

ALA Committee Report Form

TO: ALA Council

DATE: June 1, 2022

RE:

ALA Council voted to create the Council Committee on Sustainability in January 2021 and, once a roster was established, began meeting in July 2021.

- The ALA Sustainability Committee's charge is to provide the necessary leadership and monitoring of ALA strategic initiatives that will infuse the core value of sustainability throughout the policies, procedures, practices of our association and our professional activities, in collaboration with the ALA Board and President, ALA Council, ALA divisions, ALA offices and units, ALA round tables, ALA committees, ALA affiliates and ALA staff so that our association and its members contribute to the development of sustainable and resilient communities. In particular, this committee will maintain a working relationship with several ALA offices and groups to affect meaningful sustainability-related outcomes and model best practices across the association.
- ALA President Patty Wong focused on sustainability as one of her four presidential pillars for 2021-2022. To this end, in her inaugural speech, she outlined this area of focus: "To thrive and evolve into the future, ALA must adopt the "triple bottom line" mindset of sustainability: We must embody practices that are environmentally sound, economically feasible, and socially equitable. Planned outcomes include a basic briefing on sustainability for the field, a course to help provide the foundational knowledge necessary for library workers to think more sustainably, and a partnership with the Sustainable Libraries Initiative to open the door for public, academic, and school libraries across the country to participate in their Sustainable Library Certification Program."

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June 2022 | Council Committee on Sustainability Report

For its inaugural year, the Committee was charged with six priorities, two from resolutions passed by ALA Council and four others set by President Patty Wong:

1. Implement the 2021 Council Resolution to Achieve Carbon Neutrality for ALA Conferences by 2025: . To date the Committee has met twice with Conference Services staff; obtained quotes for a consultant to aid conference services staff with this goal; issued the

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Sustainability as a Core Value

We all live on this planet. We all need clean air, clean water, clean food and a safe place to call home. Climate change threatens all basic building blocks of life.

While it may look a bit different from region-to-region of the world, there is no doubt that few will escape the impacts of climate change. To live in this world and participate as citizens we all must take responsibility for what happens next as not only do our lives depend on it, but our children's lives do as well.

Everyone has a role to play. You may feel overwhelmed, paralyzed even, by the enormity of this issue but doing nothing is not an option. We can all take some small action, it does not have to be monumental, it does not have to match what your neighbor may do, but we do need to act now.

As a profession, we define ourselves by our ethics, our outcomes, and our ability to improve the lives we touch through our work. If we are not working to make the world a better place, what else is there? Will communities continue to support institutions that do not take climate change seriously? To achieve the scale of radical change necessary to mitigate the impacts of climate change we truly must adopt the idea that *every job is a climate job*³, we must do what we can from our sphere of influence in our workplace as well as our personal lives.

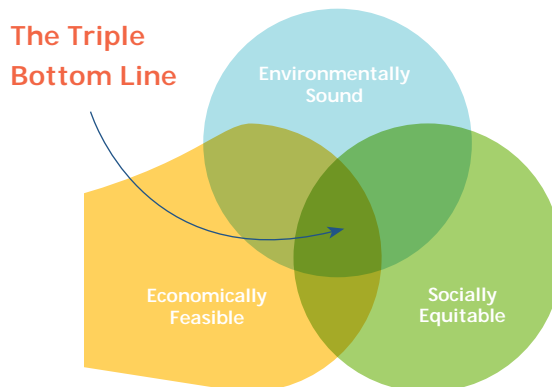
As an association striving to respond to the needs of its membership, the American Library Association named sustainability as a core value of the profession in recognition of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) finding that the immediate consequences of climate change were far more dire than originally predicted⁴. The IPCC was calling for a transformation of the world economy at a speed and scale that has "no documented historic precedent." This coincided with the Fourth

"To be truly sustainable organizations or communities must embody practices that are environmentally sound *and* economically feasible *and* socially equitable."

