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**Beyond the Annual Book Sale: A Model for an Environmentally  
Sustainable Post-Weeding Process**

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**Report**

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## **Abstract**

### **Beyond the Annual Book Sale: A Model for an Environmentally Sustainable Post-Weeding Process**

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Social activism is a foundation in librarianship. As community stewards, librarians regularly develop solutions to complex social issues from discrimination in the workplace to open source academic publishing. Increasingly, one of those issues is climate change. As the reality of climate change becomes more apparent, libraries are faced with their role in supporting healthy communities and environmental sustainability through activities like reducing carbon emissions. There has been much work on how to build greener collections and improve library facilities, but little attention has been paid to the role of weeding—specifically, what happens to deaccessioned materials. The Austin (Texas) Public Library developed an innovative, creative, and long-term model for recycling their core commodity. The Recycled Reads bookstore offers a useful example of how an urban library system recycles weeded print and media materials in such a way that 100 percent of their materials are diverted away from landfills. Through stakeholder buy-in and working closely with community and corporate partners, Austin Public Library's Recycled Reads facility is a model any library system could adopt to address environmentally responsible weeding policies.

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## Introduction

In many respects, the future is here. We may not have the flying cars and microprocessors in our brain that the science fiction of yesteryear promised us, but at any given time we are surrounded by technologies including smart phones, and tablets—a fact that would amaze the population only a half-century ago. With these computers, the digital has quickly replaced the analog. We rely on emails over the postal service, MP3s over CDs, and *The New York Times* online over a paper copy at our doorsteps (Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2008). Indeed, while print books have not completely surpassed e-books in ubiquity, more and more readers prefer Kindles and other e-readers to print books. The Pew Internet and American Life Project reports that e-reader ownership doubled—from 6% of American adults owning such a device to 12%—in just 6 months (Purcell, 2011). The percentage of adults who read digitally may in fact be higher, as the Pew report doesn't capture those who read primarily on their laptops or tablet computers. Because of the growing trend of e-books over print, both public and academic libraries are faced with new challenges regarding weeding and collection development; such as decisions regarding what can and should be purchased digitally over in print. Furthermore, an increase in e-readership reflects a broader flux of the role of the library as a physical space. Many libraries are beginning to increase weeding of their physical collections to accommodate more computer terminals or collaborative learning spaces instead of shelving units (Montgomery and Miller, 2011), thereby increasing the amount of discarded materials. While there is much writing and research

about the considerations libraries make in developing weeding guidelines, I found very little literature on what happens to materials once they've been weeded. This finding is surprising considering librarianship's relationship to environmental sustainability.

Because of librarianship's commitment to social responsibility and the library's role as community stewards, “libraries have long been icons of sustainability” (Connell, 2010, p. 1). This project aims to reconcile the need to weed with an environmentally and socially responsible approach to discarding items.

How libraries choose which serials and monographs to purchase digitally or in print and subsequent weeding decisions is beyond the scope of this paper and is very well documented elsewhere (Rais et al., 2010; Soma and Sjoberg, 2010). Instead, I contend that every weeding policy should address the environmental impact of items once they've been removed from the collection. As an integral part of any community, libraries have a responsibility to reduce their impact on the local environment and support community-wide sustainability initiatives. A comprehensive weeding policy must encourage environmental sustainability. In short, a weeding policy must ask, where do books and media go once they've been discarded and does their disposal produce a minimal impact on the local environment?

### *Defining Terms*

This paper focuses on developing and implementing environmentally sustainable weeding policies for libraries. To start with, defining sustainability is difficult.

Organizations and agencies use various definitions of the term for various purposes;

sustainability doesn't—and perhaps can't—mean one universal thing because the components of sustainability in one context aren't necessarily sustainable in another context. For the purposes of this paper, I piece together several definitions of environmental sustainability to develop a definition that suits the library profession. The Environmental Protection Agency's definition of the term is “Sustainability creates and maintains the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony, that permit fulfilling the social, economic and other requirements of present and future generations” (Environmental Protection Agency, n.d.). This definition is useful because use of the word “creates” contextualizes sustainability as a product of design, a willful and mindful process that humans create. As professionals, we need to think critically and strategically about weeding policies to develop sustainable practices.

Similarly, a definition emerged from a 1972 United Nations commission that understands sustainability as “Practices that preserve the balance between human needs and the environment, as well as between current and future human requirements” (Lerner and Lerner, 2009). Again, this definition frames sustainability as a mindful and necessary process to preserve well-being for us and future generations. Sustainability is not just advantageous to library budgets or a means to meet institutional benchmarks, but is critical in supporting libraries for the future.

Because this project understands environmental sustainability as a human and social justice issue, so, too, do the definitions of sustainability I'm using. By using terms like “productive harmony” and “preserv[ing] human needs,” the EPA and UN definitions



conceptualize sustainability as a social issue, one necessary for the survival and well-being of future generations and healthy communities. By dedicating the library to environmental sustainability, librarians make the claim that libraries are central to a community's health not only through the services and resources they provide but as role models and leaders for social change. Because promoting environmental sustainability requires cooperation, inclusion, and often challenging the status quo, it is a social justice issue, which makes it a library issue.

