in the development of this movement through its programs and initiatives, helping libraries and the profession of librarianship to coordinate and evaluate their efforts, (Jankowska, 2012).

In 1989, during the annual ALA conference in Dallas, the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) formed the “Task Force on the Environment” (TFOE) as an official group for ALA librarians who were interested in environmental issues, (Jankowska, 2012). Since the 1990s, the TFOE has worked to increase libraries’ and community awareness of environmental information resources, while also trying to promote “green concerns and practices in libraries,” improve such practices at ALA conferences, and promote “awareness of environmental issues in the ALA and library community,” (Jankowska; Marcum, 2010).

Often when librarians discuss “green” libraries, they are referring to “green” library buildings, specifically a library building that has been remodeled or constructed with ecological and
conservation needs in mind, such as LEED certified buildings, (Antonelli, 2008). However, the idea that a “green” library only refers to a LEED certified building has begun to change, as more people are beginning to realize that the choices library employees make regarding daily operations and outreach can do much to contribute towards the goal of achieving a more sustainable and healthier environment. For example, switching to natural non-toxic cleaners is one way library facilities can become more “green.” Libraries can offer “green library” programs, or create events centered around outreach on topics related to environmental education. Some libraries are even offering online courses to other libraries with the goal of giving “eco-librarians” opportunities for exchanging information on how to successfully adopt “green” practices into the daily operation of their libraries, (Antonelli, 2008).

While the concept of what constitutes a “green” library has begun to shift beyond the conventional conceptions that in the past were typically synonymous with LEED certification, some librarians still point out that there is a difference between what makes a library “green” and what makes a library “sustainable.” They argue that “piece-meal” eco-friendly changes in practices are not enough by themselves to create a sustainable organization, any more than a new building necessarily indicates “profound, permanent, and systemic change.” In order to create more than a “blip” of environmental responsibility on the timeline of the libraries’ history, libraries need to construct solutions that will have long-lasting benefits on multiple levels, (Barbakoff, 2012).

THE ROLE OF THE ACADEMIC LIBRARY

In 2008, Monika Antonelli published an article online in the Electronic Green Journal arguing that the development of green libraries was reaching a “tipping point,” thereby leading to a more pervasive “Green Library Movement” that would consequently become popular and widespread. Arguing that the time for such a movement is now, she sees a natural role for libraries in becoming “role models for sustainability.”

One of the most commonly identified barriers to creating change that leads to the development of sustainable practices in an academic environment is the tendency for “silo thinking,” that results from many disconnected areas organized by department or locations throughout campus that develop their own cultures or individual methods for decision-making (Barlett, 2004). Many universities, including Western, have established offices of sustainability to help manage this difficulty. Since one major purpose of libraries is to facilitate access to information and resources, this evaluation is suggesting that libraries have a natural role in helping address this problem. For example, working together as a partner with the OS could help support their work and address the issue of “silos” and communication barriers.

Additionally, academic libraries are interdisciplinary in nature, which means they are both the physical and virtual meeting place for every department and discipline on campus, and as such have tremendous potential for helping develop solutions to problems that may arise from disciplinary or departmental barriers. Perhaps most significantly, the concept of “Library as Place” is one way we can view libraries as contributing to the cultivation of a culture of sustainability. Library buildings and resources often serve as a means and a location for people explore their connections to other people who are collaborating on a common goal or project. On an organizational level, Western Libraries sees themselves as having a critical role to play in this area, as evidenced by their mission
statement: “Western Libraries connects: people to people, people to place, people to learning.” A sustainable community requires connections, and “connections mean relationships with human beings.” A sustainable community relies on and creates strong and lasting bonds between people and institutions, and these relationships and bonds are what ultimately determine how “sustainable” something truly is, (Barbakoff, 2012).

In addition to providing access to information and facilitating communication, libraries should also examine their own consumption and waste practices since they are typically some of the largest facilities on campus with the longest hours of daily physical accessibility. As Terry Link noted in the article: “Transforming Higher Education Through Sustainability and Environmental Education,” (2000) library staff, faculty, and administration play a major role in any university’s attempt to become more sustainable because of the logistics of their physical presence. Link points out that at the very least, library employees spend “nearly half our waking lives” in the library facility itself, thereby making them “consumers” of resources every day. As Link explains:

“We use paper, lighting, heating, cooling, and PCs in great quantity. How much are we wasting? How smart do we shop to reduce environmental impacts? Do we have principles in place to guide our decisions in this area? For example, with PCs, do we buy only those machines that are Energy Star rated by EPA? Do we configure them to save energy after we purchase them?”

Likewise, because the library facility itself occupies such a large public footprint, what the library chooses to focus on becomes a matter of public attention. This means the library also has a tremendous opportunity to publically represent the values and goals of its institution in meaningful and highly visible ways. By making access to sustainability resources more pervasive, constructing displays centered on sustainability topics in highly trafficked areas, and by hosting sustainability education events and outreach activities for the campus community, libraries can take advantage of their large physical presence to positively influence and develop a campus culture of sustainability.

**MEASURING WESTERN LIBRARIES’ ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT**

During an interview with Interim Dean Rick Osen on February 5, 2013, he explained that on an individual level, he believed that Libraries’ employees did a pretty good job when it came to conservation and not wanting to waste resources. For example, he explained that when Haggard Hall was remodeled and added to the library space, Libraries’ administration made sure everyone had bins for recycling paper under every employee’s desk because this was a collective priority. Rick also pointed out how often decisions that are made in order to be economically conservative can also have environmental benefits. He mentioned how libraries, by their very nature, have evolved from principles related to sustainability. For example, libraries allow people to share books and other resources without everyone having to “own” their own copy individually. Leveraging resources and sharing access are a fundamental component of what makes a library a library.

