GOING GREEN is now a national issue, and patrons expect their library to respond in the same way many corporations have. Libraries are going green with logos on their websites, programs for the public, and a host of other initiatives. This is the first book to focus strictly on the library’s role in going green, helping you with

- Collection development, disposal, and recycling issues
- Green equipment, technology, and facilities
- Programming ideas with supporting tables and figures
- Ways to get the community involved in the process

Highly practical and bursting with ideas, this guide will serve as a quick reference source for going green in your library.

You may also be interested in

www.alastore.ala.org
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INTRODUCTION

Throughout modern history public libraries have provided “the resources for citizens to become informed about events and thus able to participate in the democratic process with greater knowledge.”¹ A public library provides its community with the resources it needs to learn, understand, and grow.

As learners need change, so do public libraries. Change may be reflected in the resources made available to the community, the learning tools provided at the library, or the educational offerings made available at the library. Now, in the twenty-first century, public libraries are challenged with the new role of connecting the public with environmental awareness and education. Public libraries are challenged to go green.

What Does It Mean to “Go Green”?²

Our society relies on Earth’s resources for food, health, and life. It is the human race’s responsibility to protect and preserve Earth’s resources. Sustainable living, defined as one’s ability to live a life that makes as little negative impact on the environment as possible, is the underlying goal of “going green.” Living a life that protects, preserves, and replenishes Earth’s resources is a green lifestyle. Public libraries have an important
role in green living. As the “gateway to knowledge,” a public library can be the community’s resource for understanding how to live green, both as an example in being green and as a green education resource.

The need to “go green” is not a new concept but one that has risen in popularity and in media exposure as the concept of global warming has become prevalent in the news and popular media. People are beginning to understand that the decisions they make about how they live their lives directly affect the environment. Global warming is the result of what is known as the greenhouse effect, the trapping of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Urban sprawl, car and aircraft emissions, and coal-generated power all contribute to increased temperatures on Earth. The idea of “going green” is to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases we trap. “Going green” is an effort to save our planet by making better choices for its health.

**Legislation**

Countries have worked together to aid the reduction of greenhouse gases. The 1997 Kyoto Treaty, which outlined the importance of worldwide efforts to help the world’s population “go green,” is an example. This treaty is an agreement among countries for each country to make individual efforts to reduce its greenhouse emissions. The Kyoto Treaty set a date of 2012 by which developed nations would release fewer greenhouse gases than they did in 1990. The United States and Australia have not ratified the treaty.

In the United States, federal legislators have taken steps to help protect Earth by passing environmental laws. Many of these laws are administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Examples of environmental laws in place that help the United States “go green” are the Clean Water Act; the Clean Air Act; the Safe Drinking Water Act; the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act; the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act; the Federal Environmental Pesticide Control Act; and the National Environmental Policy Act.

The Clean Water Act, originally passed in 1972, regulates the discharge of pollutants into the nation’s surface waters, including lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, and coastal areas. The EPA administers this act by setting water quality standards and helping state and local governments develop state-specific water pollution control plans.
The Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. §85, originally passed in 1970, protects air quality. This legislation sets standards for air quality and specifically limits the types and amounts of pollutants that can be released into the environment. This act is also administered by the EPA.

The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), 42 U.S.C. §300, provides water quality standards that help protect the quality of actual and potential drinking water in the United States. Water quality standards and control are handled by many states, and state standards for drinking water must be at least as stringent as the federal standards.

The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), 42 U.S.C. §6901, provides rules about how solid and hazardous waste can be generated, handled, and disposed of in the United States. This law, originally enacted in 1976, has been amended to stay current as society and its waste products have changed. The EPA administers the RCRA and provides a searchable database of publications, outreach, and other materials that relate to the rules of the RCRA at www.epa.gov/waste/inforesources/online/index.htm.

The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), 42 U.S.C. §103, passed in 1980 and amended as the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) in 1986, is a federal law that addresses how the cleanup of hazardous waste sites should be handled. This law, commonly referred to as the Superfund, gives the EPA authority to require property owners or operators to clean up hazardous waste sites or, if the responsible party cannot be found, to clean up the site using a special trust fund. The Superfund laws also create retroactive liability for parties who were involved in the hazardous contamination of property.

The Federal Environmental Pesticide Control Act (FEPCA), a 1972 law that updates the 1947 Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA), gives the EPA power to regulate the use and sale of pesticides to “promote human health and preserve the environment.”

The National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. §4321, originally passed in 1970, requires the federal government to consider the environmental impact of potential projects as part of its decision-making processes. An environmental impact statement must be prepared and reviewed by the EPA before a project may begin. Environmental impact statements are available in an online searchable database at www.epa.gov/compliance/nepa/eisdata.html.
The Mercury Export Ban Act of 2008, which prohibits the export of elemental mercury from the United States, was signed into law on October 14, 2008, as Public Law No. 110-414 and was effective on January 1, 2010.

