

Chapter 13

Towards Environmental Sustainability: Improving Waste Management Practices in Libraries

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ABSTRACT

The chapter theoretically examines the improvement of waste management in academic libraries as a stride towards ensuring environmental sustainability in line with the United Nations' agenda for sustainable development. The chapter in its introductory part established the place of waste management within the development framework. It exposes the concept and practices of waste management in libraries with particular reference to reusing, recycling, pulverization, repairing, and effective disposal. Thereafter, global best practices in waste management applicable to libraries were examined. The chapter also investigated the strategies and challenges to the implementation of waste management in libraries. Conclusion and recommendations were made accordingly.

INTRODUCTION

Libraries have secured a place of pride as agent of societal transformation and a driver of development across all strata of life (Igbinovia, 2016). In the wake of sustainable development, libraries have rightly positioned themselves to support critical goals within the sustainable development framework. In broad categorization, scholars have asserted that the goals in the global sustainable development agenda fall

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within social, economic and environmental sustainabilities (Igbinoia, 2022). These could be regarded as the tripartite dimensions of sustainabilities, pertinent to solving life's problems and consequently improving the standard of living through social, economic and environmental dimensions of life. Taylor (2016) called them the three fundamental pillars of sustainable development. The International Union for Conservation of Nature in Singh and Mishra (2019 p.3) opined that sustainability is the "capacity to improve the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of the Earth's supporting eco-system". While it seems clear how libraries as social institutions are improving human lives socially by been a social space and safe-haven for people to interact profitably (Ismail & Chi, 2018); and how as information institutions they are providing information and knowledge that revamps business ventures and provide economic opportunities (Igbinoia & Odelami, 2019); they must also begin to make obvious, their stand in solving environmental problems within and outside the libraries.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which is the global agenda to transform our world and make life better without compromising the future, emphasized the need for environmental sustainability. The Sphera's Editorial Team in Igbinoia (2022) affirmed that environmental sustainability connotes the necessity to preserve natural resources and maintain the ecosystem in order to ensure quality health and well-being, now and in the future. The goal according to Goodland in Singh and Mishra (2019) is to sustain the raw materials by which human needs are met invariably enhancing human lives and ensure that the sinks for human waste are not exceeded, in avoidance of possible harm. Thus, a vital aspect of environmental sustainability is waste management. This aligns with Khudyakova and Lyaskovskaya (2021) when they opined that currently, waste management is one of the most prominent environmental challenges that threaten the environment both now and in the future. The International Institute for Sustainable Development (2016) therefore affirmed that a good utilization of public resources should be devoted to waste management to facilitate transition to sustainable forms of development. In attempt to solve environmental problems, the United Nations' agenda on sustainable development acknowledges waste management across certain targets in some of its goals. Specifically, goal 6 target 2 (6.2) partly reads "by 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all". Goal 11 target 6 (11.6) states that "by 2030, reduce the adverse per capital environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality, municipal and other waste management". Also goal 12 target 5 (12.5) stated that "by 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse". By inference from United Nations (2015), waste management is an area of critical importance that should stimulate action and collaborative partnership from all stakeholders including libraries. It is one of the critical areas demanding close attention for the realization of sustainable development, as it also impacts negatively on economic development and human health (Wan, et. al., 2019). Thus, waste management practice is an essential approach and transformative step towards achieving environmental sustainability by any nation or institution inclusive of libraries.

Libraries acquire resources which over time could have limited value and requires disposal. Some information resources in libraries might become obsolete especially in the science disciplines, and where recent editions are already available in the library. This call for weeding of such materials since library in the words of Banu (2016) is not a warehouse for books. According to Maphosa (2021), universities [of which libraries are vital aspect of] produce large amount of e-waste especially from obsolete computers and the lack the recycling infrastructure and policies to manage them leads to storing e-wastes for up to three (3) years hereby compounding e-waste burden which threatens the environment. Libraries acquire and utilize electronic resources, electricals, furniture among others, which are prone to deterioration overtime. These materials when no longer needed in the library become a waste, which if not properly

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