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How green is our library?



Jo Horsfall and Kathy Pitt

Leeds Metropolitan University

j.horsfall@leedsmet.ac.uk; k.a.pitt@leedsmet.ac.uk

Introduction

An environment group has had a presence within Leeds Met Libraries since December 2004. Initially the group chose to look at simple things which could have a positive impact on how we use resources in the workplace. We introduced recycling bins for plastic cups and cans in the staff tearooms, provided dispensers for plastic carrier bags near the self-service machines and arranged training hours for library staff to learn more about environmental issues and to look at their carbon footprint.

In May 2006, the group decided to continue their work via an e-mail discussion forum where any issues of environmental concern were raised, with dedicated members of the group continuing to action if appropriate. We found that as time went on, there was an increased interest in environmental matters, so much so that in April 2009 the group reformed, with a new membership and a new title of Green Initiatives Group. The remit of the group is:

- To raise awareness of and promote green issues amongst library staff.
- To exchange best practice in the university and in the Higher Education library sector.
- To build relationships with other ethical organisations working in the Leeds area.

One of our aims is to be aware of initiatives taking place in the wider university and to be able to communicate relevant information to library staff about what the university is involved in environmentally. Below is a brief outline of what we have achieved as a group and current projects we are working on.

Waste management

Since waste bins were removed from the library and replaced by “recycling” bins, there has been some confusion amongst staff and students as to what we can place in these bins and what becomes of the contents. For example, can food waste be placed with paper and card? Following requests from colleagues to investigate, we are organising a trip for several group members to visit the local recycling plant used by Leeds Met. Our intention is to see at first hand how the waste is sorted with the aim of publicising our findings to library staff and possibly mounting an awareness campaign.

PC shutdown

The group is keen to find different ways to encourage staff to shut down their computers at night instead of just logging off. In November 2008 Leeds Met staff were invited to make a concerted effort to turn off their electrical appliances when they left for the weekend. This initiative formed part of the ‘Big Switch Off’ campaign, which saw the university working in collaboration with Leeds City Council. Figures recorded showed a dramatic reduction in numbers of computers left on compared to weekends leading up to this event. Unfortunately the number left on quickly rose again afterwards but this shows the impact that is possible. Although the university’s IT department is currently working on an automatic shut-down of staff computers, we need to find a solution in the interim.

Recycled paper

We were asked to investigate the possibility of using recycled paper for all printed library guides. After discussing printing costs and looking at the types of recycled paper available, a decision has been made to use recycled paper for all printed library guides from summer 2010 (externally produced material is already on recycled paper). We are also currently looking into changing to a “greener” stationery supplier.

A simple but very effective initiative we have taken is to make sure there is a constant supply of scrap paper to hand at the libraries Help and Information Points. The amount of scrap paper that staff can potentially accumulate means that we never have to use Post-It notes or unused paper. A designated member of staff at both library campuses makes sure that the supply is constantly topped up and feedback suggests that staff now rely heavily on it being there.

Involvement with other environmental groups

We have an active presence on the university Environmental Coordinators Group and also on the Fairtrade Steering Group. We also contribute to discussions on the LIS-Green e-mailing list.

This enables us to keep up to date with plans, activities and events in which we can get involved. In addition, it is a useful vehicle to inform the wider university what the library is doing with regards to environmental matters. As a result, we are looking at the possibility of mounting displays to promote Earth Hour switch off, recycling and transport initiatives in the libraries' display area.

One of the challenges we have faced as a group is to keep motivated when ideas and suggestions can take time to mature. Time constraints and staff commitments elsewhere have played a big part in just how much the group can do. New and innovative ways of taking the group forward have to be considered. We are aiming to hold our next meeting via the web conferencing software, Elluminate, which will allow staff to sit at their own PCs and participate in the meeting, avoiding the need for travel between sites – this is truly green awareness in action!

As joint-chairs of the Green Initiatives Group, we have big hopes for the future and will continue to look for new and innovative ways to encourage green behaviour.

Durham University Library Environment Group

Anne Farrow

Durham University Library Environment Group

Inspired by speakers at the UC&R North West Section training day in April 2008, staff at Durham set up a Library Environment Group (LEG) to consider how we could become less wasteful of resources and more aware of the impact current library practice was having on the environment. In fact we soon discovered we were pre-empting changes the university as a whole was about to make, to improve its green credentials. So when departments were asked in November 2008 to appoint Energy Champions to oversee the implementation of university environmental policies, the library already had a committee working to achieve this, which our appointed Energy Champion could join and indeed lead.

In October 2010, the university restructured and renamed its Environment Office in order to bring all environmental initiatives and activities together under the one name of Greenspace. This refocusing of activity has been strongly promoted by the Vice Chancellor, who addressed a meeting of all Environment Champions, urging them to raise the environmental awareness of staff and students.