Rick also explained that increasing access to online resources also plays a considerable role in libraries’ efforts to become more environmentally sustainable. For example, if Western Libraries had actual print access to everything that they have available digitally, then there would be a serious need for a dramatically larger building to house and store all of the print resources, which would definitely contribute to a much larger library footprint. When viewed from
this perspective, the Libraries’ digitization efforts can be viewed as a means of supporting sustainability.

The benefits of supplying communities with multiple ways of providing shared access are many; for example, a book that is borrowed from a library ten times not only reduces economic costs, but also cuts the use of paper per read by a factor of ten. (Meadows, 1999). More than thirty million trees are cut down annually to supply the resources for book production in the United States alone, and the “sourcing” of forest fiber for the book industry still takes place in some areas that have the status of “endangered” or “high conservation value” forests that are vulnerable because there are no laws regulating their protection, (Borealis Center, 2008).

When considering print versus digital media formats, however, there is a common recurring question in current literature regarding which format uses more resources. Each format has costs and benefits related to production costs, waste disposal, and resource usage. While there is currently not enough evidence to definitively conclude which format is better when considering environmental sustainability, and while some studies have pointed to some of the negative impacts of electronic waste, it is still apparent that there are numerous benefits of electronic information when compared to print media, especially in terms of production costs, storage needs, and volume of accessibility.

While there are currently some articles that point out the environmental costs that come from digital resources (in terms of e-waste and electronic resources needed for access), few studies have considered the “environmental costs associated with the storage, handling, management and use of printed books through libraries, and especially the environmental costs of long term storage and preservation of printed content in libraries.” Additionally, there are a number of printed resources that are produced in different countries on a variety of papers using different printing technologies. The production and transportation costs can be quite high when compared to digital resources. Additionally, once the print resources are produced, transported, handled, and processed, there are also storage considerations that should be examined. Often library storage of print materials requires the use of a considerable amount of energy in order to maintain the necessary conditions of preservation and storage, (Chowdury, 2012).

Because of all of these factors, there is a strong argument to be made for recommending a “lifecycle analysis” when considering the ecological costs of print media. One such study that used a lifecycle analysis concluded that book print publishing is responsible for .6 % of greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S., and also suggested that electronic information can actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This same study concluded that the replacement of printed content with digital information could “help libraries and institutions to reduce their impact on the environment,” (Chowdury, 2012).

When adopting indicators for considering how to evaluate both the consumption and impacts of library goods and services, and while such an assessment would be very helpful in supplying critical data for informed decision-making, the complexity of the library needs and structure can make the prospect of designing such assessments seem daunting. As the above discussion of print versus electronic formats illustrates, the issues that must be considered are not simple or one-dimensional. For example, it’s not simply a matter of how many trees were used versus how many computers are needed, but the entire process from initial production, to transportation, to the volume of access provided, to actual usage, to what is needed in terms of
physical storage facilities. That being said, this approach can lead to more questions than answers. For example, if a printed book that is borrowed ten times reduces the cost or consumption of paper by ten, how much does an electronic version of that book (or article, or journal) shared among hundreds of people reduce the cost or consumption? And is it even possible to make such a determination?

While there is a definite need for further studies and analysis in this area, there is also a growing interest in using precise assessment measurements order to determine what a library’s actual “ecological footprint” is. Some writers are recommending that libraries take advantage of existing “indicators” in order to evaluate “economic, environmental, and social performance of libraries, producing budget savings and the environmental impact.” (Jankowska; Marcum 2010). These indicators should produce data on: water used, solid and hazardous waste generated, the percentage of daily shipments recycled or waste, as well as paper consumed and energy that is used.

Western Libraries does not currently have much formal data related to such indicators, although the Office of Sustainability did conduct a waste audit of both the Wilson Library (WL) and Haggard Hall (HH) buildings in 2011. While the HH waste audit included areas of the building that are not technically part of the Libraries, the results of the waste audit still provide a useful breakdown of waste categories. For example, the results of this audit indicate that only a portion of the building’s total waste goes directly into the landfill, (13% in WL and 19% in HH). Additionally, paper towel and paper cup waste constitute almost half of the waste in both buildings, which is useful information since both types of waste can be linked to patterns of behavior and consumption, which provides the Libraries’ with useful data in terms of planning potential outreach or education events or campaigns.
Unfortunately at this time, the primary self-reporting instrument offered through AASHE that is commonly used by universities in order to measure their sustainability, (which is known as STARS: Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System), does not consider the impact of libraries as a separate and unique entity in the way that is accounts for other distinct areas on campus, such as the cafeteria, the grounds, or campus theatres. (Jankowska, 2010-2011). If this weakness of the STARS rating system could be corrected, it is possible that such changes could strengthen administrative support for an increased involvement in sustainability efforts by academic libraries nation-wide.

Although it is impossible at this time for Western Libraries to determine precisely what their ecological footprint is, there are still ways this organization can examine current practices in order to reduce the environmental impact of the organization. Individual employees and departments can take steps to reduce their own energy and waste consumption, and the Libraries’ can take advantage of their role on campus to provide access to important information that can contribute to successful environmental education efforts on campus. One way of doing this would be to formally adopt “benchmarks” to be used as guidelines in assessing the success of the organizations’ sustainability efforts. Since this is a relatively undeveloped area in terms of formally created and measurable standards and practices, these benchmarks could be created based on recommendations and published research from existing librarians and academic professionals who are working towards developing sustainability programs at their own institutions.
SUSTAINABILITY SURVEY

Since focusing on deliberate collective efforts to promote environmental sustainability on an organizational level will require the input and participation of Western Libraries’ and Learning Commons’ employees, the evaluator wanted to assess employee perceptions of sustainability issues, not only to gauge the existing climate, but also in order to provide evidence for making the case that there is widespread interest in these efforts.

A thirteen question survey designed to assess the perceptions and sustainability awareness of Western Libraries’ and LC employees was executed online during the second week of February 2013. Survey respondents were approached via email. The survey was active online for one week, and a reminder email was sent out to all survey invitees the day before the survey closed. Sixty people (faculty, staff, and administrators from the Libraries and the LC) were invited to respond, and it was explained that the survey would be voluntary and anonymous. Thirty-four people participated in answering the survey questions.

