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The Library as a Campus Sustainability Champion

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CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

The Library as a Campus Sustainability Champion

Mandi Goodsett, MLIS, MEd

Performing Arts & Humanities Librarian

Michael Schwartz Library | Cleveland State University

Libraries and Sustainability

Institutions, businesses, and governments around the world have come to realize that a sustainable mindset is not only good for human health *and* their bottom line, it's also essential for the maintenance of civilization for future generations. **Sustainability** can be defined as: "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, United Nations). **But what does sustainability have to do with libraries?**

Looking at the **United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals**, we can see some clues about why sustainability is relevant to libraries—including academic libraries. **Sustainability, at its core, is not about nature or the planet; it's about people.** To sustain our population into the future, we need to consider the implications of our actions on natural resources and the environment we share. Sustainability is also a **social justice issue**: those who live in less developed countries or regions will be most negatively impacted by the effects of climate change. For these reasons, the Michael Schwartz Library (MSL) started a Sustainability Interest Group, made up of library staff, to tackle issues related to sustainability.

Projects

The MSL Sustainability Interest Group was founded in the summer of 2017. The group started with some small projects, including:

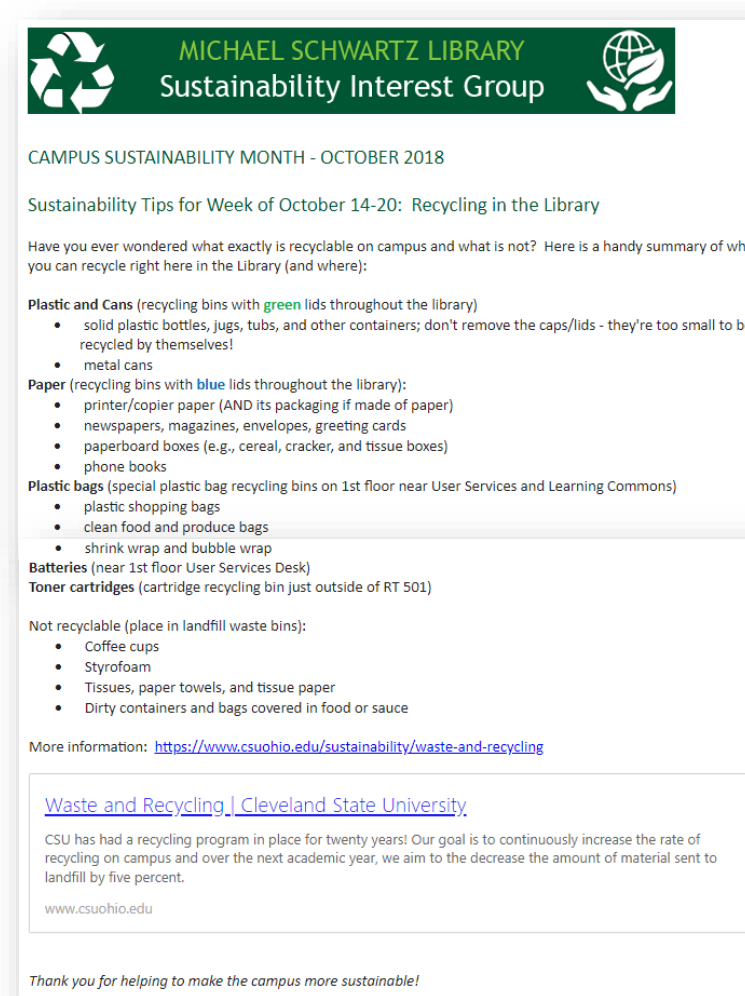
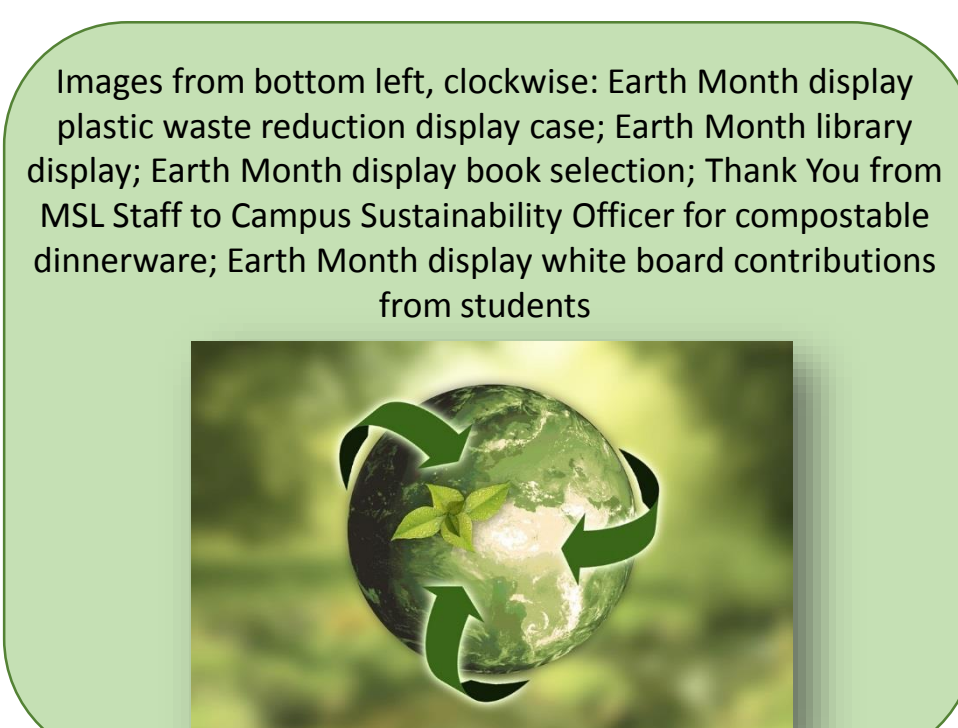
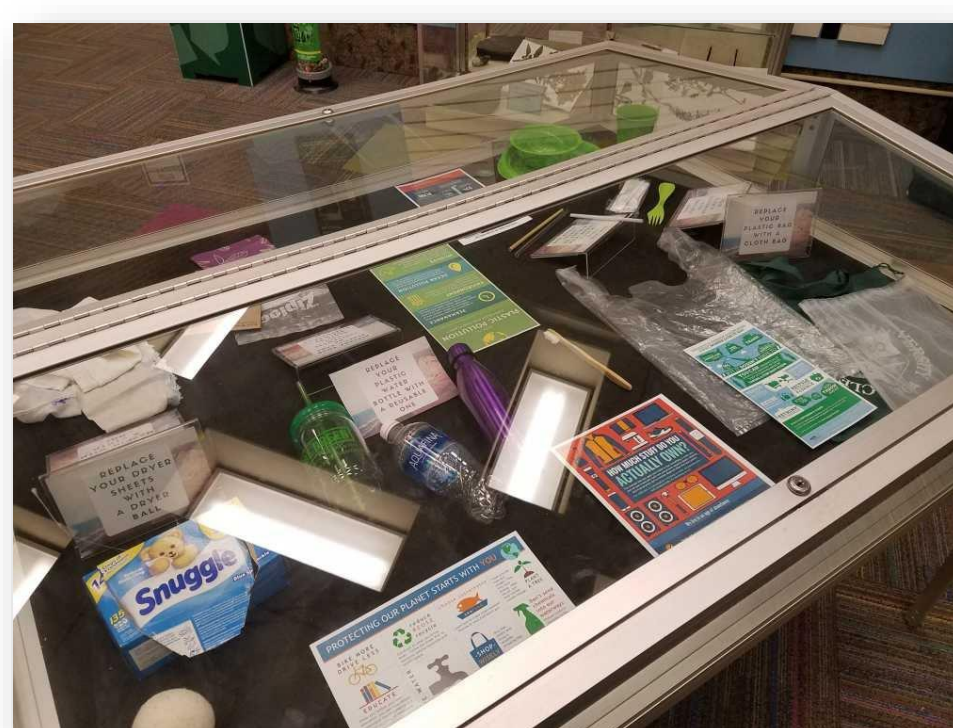
- Having the Cleveland State University **Sustainability Officer** come to a library staff meeting to talk about sustainability efforts on campus
- Working with the custodial staff and facilities to **reduce the number of garbage bins** and **increase the number of recycling bins** in the library; bins were also grouped in a more logical way that made recycling easier
- Working with the Sustainability Officer to **win a grant** from the Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District to get two **plastic bag recycling bins**, now located prominently on the library's first floor
- Creating an image **advertising plastic bag and battery recycling** that is displayed on our large display screens in the library entrance
- Switching to **100% recycled paper** for library staff printing
- Receiving small **paper recycling bins** for free from the Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District to be used in library staff offices
- Creating and facilitating trays for **gently-used paper to be reused** by library staff
- Facilitating **weekly sustainability e-mail tips** for Campus Sustainability Month in October of 2017 and 2018