There have been many proposals for new federal laws that would help protect the environment but have not been passed into law. States and cities, however, have taken a lead on developing and implementing environmental laws. An example of a state law that aims to protect the environment is New York State’s Plastic Bag Recycling Law (Assembly Bill A11725/Senate Bill 8643-A). Effective in January 2009, the law requires large retail and chain stores to accept clean plastic bags for recycling.

States have been implementing a variety of laws that direct how electronic products can be disposed of. Many states place the burden of providing a recycling program on the producers of the product. States that have an electronic waste disposal law in place or in process include the following:

- Hawaii: Electronic Device Recycling Act
- Illinois: Electronic Products Recycling and Reuse Act
- Maine: Electronics Waste Recycling Law
- Missouri: Manufacturer Responsibility and Consumer Convenience Computer Equipment Collection and Recovery Act
- New York: Electronic Equipment Recycling and Reuse Act
- Oklahoma: Computer Electronic Recovery Act
- Oregon: Oregon E-Cycles
- Pennsylvania: Manufacturer Responsibility and Consumer Convenience Computer Equipment Collection and Recovery Act
- Rhode Island: Electronic Waste Prevention, Reuse and Recycling Act
- Tennessee: Manufacturer Responsibility and Consumer Convenience Information Technology Equipment Collection and Recovery Act
- Texas: Manufacturer Responsibility and Consumer Convenience Computer Equipment Collection and Recovery Act
- Washington: E-Cycle Washington
Arizona, California, Connecticut, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, Vermont, and West Virginia also have versions of electronic waste disposal laws. To review the laws of each state, visit the Northwest Product Stewardship Council (NWPSC, www.productstewardship.net/index.html)—a coalition of government organizations in Washington and Oregon that operates as an unincorporated association of members.

On a city government level, New York City has many green laws and directives that aim to reduce the amount of waste discarded and to promote waste prevention, recycling, and composting. One of the city’s progressive green laws is Local Law 86 of 2005 (effective in January 2007), which requires “most City construction and renovation projects to meet certain standards for green building. Projects that cost over $2,000,000 must achieve a LEED Silver or higher rating. Projects of higher value are subject to more stringent regulations.”

Another example of a local environmental law is San Francisco’s mandatory composting law, which was passed in 2009. This is a very specific law that requires residents and businesses to sort their waste into three separate color-coded bins for recycling, compost, and waste. Food scraps must be composted and not included in the waste bin. This law includes a steep fine for those who do not properly sort their waste.

As more and more localities pass ordinances or laws that require educated choices, the library can be a leader and teach the community how to understand and comply with the new legislation.

Your public library is a vital component in connecting your citizens with the knowledge and tools they need to “go green”—to change their habits and make the smallest impact possible on Earth’s limited resources. This book outlines ways that an existing public library can take steps to be green, teach green, and lead green. Public libraries going green: this is the next chapter in the growth and history of the public library.

Notes
As our world becomes more environmentally conscious, your public library has the opportunity to become a community example of environmental friendly practices, an environmental leader. An environmental leader is a person or group who acknowledges and accepts the responsibility to set an example as one who bases decisions on how his or her action or choice will affect the environment. A public library can be an environmental leader:

Leadership is all about personal choices. Leaders strive to be the best they can be, not only for themselves, but for those they serve. Environmentalism is all about personal choices, too. In the face of what seems at times to be almost overwhelming environmental bad news, it is reassuring to know that each one of us can make a difference. Each small personal victory adds up to a major impact on our planet’s future.¹

Environmental education is a second green role that your public library can embrace. Environmental education ties into the educational role of the library as a specific type of literacy: environmental literacy. Environmental literacy is “the capacity to perceive and interpret the relative
health of environmental systems and take appropriate action to maintain, restore, or improve the health of those systems."

Environmental leadership and education are growth opportunities for the twenty-first-century public library.

**Environmental Leadership**

Public libraries have traditionally served as vehicles for societal progress within their communities. As President Barack Obama states, “The library has always been a window to a larger world. A place where we’ve always come to discover big ideas and profound concepts that help move the American story forward.” Michael Gorman, past president of the American Library Association, explains: “The printed text allowed us to conquer space, in that many copies were available in many places, and also to conquer time, in that a text printed in, say, the 17th century and held in libraries today is available to us and will be available to future generations.” Throughout history, libraries have contributed to the progress of human knowledge. In the twentieth century, public libraries began to expand their role beyond books and materials and into the use and comprehension of Internet technology. Examples include public libraries’ development of web pages, database use, and, most recently, the use of blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and other Web 2.0 applications to communicate with their communities. Now, in the twenty-first century, public libraries have the role of teaching environmental awareness through library programming and services. Environmental education is yet another way that the public library can help its community take another step toward societal progress.

