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Adoption of Green Practices in University Libraries of Pakistan: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Conceptual, technological, and material advancement has a deep influence on all sectors of life including libraries. Libraries are coping with these developments accordingly, however, the pace of development is not the same around the globe. This study aims to explore the adoption status of green library practices in the university libraries of Pakistan. The peer-reviewed literature including IFLA's checklist was encompassed to model twelve aspects/practices of the green library initiative. The feedback from the selected, senior university librarians of Pakistan on the proposed model of green library practices was collected through interviews. The librarians apprise the green library model as an effective combination of related aspects and technologies. The findings reveal that each participating library has adopted some of the green library practices. However, a lot of more work is to be done to fully understand and adopt the green library initiative.

Keywords: Green library, Environment-friendly libraries, Going green, Sustainability in libraries, IFLA, University libraries, Pakistan.

Introduction

Global warming and climate change pose a challenge to the world with harmful consequences for human life. Implications urge to go green in all sectors of life. In recent decades, organizations around the world have adopted the slogan of "Go Green" (Jones & Wong, 2016). Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science (ODLIS; https://products.abc-clio.com/ODLIS/odlis_s.aspx#sustainablelib) defines the green/sustainable library as "a library designed to minimize the negative impact on the natural environment and maximize indoor environmental quality through careful site selection, use of natural construction materials and biodegradable products, conservation of resources (water, energy, paper), and responsible waste disposal (recycling, etc.)." Go Green is a series of strategies for making more environmentally sustainable and ecologically conscious decisions and lifestyle choices that can conserve our climate and its natural resources for

present and future generations (Pangail, 2015). All professions own an environmental aspect that must be considered while making management decisions to deliberate a sense of environmental responsibility.

Nowadays, libraries have also adopted the slogan of “Go Green.” The libraries conceive the term green as putting library management viewpoints into sustainable development. According to Ephrain (2003), the concept of a green library is the initiative of environment-friendliness in the management and use of the library. This includes strategies and decisions that would protect the library’s internal and external environments by mitigating pollution, lowering resources and energy utilization, and guaranteeing that library usage is far less harmful to health.

Green library sustainability initiatives include all of the prudent decisions that must be taken to maintain the fragile equilibrium between the library system and the underlying environmental system. It has been demonstrated that failing to adequately handle the reciprocal dependency between the library mechanism and the environmental equilibrium may have disastrous implications. Therefore, the green library philosophy advocates for a conscientious understanding of the environment and the creation of methods for administering library facilities and programs while keeping environmental concerns in mind.

In practice, this will imply embracing and adapting those practices that would ensure the earth and the library’s shared future (Meher & Parabhoi, 2017). Green library management emphasizes a positive attitude of accepting responsibility for the health of library members and staff, as well as appealing to the needs and interests of future generations of users and the stability of nature. Currently, rising global warming concerns necessitate the greening of libraries. Nonetheless, libraries can increase the sustainability gains even more by taking incremental green measures to reduce the environmental effects of day-to-day operations (Khalid, Malik, & Mehmood, 2021).

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to create awareness among Pakistani librarians by proposing a model of green library practices based on peer-reviewed literature. The secondary objective is to obtain feedback from the university librarians of Pakistan on the status and adoption of these practices.

Research Questions

- The objectives of the study can best be interpreted in the following research questions.
1. How do the university librarians of Pakistan view the proposed model?
 2. What is the adoption status of green practices in your library entirely or partially?

Literature Review

The concept of a green library has been defined with different aspects by different authors. International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) worked rigorously on this concept to conclude a checklist with 12 points (Hauke, P., Latimer, K., & Werner, K.L., 2013).

IFLA Checklist

A checklist is a good way of ensuring that anything has been considered for any building scheme, as well as any complicated undertaking in general. The IFLA checklist

of green libraries reviewed below comprises areas of planning, development, and library service intended to help ensure that everything has been taken into account.

1. Project planning, finance. Project planning and finance is the first and elementary step to start any initiative. This phase includes discussion about sustainability goals, true direction, level of go green, design of the building, construction cost, resources, and other budget-related matters.

2. Tendering. This phase of necessary measurements includes the formulation of specific criteria for sustainability, definition of the ecological footprint of the library, statement of specific environmental objectives, requirements for a holistic view of sustainability issues, and verification of certificates.

3. Site/location. The library's environmental and social effect is heavily influenced by its location. The site selection process involves measures such as ensuring that the site is in a residential area and that other relevant facilities are nearby so that residents do not have to drive far for various services. The library building should have parking spaces, and people driving energy-efficient vehicles must be given preference. The building must be situated in an area that is readily accessible by public transportation as well. Climate, conditions, emissions, and noise should also be in mind while selecting the site/location for the library.

4. Construction. The materials used in the building's design must be chosen carefully and wisely. Only materials that contain very little waste and goods that do not damage or harm the natural environment should be chosen. The building contractors and required equipment should be chosen from surrounding the building to save the finance.