Compostable Dinnerware at Library-Hosted Events

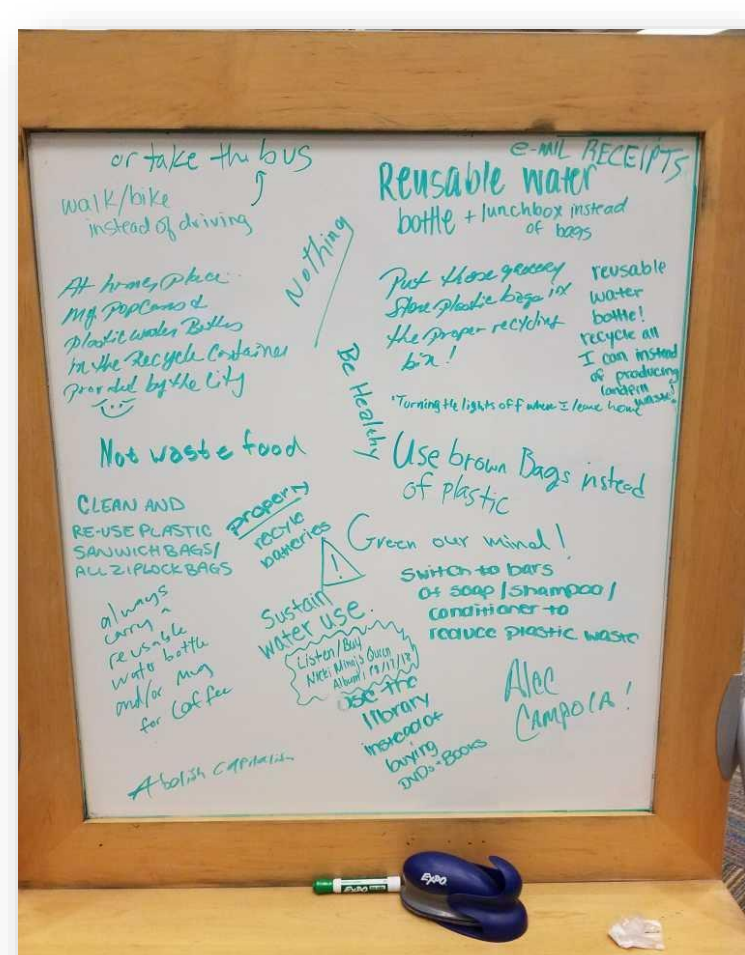
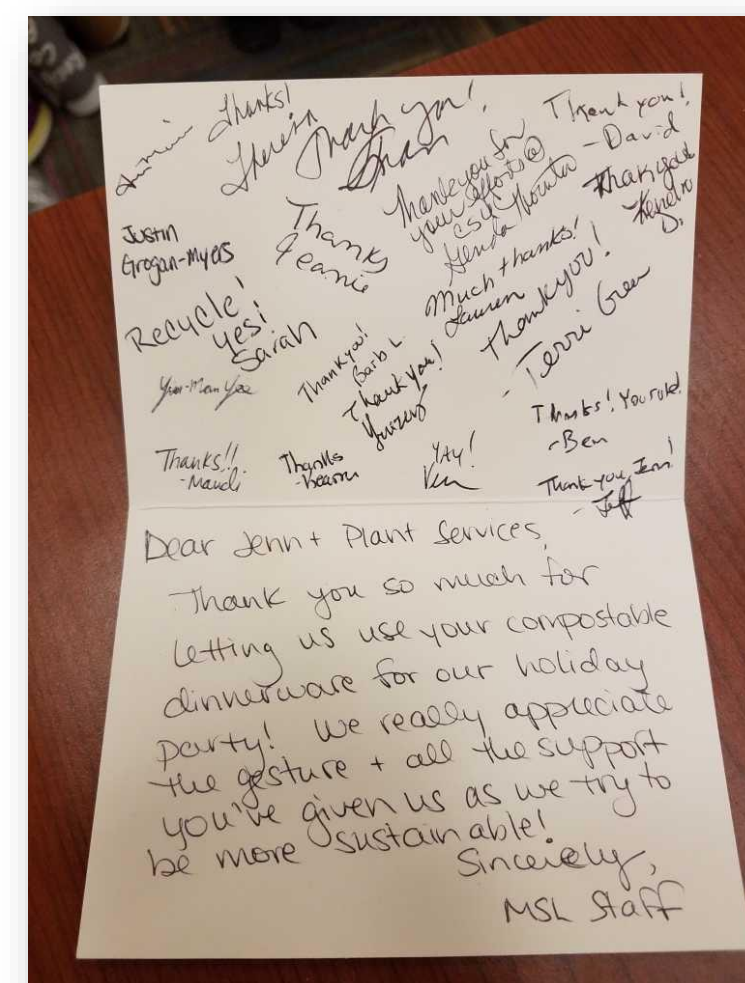
- Who:** The MSL Sustainability Interest Group and the CSU Sustainability Office
- When:** Library holiday celebration—our largest annual party—among other events
- What:** Campus Sustainability Office provided a compostable garbage bag, as well as compostable plates, cups, and utensils. The library was able to supplement the above with additional compostable dinnerware. Sustainability IG members took care of helping staff use the compost bin and transporting the compost to the appropriate site on campus.
- Why:** Reduces waste; the project was so successful that we were able to implement it again at the Staff Awards Ceremony using donated compostable dinnerware