Resolution for the Adoption
of Sustainability as a Core Value
of Librarianship, ALA, 2019

National Climate Assessment finding that due to lack of action by society, climate change induced damage to the economy, environment and human health had become unavoidable⁵.

This pivotal moment was calling for simultaneous change to both slow the effects of climate change through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions while also building community resilience to adapt in the face of the impacts climate change is already causing. The challenge when talking about these two massive undertakings is that it feels like everything needs to be addressed, all at once. To better mobilize the library community, and to help folks feel less intimidated so they could act in meaningful ways ALA adopted the "triple bottom line" conceptual framework to define what was meant by a core value of "sustainability."



³ www.drawdown.org/publications/climate-solutions-at-work

⁴ www.ipcc.ch/sr15/

⁵ <https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/>

greenhouse gas emissions. To decarbonize libraries and our communities we must focus on:

- Energy efficient facilities
- Switching to renewable energy sources
- Electric vehicles
- Ethical Carbon Offsets

Climate Adaptation / Climate Justice

We must strengthen community resilience and the livability of our neighborhoods. Community resilience is the sustained capacity for communities to withstand, adapt to, and recover from adversity and disruption. The concept is associated with increasing social support networks and social cohesion and minimizing

Many in our profession are already answering the call to leadership on the topic of sustainability and serve as a model for us all.

Public Libraries

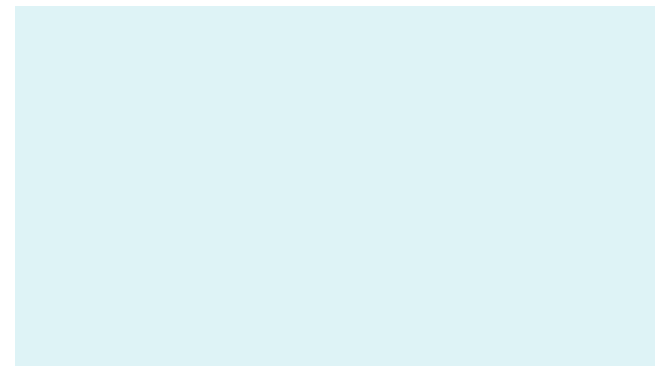
From Staten Island (NY) to Chrisney (IN) to San Diego (CA) we find libraries that went the extra mile to decarbonize their facilities, building net-zero energy branches. A Net Zero Energy (NZ) strategy means producing, from renewable resources, as much energy on site as is used over the course of the year⁸.

Libraries across the country are hosting repair events to empower folks to fix items rather than

risks, miscommunication, and trauma⁶. Key to this concept is the ability of community members to work together to achieve positive outcomes – not just for themselves, but for individuals, families, and the community as a whole despite the challenges they may face as a community from a variety of causes.

Climate adaptation/justice work is equity, diversity, and inclusion work. NAACP describes four areas of focus for climate justice work⁷:

- Advance Food Justice
- Advocate for Transportation Equity
- Uphold Civil and Human Rights in Emergency Management
- Facilitate Participatory Democracy.



⁶ Sonny S. Patel, M. Brooke Rogers, Richard Amlôt, and G. James Rubin, "What Do We Mean by 'Community Resilience'? A Systematic Literature Review of How It Is Defined in the Literature," 2017, currents.plos.org/disasters/index.html%3Fp=28783.html

⁷ <https://naacp.org/know-issues/environmental-climate-justice.org/know-issues/environmental-climate-justice>

⁸ www.epa.gov/water-research/net-zero-resources

of all ten libraries on the SLI website:
www.sustainablelibrariesinitiative.org/

School Libraries



Council Committee on Sustainability Spring 2022

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Four easy ways to get started

Join the Sustainability Round Table of the American Library Association. Check out their fabulous Zotero Library filled with resources on sustainability: www.ala.org/rt/sustainrt

Download the free Road Map to Sustainability app from the Sustainable Libraries Initiative (and sign