During the survey construction, the evaluator decided that the survey could also be viewed as another way that the evaluation process could engage Libraries and LC employees on the topic of sustainability. Consequently, the survey was designed with the intention of combining education with assessment efforts, essentially making the survey an instrument in sustainability education by providing survey participants with relevant information that they might not have, (such as the campus waste disposal procedure for disposing of batteries, or that used pens could now be collected in the library for recycling, or even something as basic as sharing that the Libraries have a “Sustainability Team”).

Additionally, one of the assumptions the survey was designed to investigate was that conversations and presentations about sustainability education on an organizational level have an effect on the institutional culture. The presentation by Clarissa Mansfield and Carol Berry during 2012 Staff Development Day was thought to have had a noticeable effect of increasing the awareness of issues related to sustainability on the library. This assumption was based primarily on anecdotal evidence, conversations that took place after the event, and a few comments that were made on the Staff Development Day survey that pointed out the incongruity between the presentation about sustainability and the waste that resulted from the lunch that followed the presentation.

Consequently, the first few survey questions were constructed in order to determine whether or not the presentation had an effect on how people thought about sustainability in the library. Twenty-four of the thirty-four survey respondents (70.6%) answered that they did attend the presentation given by Carol and Clarissa, and out of those who attended the event, twenty-two people answered that the presentation did cause them to become more interested in sustainability activities.
Sustainability Survey

Did you attend the 2012 Staff Development Day presentation by Clarissa Mansfield and Carol Berry about the Sustainable Office Certification (SOC) program?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 34
skipped question 0

If yes, did the presentation cause you to become interested in participating in the SOC program, or in other possible future sustainability-related activities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>90.9%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>

answered question 22
skipped question 12

Have you since become involved with any sustainability efforts?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>61.3%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 31
skipped question 3

The sixth question on the survey was designed to assess how Libraries and LC’s employees felt about the current state of sustainability practices within the Libraries / LC.

Please choose one statement from the list below that best describes your feelings about sustainability practices in the Library / Learning Commons:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall, I would say we are pretty environmentally literate as a group, and I am satisfied with how things are.</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We do an ok job, but there is definitely room for improvement in terms of waste and consumption that could be reduced.</td>
<td>87.9%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I see how my daily actions have a larger impact on the world around me, but I don’t think that is the collective common perspective.</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t have time/interest/energy to worry about the environment.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I don’t like to think about the environment because it just depresses me and I feel like there is nothing I can do.

Twenty-nine out of thirty-four respondents selected the response of “We do an ok job, but there is definitely room for improvement in terms of waste and consumption that could be reduced.” No respondents selected either one of the last two options, which were designed to indicate whether there was a lack of interest or even opposition to pursuing sustainability practices in the Libraries. Although it is possible that employees who may have chosen either one of these options did not participate in the survey at all, based on the answers that were submitted, the results of the first two questions indicate that there is at least a self-assessed positive correlation between sustainability-related programs and an increased interest in sustainability, while the results from the sixth question also indicate that there is interest in pursuing actions in the Libraries / LC that encourage sustainability.

When discussing the organizational culture or collective expectations of an institution, the role of social norms should be taken into consideration. Studies have shown that social norms play a very definite role in determining behavior, and that people are more likely to do themselves what they observe others around them doing. (Clayton; Myers, 2009). For example, when recycling becomes an expected behavior on a collective level, it stands to reason someone would be uncomfortable not recycling, (at least in public). The staff survey results indicate that there are already strong social norms in place that support sustainable practices, which means that the Libraries’ Sustainability Team can build on this foundation and find ways to help facilitate making sustainability a stronger part of the institutional culture.

THE “HUMAN SIDE” OF SUSTAINABILITY

During a conversation with Carmen Werder, who is the director of the TLA, Writing Instruction Support, and the Learning Commons, she explained that one thing she hoped this evaluation would elucidate is the “human side” of sustainability. She stated that she is very interested in identifying ways to cultivate and acknowledge the importance of this aspect, both in terms of personal relationships, and also in terms of people’s health and well-being. Much of the literature that exists about faculty, staff, and administrators in higher education who have decided to engage in sustainability work concludes that the “human” benefits are many.

For one thing, often such efforts bring university employees into closer collaborative relationships with students, and with each other. Not only can working together for a common purpose foster a sense of community, it can also “counter the alienation” that some people experience “in the bureaucratized and productivity-driven climate of their institution.” (Barlett, 2004). Community participation can help people “experience a heightened sense of group identity as well as an increased sense of empowerment.” This empowerment and strengthened identity often leads to “further actions to protect the local environment,” (Clayton; Myers, 2009).
Consequently, allowing people the opportunity to work together on issues related to sustainability offer people opportunities for creating a sense of meaning in their daily work life, restoring a sense of community, and finding the joy that comes from aligning our values with our actions. Additionally, there are positive psychological benefits that result from “building attachment to the natural world,” and sharing that attachment with others, (Barlett 2004).

On an institutional level, reducing the university’s environmental impact and finding ways to conserve resources and save money, (especially during times of financial constraint), can instill “campus pride” and boost morale, thereby “improving campus image and creating public relations benefits,” by creating a positive example for the larger community, becoming more relevant as an organization, and “creating hope,” (Simpson, 2008).

**SUSTAINABILITY BENCHMARKS / RECOMMENDATIONS**

When committing to sustainability and the pursuit of sustainable practices, libraries are also committing to discovering “best practices,” to being innovative in order to solve problems, to reducing waste, to adopting new habits, and to celebrating success, (Schaper, 2010). In order to progress in these areas, some sort of assessment is necessary.

