



Envisioning Green Library Initiatives: A Key Concern for 21st Century Librarians

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Abstract

The Green Library Initiative (GLI) is a global movement advocating for the integration of sustainable practices into library operations. Libraries, as essential repositories of knowledge and information, have a notable environmental footprint. Nigeria, a rapidly developing nation facing significant environmental challenges, stands to benefit from implementing the GLI. This paper discusses the concept of the GLI, examples of green practices suitable for Nigerian libraries, benefits of the initiative, associated challenges, and proposed solutions. It also explores the implications of the GLI for 21st-century librarians, emphasizing the pivotal role they play in driving sustainable practices and environmental education. The study underscores the need for collective efforts, policy support, and a paradigm shift towards sustainability for a greener and more sustainable future in Nigerian libraries.

Keywords: Green library initiative, Sustainability, Environmental Impact, Nigeria

Introduction

Libraries are pivotal institutions that serve as gateways to knowledge, advocates for literacy, and guardians of cultural heritage. Throughout history, libraries have stood as vital community hubs, providing essential access to a wealth of information and resources (Ogunbodede & Okwu, 2023). Singh and Mishra (2021) noted that libraries have a significant environmental impact due to their consumption of energy, paper, water, and other resources. The construction, maintenance, and day-to-day operations of libraries contribute to overall greenhouse gas emissions. However, in recent years, there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of environmental sustainability in all aspects of society, including libraries, as a result of numerous environmental challenges (Emmanuel & Okojie, 2022). The concept of the Green Library Initiative (GLI) has emerged as a response to this concern, emphasizing the integration of eco-friendly practices and principles into library operations and services. A green library is a library that minimizes its environmental impact through its design and operation. The GLI encompasses a wide range of activities, such as reducing energy consumption, water consumption, and waste production; using sustainable materials and practices in construction and renovation; and promoting environmental literacy among patrons.

Nigeria, as a rapidly developing country in Africa, faces numerous environmental challenges, including deforestation, waste management issues, and energy consumption. These challenges have led to severe air and water pollution, soil erosion, and significant contributions to climate change within the nation. The GLI can play a vital role in helping Nigerian libraries reduce their environmental impact and promote sustainable practices (Antonelli, 2008). The green library initiative's importance lies in its potential to drive sustainable practices within libraries and make a significant positive impact on the environment, communities, and future generations. The green library initiative can also help save money by reducing their consumption of energy, water, and other resources, improving indoor air quality, and attracting and retaining patrons. The Green Library initiative is a win-win for everyone involved. It helps to protect the environment, save money, improve indoor air quality, and attract and retain patrons.

In addition to promoting sustainable practices, green libraries can also play a role in educating the public about environmental issues (Pagore & Chalukya, 2022). They can hold educational workshops, seminars, and exhibitions

on environmental topics, as well as provide access to books, articles, and other resources on environmental issues. By providing access to information and resources, offering educational programs, and partnering with other environmental organizations, green libraries can help to create a more informed and engaged citizenry. Library staff can receive training and support to teach environmental education programs, and they can also host book clubs and discussion groups on environmental topics. Overall, these initiatives are vital in reducing the environmental impact of libraries and encouraging sustainable living.

The GLI is a global movement that promotes the adoption of sustainable practices in libraries. Libraries, as crucial information hubs, have a significant ecological footprint due to their energy consumption, waste generation, and use of non-renewable resources. In Nigeria, a rapidly developing nation, the environmental impact of libraries remains a pressing concern, yet there is a notable lack of structured initiatives and awareness regarding sustainable library practices (Okpidi-Urhibo, 2023). This may be a result of a lack of awareness among librarians, limited financial resources and infrastructure, limited policy support, and institutional commitment. Despite these challenges, there is a growing interest in the green library initiative in Nigeria. A number of libraries have begun to implement green practices, such as installing energy-efficient lighting and recycling paper. Additionally, the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) has established a Green Library Committee to promote the initiative. However, it is important to continue to raise awareness among librarians and other stakeholders.

Educational campaigns, workshops, trainings, and conferences can create awareness and promote the implementation of the GLI in Nigeria. Libraries in Nigeria also need access to the resources they require to implement sustainable practices. Government and institutional funding, along with partnerships with other organizations, can achieve this. By addressing these challenges, we can pave the way for a more sustainable future for libraries in Nigeria, aligning with global environmental objectives. We can raise awareness among librarians and stakeholders about the significance and practicality of sustainable practices through targeted educational initiatives like campaigns, workshops, and training programs. Ultimately, this study aims to empower librarians to embrace their roles as catalysts for positive environmental change and contribute to a more sustainable future. This study aims to explore the concept of the Green Library Initiative in Nigeria, focusing on the concerns and challenges faced by librarians in implementing eco-friendly practices, and to propose solutions that can help promote the implementation of the GLI in Nigeria.