The public library also plays the role of leading by example. By making pro-environment decisions and adopting pro-environment practices, the public library leads its community by example.

Change is effected through education and by example. The public library is well positioned to effect environmental change. This book provides a public library with ideas about how it can help its community understand their environment and help them make pro-environment choices. With budgets tight and resources becoming more and more expensive, finding funding for green initiatives is tricky. Ideas about how to bring a green atmosphere to your library without making major budget commitments are included.
Environmental Education

Public libraries now have the opportunity to help create environmentally literate communities. Modern environmental education focuses on environmental literacy, a green parallel to information literacy. According to one definition, “To be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information.” As “information literacy is the ability to find and use information,” environmental literacy is the ability to identify a sustainable choice and make that choice. A 2003 report from the National Science Foundation’s Advisory Committee for Environmental Research and Education found that “in the coming decades, the public will more frequently be called upon to understand complex environmental issues, assess risk, evaluate proposed environmental plans and understand how individual decisions affect the environment at local and global scales.” This forecast points to the need for environmental literacy.

The National Environmental Education Foundation’s 2005 report “Environmental Literacy in America” included specific strategies for improved environmental literacy in this nation. Many of the steps suggested in the plan can be effectively achieved by public libraries:

1. Achieve a base of environmental knowledge in America.
2. Organize delivery of environmental education content.
3. Extend environmental education to professionals.
4. More effectively deploy off-site centers, people, and places.
5. Maximize information technology for environmental education delivery.

Through environmental education, we will be taking steps to create environmentally knowledgeable people—people who are able to translate their environmental knowledge into pro-environment behaviors.

According to the plan, environmentally knowledgeable people are

- 10 percent more likely to save energy in the home
- 50 percent more likely to recycle
- 10 percent more likely to purchase environmentally safe products
- 50 percent more likely to avoid using chemicals in yard care
People who are aware of their environment and recognize the effects personal choices can have on our natural resources are more likely to make environmentally sound decisions. Educating people about the environment is key to changing human attitude and action.

An environmentally literate community is one where environmentally knowledgeable people work together to influence the way their community views and uses the environment. The public library can be a hub to put environmental education into the hands of communities throughout the United States. Your public library can effect change through environmental education, creating environmentally knowledgeable people and an environmentally literate community.

Where to Begin?

How does a public library begin becoming green? A first step in becoming green is to develop an action plan that can serve as a road map for the directions and choices your library makes. Your action plan does not have to be detailed; it can simply be an outline of your library’s goals.

An action plan does not have to be cumbersome, and the action plan template shown in figure 1.1 can help jump-start your library’s efforts to be green. Begin your action plan with your overall purpose (it can be as simple as “To be green”). Carol A. Brey-Casiano, ALA president in 2004/5, suggests that “one of the most critical elements of the action plan is the

FIGURE 1.1
Action Plan Template

Description of Project
To position the library as a leader in environmental action and education.

Project Goals
Become a community leader in environmental education
Become a community example in eco-friendly practice
Establish environmentally friendly practices in library facilities
Initiate a community-wide discussion regarding recycling and energy usage
Increase community awareness of environmentally friendly practices through library programming
**The Library’s Green Role**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Persons Responsible</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meet with Board of Trustees to discuss green initiative</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>Library Director, Head of Children’s Service, Head of Adult Service</td>
<td>Meeting took place. Action approved by Board.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish green committee</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>Library Director</td>
<td>Committee members chosen. Committee met January 20.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze current practices used by the library</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>Green Committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invite environmental expert to library to address staff</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>Green Committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop plan on waste reduction in the library</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>Green Committee, Library Director</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop environmental programs</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>Head of Children’s Service, Head of Adult Service, library staff members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare press release discussing the library’s green initiative, actions, and plans for the community</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>Green Committee, Library Director</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once your action plan’s purpose has been established, communicating that purpose to your community is essential. Brey-Casiano urges libraries...
to develop a message that matches their purpose (this can be as simple as “Your Hometown Public Library Is Going Green”). With a concise message, your library can deliver its “going green” purpose and goals to library workers, the community, vendors, and potential community partners. A descriptive message not only communicates your library’s going green, but also provides an easy way to share your vision with those who can help shape and cultivate your library’s efforts.

Community Partnerships

The local business community can be an active partner in your library’s efforts to bring about a greener community. Your action plan can be a good tool to introduce your library’s plan to go green to local businesses who may be able to support your efforts through funding, programming, or advertising your programs.

