

Building Resilient Communities



Landscape Survey

The Building Resilient Communities team conducted a landscape survey of public libraries to assess opinions, knowledge, and current library trends around climate change, environmental justice, and community health topics. Highlights from this survey are shared in this document. Funding provided by the National Science Foundation under Grant 2314180. IRB oversight provided by Aspire IRB.

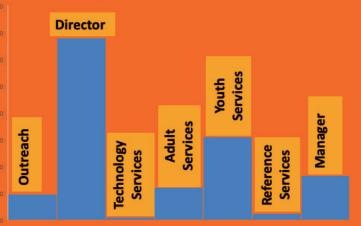
Symposium

The Space Science Institute, in partnership with WebJunction, Informal Learning Dynamics and the University of North Carolina Greensboro also hosted a symposium with leaders from the library, public health, and climate science communities to develop next steps for action in public libraries and their communities.



Survey Respondents

Library Role of Respondent



This survey had 281 respondents, compared to over 1,000 for similar length surveys. Many staff reached out and expressed discomfort at talking about these issues on a work computer.

77% of Respondents are from Rural Areas, and 33% are from Urban/Suburban Areas (Suburban areas category determined by total population served).

Partnerships

69% of libraries have partnerships focused on health or sustainability. These partnerships had no correlation with library type or size.

Greater than 70%

More than 70% of surveyed libraries conduct general health programs and programs with outdoor activities, but less than 30% conduct programs with Diagnostic Activities (such as blood drives with blood pressure screenings) or with local environmental Calls to Action.

Reduce/Reuse/Recycle

While 64% of libraries provide recycling access for patrons, only 10% provided composting access, mostly in urban areas.

LEED and Green Roof Initiatives

Only 9.8% of surveyed libraries have LEED certification, and 3.1% have a Green Roof. These numbers were strongly correlated with Urban locations.

Library Staff Know Their Stuff...

96% of respondents were Very Familiar or Familiar with the term Climate Change, and over 80% were Very Familiar or Familiar with the terms Equity and Sustainability, though only 55% were Very Familiar or Familiar with Environmental Justice.



Health and Climate Programs

Health and Climate programs conducted by responding libraries (without partners, including both one-off and reoccuring activities) included installing solar panels, installing geothermal, hosting butterfly gardens, planting native seeds, seed swaps, first aid classes, upcycling for programs, nutrition and composting classes, walking trails, vehicle charging stations, loaning exercise equipment, and joining the Sustainable Library Initiative.



But They're Less Confident in Sharing It

60% of respondents believe it is within the role of public libraries to discuss climate change with their community (35% were unsure), but only 2.9% disagreed this was within their role. 75% feel safe talking about climate change with colleagues, but only 51% within their community.





Libraries Need Clearer Policies

Less than 5% of respondents felt their library has a clear policy outlining their stance on climate change. 64% felt no such policy existed. While over 30% were unsure. There was a weak positive correlation between urban libraries and clear policies, but rural libraries fared no worse than their suburban or suburban/urban counterparts.

Inconsistent Support from Library Leadership

50% of respondents felt they had the support of their leadership to discuss climate change with patrons. 10% disagreed they had this support, and 38% were unsure. There was a weak positive correlation between feeling more support and identifying as urban. In addition, there was a moderate negative correlation between support and rural libraries.

"I believe it is the role of libraries to provide resources and services to promote climate awareness, but we should avoid taking a stand on the issue."

"We're (libraries) not doing enough about climate change at this point."

What do the Words Climate Change Make Respondents Think of?

action activism adaptation animals anxiety carbon change community conservation controversial crisis danger disaster drought earth education emergency energy environment extinction extreme fear flooding fossil fuels future global green greenhouse health heat ice important melting mitigation nature ocean politics pollution recycle resilience rising scary science storms sustainability temperature warming water weather

The 50 most common words respondents shared are highlighted to the left, with the larger words being the most common. Sentiment analysis showed that X% of words shared were positive, and X% had negative connotations. There appeared to be an effort from many respondents to include at least one positive or neutral term, even when including very negative terms such as "disaster".







Who do Libraries Partner with for Health or Sustainability Programs?

Respondents partnered with their local governments, national environmental groups, summer camps, local schools, parks and recreation departments, local gardens and zoos, conservation areas, churches, senior centers, museums, universitites, utility companies, emergency management, fish and wildlife services, tribal groups, and agricultural groups.

This year's summer reading theme is Adventure Begins at the Library and is also Smokey Bear's 80th Birthday. These 2 events are perfect vehicles to spread information in a learning way about climate change, caring for the environment, and caring for people."

These Partnerships Supported Programs Including:

Blood drives, Health Drives, Homeless
Support, Composting Programs,
Conservation and Animal Care Classes, EV
Charging, Mental Health Awareness, Bike
to Work Day, COVID response, Disaster
Preparedness, Vaccination Drives,
Gardening Courses, Installation of Sharps
Containers, Opiod Response Training, and
Women's and Children's Health Programs.

"We feel more empowered to cover climate related issues becuaseour town has made a commitment to develop a Climate Action Plan!"

Funding provided by the National Science Foundation under Grant 2314180.









