Environmental Protection Agency

Amanda Snyder
Cleve J. Fredricksen Library, USA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provides access to information on a variety of topics related to the environment and strives to inform citizens of health risks. The EPA also has an extensive library network that consists of 26 libraries throughout the United States, which provide access to a plethora of information to EPA employees, scientists, and researchers. The EPA implemented a reorganization project to digitize their materials so they would be more accessible to a wider range of users, but this plan was drastically accelerated when the EPA was threatened with a budget cut. It chose to close and reduce the hours and services of some of their libraries. As a result, the agency was accused of denying users the "right to know" by making information unavailable, not providing an adequate strategic plan, and discarding vital materials. This case study explores the background of the digitization project, the practices implemented, and the critiques of the project.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was created on December 2, 1970 due to concerns about environmental pollution. The EPA was designed to conduct federal research, monitor pollution levels, set standards, and protect the environment (EPA, 1992). The EPA's overall current mission is to protect individuals and the environment by eliminating health risks within communities and

workplaces. The EPA also strives to reduce environmental risks based on scientific research through federal laws and policies regarding natural resources, economic growth, energy, transportation, agriculture, industry, and international trade. The EPA further provides access to this information to every level of society including state and local governments, communities, businesses, and individuals. Additionally, the EPA encourages the United States to cooperate on an international scale and stand as an example in protecting the global environment. The EPA accomplishes its mission and vision through a variety of actions. When an environmental law is passed, it creates the corresponding regulations and sets national standards that will be enforced through state regulations. The agency also set aside about half of its budget to fund grants for state environmental programs, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations for scientific research or studies. The EPA also conducts laboratory research concerning environmental problems and shares its findings with private organizations and schools. Through these initiatives, the agency is able to forge partnerships and educate people about pressing environmental issues (EPA, 2012d).

For the 2012 fiscal year, the EPA's enacted budget was $8,449,385,000 indicating it is a very well-funded agency, although the agency received more funding in 2011 with $8,682,117,000. Throughout the years, funding has fluctuated within about $1,000,000 every year. For example, looking at the enacted budget for 2005, the EPA received $8,023,483,000. In 2006 and 2007, however, it was notified of a proposed budget cut and received $7,617,416,000 and $7,725,130,000 respectively. The workforce for the EPA in 2011 consisted of 17,359 people, a slight increase from 2010's 17,278. Based on the numbers, the EPA seems to have stabilized with a workforce of about 16,000 to 17,000 individuals with about $6,000,000 to $8,000,000 as a budget. This is much increased from the 1970 workforce of 4,084 employees with only a budget of $1,003,984,000. In 2011, the EPA focused on purifying the Hudson River through dredging, and in the next five years, it is expected that General Electric will remove 2.4 million cubic years of contaminated sediment from part of the Upper Hudson River. The agency also worked to improve air quality through the Clean Air Act Settlement with the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) who spent $350 million on projects for increasing energy efficiency and renewable energy. This project could help reduce nitrogen emissions by 69% and sulfur dioxide by 67%. The EPA has also worked on preserving the quality of America's waterways among other projects (EPA, 2012b; EPA, 2012c).

An increased interest in the environment surfaced in 1969 after the moon landing. As the EPA (1992) noted, humanity was, for the first time, able to see pictures of the Earth from space, which instilled a newfound pride and concern for their planet culminating in the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970. Americans, however, had long recognized the consequences of damaging behavior on the environment.

13 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/environmental-protection-agency/82660

Related Content

Privacy-Preserving Data Mining
Stanley R.M. Oliveira (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 1582-1588).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/privacy-preserving-data-mining/11030

Information Veins and Resampling with Rough Set Theory
Benjamin Griffiths (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 1034-1040).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/information-veins-resampling-rough-set/10948

Literacy in Early Childhood: Multimodal Play and Text Production
Sally Brown (2020). *Participatory Literacy Practices for P-12 Classrooms in the Digital Age (pp. 1-19).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/literacy-in-early-childhood/237410

Tabu Search for Variable Selection in Classification
Silvia Casado Yustaand Joaquín Pacheco Bonrostro (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 1909-1915).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/tabu-search-variable-selection-classification/11080

Mining 3D Shape Data for Morphometric Pattern Discovery
Li Shenand Fillia Makedon (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 1236-1242).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/mining-shape-data-morphometric-pattern/10980