To help facilitate business interest in the greening of your community, your library can establish a green award to recognize local businesses and services that have taken steps to be green. School and Community Assistance for Recycling and Composting Education (SCARCE) of Glen Ellyn, Illinois, has developed an “Earth Flag for Businesses.” The Earth Flag program is a model for showing that businesses are a friend of the environment. To earn an Earth Flag, the business, organization, or school needs to follow several steps specifically outlined by the organization. Sample steps that need to be taken to earn the Earth Flag include organizing the initial environmental movement at an office meeting, sponsoring an ongoing recycling program at the office, volunteering at a community event that benefits the environment, and sponsoring a waste- or energy-reduction activity (e.g., collection event, composting). SCARCE spells out specific steps for businesses, schools, and organizations on its website (www.bookrescue.org). The SCARCE Earth Flag is a standard-size flag that can be proudly hung on a standard flagpole, clearly announcing that this business, school, organization, or library is environmentally conscious. The SCARCE flag is also available as an image to display on a website. More than thirty businesses have earned SCARCE’s Earth Flag.

This program is an example of how one agency can influence environmental learning and action. Public libraries can study the SCARCE Earth Flag program as an exemplary award-based program in environmental and community awareness that both announces a business or
organization’s commitment to the environment and gently guides the business community through a series of steps to be green.

Your public library can also be a partner in the implementation of local legislation. Many local government bodies are proposing and passing legislation that will help sustain our resources. Public libraries should identify the environment-related laws that are being passed in their own state, town, and community and be an advocate, as well as a possible trainer, for those new laws. Examples of local legislation include San Francisco’s mandatory composting law and New York City’s local green building law.

Partnering with community businesses and organizations will help connect your public library to other groups, with the great potential to expand your own user base. Brey-Casiano notes that the local news media is a valuable partner: “We often think of the media as our adversaries, but members of the media can prove to be your biggest supporters. Most reporters and others associated with the news media believe in intellectual freedom, which creates a common ground from which to start.”

With the help of the local news media, your library can inform your community about your plans to go green. Your local news media can also be excellent vehicles for your community to learn about the green programs and other offerings that will be available at your library.

Notes
9. Ibid., 188.
Your public library has the opportunity to be a community example of environmental awareness and conscious green behavior. In this chapter we look at ways a public library can be a green place.

**Sustainable Buildings**

A green library begins with a sustainable building. A sustainable building is a building that meets the needs of today’s users but does not compromise the health and availability of Earth’s resources. New construction allows planners to create a building that will coexist with the environment, but simple steps can also be taken to make existing buildings more sustainable, or greener.

The United States Green Building Council has developed Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification, a standard for measuring building sustainability. A LEED building is viewed as a green facility: “LEED certification provides independent, third-party verification that a building project meets the highest green building and performance measures.” Several public libraries have achieved LEED certification, including Darien Public Library in Darien, Connecticut,
the Bronx Public Library in New York, and the Hillside Public Library in Multnomah County, Oregon. LEED certification allows these libraries to be examples within their communities of environmental leadership through action.

The New York Public Library system has made a commitment to sustainable buildings as exemplified by its Bronx Library Center, a LEED-certified building. The Bronx Library Center is an actively used building and a central vein of community life in the Bronx borough of New York City. The library features typical library service areas including adult services and children’s services. Computer labs with computer instruction and education rooms, including an area dedicated to English classes for speakers of other languages, are also available. This library is a community leader in environmental education.

Environmental education at the Bronx Public Library begins with its building. Library users are able to experience examples of environmentally conscious design choices such as the placement of lights, wide windows that allow natural light to brighten the library, and low-flush toilets in the bathrooms.

Louis La Grippo, the senior construction manager for the New York Public Library, explains that New York City’s commitment to environmental awareness begins with the buildings but depends on the attitudes and choices made by the employees and users of the library. Environmental choices are a team effort, and every person on the New York Public Library team has to be educated about how to make the best choices for the environment and how to help users make the best choices as well.

Environmental learning is about support as well as knowledge. New York City has the support of its government to encourage and fund environmentally sustainable buildings, the public library has the support of its employees to help the library make choices that have the least impact on the environment, and the people of New York City have the example of the beautiful, environmentally conscious Bronx Library Center to help them learn about and guide their own environmentally conscious decisions for their own homes and businesses. The plaque announcing the Bronx Library Center’s LEED certification is a reminder for every library employee and user that the environment comes first at the New York Public Library.

With categories for both existing buildings and new constructions, LEED has developed a point system with varied values for different green building practices. Various levels of LEED certification based on the num-
ber of points (out of a total of sixty-nine) that your building earns. There are five broad credit categories from which to obtain points: Sustainable Sites, Water Efficiency, Energy and Atmosphere, Material and Resources, and Indoor Environmental Quality. To become certified at the base level, a library building needs twenty-six points. Silver certification is available at thirty-three points, gold at thirty-nine points, and platinum at fifty-two points.