5. Building. The primary objective of green buildings and operations is to create such systems that understand and show, from their initial creation and construction, that the project or framework can reduce resource cost and negative environmental effects over the structure's entire life-cycle. This strategy includes reducing waste, emissions, and environmental destruction, as well as making better use of electricity, water, and other services. A green/sustainable approach to library buildings acknowledges the essential value of ensuring the health and comfort of building occupants by considering factors such as air, solar protection, revolving doors, vestibules, natural light, and sensors' lighting system efficiency.

6. Interior fitting. Interior design is very important in the concept of green libraries. Building and interior design are the main tools to attract users to libraries. IFLA recommends that the floor of the library should be carpeted. When the library management team decides to purchase new furniture, go for the green option. Give the preference to select the furniture made from recycled materials. Preference should be given to such a paint that has less volatile organic compounds. Choose a recyclable coating that does not release noxious odors when removing flooring.

7. Green information and communication technology. Information and communication technology (ICT) has penetrated every facet of life. No profession may

exist without information and communication technologies. IFLA checklist encourages the use of ICT tools in the daily operations of the libraries. It recommends the use of remote access, thin clients instead of PCs, energy star hardware, switchable sockets, and use of software to optimize energy consumption. Green ICT supports the less use of paper and encourages the maximum use of technology. Green ICT can also be implemented in other ways including book check-in and check-out through software, online application for membership, OPAC, e-receipts, use of laptops instead of PCs to save electricity, and scanning instead of printing or photocopying, and so on.

8. User services. IFLA checklist suggests various ways to implement the green initiative in library user services. For example, the use of digital format should be encouraged instead of print format to keep the environment clean. The digital medium is less harmful to health as compared to the print medium. Libraries can provide a scanning facility rather than printing or photocopying services. Electronic communication should be used in place of paper-based postal communication. Users should be motivated towards digital media.

9. Library management. IFLA divides it into three categories, i.e. environmental management certificates, facilities management, and the green library office. Environmental management certificate [ISO 14000] includes motivated library staff, legal agreements, transparency in financial matters, and responsibility for sustainable goals. Facilities management promotes the use of vacuum cleaning, separation of waste for recycling, cleaning on regular basis, recycling of batteries, and use of energy-saving lamps and LED lighting. Green library office suggests the purchase of equipment from local and certified suppliers to save money, less use of paper and maximum use of digital objects, recyclable cartridges of the printer, avoiding harmful and poisonous products, and less use of things that are difficult to recycle. Training of employees is also necessary to go green in the offices.

10. Strategic goal. IFLA suggests that transparency in the cost of energy should be ensured to create savings. Reward and incentive schemes should be introduced to attract the intentions of staff towards green operations. Librarians can also influence their business partners, i.e. publishers, booksellers, and suppliers, to participate in the going green initiative of the library. The library can also initiate a strategic partnership with them.

11. Marketing and PR. Marketing is always needed to promote any initiative. Library staff should promote the motto of “A green image is a good image.” Library staff should lead it proactively to motivate others as well. To generate funds, library staff can share this concept with stakeholders, i.e. users, publishers, vendors, donors, and friends.

12. Certificates. This includes the adoption of green building certificates. There are different green building standards available, e.g. LEED (US Standard), BREEAM (UK Standard), and Green Star Rating System.

Summary of Green Librarianship

The conservation of the environment is an essential component in today's modern world, which is influenced by several factors such as greenhouse gases, environmental pollution, global warming, and carbon dioxide. Over time, natural resources are being depleted. We as humans are responsible for leaving a healthy world for future generations to exist. IFLA provides a comprehensive checklist for the sustainability of the environment. Libraries around the world can participate in this initiative of environmental protection by implementing the measures suggested by IFLA. Other studies found on green libraries in the literature include:

- Green library building (Aulisio, 2013; Jones & Wong, 2016).
- Green libraries and sustainability (Barnes, 2012; Cardoso & Machado, 2015; Ephrain, 2003; Fourie, 2012; Meher & Parabhoi, 2017; Sesen & Kuzucuoglu, 2020; Shukla, Sharma, & Singh, 2020).
- Green printing and copying (Dempsey & Palilonis, 2012; Kruse, 2011).
- Green information and communication technologies (Jayalakshmi & Sarangapani, 2017; Oyelude, 2018; Soroya et al., 2021).
- Environmental sustainability through library management (Dias, 2017; Ghorbani, Babalhavaeji, & Nooshinfard, 2016; Shaffer et al., 2018).
- Sustainability challenges (Jankowska & Marcum, 2010).

Based on the review of literature, a model of green librarianship is developed and shown in Figure 1 below.