As previously mentioned, there are currently no standardized tools designed with the intention of assessing sustainability in academic libraries. Consequently, for the purposes of this evaluation, categories have been created in order to explore some of the issues that are common to libraries engaged in this work. Categories include: printing and paper consumption, energy consumption, cleaning practices, organizational commitment to adopting sustainable practices, and personnel commitment.

**PRINTING AND PAPER CONSUMPTION**

*Libraries should implement practices for reducing the waste and financial burden that comes from unnecessary printing.*

Much of the literature that discusses sustainability in libraries highlights the importance of printing. Despite the growing trend to provide more digital access to resources, paper and printing waste is still a very large issue for libraries. Not only is paper and printing waste an issue for many libraries, the financial costs of providing free printing to users can be exorbitant, (Hardesty, 2011). Consequently, one recommendation that is common to most library sustainability action plans includes making a transition from providing free printing for patrons to a pay-for-print model.

At WWU, Academic Technology and User Services (ATUS) announced in September 2011 that due to budget cuts, they would begin charging students for printing costs, 5 cents per single black and white page. ATUS explained in an electronic newsletter that the University was spending more than $100,000 a year on paper and toner for student printing, and this did not even factor in
the cost of printer maintenance and power. All printing paper and toner costs for students had previously been paid for by ATUS and the Libraries, (Galbraith, 2011).

One of the first things any library does when it begins examining how to become more sustainable is to switch to a pay-for-print model, and an automatic default to double-sided printing. Fortunately, this has already happened at WWU, which means in terms of student and public printing, this is not something Western Libraries need to pursue.

In terms of daily paper consumption related to operational needs, both the Writing Center and the Tutoring Center have taken deliberate steps to reduce paper waste. The Writing Center collects paper that is only used on one side from recycling bins and from various departments in the Libraries, including Circulation Services, which donates single-side used paper to the Writing Center. Additionally, the Writing Center does the majority of their paper-editing work online, and can even assist students via email. Likewise, the Tutoring Center is the recipient of recycled scratch paper donations from several offices on campus, including Academic Advising and Career Services. They also purchased small whiteboards that tutors use as they move from table to table helping people in an effort to reduce the need for paper.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

While it is good that recycling is widespread and takes place on an institutional level, reduction of printing would also reduce the need for the resources used to recycle the paper that may not have been needed to have been printed in the first place. In terms of Western Libraries’ employees, the evaluator notes just from observation of daily practice that there is definitely room for improvement when it comes to internal printing in the Libraries. Duplicate meeting agendas, forms that are not yet filled out, emails, articles, book reviews, or other such items that wind up in the recycling bins are all a daily occurrence. Additionally, care should always be taken when proofreading publicity-related or marketing materials so that numerous copies of fliers or event posters are not printed with typos or other errors that will then need to be corrected and re-printed.

Circulation Services has taken deliberate steps to reduce how much they print through their participation in SOC program, but they are also interested in finding new ways to conserve paper. For example, future plans to reduce printing include potential collaboration between Clarissa Mansfield and Andrea Peterson to explore options for tracking Course Reserve requests electronically in order to reduce the amount of paper currently being used for that purpose.

ENERGY AND WATER CONSUMPTION

Libraries should find ways to reduce energy and water consumption, by participating in programs that encourage conservation, using prompts to remind people to turn off lights, and installing energy efficient light fixtures and water conservation tools if possible.

WWU was the beneficiary of grants provided by the state and also by Puget Sound Energy to implement lighting and water conservation measures in buildings across the campus, including both the Haggard Hall and Wilson Library buildings. These grants made it possible for a number of
energy-efficient light fixtures to be installed, as well as the conversion of the lighting system in Wilson Library to motion-sensors, and for the installation of some low-flow water retro-fits to be added to the bathroom plumbing fixtures.

Additionally, Western Libraries does make use of visual prompts to serve as reminders for turning off lights, and several departments including both Circulation Services and the TLA, have participated in the SOC program.

Interim Dean of Libraries Rick Osen pointed out how the existence and arrangement of the Learning Commons is an example of sustainability in action because co-location of services allows the various entities to share resources and space, while subsequently providing more centralized services to meet student needs. For example, at one point in time, the Tutoring Center used to be open late into the evenings on campus in other spaces that perhaps would not have necessarily stayed open otherwise, while the Libraries were already open due to their extended hours. Consequently, that sharing of space in the Wilson Library building might enable space elsewhere on campus to be closed during evening hours, thereby saving on energy consumption.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Increased collaboration among departments and between LC partners to foster personal energy conservation practices would be beneficial; the survey also indicated generalized interest in more SOC participation, and conversations with various people indicate some interested people are unsure of how to become involved or where to start, so the Sustainability Team could find ways to identify and assist interested people and/or departments.

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**CLEANING**

*Libraries should commit to adopting non-toxic environmentally-friendly cleaning practices.*

Western’s Academic Custodial Services has been committed to “green” cleaning for nearly a decade. The department divested itself from petrochemical cleaning products, and uses non-toxic eco-friendly cleaners, like vinegar and water solutions, to keep the campus clean. They also use a water ionizer to both clean and disinfect surfaces, and in November 2011, they provided information to the Libraries’ Circulation staff about the ionizer product. Western Libraries then purchased their own ionizer, which is housed at the Circulation desk and available for checkout and use in Libraries’ departments by the rest of the Libraries’ staff.

Additionally, the Academic Custodial Services department also provides microfiber cloths to Circulation staff for use in cleaning the Circulation area, and they also pick up and wash the cloths when dirty, while returning clean ones to the Libraries’ for further use. Western Libraries is very fortunate to have such a committed custodial staff working on their behalf to keep the facilities clean in environmentally-friendly non-toxic ways.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The Libraries’ Sustainability Team should find ways to highlight eco-friendly cleaning practices and promote the usage of the water ionizer that can be checked out from Circulation Services. Likewise, they should continue to develop their collaborative relationship with the custodial staff, and seek out opportunities to acknowledge the value of their efforts and work.