LEED provides libraries with checklists and relevant points for green elements. LEED certification considers many environmental factors within a building, including the efficiency of indoor plumbing fixtures and fittings, the water efficiency of landscaping, energy efficiency performance, and pest management.

Investigating LEED certification can be a learning experience in sustainable building practices for any public library. Figure 2.1 is a letter that introduces LEED and the library’s goal of obtaining LEED certification. Any public library can use this as a template to begin the LEED conversation with its board of trustees.

The Darien Public Library, another LEED library building, adds one more green element to its environmentally friendly location: preferred parking spots for environmentally friendly vehicles. Hybrid cars and any of the other LEED-certified automobiles are eligible for preferred parking at the Darien Public Library. Each environmentally friendly parking spot is designated with a sign similar to a handicapped parking sign but with an environmental designation (see figure 2.2).

**Sustainable Products**

Although LEED certification is a goal a library can reach for, public libraries can begin making the library building greener by choosing sustainable products. In this section we review some examples.²

**Paint**

A coat of paint can bring new life to a library’s indoor spaces. Choosing the right paint helps bring green to your library.

A paint shade can brighten an indoor space, naturally saving electricity. Light-colored paint reflects the sun’s heat and makes the room brighter during the day, reducing the need for artificial light.
Typically, indoor paint is either latex, in which water is a major ingredient, or oil-based, which contains a solvent that does not mix with water. Latex is safer to use, does not require a special product for cleanup, and can be recycled. Oil-based paint can contribute to air pollution and have harmful effects on the environment if improperly disposed of.
When selecting paint, librarians should work with their maintenance staff to read carefully the labels of paint considered for use inside the building. The American Coatings Association offers a glossary of terms commonly found on paint labels (www.paint.org/industry/glossary.cfm). Consulting this glossary can help you determine whether your paint is made from natural ingredients or contains chemicals that may be hazardous to the environment.

Green Seal (www.greenseal.org), a nonprofit organization that aims to validate environmental excellence, provides detailed standards for environmental safety on more than forty categories. As explained on its website, Green Seal provides “science-based environmental certification standards” for products that are environmentally friendly. Products that are certified by Green Seal go through an approval process that looks at the materials life cycle: “We utilize a life-cycle approach, which means we evaluate a product or service beginning with material extraction, continuing with manufacturing and use, and ending with recycling and disposal.” Only products that meet the Green Seal environmental standards are awarded the Green Seal. A Green Seal on a product certifies that the product has gone through scientific testing and that it has little impact on the environment.

To help consumers identify safer paints, Green Seal has created a series of criteria to evaluate the environmental impact of paints and coatings. Librarians can use Green Seal’s website to identify paints that are certified by Green Seal as environmentally friendly products.

Not all paint manufacturers have gone through the Green Seal certification process. Librarians can understand what is inside a can of paint by reviewing its Materials Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), many of which are available online. An MSDS provides information about a product, including the manufacturer’s contact information, hazardous ingredients
of the product, physical and chemical characteristics of the product, fire and explosion hazard information, health hazard data, and recommendations on safe handling and use. Several databases offer MSDS access, some of which offer free trials or access to free initial MSDS:

- MSDSonline, www.msdsonline.com
- MSDS Solutions, www.msds.com

If you need help understanding more about a particular ingredient listed on a paint can label or MSDS, visit the University of Akron’s searchable Chemical Database at http://ull.chemistry.uakron.edu/erd/.

It can be difficult to weed through and understand all of this technical information. Key factors in choosing a paint are its toxicity level and its level of volatile organic compounds (lower is better).

Determining the correct amount of paint needed for your project is important as well. For one-coat coverage, one gallon can cover approximately 400–450 square feet. Paint professionals recommend using the full can of paint and not saving any left over. If one coat does not use up all your paint, add coats on sections of the wall until the can is empty and ready for recycling.

Some painters end up with extra latex paint and bring their leftover paint to local household hazardous waste collections. Many communities send leftover paint to paint manufacturers for recycling. Recycled latex paint is made primarily with leftover but unused latex and is typically available for purchase less expensively than “new” paint. Use of recycled paint helps the environment and provides the library with a high-quality and economical paint choice for its new look.