Concept of Green Library Initiative

The Green Library Initiative (GLI) is a global movement that promotes the integration of sustainable practices and principles into library operations and services. It focuses on minimizing libraries' environmental impact and fostering a culture of environmental responsibility within the library community. The concept of the Green Library Initiative encompasses various aspects of sustainability, including energy efficiency, waste reduction, resource conservation, and environmental education (John & Mwit, 2024; Kesuma & Rahmawati, 2024). It seeks to align library practices with environmental objectives, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions, conserving natural resources, and promoting ecological balance.

Green library initiatives can benefit both the library and the community. Libraries can save money on energy and water bills while reducing their environmental impact. The community can benefit from having a more sustainable library that is committed to reducing its environmental impact. Libraries of all sizes and types can implement green library initiatives. Even small changes can make a big difference in reducing the environmental impact of libraries.

Hauke et al. (2014) highlighted the global nature of the Green Library Initiative and the abundance of resources available to assist libraries in their initial steps. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) has a Green Library Initiative, and there are also many regional and national green library organizations. Libraries can play an important role in promoting sustainability and environmental awareness in their communities. By implementing green library initiatives, libraries can reduce their environmental impact and set a positive example for others.

Examples of Green Practices that Libraries in Nigeria can adopt

Here are some examples of green practices that libraries in Nigeria can adopt:

- **Install solar panels:** Solar panels can be used to generate electricity for libraries, reducing their reliance on fossil fuels.

- **Collect rainwater:** Rainwater can be collected and used for irrigation, cleaning, and other non-potable purposes.
- **Recycle materials:** Libraries can recycle paper, plastic, metal, and other materials. This can reduce waste and save money.
- **Use energy-efficient appliances and lighting:** Libraries can switch to energy-efficient appliances and lighting to reduce their energy consumption.
- **Reduce waste:** Libraries can reduce waste by composting food scraps and other organic materials. They can also reduce the use of disposable products.
- **Promote environmental sustainability:** Libraries can offer programs and workshops on environmental sustainability to educate library users.

In addition to these practices, libraries can also partner with other organizations in the community to promote environmental sustainability. For example, libraries can partner with environmental agencies to offer programs on environmental issues or to collect recyclables. Libraries can also partner with local businesses to promote sustainable products and services. By adopting green practices and educating the public about environmental issues, libraries can play a significant role in promoting environmental sustainability in Nigeria.

Benefits of the Green Library Initiative

The Green Library Initiative (GLI) offers a wide array of benefits that positively impact the overall functioning of libraries. Here are the key benefits of implementing the GLI:

- **Reduced environmental impact:** By implementing sustainable practices, libraries can significantly reduce their consumption of energy, water, and other resources, leading to a decreased carbon footprint and environmental impact (Nikam, 2017).
- **Cost savings:** Green practices often result in cost savings through reduced energy and resource consumption. Libraries can allocate saved funds for other purposes, such as expanding collections or enhancing user services (Thomas, 2017).
- **Enhanced user experience:** Green libraries provide healthier and more comfortable environments for library users by improving indoor air quality, optimizing lighting, and creating spaces that promote well-being.
- **Community engagement:** By promoting environmental education and outreach, green libraries engage with their communities, raise awareness about environmental issues, and inspire sustainable actions among patrons.
- **Enhanced public image:** Libraries that are committed to sustainability can enhance their public image and attract new patrons.
- **Improved indoor air quality:** Green library initiatives can help improve the indoor air quality of libraries. For example, libraries that use recycled paper and avoid using toxic cleaning products can reduce the levels of pollutants in the air.

Overall, the GLI encourages libraries to embrace sustainable practices, educate their communities, and contribute to a more environmentally conscious society. By integrating eco-friendly principles into their operations, libraries can serve as role models for sustainable living and contribute to a greener and more sustainable future.

