GOOD NEWS! Libraries are, by their very nature, inherently “green.” They are all about sharing resources, eliminating the need to duplicate them for everybody. BUT… we do use a lot of resources, particularly paper and electricity.

As information professionals, “a lot” is a very unsatisfying answer. We like detailed numbers! How can we get accurate data about how much energy/water/paper we consume? INTRODUCING…

The Natural Capital Protocol
a way to measure impacts and dependencies on natural resources

- Natural capital is one of the commonly recognized forms of capital. Others include financial, intellectual, and social capital.
- The Protocol provides a framework for businesses (and non-profits) to analyze their interactions with this crucial form of capital that forms the basis of all wealth on Earth.

Resources Libraries Use

- Paper: As long as we buy books, we can’t avoid it. But we can recycle more, and maybe move some of our routine tasks online and stay digital instead of getting printed.
- Overheads: Clearly, power use for computers will only increase. Likewise, for everything closed “to the cloud.” There’s a lot of energy being used… somewhere.
- Lights: Obviously we need them, but can libraries be made more sustainable? Can less?
- Water: For handwashing and toilets, consider a catchment system.

Programming Ideas

Passive:
- Expand rubbish bins to include multiple types of recycling
- Seed Share Stations to encourage sharing knowledge of growing food
- Make sure that any energy-generating systems in place at the library are visible, and that information about them is accessible (how many kWs does this produce?)

Active:
- Hosting programs for all ages on sustainability, energy conservation, reuse/recycling, and local food systems
- Create makerspaces centered around creative reuse
- Involve the community in brainstorming how the library can become more sustainable over time

References
- IFLA’s Green Library Award: http://www.ifla.org/askco8gif
- Kah-lok/background image credit: User: Anvito/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-fish.jpg
- Makaha-Jean Lee/Booth Kohala Public Library
- Want more? Check these out:
  - www.greenlibrarian.org: A directory of green libraries in North America
  - http://www.ala.org/nuinternet/ - ALA’s Sustainability RoadTable

Inspiration: IFLA’s 2016 Green Library Award

El Pequito Sol Ecological Library,
San Cristobal de las Casas,
Chiapas, Mexico

The library was built from garbage and panels. It was all hand-made and built by the school community.

North Kohala
Hawaii’s Greenest Public Library?

Good ‘passive’ design: Large windows allow for natural lighting in rooms. Cost- very little (high ROI)

Well-mean design: Windmills are really cute. They don’t end up providing much of the library’s energy needs. Cost- was it worth it?

Turning pages
Into treasures
Image: Gerin Venezia A.A.