**Cleaning Agents**

Environmentally friendly cleaning agents also have the Green Seal certification mark available to ensure that the product meets Green Seal’s evaluations on the product’s life cycle and its impact on the environment. Use of environmentally friendly cleaners is a green initiative your library can pursue. Not all materials clearly label a product safe or not so safe.
Recognizing how to read the labels on cleaning agents can help a public library make the best environmental choices. The terms “nontoxic,” “natural,” “environmentally friendly,” and “biodegradable” do not have standardized meanings. Without standard definitions, a product can claim to be any of these terms, but such claims do not represent that the product has any particular environmental benefit. The following, from GreenerChoices.org, explains the language found on the labels of many cleaning agents:

*Danger* refers to products that are corrosive, extremely flammable, highly toxic, or poisonous. Commercial toilet-bowl, oven, and drain cleaners often bear this label.

*Caution* or *Warning* are catchall terms for many other hazards, so scan for specifics, such as “Vapor harmful,” “Causes burns,” or “May be fatal or cause blindness if swallowed.”

*Irritants* refer to substances that cause injury or inflammation on contact.

*Corrosives* refer to chemicals that destroy tissue.

It is also vital to know what ingredients are potentially harmful. Some potentially harmful ingredients identified by GreenerChoices.org and sometimes found in cleaners include these:

- **Nonylphenol ethoxylates (NPEs).** When they’re released into the environment, these chemicals can break down into toxic substances that can act as hormone disrupters, potentially threatening the reproductive capacity of fish, birds, and mammals. NPEs are found in many cleaning products, especially detergents, stain removers, citrus cleaners, and disinfectants.

- **Butyl cellosolve (also known as butyl glycol, ethylene glycol, monobutyl).** Poisonous when swallowed and a lung tissue irritant. Found in glass cleaners and all-purpose cleaners.

- **Hydrochloric acid.** Can severely burn skin, irritate eyes and respiratory tract. Found in toilet bowl cleaners.

- **Naphthta.** Can cause headaches, nausea, and central-nervous-system symptoms with overexposure. Found in furniture and floor polish and glass cleaners.
Libraries can choose to work with the most environmentally friendly products by asking for Green Seal products. The GS-8 standard is the Green Seal environmental standard for general purpose, bathroom, glass, and carpet cleaners used for household purposes. Many GS-8 products are used in library maintenance and cleaning. Green Seal certified products that may be useful as cleaning agents in libraries include those listed in table 2.1.

Libraries could also consider making their own cleaning agents out of environmentally friendly materials. Of course, this would be additional work for the library staff responsible for building maintenance, but it would make a strong environmental leadership statement to your community. Sample homemade cleaning solutions from GreenerChoices.org that could be used by a public library include these:

- **Baking soda and lemon juice:** To remove odors, combine 1 teaspoon baking soda and 1 teaspoon lemon juice with 2 cups hot water in a spray bottle.
- **Baking soda:** To eliminate carpet odors, sprinkle baking soda on the carpet, let it stand for 20 minutes, and vacuum.
- **Borax and vinegar:** For a general sanitizer, combine 2 teaspoons borax with 4 tablespoons vinegar and 4 cups hot water in a spray bottle.

Additional recipes for cleaning solutions can be found at the Recipe Goldmine (www.recipegoldmine.com/house/house.html) and Eco-Cycle (www.ecocycle.org/hazwaste/recipes.cfm).

**Cleaning Tools**

A public library can also choose to use environmentally friendly cleaning tools.

**Brooms.** Every library has a collection of brooms. When buying your next broom, look at how it was made. Broom bristles can be made from recycled soda bottles. Broom poles can be made from recycled aluminum. Also, when you need another broom, do you have to purchase an entirely new broom, or can you simply replace the bristles? An example of an environmentally sustainable broom is the Eclipse Broom by Casabella (www.casabella.com). When you are shopping for brooms that are better
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MANUFACTURER</th>
<th>PRODUCT NAME</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ace Hardware</td>
<td>Ace Peroxide Cleaner@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ace Peroxide Cleaner Concentrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkley Packaging Company</td>
<td>Glass Cleaner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Purpose Cleaner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ipax Cleanogel, Inc.</td>
<td>Green4Kleen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nexgen Chemistries</td>
<td>Responsibly Clean Rug and Carpet Cleaner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responsibly Clean Heavy Duty Cleaner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Depot</td>
<td>Office Depot green All Purpose Cleaner (OD802)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Office Depot green Glass Cleaner (OD803)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Office Depot green Bathroom Cleaner (OD804)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OurHouse an EnvirOx Company</td>
<td>Heavy Duty Cleaner (H1051)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shiny Surface Cleaner (H1052)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple Green</td>
<td>Simple Green Naturals Multi-Surface Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple Green Naturals Bathroom Cleaner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple Green Naturals Glass &amp; Surface Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple Green Naturals Floor Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple Green Naturals Dilutable Concentrated Cleaner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simoniz USA</td>
<td>Green Scene All Purpose Cleaner Deck and Fence Wash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Green Scene All Purpose Cleaner House and Siding Wash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Green Scene All Purpose Cleaner Wash and Wax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Green Scene All Purpose Cleaner and Degreaser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source Direct Holdings, Inc.</td>
<td>Simply WoW Cleaner/Degreaser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simply WoW Cleaner/Spot Remover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worx Environmental Products</td>
<td>All Natural Hand Cleaner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Green Seal, www.greenseal.org/findaproduct/hhcleaners.cfm (retrieved May 3, 2009).*
for our environment, do not be influenced by brooms that are green in color; green-colored brooms are not necessarily environmentally friendly.