Challenges Associated with Implementing the Green Library Initiative in Nigeria

While implementing the Green Library Initiative in Nigeria offers numerous benefits, there are also several challenges that need to be addressed. Here are some key challenges associated with implementing the initiative:

- **Funding issues:** One of the major challenges is the availability of financial resources. Implementing green technologies and adopting sustainable practices often requires upfront investments, which can be a significant barrier, especially for libraries with limited budgets (Okpidi-Urhibo, 2023; Idiegbeyan-Ose et al., 2018). Securing funding from government agencies, NGOs, or private sponsors for the implementation and maintenance of green initiatives can be a challenge.
- **Infrastructure limitations:** Many libraries in Nigeria face infrastructure limitations, including inadequate physical space, outdated buildings, and insufficient access to basic utilities like electricity and water. Implementing energy-efficient technologies or renewable energy solutions may require infrastructure upgrades or modifications, which can be costly and time-consuming.

- **Lack of awareness:** Many stakeholders, including library staff, government authorities, and the public, might lack awareness and understanding of the importance and benefits of the GLI and sustainable practices (Asim & Ahmad, 2022).
- **Maintenance and technical expertise:** Green initiatives often require ongoing maintenance and technical expertise. Libraries may face challenges in finding skilled personnel or training existing staff to handle the installation, operation, and maintenance of green technologies. Additionally, access to technical support and spare parts for renewable energy systems or other eco-friendly equipment can be limited in certain regions.
- **Policy and regulatory framework:** The absence of specific policies or regulations that encourage and support green initiatives in libraries can pose a challenge (Asim & Ahmad, 2022). Clear guidelines and incentives from government bodies can facilitate the implementation of sustainable practices in libraries. The development of supportive policies and regulatory frameworks is crucial to overcoming this challenge.
- **Cultural and behavioural factors:** Changing cultural and behavioural norms can be a challenge when promoting green practices. Encouraging users to adopt sustainable habits, such as proper waste management or energy conservation, may require significant efforts in terms of education, outreach, and community engagement. Overcoming resistance to change and fostering a culture of sustainability may take time and consistent efforts.
- **Lack of Collaboration with Environmental Agencies** is a significant challenge associated with implementing the Green Library Initiative (GLI) in Nigeria. Environmental agencies have the expertise and resources to help libraries implement green practices, such as energy efficiency, waste reduction, and water conservation. However, there is often a lack of communication and coordination between libraries and environmental agencies. This can make it difficult for libraries to access the support they need to implement green practices (Okpidi-urhib, 2023).
- **Availability of green technologies and resources:** The availability and affordability of green technologies, equipment, and resources in Nigeria can be a challenge (Asim & Ahmad, 2022). Access to renewable energy systems, energy-efficient equipment, recycling facilities, and sustainable materials may be limited, especially in rural areas. Addressing supply chain challenges and promoting the local production of eco-friendly resources can help overcome this obstacle.

Solutions to the Challenges Associated with Implementing the Green Library Initiative in Nigeria

Despite the challenges associated with implementing the GLI in Nigeria, there are a number of solutions that can be explored.

- **Seek funding opportunities:** Libraries can actively seek funding opportunities from government agencies, NGOs, and private sponsors to support the implementation of green initiatives. This can include applying for grants, partnering with environmentally focused organizations, and exploring crowdfunding platforms to raise funds for specific projects.
- **Infrastructure:** Libraries can start by implementing low-cost green practices, such as reducing energy and water consumption, recycling and composting, and using sustainable materials. They can also explore partnerships with other organizations, such as universities and businesses, to share resources and expertise.
- **Raise awareness and educate stakeholders:** Conduct awareness campaigns, workshops, and training programs to educate library staff, government authorities, and the public about the importance and benefits of the Green Library Initiative. Highlight the positive impact of sustainable practices on the environment, cost savings, and improved user experience to encourage support and participation.
- **Develop technical expertise:** Provide training and professional development opportunities for library staff on green technologies, energy management, waste reduction, and other sustainable practices. This can include partnering with technical institutions, universities, or environmental organizations to offer training programs or workshops. Libraries can also explore collaborations with experts in the field and seek their guidance and support.
- **Advocate for supportive policies:** Engage with government authorities, policymakers, and relevant stakeholders to advocate for the development and implementation of supportive policies and regulatory frameworks for green initiatives in libraries. Highlight the benefits of sustainable practices and their alignment with national environmental goals to encourage policy changes and incentives.
- **Cultural and behavioural factors:** Libraries can promote a culture of sustainability by implementing green practices into their daily operations and encouraging staff and users to adopt sustainable habits. They can

also organize educational programs and workshops to raise awareness about the importance of sustainability and how to reduce one's environmental impact.

