

**Spend More of Your Budget for Books  
by Spending Less for Energy**

**Three Short Checklists to Become an  
Effective Advocate for Conservation**

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**WHY ARE WE HERE?**

Librarians occupy one of the most important positions in society. You hold the keys to the information of our civilization. Most of the time, you catalog and dispense information. But, in some critical issues, you have the ability to do even more by promoting change for the better. Energy conservation is such an issue. We are here so you can learn how to exercise your power for change effectively and responsibly.

Why does energy conservation matter? Two thirds of the world's energy is consumed in the buildings where we live and work, and in the factories and plants that produce our needs. The cost is enormous. Utility bills account for much of the cost of housing, and they are a major cost of business. For many families, energy is the largest monthly bill. A large hotel or hospital spends millions of dollars for energy each year. Some steel mills pay a quarter billion dollars annually for energy.

With this consumption comes a host of environmental dangers. Burning fossil fuels pumps carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, accelerating the greenhouse effect. Air conditioning systems release gases that deplete the earth's ozone layer. Discarded lamps contribute to mercury pollution. Fuels themselves are an important resource that is being depleted. Excessive energy use, on the public's mind since the "energy crisis" years, is now being recognized as a fundamental cause of damage to the environment.

Conservation is the primary way of reducing energy costs and it is one of the foundations of environmental protection. For the average citizen, it is by far the most powerful way to protect the environment.

And for libraries, energy conservation eases tight library budgets, letting you buy more books, hire more staff, or operate for longer hours.

Librarians must become primary agents for conservation. School teachers, parents, politicians, activists, and the media have created a demand for information about energy conservation. Now, it's up to you to provide that information effectively.

As part of that responsibility, you have another important role. It is to reorient the way that conservation is accomplished. To date, energy conservation has failed to take hold broadly and many energy conservation activities have not endured. Conservation has suffered from public disillusionment with failed solar systems, uncomfortable temperatures, and indoor air quality problems. To achieve the potential of conservation, you need to educate the public about the right way to conserve resources. We will part company with the enthusiasts who pitch energy conservation as an effortless no-brainer. Only successful conservation pays off. You want to contribute to the successes and to banish failure.

Furthermore, we need to dispel the common misconception that energy conservation involves compromises with comfort or health or work efficiency. On the contrary, if energy conservation is done right, it will improve health, comfort, and work efficiency.

### **THREE SHORT, POWERFUL CHECKLISTS**

The American Library Association's Task Force on the Environment asked me to deal with three different aspects of energy conservation during this brief session. In response to that daunting request, I am going to give you three short checklists. The checklists will enable you to get started immediately in three critical areas where librarians should take a leadership role:

∅ Checklist 1 (*yellow*) gives you the basic steps for educating your community about energy conservation.

This checklist is for all librarians. It has the broadest impact, because it applies to every library patron. The steps are easy. They involve some innovative procedures.

∅ Checklist 2 (*pink*) gives you the basic steps for saving energy within your own library buildings.

This checklist is for librarians and administrators who manage library facilities. It follows directly from the first checklist.

∅ Checklist 3 (*green*) lays out the basic steps for achieving efficiency and avoiding trouble in the construction and renovation of library buildings.

This checklist is for library administrators involved in construction of facilities. It outlines major improvements that are needed to achieve efficiency in library design and construction practice.

## CHECKLIST 1 **Teach the Public about Energy Conservation**

### Starting Points:

- € **Libraries are essential for educating the public about energy conservation. Be assertive about getting your library and your system to exercise that responsibility.**
- € **Energy conservation and environmental protection are taught in all schools. Energy is in the news every day. Students, parents, homeowners, business managers, writers, and others are all looking for good conservation resources.**
- € **Any library can easily afford a good collection of conservation books.**
- € **Many books about energy conservation are available. Some deal with individual aspects of conservation. The best deal with conservation in a complete, systematic way. Others are random collections of conservation activities.**

### Action Items:

\_\_\_ **THE ULTIMATE NO-BRAINER FOR LIBRARIANS: *Make sure that your library has a complete selection of good books about energy conservation!*** Make it a priority to build a collection of the best books for each reader group.

How do you pay for these books? Order one less copy of the latest hit novel and allocate the money toward another good conservation book. Within a year, your collection will be established. Furthermore, using your own conservation books (see Checklist 2) will make conservation a revenue producer for your library!

\_\_\_ ***Catalog all your conservation books under a single Dewey classification.***

Keep all your energy conservation resources together. Use Dewey classification "697" (no decimal). This number covers residential and commercial construction, as well as alternative energy sources (solar energy, wind, etc.).

\_\_\_ ***Don't bury ANY of your conservation books in the Reference Room.*** The more expensive books are the most important for serious conservation. Let them circulate. Remember, *the purpose of libraries is to provide access to books!*

If you place a few key titles in the Reference Room, and other books in the main stacks, your patrons will not think to look in the Reference Room.

\_\_\_ ***Select your efficiency and environmental books carefully.*** Both "inspirational" and "serious" books are essential. Get books that show how to make conservation work in the real world.

The quality of conservation books is spotty. Avoid books with erroneous information. For guidance in selecting good resources, get a copy of "The Modern History of Energy Conservation: an Overview for Information Professionals." See the superb *Electronic Green Journal*, Issue 13, at <http://egj.lib.uidaho.edu>. The

article has many links to information sources. You can get reproducible MS Word files of "The Modern History ..." by sending a request to [DW@EnergyBooks.com](mailto:DW@EnergyBooks.com).