_Mops._ When you are shopping for a new mop, consider a microfiber mop. Microfiber mops clean without the need for chemicals. Microfibers, in this commercial context, are fibers that measure less than 1.0 denier in diameter. The smaller the diameter of the fiber, the more effective it is for cleaning surfaces. According to Mission Mop (www.missionmop.org), a manufacturer of microfiber mops, microfiber yarns cling “to the smallest particles like a magnet,” thus picking up dirt without the need for chemicals. “Each fiber is split during manufacturing making the tiny fibers very absorbent so the mop holds sufficient water for cleaning yet doesn’t drip. The mop pad leaves the floor only slightly damp allowing it to dry quickly after cleaning.” Thus you save water by not needing to refill a water bucket constantly, and since microfiber mops have washable heads you can wash them in the laundry to keep them in good working order. Microfiber mops are available directly from Mission Mop and from Starfiber (www.starfibers.com).

_Vacuum cleaners._ When purchasing vacuum cleaners, be careful to choose one that will serve the library for a long time. Vacuum cleaners that are bought for a cheap price and quickly disposed of only add to landfills, thereby hurting the environment. When you are purchasing a new vacuum cleaner, consider how much electricity the product uses. Electricity in vacuum cleaners is measured by amperage (amps)—the flow rate of electrical current that is available. According to Ecollo (www.ecollo.com), a website devoted to educating everyday eco-conscious people, a green vacuum cleaner is one that has an eight-amp motor or can at least operate in a power-saving mode. Other environmentally friendly features to look for in vacuum cleaners include filters that are washable and reusable and, if the vacuum has a dust bag, it should not be made from paper that has been plasticized.

_Lighting_  
A public library can also choose to use environmentally friendly lighting both inside and outside. Geothermal power, solar energy, and wind power are all forms of green energy. Powering a library with energy from the earth is a great goal for a public library, but short of that you can take practical steps to cut back on the energy source already in use by the library.
The U.S. Department of Energy estimates that 30 percent of energy use is dedicated to lighting. Compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs are energy-efficient bulbs that are more expensive but use 75 percent less electricity and last five to seven times longer than traditional incandescent lightbulbs. With the savings CFLs can bring to the library, it makes financial sense to purchase the more expensive, environmentally friendly CFL bulbs. Some CFL users claim that the light is different, and that is true. The color of CFL bulbs changes as the bulb heats up. Color ranges for CFL bulbs are listed on the bulb’s package. CFL light that is most similar to a standard incandescent lightbulb is in the warm white color range between 2,650 and 2,800 degrees Kelvin.

**Correlated color temperature:**
- 2,650–3,200 K: warm white (yellowish white)
- 3,200–4,000 K: neutral
- Above 4,000 K: cool (bluish white or daylight)

Motion-activated light switches can also help a library save energy. A motion-activated light switch uses sensors to dim a lightbulb by 50 percent and can save up to 35 percent of the energy used by a fully bright bulb. Sensors currently have a range of 150 or 180 degrees of motion sensitivity and 15-, 30-, and 60-minute and 24-hour times. Motion-activated light switches are available in many styles and range from switches that need to be wired into your lighting system to ones that simply plug into an existing electric socket.

Many libraries are victims of “vampire power”—the standby power used by chargers for cell phones, iPods, and other electronic equipment. Standby power is typically 10–15 watts per device; a half dozen devices on standby power use as much power as a 60-watt lightbulb burning. Some of this waste can be saved with the use of digital timers. A library can set a timer to turn on for a couple of hours prior to the library’s opening, fully charge battery-based electronic tools, and then turn off. Use of a digital timer could save a library twenty-three hours of vampire power use each day.

Outside lighting includes landscape lighting and other accent lighting, and these can be powered by the sun. The benefits of solar landscape lighting include energy efficiency as well as an immediate reduction in energy bills. With solar landscape lighting, the source of energy is
the sun. The solar panels that convert the sun into energy are composed of photocells that charge the solar battery. Each fixture consists of a rechargeable battery that lasts for eight to ten hours of continuous use. LED (light-emitting diode) lamps, which have a lower energy consumption and longer lifetime than traditional lightbulbs, can be used for illumination in solar landscape lighting, which allows each fixture to last for a long time. Solar lights also have built-in sensors that turn the lamps on and off automatically, allowing for maximum use and minimum staffing commitment from the public library.5

**Water**

Efficient use of water helps your community conserve water resources and also helps save the library money. A library can take some simple steps to reduce its water usage.