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COMMITMENT TO STANDARD PRACTICES AND WASTE REDUCTION

Libraries should make a formal commitment to adopting standardized practices on an institutional level regarding the disposal of hazardous materials, recycling, energy consumption, and waste reduction.

Currently, Circulation Services, the TLA, and the Archives and Records / Center for Pacific Northwest Studies are participants in the SOC program. Circulation Services shared their experiences in an effort to promote the program during the 2012 annual Staff Development Day. They also created a “mug station” in order for staff and students in the Circulation area to have easy access to re-useable mugs. In some ways, the TLA has gone beyond what Circulation was able to do by initiating compost practices in their area. Additionally, the TLA also serves as an example to the larger organization by making sure the events and get-togethers that they host involve composting waste and using re-useable dishes and cutlery. The Archives Building has also implemented waste reduction practices through their participation in the SOC program, and with the assistance of Carol Berry. They now have compost containers both in the break room and behind the building. Additionally, they have also begun composting bathroom paper towels, and have reduced both the size and the pickup of their waste containers by half.

In general, Western Libraries’ employees do attempt to share and re-use supplies and materials whenever possible. For example, whenever someone is moving or re-organizing their office, they will send out an email announcing a “garage sale” so that people from other departments can collect useful items from the supplies and materials that are leftover. Additionally, Circulation Services keeps the packing materials they receive from various shipments and re-routes these materials to Interlibrary Loan for re-use. They also re-use campus envelopes, and have an area where empty binders and other supplies are stored for future use.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Library Administration should publicly endorse best practices, such as the adoption of the Sustainable Events Checklist. Additionally, sustainable events practices should also be integrated into the planning and execution of internal celebrations and social gatherings that the Libraries’ hosts for itself, (ex, Christmas parties, picnics, birthday celebrations, Staff Development Day, etc.).

The Sustainability Team should work to create new ways of conducting outreach to Libraries and LC employees who are interested in integrating more sustainable practices into their everyday work life, (such as disabling screensavers, properly disposing of hazardous waste materials,
purchasing supplies made from recycled products, and encouraging sustainable behaviors like composting). Libraries’ and LC SOC participants should meet to discuss what has been successful and challenging in their areas in order to compare their experiences and learn from other participants ways to identify potential areas for improvement.

Additionally, progress and success in the adoption and implementation of sustainable practices should be promoted, advertised, and celebrated.

PERSONNEL COMMITMENT

Libraries should officially designate personnel to pursuing sustainability on behalf of the organization.

If sustainability efforts are going to be sustainable, then a commitment from the Libraries’ administration of dedicated personnel is critical, (Schaper, 2010). Administrative support is essential, and often recognition of development in this area can lead to the discovery of additional institutional resources that can be used to support sustainability work. Recognizing that cultivating relationships and developing successful communication is a critical part of this job, some institutions recommend identifying a “champion” within the organization, often noting that personality matters. Someone who can make things fun, has personal charm, or a good sense of humor can often be successful promoting sustainability both internally and externally, since so much of the success of these efforts rests on the success of the personal relationships that are developed, (Barlett; Chase 2004).

Sustainability personnel also need room to try things out, to succeed or fail, and to network with others in order to seek out future opportunities. (Barlett; Chase 2004). Libraries should consider updating the job descriptions, titles, and interview questions when hiring to reflect this emphasis on sustainability, (Schaper, 2010).

Additionally, libraries need to make sure their hard work and successful efforts are communicated both within the library itself, but also to the larger campus community. Libraries should have a communication plan and a web presence for this purpose. Many of the benefits of sustainability are not retained if they are not communicated, (Simpson, 2008) and one thing worth noting about sustainability efforts is that they build on each other—one project often leads to another, and since collaboration is key, communication is vitally important.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Currently, Western Libraries has a Sustainability Team made up officially of two members, one faculty and one classified staff member. The team does have some freedom and support to explore new opportunities and develop new projects, as long as the time and resources that are needed do not create a burden or hardship on the larger organization.

When examining organizational structures within the Libraries, it is worth noting that classified staff members typically have less autonomy and flexibility in terms of schedules and workload than faculty members, because staff report directly to supervisors and departments and are
therefore required to get approval and permission for anything that could be perceived as being outside of their normal duties. For example, classified staff members cannot issue or accept meeting invitations without supervisor approval, and if approval is not given, or if a classified staff member is uncomfortable making a request for approval, then often the choice is between either participating during one’s personal time during non-work hours, or not participating at all. Faculty members, however, have more autonomy and freedom to choose which activities to pursue, and what they want to focus on, since they can decide themselves how their work supports their role within the organization.

This contrast in expectations and operations suggest that it would be helpful in the case of classified staff members (when deemed appropriate), to have official administrative approval to support their sustainability efforts. This could take the form of the alteration and review of job descriptions, or in designating such work as having a high enough priority to make it worth assigning resources and energy to in a more official capacity, as has been the case with “Assessment,” “Organizational Development,” or “Marketing,” which now have specific staff members devoted to serving part-time as coordinators in those particular areas in order to benefit the larger organization.

Additionally, participation by the Libraries and LC in outreach activities and campus events is a significant and highly-visible way to build new relationships and connect with the campus community. Many academic libraries point to library involvement with Earth Day events (in April) and Campus Sustainability Week (in October) as being two important events that libraries should become regularly involved with actively supporting. Such events would also provide Western Libraries with numerous opportunities for networking and collaborating with student clubs and other departments on campus.

Currently, Western Libraries’ Sustainability Team’s participation in GEF applications to sponsor projects and events, the collaboration with the OS on programs like the SOC or in the “Sweater Days” campaign, and the exploration of future outreach opportunities for the Sustainability Team, have all been philosophically supported by Libraries and LC administration. However, there is tremendous potential for growth and increased participation in this area, and providing Libraries and LC employees with the ability to intentionally develop more of these efforts during work time would be beneficial.