Earth Month Library Display

- Who:** In celebration of Earth Month in April, the MSL Sustainability Interest Group worked with multiple campus organizations to create a large Earth Month display in the library.
- What:** The campus group, Student Environmental Movement, contributed material to the display and helped arrange it. The Sustainability Office provided material about sustainability on campus. Librarians pulled relevant books to include in the display. Marketing and program planning staff created signage, set up a TV to play sustainability-related films, and helped to bring the display together.
- When:** The display was completed in time for the campus Earth Fest celebration in April, 2018, so we were able to encourage participants to see the library's display.
- Why:** Raised awareness about sustainability with a large audience; Provided an opportunity for collaboration; The display received a lot of positive feedback and remained up throughout the summer



Campus Sustainability Month Email Campaign



Projects, Continued

Sustainability Speaker Series

- Who:** For 2018–2019, the MSL is collaborating with the Sustainability Office to offer a sustainability speaker series
- What:** Four sets of speakers, each composed of faculty paired with someone from a community organization working on a similar issue; Speakers come from business, environmental science, urban affairs, and engineering
- When:** Two speaker events in the fall and two in spring
- Where:** Library lounge, where passers-by might stop-in to listen
- Why:** To highlight the sustainability research of CSU faculty and demonstrate how it's applied in our communities; To spur conversation about sustainability on campus; To help celebrate Sustainable Cleveland 2019, which marks the 50th anniversary of the Cuyahoga River catching fire, sparking the modern environmental movement

Become a Sustainability Champion on Your Campus!

Are you interested in trying some sustainability initiatives at *your* library? Here are some ways to get started!



Collaborate with your campus sustainability officer or office

- Schedule a meeting to learn what the campus is already doing; ask how you can help!
- Brainstorm an event or project you could collaborate on



Create a group, team, or committee in your library

- Determine which staff members or librarians are also interested in sustainability at your library
- If you can, gain administrative support for a group or committee



Highlight sustainability research your faculty is doing

- Determine who the sustainability researchers are on your campus—they may come from a variety of depts.
- Showcase their work in a speaker series or on a research guide; how can you provide support to them?



