

Role of Green Libraries in Environmental Sustainability: A Study on Approaches of Academic Library Directors

Müge Akbulut, Erdinç Alaca, Tubanur Büyükçolpan, Demet Soylu

Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University, Ankara, Turkey {makbulut, ealaca, tbuyukcolpan, [dsoylu](mailto:dsoylu@ybu.edu.tr)}@ybu.edu.tr

Banu Fulya Yıldırım

Ankara University, Ankara, Turkey, bfyildirim@ankara.edu.tr

Nilay Cevher, Serap Kurbanoğlu

Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey, {cevher13, serap}@hacettepe.edu.tr

Green library action has boosted both libraries and their users to become much greener and contribute to ecological sustainability. The concept of green library, which has emerged in the late 20th century, has recently started to be used commonly in the field of information science (Küçükcan & Konya, 2013), is defined as a “library designed to minimize negative impacts on natural environment and maximize indoor environment quality by means of careful site selection, use of natural construction materials and biodegradable products, conservation of resources such as water, energy etc.” (Online Dictionary of Library and Information Science [ODLIS], 2017). Today, libraries are considered significant as they not only disseminate the idea of sustainability and teach environmental literacy but also become a role model for other organizations in green practices by thinking globally and acting locally (Mulford & Himmel, 2010). Thus, it can be stated that as decision makers, library directors, play a key role in sustainability and practises of green libraries while making decisions in crucial issues such as supporting sustainability, being more sensitive to nature, and creating green library perception.

This study aims to address the approaches and attitudes of library directors towards possible impacts of libraries on the environment, measures taken and contributions of green libraries to environmental sustainability. Within the scope of the study, a questionnaire was conducted with 13 library directors in Ankara, Turkey. The survey consists of six main sections: sustainable environment, water saving, energy and atmosphere, sustainable resources and materials, indoor air quality, innovations in design and application. It has revealed the green practices of the libraries, environmental awareness and environmental literacy level of the library directors.

Findings of the survey have proven that university libraries in Ankara meet green library criteria only partially. Findings also indicate insufficiencies and ignorance in terms of water saving, routine follow-up of water consumption, energy use and use of renewable sources as well as participation in environmental activities. Some differences among universities in terms of environmental approaches and green practices were also detected. Atılım University, Bilkent University, Başkent University, University of Turkish Aeronautical Association and Middle East Technical University libraries have been found out to be the greenest, in other words, most environmentally friendly libraries. Majority of the library directors have been identified to be sensitive to environmental sustainability, water and energy saving as well as taking necessary precautions.

References

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Keywords: *Green library, environmental awareness, environmental attitudes, environmental sustainability, environmental literacy, university libraries, library managers.*