The Libraries’ Sustainability Team should continue to meet when possible, and they should also work to make sure their efforts are publicized and marketed. By demonstrating their past and present successes and promoting the positive impacts of their efforts, they can reach more people, encourage increased participation, and build on the strengths of their previous efforts so that resources and connections are leveraged. In order to do this, some sort of organized outreach and communication effort is needed since the benefits of the work they will be doing are lost if they are not successfully communicated, (Simpson, 2008).

Many libraries that have committed to working on sustainability issues have begun using “green library” blogs to advertise events, highlight library resources about sustainability, communicate opportunities for collaboration, and promote support for a culture of sustainability. Blogging has many positive attributes and allows people to participate by posting questions or share their own ideas in the form of comments. As such, it fosters community and communication and requires little in terms of resources and effort since most of the commonly used blogging software is free and easy to use, (Williams, 2012). Posts can be labeled, easily archived, and made searchable.
with very little effort. Both members of Western Libraries’ Sustainability Team have experience with and enjoy blogging, and are interested in launching a “green” library blog to promote library resources and events related to sustainability. The Sustainability Team should create a plan for the blog and solicit administrative approval for creating this blog as soon as possible. Once created, it could be used as way to highlight the upcoming “Built to Last” film festival event, and the “Bring Your Own Mug” campaign that is scheduled to take place in April 2013 as part of a GEF small project grant proposal that was approved in March.

Universities that are dedicated to fostering sustainability have demonstrated their commitment to this kind of work by establishing offices of sustainability on campus. WWU’s OS is a tremendous asset to the university community, and much of the work that Western Libraries and the LC have participated in is directly because of the OS and their efforts in program development, collaboration, and communication. The OS gives an undeniable legitimacy to the value of sustainability by signifying that sustainability is an institutional priority.

Additionally, OS management, staff, and coordinators are professional and committed, while being extremely personable and friendly, which makes them a very valuable and approachable resource for the entire campus. The “Sweater Days” campaign of Winter Quarter 2013 was very successful on several levels. Several LC and Libraries’ employees benefitted from participating in the “Lunch and Learn” component of that campaign by taking advantage of opportunities to connect, converse, and collaborate with a variety of people. Such conversations and events could actually have formed the foundation for future projects and collaborations, while building momentum and creating networks for future projects.

The idea for the “Built to Last” project, for example, originated from several conversations that took place during these lunch-time sessions between Carol Berry, the Libraries’ Sustainability Team, the LC and TLA Program Coordinator Shevell Thibou, and the Libraries’ Instructional Design Librarian Ryer Banta. Further cultivation of the relationship between the Libraries and the OS could have even more mutually-beneficial long-term effects, and Western Libraries should continue to seek out new ways to support the work of the OS and promote their programs and plans.

**CONCLUSION**

Libraries have a “legacy” of being “at the heart of learning,” (Link, 2000). Libraries are not bound to one discipline or subject, and as such they offer people a release from the confines of their specializations, and a means to finding common ground. Libraries offer people from diverse backgrounds and varied perspectives a way to connect, to communicate, and to learn from each other. No other building on campus receives as much physical and virtual traffic on a daily basis as Western Libraries. While this might make the Libraries’ ecological footprint one of the largest footprints on campus, it also offers Western Libraries a tremendous opportunity for promoting sustainability at WWU.

During this evaluation process, several Libraries’ employees expressed their concern that one of the difficulties of dealing with such a large public space is that it can be very hard to manage certain aspects of consumption or waste. For example, it is impossible to control or monitor energy
that is lost as a result of people’s individual behaviors; if someone chooses to open a window on a cold day, or waste paper, water, or other resources, Western Libraries do not have the ability or means to prevent this from happening. Because of this, initiating sustainability behaviors in one’s own home is considered to be much easier than doing so in the Libraries.

One goal of this evaluation report is to demonstrate that while it is easier to initiate environmentally responsible behavior on an individualized personal basis, at the same time, the very thing that is often regarded as a challenge for libraries when it comes to sustainability—it’s very large and very public footprint—is also an asset. This is exactly what creates the Libraries’ natural role in bringing sustainability to the forefront of the culture. Libraries can provide people with information to help them consider and discuss issues related to sustainability while creating access to vital research and important resources. Libraries can foster the exchange of information and ideas that can have huge significance to the campus community and to the larger world. Libraries can help bridge the gaps that tend to arise from the development of disciplinary or departmental “silos” on university campuses. And Western Libraries in particular can support the institutional goals of WWU by collaborating with the OS and highlighting the good work they are doing whenever possible.

Assuming the GEF proposal of the Hydration Station and sustainability information wall is implemented, the area in the Wilson Library building located across from the Tutoring Center that will house both the hydration station and the displays will become a large and very visible public statement about both the Libraries’ and also Western’s commitment to sustainability efforts. As such, Western Libraries could become a central place for providing information about such efforts to the campus community. Conversations between the Libraries’ Sustainability Team and the GEF Grant Coordinator Regan Clover have already led to the possibility of Regan someday holding “office hours” in the library to provide consultations to students, faculty, and staff about possible GEF sponsored projects.

At this time it is unclear just what the future of “Sustainability” at Western Libraries will look like, but hopefully this report has demonstrated that the potential for further development is great, and that these efforts are both valuable and worthwhile. There is a reason why Libraries have historically been regarded as being at the “heart of learning,” and as such, Western Libraries are situated in a very valuable and significant place with the chance to shape and influence both the campus and the larger environment that they are an important part of in positive and meaningful ways.
Works Cited


Western Libraries. (2012). “Sustainability in the Libraries” display, retrieved from: http://library.wwu.edu/content/12478


Appendix One: Western Libraries Organizational Chart:

Appendix Two: Western Libraries Strategic Plan

**Western Washington University Strategic Plan**

**Mission**
Western Washington University serves the people of the State of Washington, the nation, and the world by bringing together individuals of diverse backgrounds and perspectives in an inclusive, student-centered university that develops the potential of learners and the well-being of communities.