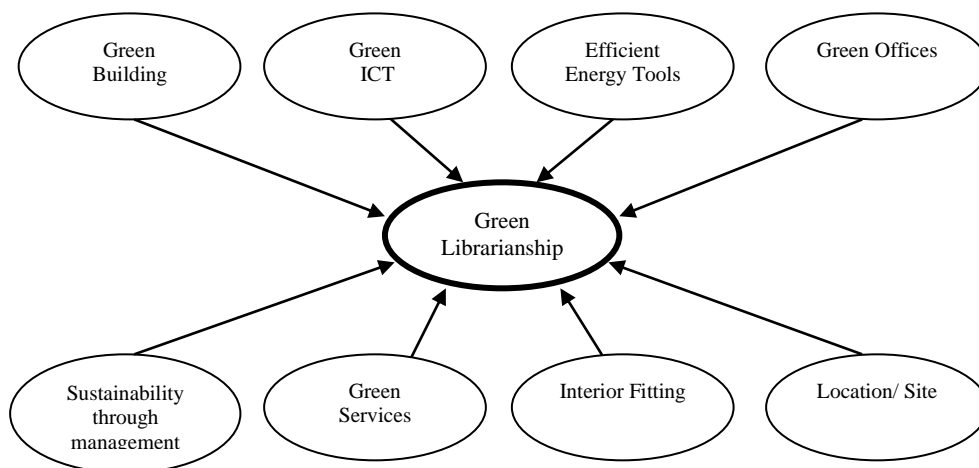


Figure 1. Model/conceptual framework of green library

Research Methodology and Limitations

The qualitative method was adopted for this research study. Firstly, a review of accessible literature was conducted to model green library practices. Secondly, a purposive sample of three university librarians was drawn for seeking their feedback with

their prior consent. However, only two of them responded. Owing to time constraints, the sample was limited to Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. However, the librarians selected were the most senior and experienced ones. The selection of university libraries was because of their better standing than other types of libraries in terms of collection, physical and human resources, space, budget, infrastructure, users, and so on. Data collected from librarians through open-ended, written interviews via email were analyzed thematically.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected from university librarians through interviews are interpreted below against each research question.

RQ1. How do the university librarians of Pakistan view the proposed model (Figure 1)?

The model for green librarianship along with a description was sent to both experts for their feedback. Overall, both of the experts are satisfied with the model, however, they suggest minor changes in it. One of the experts recommends that the term “Green Office” in the model should be replaced with “E-office” while the second expert suggests that the term “Green Management” should be used instead of “Sustainability through Management.” Despite challenges, the experts also realize that the adoption of green library practices is direly needed especially in developing countries like Pakistan. They emphasize that university libraries should be the pioneer to plan and implement this initiative because of their better standing when compared with other types of counterparts. They also feel the need for awareness campaigns in this regard.

RQ2. What is the adoption status of green practices in your library entirely or partially?

In response to this question, one of the experts explains that they have adopted different green practices including restriction on polythene bags, less use of paper where possible, arrangement of natural light, a green area outside the library, solar panels, roof treatment, transparent glass windows, and seating arrangement near windows. The other expert informs that they have implemented most of such practices to varying degrees mostly partially.

Conclusion

The peer-reviewed literature reveals different opinions about what makes a library “green” and what and how should be measured to demonstrate that a library is certainly environment-friendly. As such, no coherent and concrete definition of a green library is agreed upon by all. A green library is sometimes synonymous with a green building. However, theorists and practitioners of librarianship offer a wider interpretation of the term ‘green library,’ for example, the concept of a green library is not confined to libraries with accredited green buildings; a green library is any library that encourages sustainability through education, operation, and outreach. The participants of this study also suggest some alternative terms. The researchers prefer ODLIS for the definition of green library and IFLA for green library practices or checklist because of their authenticity and credibility.

This study aims to model green librarianship and its practices with the help of scholarly peer-reviewed literature to create awareness among university librarians of

Pakistan as a starting point. Through qualitative interviews, the researchers find the select sample of this study aware of most of such practices. However, the adoption level of the entire green librarianship is still in its nascent stage. Little has been done and much is to be done. Some factors cannot be undone or redone, e.g. site/location, because the purpose-built building called library is already there. As per researchers' observation, however, most university libraries are located in a central place easily accessible to all stakeholders.

Though the researchers find some evidence of awareness and adoption of green practices in the university libraries of Pakistan, still there is much to be done. In developing countries like Pakistan where a lot of persons in the hierarchy have to endorse a paper document with signature and diary number, email may not be an alternative unless a system of electronic communication at par with the manual system is devised. Moreover, the level of implementation of all green library practices is still in its early stage owing to certain challenges.

There is a need to conduct this study to include all 200+ university libraries, public and private sector, for a wider awareness across Pakistan. There are different forums, e.g. library associations, library welfare/cooperation organizations/societies, available to discuss green library initiatives through seminars/webinars, listserv, social media, and messenger apps. Pakistan Library Association may initiate a series of training and workshops for the library professionals in all major cities in this regard. Librarians are the key players in this regard. They should initiate persuading their higher authorities to earmark a permanent head of budget to gradually switch to green librarianship, for Pakistan being a developing country may not afford ungreen library practices, not only because of wastage of money but also for environmental unfriendliness.

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