- **Availability of green technologies and resources:** Libraries can work with suppliers and contractors to promote the availability and affordability of green technologies, equipment, and resources in Nigeria. Additionally, libraries can explore the possibility of producing their own eco-friendly resources, such as recycled paper and compost.
- **Monitor and evaluate:** Establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the impact of green initiatives in libraries. This can involve tracking energy consumption, waste generation, cost savings, and user feedback. Regular monitoring and evaluation will help identify areas for improvement, showcase the success of implemented initiatives, and guide future decision-making.

Implications for the 21st Century Librarian

The Green Library Initiative in Nigeria presents significant implications for the role and responsibilities of 21st-century librarians. As sustainability becomes increasingly important in society, librarians must adapt and embrace their roles as environmental stewards and information providers. Here are some key implications for librarians in Nigeria:

- **Environmental literacy:** Librarians need to develop a deep understanding of environmental issues and sustainability concepts. They should stay updated on current environmental research, policies, and best practices. By becoming environmental literacy champions, librarians can effectively educate and empower library users to make informed decisions and take sustainable actions.
- **Integration of green practices:** Librarians should lead the implementation of green practices within their libraries. This includes advocating for sustainable building design, energy-efficient technologies, waste reduction strategies, and recycling initiatives. Librarians can collaborate with facility managers, administrators, and external partners to ensure environmentally friendly practices are embedded in library operations.
- **Information provision:** Librarians play a crucial role in curating and disseminating information on environmental topics. They should actively collect and promote resources related to sustainability, climate change, renewable energy, conservation, and other relevant subjects. Librarians can organize displays, create online resource guides, and host educational programs to raise awareness and promote environmental literacy.
- **Collaboration and advocacy:** Librarians should actively engage in collaborations and networks focused on sustainability. By sharing experiences, best practices, and challenges, librarians can learn from each other and collectively drive change. Librarians can also advocate for supportive policies and funding for green initiatives in libraries, amplifying their voices at local, national, and international levels.
- **User education and outreach:** Librarians should design and deliver educational programs and workshops to promote environmental awareness and behaviour change among library users. They can organize events such as green exhibitions, film screenings, and guest lectures to engage the community. Librarians should also collaborate with schools, universities, and community organizations to expand the reach of environmental education initiatives.
- **Technology integration:** Librarians should leverage technology to support green initiatives. This may involve implementing energy management systems, utilizing digital resources to reduce paper consumption, and providing online platforms for users to access environmental information. Librarians should stay informed about emerging technologies and explore their potential for promoting sustainability in library services.
- **Research and Innovation:** Librarians can contribute to research and innovation in green library practices. They can conduct studies on the environmental impact of libraries, evaluate the effectiveness of implemented initiatives, and explore new strategies for sustainability. Librarians should collaborate with researchers, join research networks, and publish their findings to contribute to the field of green librarianship.
- **Continuous Learning and Professional Development:** Given the evolving nature of sustainability practices, librarians must engage in continuous learning and professional development. They should attend workshops, conferences, and webinars on sustainability, green technologies, and environmental management. Librarians can also pursue certifications and training programs related to green librarianship to enhance their expertise.

Conclusion

The Green Library Initiative in Nigeria represents a crucial step towards environmental sustainability within libraries. Librarians need to embrace their role as environmental advocates and educators. Implementing eco-friendly practices, seeking funding and policy support, raising awareness, and promoting environmental literacy are key strategies to overcome challenges. The benefits of GLI extend to cost savings, improved user experience, and community engagement. Librarians must integrate technology, stay informed, and continually innovate to drive green practices. Ultimately, GLI's success depends on collective efforts, leading Nigeria towards a sustainable future.

Suggestions

1. University libraries in Nigeria should launch targeted awareness campaigns to educate librarians and the public on the benefits of sustainable practices through workshops, online resources, and social media. To support green initiatives, government bodies, NGOs, and the private sector should provide financial assistance, with libraries exploring grants, partnerships, or crowdfunding for renewable energy, energy-efficient technologies, and sustainable materials.
2. University libraries can start by implementing low-cost green initiatives, such as reducing energy and water usage, recycling paper, and using energy-efficient appliances. These small steps can pave the way for larger projects, like installing solar panels. Collaborations with environmental agencies can provide libraries with technical expertise and green technologies.
3. The Nigerian government, in partnership with library associations, should create policies to guide sustainability in libraries. For librarians to maintain these practices, continuous training on green technologies and sustainability is essential.
4. Additionally, libraries should foster a culture of environmental responsibility among staff and patrons and establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the impact of their green initiatives.

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