**Vision**
Western will build a stronger Washington by being an international leader in active learning, critical thinking, and societal problem solving.

**Western Washington University Strategic Goals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WWU Goal: Build upon Western’s strengths to address critical needs in the State of Washington.</th>
<th>WWU Goal: Expand Student access to rigorous and engaging baccalaureate and graduate education.</th>
<th>WWU Goal: Foster and promote life-long learning and success in an ever-changing world.</th>
<th>WWU Goal: Apply Western’s expertise and collaborative approach to scholarship, creativity and research in ways that strengthen communities beyond the campus.</th>
<th>WWU Goal: Serve as a model for institutional effectiveness, innovation, diversity and sustainability.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Libraries Goal: Create and maintain sustainable physical and virtual environments that enhance barrier-free access, a diversity of scholarship, and the pursuit of life-long learning by the citizens of Washington State.</td>
<td>Libraries Goal: Develop a comprehensive, scalable and sustainable plan for the delivery of curricular and co-curricular instruction for all WWU students.</td>
<td>Libraries Goal: Take an active leadership role in the promotion of scholarly communication through collaborating in the development of infrastructure to support 21st century scholarship.</td>
<td>Libraries Goal: Expand partnerships and strengthen collaborative efforts throughout the campus, the community and beyond.</td>
<td>Libraries Goal: Provide support to the WWU community using data driven decision making to focus on user needs and services.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Western Libraries Strategic Goals**

**Western Libraries Strategic Plan 2012 -2015**

**Mission**
Western Libraries connects – people to people, people to place, people to learning.

**Vision**
Western Libraries will be the intellectual crossroads of our community, an innovative partner in learning and research.

from: [http://library.wwu.edu/strategic_plan](http://library.wwu.edu/strategic_plan)
Appendix Three: Western Libraries and Sustainability Logic Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOGIC MODEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASSUMPTIONS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries have a natural tendency to utilize sustainable practices. The Libraries should recognize how they are already supporting sustainability so that such work is regarded as the norm and does not seem daunting or foreign.</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Four:

WESTERN LIBRARIES SUSTAINABILITY TIMELINE

- **2005:** Librarian Rob Lopresti, liaison to Huxley College, volunteers to join WWU’s “Sustainability Committee.” Since that time, he has been active in ordering materials for the library collection that are related to “sustainability,” and in reporting back to WWU’s committee on what resources are available at the library. He attends meetings of the “Sustainability Committee,” and informs Western Libraries of any relevant information from the meetings.

- **September 2011:** ATUS announces that it will begin charging students for printing costs, 5 cents per single black and white page. They also state that they will kick off the transition during fall quarter with a limited pre-paid print quota of $1.25 per student, which will then be reset to 0 at the beginning of the summer 2012.

- **September 2011:** Circulation staff member Clarissa Mansfield begins the graduate program in Environmental Education with approval and support of her supervisor, her department, and Library Administration.

- **November 2011:** Haggard Circulation purchases a water ionizer for cleaning with the intention of no longer using chemical products for cleaning, and sharing the ionizer with other library departments as needed.

- **December 2011:** Haggard Hall second floor library restrooms participate in the Green Energy Fee (GEF) pilot project to compost paper towels.

- **Winter Quarter 2012:** Rick Osen shares the news with Western Libraries staff that the University has received grants through the state and through Puget Sound Energy to implement lighting and water conservation measures in buildings across the campus, including both the Haggard Hall and Wilson Library buildings.

- **March 2012:** Dean Chris Cox creates a “Sustainability Team” for Western Libraries, which consists of Rob Lopresti, Clarissa Mansfield, and Dubravka Illic. Members begin collaborating with a student team from the AS Club “Students for Sustainable Water” to apply for GEF grant sponsored project.

- **Spring Quarter 2012:** The Libraries’ and Students for Sustainable Water GEF project for the Hydration Station/ Resource wall is approved to move into the next phase of development. This project involves a proposal to install a water bottle refilling station in Wilson Library in order to continue the education of the use of reusable water bottles coupled with a Green Energy Resource wall which will feature library resources, info about the GEF program, outreach concerning hydration stations, and other sustainable projects, clubs, and events at WWU.

- **April 2012:** The Haggard side Circulation Department volunteers to work with Carol Berry in WWU’s OS to help develop the “Sustainable Office Certification” (SOC) pilot project.

- **May 2012:** Dubravka Illic resigns from “Sustainability Team” due to a combination of circumstances and time constraints. Rob Lopresti and Clarissa Mansfield remain on the team to continue working on sustainability projects, with the hopes that Dubravka will feel welcome to re-join the team at a future date if her situation changes.

- **June-August 2012:** Clarissa Mansfield coordinates the Circulation department’s participation in SOC pilot project. Once the project is concluded, she writes a report which she then shares with Carol Berry and the Office of Sustainability.
September 5, 2012: Clarissa Mansfield and Carol Berry conduct a joint presentation about the SOC pilot at the Libraries’ annual Staff Development Day 2012. That theme of the day is “Our World, Our Roles: Creating Our Future,” which ties in nicely with “sustainability” as a concept. Carol Berry also presents Circulation with Hans Wholebean, the “sustainability” sock monkey, made from recycled materials, in recognition of their participation in the pilot project. Hans is later catalogued by Tamara Belts in Special Collections and is officially added to the Libraries’ “Mathes Figurine Collection.”

September 20, 2012: Pattie Moon and Rob Lopresti create a “Sustainability in the Library” display featuring sustainability-themed library resources and the Mathes figurine Hans Wholebean. This display remains up until the end of the quarter.

October 25, 2012: Circulation is honored for their SOC participation at the OS Awards Ceremony.