Waterless urinals, which save an average of 45,000 gallons of water per year per urinal, can be installed. According to the *GreenTech Bulletin* of the Kansas State Department of Architectural Engineering and Construction Science, for example, one Texas elementary school retrofitted its restrooms with ten waterless urinals and realized a 15–20 percent reduction in water consumption.6

Low-flush toilets also contribute to lower water usage in the library restroom. Low-flush toilets look like regular toilets, but they use about half the water, typically 1.6 gallons per flush instead of 3.5 gallons per flush. Most low-flush toilets hold around 13 quarts of water, but only 6 quarts are flushed through at a time. Some low-flush toilets offer the option of a half-flush for liquid waste.7

Water conservation extends to sensor-operated faucets, in which the water flow stops when the user removes his hands from below the water spout. Sensors are also available for the toilet flush valve and work to prevent a user from flushing multiple times. Sensors in a library restroom also contribute to improved hygiene.

Even if your library cannot take the steps to install low-flush toilets at this time, every library should consider purchasing bathroom tissue (also known as toilet paper) that is made from recycled paper. According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, “If every household in the United States replaced just one roll of virgin fiber toilet paper (500 sheets) with
100% recycled ones, we could save 423,900 trees. Public libraries can make a contribution to this effort by purchasing bathroom tissue made from recycled paper, making it available for library users, and letting users know that they are using a recycled product. Greenpeace recommends that you consider following three criteria when purchasing recycled tissue:

1. The tissue should be made from 100 percent overall recycled content.
2. The product should be made with a minimum of 50 percent post-consumer recycled content.
3. The product should not be bleached with chlorine or toxic chlorine compounds.

Recycled bathroom tissue is available from a variety of companies, including Green Forest (www.greenforest-products.com), Seventh Generation (www.seventhgeneration.com), and Small Steps by Marcal (www.marcalpaper.com).

Take the next step and let your users know you are using recycled bathroom tissue. If they like it in the library, they may decide to purchase the recycled product for their own home. Inside each bathroom stall, post a discreet sign such as the one shown in figure 2.3.

**Transportation**

How do people get to your library? Walking and biking are green ways to travel, and your library can encourage users to walk or bike to the library by ensuring that safe routes are in place. Your library can prepare walking and biking route maps so users understand the best ways to get to the library without a vehicle. These route maps can also work as encouragement for people to come to the library on foot or on a bicycle. Work with your city or town officials to identify stop signs, streetlights, and pedestrian walkways that need to be in place for safe walking and bicycling access to your library. Your library could work with your city to develop a personalized bike and walking map service that maps out the best way users can bike or walk from their home to the library. Bicycle parking, typically in the form of bike racks, encourages people to bring their bicycles to the library and store them. The following national
In our effort to be sensitive to the environment, this bathroom uses recycled bathroom tissue.
groups offer ideas on how your library can help encourage users to visit your library by walking or cycling:

Alliance for Biking and Walking,  
www.peoplepoweredmovement.org/site/  
America Bikes, www.americabikes.org  
National Center for Bicycling and Walking, www.bikewalk.org  
U.S. Federal Highway Administration, Safe Routes to School,  
http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/saferoutes/

Is your library accessible by public transportation? Public transportation is green transportation because it directly cuts down on the number of vehicles on the road. Contact your location transportation office for route maps, time schedules, and more information on the types of public transportation available and accessible to your library. Making bus and train route maps and schedules available in your library encourages library users to come to the library by public transportation. Also, personalized bus and train route planning can help encourage users to come to your library on buses or trains.

Notes
2. Except as otherwise noted, the following product information is drawn from Consumer Reports, GreenerChoices.org: Products for a Better Planet, http://greenerchoices.org.
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GOING GREEN is now a national issue, and patrons expect their library to respond in the same way many corporations have. Libraries are going green with logos on their websites, programs for the public, and a host of other initiatives. This is the first book to focus strictly on the library’s role in going green, helping you with

- Collection development, disposal, and recycling issues
- Green equipment, technology, and facilities
- Programming ideas with supporting tables and figures
- Ways to get the community involved in the process

Highly practical and bursting with ideas, this guide will serve as a quick reference source for going green in your library.

You may also be interested in

- BUILDING SCIENCE
- SMALL BUSINESS AND THE PUBLIC LIBRARY
- Designing Space for Children and Teens
- NO SHELF REQUIRED

www.alastore.ala.org