Consider how to make the library facility more sustainable

- Is there adequate recycling in the building? Do faucets leak? Are the light bulbs LEDs?
- Get to know the custodial staff and ask how you can help make sustainable practices easier for them

Resources

To learn more about sustainability in libraries, consider consulting these resources:

- Smith Aldrich, Rebekkah. (2018). *Sustainable Thinking: Ensuring your Library's Future in an Uncertain World*. ALA Editions.
- Jankowska, M. A. (Ed.). (2014). *Focus on Educating for Sustainability: Toolkit for Academic Libraries*. Litwin Books.
- Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE): <http://www.aashe.org/>
- ALA Sustainability Roundtable: <http://www.ala.org/rt/sustainrt/>
- Final Report of the ALA Special Task Force on Sustainability: <http://sustainablelibraries.org/>
- UN Sustainable Development Goals: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>
- New York Library Association Sustainability Initiative: <https://tinyurl.com/ybohlm9j>
- ALA Sustainability Research Guide: <http://libguides.ala.org/SustainableLibraries>
- CSU Michael Schwartz Library Sustainability Interest Group: <http://researchguides.csuohio.edu/mslsustainability>

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Link to this Poster: <https://tinyurl.com/ycn2bxtc>

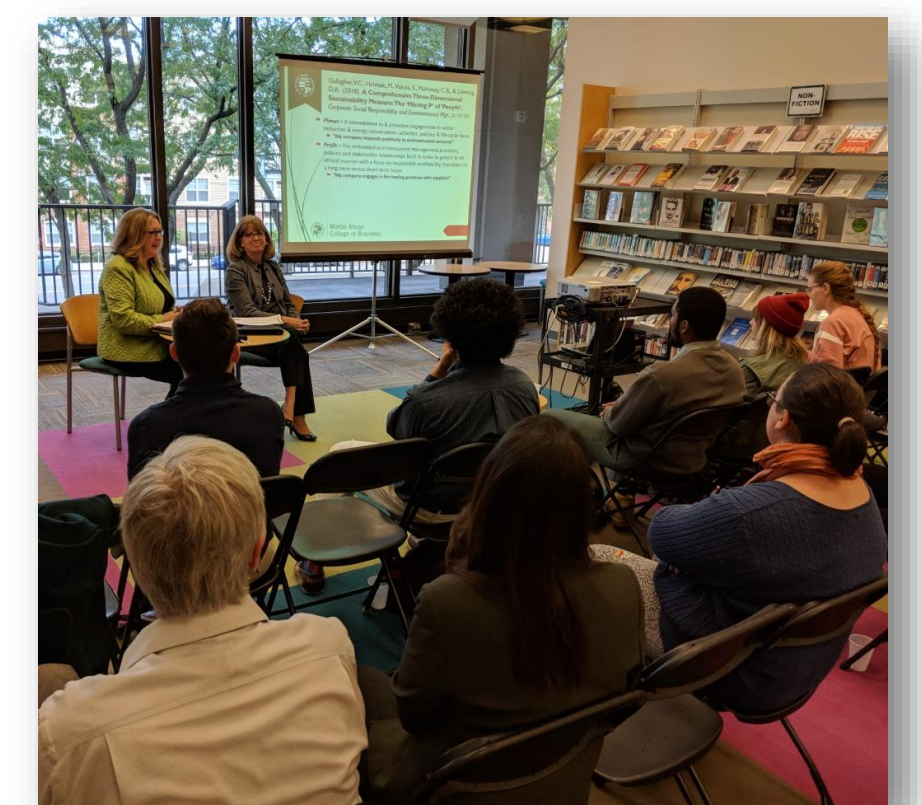
Sustainability Library Groups

Below is a list of groups that support sustainability in libraries:

- IFLA Environment, Sustainability, and Libraries Special Interest Group
- ALA International Relations Round Table (IRRT) International Sustainable Development Interest Group
- ALA Sustainability Round Table
- ALA Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) Task Force on the Environment
- New York Library Association (NYLA) Sustainable Library Certification Program

For more details on ALA's involvement in promoting sustainability, see:

<http://libguides.ala.org/SustainableLibraries>



First event of MSL Sustainability Speaker Series, October 2018