Fall Quarter 2012: “Sustainability” emerges as an articulated theme in the Libraries’ new strategic plan, although the definition of sustainability in this context focuses more specifically on preservation and resources than on ecological aspects of sustainability. However, since there are multiple interconnected dimensions of “sustainability,” this articulation provides the Libraries with a framework for further exploration, as well as opportunities to further align the Libraries with Western’s institutional goals and strategic plan. Also during this quarter, the TLA enrolls in the SOC program and begins working with Carol Berry and the OS.

Fall 2012-Winter 2013 intersession: The lights in the Wilson building are converted to motion sensors.

December 2012: Western Libraries begins the option of ordering office supplies made from recycled materials from regionally local company Keeneys. Western Libraries and the Students for Sustainable Water GEF project Proposal enters into the Preliminary Estimate and Design Stage of the project proposal.

December 2012 through Winter Quarter 2013: Libraries and LC employees participate in the OS “Sweater Days” campaign. Western Libraries are listed in publicity materials as a project partner. Carol Berry organizes and hosts a weekly “Lunch and Learn” series on Tuesdays from 12-1 with the TLA in WL 265. These sessions offer numerous opportunities for collaboration and connecting with other members of WWU’s community who are interested in sustainability.

February 2013: Rob Lopresti, Clarissa Mansfield, Shevell Thibou and Ryer Banta begin collaborating on ideas for a small project GEF grant proposal. They develop the idea for a “Built to Last” film festival which will be held over a period of weeks in April and hosted by the Libraries. The festival will highlight Libraries’ film and other resources related to sustainability, and offer the Libraries / LC a chance to participate in “Earth Day” celebrations while offering outreach and environmental education opportunities. Part of this proposal will include the launching of a “Bring Your Own Mug” awareness campaign, and both the planning and implementation of this project will require numerous opportunities for working collaboratively with students.
QUESTION ONE:

Did you attend the 2012 Staff Development Day presentation by Clarissa Mansfield and Carol Berry about the Sustainable Office Certification (SOC) program?

<table>
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<tr>
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<td>No</td>
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answered question: 34
skipped question: 0

QUESTION TWO:

If yes, did the presentation cause you to become interested in participating in the SOC program, or in other possible future sustainability-related activities?

<table>
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answered question: 22
skipped question: 12
QUESTION THREE

Have you since become involved with any sustainability efforts?

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answered question 31
skipped question 3

QUESTION FOUR

If you did not attend the presentation, have you since heard about the SOC program?

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answered question 15
skipped question 19

QUESTION FIVE

Are you at all interested in learning more about it?

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<th>Answer Options</th>
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<td>No</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
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If yes, please include your name below:
QUESTION SIX

Please choose one statement from the list below that best describes your feelings about sustainability practices in the Library / Learning Commons:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall, I would say we are pretty environmentally literate as a group, and I am satisfied with how things are. We do an ok job, but there is definitely room for improvement in terms of waste and consumption that could be reduced. I feel like I see how my daily actions have a larger impact on the world around me, but I don’t think that is the collective common perspective. I don’t have time/interest/energy to worry about the environment. I don’t like to think about the environment because it just depresses me and I feel like there is nothing I can do. Other (please specify)</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>87.9%</td>
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<td></td>
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answered question 33

skipped question 1

Please choose one statement from the list below that best describes your feelings about sustainability practices in the Library / Learning Commons:

- Overall, I would say we are pretty environmentally literate as a group, and I am satisfied with how things are.
- We do an ok job, but there is definitely room for improvement in terms of waste and consumption that could be reduced.
- I feel like I see how my daily actions have a larger impact on the world around me, but I don’t think that is the collective common perspective.
- I don’t have time/interest/energy to worry about the environment.
### QUESTION SEVEN

**Did you know the library currently has a Sustainability team?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>5</td>
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</table>

*Answered question: 34
Skipped question: 0*

### QUESTION EIGHT

**If yes, are you aware of any of their current projects and/or plans?**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
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<tbody>
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*Answered question: 30
Skipped question: 4*

### QUESTION NINE

**Are you interested in becoming more involved with the Sustainability team?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
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</table>

*If yes, please include your name below:*

*Answered question: 27
Skipped question: 7*

### QUESTION TEN

**Did you know that we can now order office supplies made from recycled materials from a regionally local company?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
<td>23</td>
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</table>

*(FYI: Check out [http://www.keeneys.com/](http://www.keeneys.com/) for more information about this company)*

### QUESTION ELEVEN

**Are you aware of the procedure for disposing of used batteries or other hazardous materials on campus?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>55.9%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(FYI: Check out WWU’s Environmental Health and Safety waste recycling page for more info: [http://www.wwu.edu/ehs/waste_recycle_disposal/chemical.shtml](http://www.wwu.edu/ehs/waste_recycle_disposal/chemical.shtml))
**QUESTION TWELVE**

Did you know that there are collection boxes in the library for recycling used pens, pencils, and markers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(answered question 34
skipped question 0

*(FYI: There are three locations for the boxes: Outside of WL 265, upstairs in the Collection Services area, (just across from Toai’s area beneath the panel of wall calendars) and also on Clarissa’s back desk in Haggard Circulation.)*

**QUESTION THIRTEEN**

Please select the statement that best describes your feelings about adopting environmentally-friendly sustainability practices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t mind them, as long as they are easy and don’t inconvenience me.</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would rather just do things the way I want to do them. Sustainability tips just make me feel guilty.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am definitely interested in learning more about how to increase sustainability practices in my daily work routines! Tell me more!</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (or include your name for more info!)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
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</table>

(answered question 30
skipped question 4

Please select the statement that best describes your feelings about adopting environmentally-friendly sustainability practices:

- I don’t mind them, as long as they are easy and don’t inconvenience me.
- I would rather just do things the way I want to do them. Sustainability tips just make me feel guilty.
- I am definitely interested in learning more about how to increase sustainability practices in my daily work routines! Tell me more!