— ***Prepare a guide to your conservation collection.***

- € Display published reviews. This is an easy way to start.
- € Prepare an annotated list of all the books in your collection, summarizing the subjects covered, the degree of detail, ease of use, and attention to key issues, such as reliability and comfort.
- € Display your conservation guide at the shelf where you keep your collection. This is important because the best books in your collection are likely to be checked out, or they may be imprisoned in the Reference section.

Make your conservation book list stand out from the shelves like the sale cards in a supermarket. Libraries are supermarkets of information.

— ***Educate your colleagues about conservation.*** Point out that energy conservation is a topic of intense interest to the public, that it is the primary method of environmental protection that is available to all people, and that libraries should be the principal source of information about conservation.

— ***Show your colleagues how to find conservation resources.*** Organize a session for your colleagues using "The Modern History of Energy Conservation: an Overview for Information Professionals."

— ***Use your own energy conservation measures as demonstrations for the public.*** See Checklist 2. This will also make your conservation measures more effective for the library itself.

## CHECKLIST 2 Reduce the Energy Cost of Your Library

### Starting Points:

- € Conservation can reduce your library's utilities costs considerably, making more money available for books, salaries, and operating hours.
- € Using *practical, economical, well explained* energy conservation measures in your own library is a powerful way to teach the public about conservation.
- € Effective conservation does NOT reduce comfort or create health hazards.
- € But, energy conservation activities that are not selected and accomplished properly will fail. Unsuccessful energy conservation activities waste money and resources. Success requires an investment in study.
- € Saving energy can be your most rewarding professional experience. If you do it right, it will make you familiar with every aspect of your library system's operation, get you acquainted with a lot of interesting people, and win recognition.

### Action Items:

- \_\_\_ **ANOTHER NO-BRAINER:** *Use the books in your own collection to find ways to save energy and improve comfort and health!*
- \_\_\_ *Survey your library thoroughly for conservation opportunities.* Use the *Energy Efficiency Manual* as your survey guide.
- \_\_\_ *Work effectively with your facilities staff to make the improvements.* Energy conservation improvements are not something that you can just hand over to others to accomplish. You must effectively communicate "what, why, and how." Remain involved from the planning of each activity through its successful check-out.
- \_\_\_ *Claim your energy savings to buy more books and to make more efficiency improvements.* Don't be a silent hero. Educate headquarters to recognize the value of your activities to the library system's budget.
- \_\_\_ *Become an advocate for effective energy conservation within your library system.* This will help you get the improvements you want for your own library, replicate the benefit of your activities throughout your system, and draw the attention of administrators to the importance of conservation.
- \_\_\_ **TIP:** *Use well designed placards to explain your energy saving features.* The same placards are essential for your own staff and for educating the public.

### CHECKLIST 3 Build Efficiency into Your New Libraries

#### Starting Points:

- € By far the best time to improve efficiency is *before the library is built*. During early design, all efficiency improvements are possible, and the best are inexpensive.
- € Contemporary library design can be improved considerably. Today, library design is dominated by two approaches:
  - (1) *the same old way*, in which designers function by rote to avoid short-term trouble. This approach is reliable and it is fairly economical to build, but it wastes energy.
  - (2) *reckless innovation*, which is unreliable, causes serious comfort problems, increases construction cost, and commonly increases energy cost. Ironically, this approach to design justifies itself by concern for energy conservation. *Much of "green" or "sustainable" design wastes energy and creates discomfort.*
- € Reject both of these design approaches. The best efficiency, comfort, and economy occur when the designer uses *all* the best conservation methods that apply to the facility, but restricted to *well proven* methods, materials, and equipment.
- € Beware of fad design! The hallmark of fad design is fixation on one or two highly visible features. It neglects the full range of efficiency opportunities that the designer should consider. Fad design is a cheap way for a designer to claim to be at the leading edge of conservation, while not doing much work.

Fad design is a quack remedy. It distracts attention from real remedies, and it may cause harm. You expect your physician to be familiar with the full range of diseases and cures. Demand the same broad perspective from your library designers.

#### Action Items:

- \_\_\_ *Educate yourself about efficiency issues in design.* Take a copy of the *Energy Efficiency Manual* off your shelf and read "A Personal Note: the Right Way to Do Energy Conservation."
- \_\_\_ *Be assertive with designers* about wanting *effective* conservation and avoiding fads. Don't be dazzled by glib talk about "sustainability" and "green design." Ask potential designers how they plan to include *all* the best techniques in your project..
- \_\_\_ *Get a competent energy efficiency expert to review your proposed library design.* This is the only way to be sure that you are exploiting all your opportunities.
- \_\_\_ *Coordinate efficiency with comfort, health, and economy.* "Sick building syndrome" has emerged as a major environmental hazard, and it is widely blamed on energy conservation. Also, it is widely believed that efficiency increases the cost of construction. None of this needs to be true, but reconciling efficiency with the other important aspects of comfort and health takes a great deal of skill. Make sure that your designer knows how to integrate these important design issues.

— **TIP: *Question the glazing design!*** Irrational or extravagant use of windows, skylights, and atriums is a common symptom of fad design. It wastes energy, creates discomfort, and causes uncomfortable reading conditions.

Review the Reference Notes in the *Energy Efficiency Manual* about Daylighting and Passive Solar Heating. Make sure that your architect is well educated about these aspects of design.