The targets for carbon emission reduction set by HEFCE originated in the Climate Change Act 2008, and are legally binding. In addition to all the well-rehearsed environmental reasons, there are now compelling economic reasons for universities to reach these targets, as poor performing institutions will face financial penalties from HEFCE as well as increasing energy bills. With these incentives and the weight of the VC behind us, there is a new urgency to the work of LEG and we believe our role has been given a significantly higher profile. We are responsible for ensuring that the instructions received from Greenspace are communicated to the library staff and acted upon.

During the last two and a half years we have achieved a great deal but also encountered obstacles and frustrations on the path to greener libraries. LEG meets about 5 times a year to review progress and promote new initiatives.

Recycling

We now have bins for recycling paper and card, plastic, and cans. In addition, we recycle batteries and printer cartridges and used fluorescent tubes.

Saving Energy

- We invited the university Energy Officer to attend one of our meetings and discussed with him the best ways for saving energy. There was some useful exchange of information, enabling us to cooperate more on reducing energy consumption. Knowing where the heat sensors are, and who to contact when faults occur are important.
- Greenspace sends weekly information on energy saving actions to LEG to display and pass on to staff.
- We are continually encouraging staff to switch off unnecessary lights, screens, PCs, photocopiers, laptop safes, and other energy guzzling machines. A timelier programme of automatic powering down of PCs is being prepared for implementation soon which will relate switch on and off times more closely to opening hours at the various library sites.

.Use of Stationery

- All Library sites have printers which will facilitate double sided printing and staff are encouraged to print in this way and only to print when necessary.
- All paper bought for printing and photocopying is recycled paper.
- Scrap paper printed on one side only is used for notes instead of “post-its” and left by catalogue terminals for readers to use.
- Envelopes are reused for all internal post.
- Staff are encouraged to use pencils and fountain pens rather than biros.

Book Disposal

The Library has begun to use the firm Nationwide Bookbuyers for book disposal. Books are either re-used or re-marketed and any remaining are recycled, thus avoiding the use of landfill for book disposal.

Cycle racks

The library in cooperation with Estates and Buildings paid for the installation of cycle racks in front of the Main Library.

Bags



Perhaps our greatest success has been the sale of the Bill Bryson Jute Bag. Until the bag was produced, Library staff had been given new plastic carriers to hand out to readers. The first edition of 2,000 Bryson bags sold out in six months. The bag was printed with the side panels in the Durham “Palatinate purple”, the library URL and a quotation about Durham from the Chancellor, Bill Bryson’s book “Notes from a small island”, in which he extols the attractions of Durham, “If

you have never been to Durham, go there at once.... It's wonderful." We omitted his words, "take my car", as this didn't quite fit with being green!



Bill agreed to be photographed at the launch of the bag, and to his name being associated with it. We are now selling the second edition, which was made smaller, a different colour, but still in jute, in response to comments received in a survey. Bill has given us a new quotation on Durham, so the bag continues to be popular among tourists and library users. It even has a Facebook fan page and has been spotted as far afield as New York and in various parts of

Australia, where it was taken by the Librarian.

Communicating our message

This is the most challenging part of our work as a committee, and the one where success is more difficult to measure. We have displayed posters and stickers, and added regular messages to the weekly staff bulletin. We now have a weekly "Green tips" slot which has become very popular among staff.

Here is an example:

Green tips

BE A BETTER DRIVER AND SAVE MONEY

If you can't avoid using the car every now and then, you can at least reduce its environmental impact. To save on fuel, drive in the highest gear practicable and avoid using air-conditioning whenever possible. For more ideas, see: <http://www.fuel-economy.co.uk/toptips.shtml>

Library Environment Group

We have contributed to the university Environment Week activities this year and last, by having a library stall at the fair, and a display in the library where we advertised books and DVDs on environmental matters, sold our Bryson bag and asked for suggestions from students and staff on how we could make the library a more environmentally friendly place. One lucky winner, picked at random from the box of suggestions, received a free Bryson bag and a copy of "Notes from a small island". We have bought

books which convey the green message and displayed them as part of a separate “wellbeing” collection.

The problem for libraries is that we need to encourage others, staff and readers, to join our green crusade, without being so constantly demanding that we discourage rather than encourage. So we try to facilitate change rather than enforce it. We rely on outsiders, our readers, to co-operate with our aims and wishes, and other university departments, Estates and Buildings and ITS. Perhaps we have to be content with a less than perfect result, knowing we have done what we can and are not able to force others to adopt our ways, or provide the funding needed for change. Any advice on more subtle and effective methods of persuasion would be gratefully received.