### *Why Focus on Weeding?*

In an ideal world, libraries would have all the space and resources needed to never weed collections. In fact, the most sustainable weeding policy of all would be to never discard anything. As we do not live in such a fantastic place, weeding is a vital part in maintaining the currency, relevancy, and utility of a library collection. Indeed, because of an increase in discarded printed materials, developing weeding strategies is a necessary concern for librarians. A popular NPR column recently dubbed this age of information a “book-burning era” due to the huge amounts of discarded print books (Holmes, 2011). Other library bloggers responded to this column by explaining librarians' discomfort and displeasure in discarding library materials but understanding it as a necessary evil due to, among other concerns, budget and space constraints (Goldberg, 2011). Libraries, then, have weeding policies to help librarians and paraprofessionals make smart and strategic decisions about what should be weeded and when. The majority of research on weeding that I found during this project stresses individual departments' decisions of weeding

particular sections of the collection. These policies are typically dictated by budget and restrictions (Martin and Sayed, 2004), community and institutional needs (Soma and Sjoberg, 2010), availability of electronic resources (Francis, 2012), and library-specific regulations. I find something missing, though: namely, consideration of supporting environmental initiatives and overall impact on the environment or any substantial conversation about developing policies to actually handle discarded items. To be fair, there is a growing body of literature that discusses environmental collection development decisions (Connell, 2010), which I will detail in the literature review, but by and large, library literature tends to obfuscate the post-weeding fate of a book. It appears that after a book has been removed from its shelf and the catalog, it is no longer of the library's concern. Failure to address what happens to books once they're off the shelves is at best socially irresponsible, and at worst a failure to serve our communities.

Efforts to make sustainability a tenet of librarianship focus on the environmental impact of our core commodity: books. From cutting trees to make paper, to processing paper, to printing, binding, and shipping, book publishing takes a lot of energy (Connell, 2010, p. 6). Because of the high environmental cost of our commodity, it makes sense that librarians be concerned with maximizing a book's use, a concern librarians consistently deal with through book repairs and book sales. Maximizing use, though, shouldn't end at repairing damaged books and selling them at low-cost once the library is finished with them. Maximizing a book's use should be central to collection development, marketing, circulation, and deaccessioning materials. From purchasing to

its eventual recycling, librarians have a responsibility to our communities and environment to ensure books are cared for responsibly.

### *Project Outline*

As I am framing the work of environmental sustainability as a social justice issue, I will begin by contextualizing librarian work as social justice work. From civil rights to the Freedom of Information Act to open source scholarly publishing, librarianship has a long history of involvement in community building through social justice enterprises. I will then briefly discuss the environmental sustainability movement in other information science disciplines. Within these two frameworks, I will place environmentally sustainable weeding practices in libraries as a social justice issue.

The second portion of this paper is an example of an existing, successful model for sustainable weeding. As a result of a 2009 city-wide Climate Protection Program, in Austin, Texas, each city department was tasked with making significant strides in reducing its environmental impact. The Austin Public Library (APL) developed an innovative solution to this task: Recycled Reads is APL's bookstore and weeded materials warehouse. In addition to providing good quality reading materials at very low cost to the public, it also boasts a zero-landfill recycling operation that keeps one ton of books and media out of landfills each month. I will provide an analysis of this operation and propose ways the Recycled Reads model can be adapted for any library system. This project hopes to demonstrate how tackling climate change and carbon emissions is a central tenet to librarianship's mission to improve communities. Moreover, Recycled

Reads demonstrates that developing effective and efficient solutions to these issues of climate change needn't be political or costly. Indeed, APL believes that investing in our communities today ensures the success of libraries in the future (M. Reed, personal communication, February 24, 2012).

## **Literature Review**

This project first and foremost is about the creation of a comprehensive weeding policy that accounts for an environmentally responsible way of disposing discarded materials. Literature addressing the connection between librarianship and environmental responsibility is just starting to emerge and I hope this project will contribute to that tradition. There is, though, substantial literature on the role of librarianship in social movements, and because I frame environmental sustainability as a social justice issue, it is useful to understand librarianship's history with other social justice campaigns. Positioning environmental sustainability as library work isn't so far-fetched when we see the other kinds of social justice work librarians incorporate into their policies and daily practices.

First, we must understand the nature of library work. Librarianship at its core is sociopolitical (Raber, 2007). The notion of providing free information for the greatest number of people is radical. In subscribing to the values of free and open information for everyone, the library is a political space. In the past few decades as more research has emerged about the growing climate crisis, we are beginning to understand the direct impact local climate has on communities (Gecy and Furniss, 2009). From droughts to unstable weather patterns to wildfires, we have seen our neighborhoods (if not our own library buildings) affected by a changing climate. As caretakers of the community, librarians have a responsibility to promote environmental well-being professionally. Therefore, libraries should care about environmental responsibility because it is a social

justice issue.

I frame this project within a number of different fields of study. First, I will describe the history of librarianship as social justice work generally. I will elucidate some of librarianship's history, earliest goals, objectives, and current trends to demonstrate that it has always had human rights as a core value. Next, I will speak specifically to the role libraries and librarians had during the Civil Rights movement in the United States at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in order to understand the professionalization of social responsibility in librarianship. I will then address some emerging trends in current social justice issues, like open-source academic publishing and the treatment of the Freedom of Information Act, as they relate to library work and library activism. Finally, there has been much work on environmental sustainability in information science cognate disciplines, including librarianship. I will briefly discuss the work being done within these disciplines.

### *The Nature of Librarianship is Political*

Librarianship has a long history as agents for social change. Professional librarianship emerged during the expansion of the public library and the Progressive Era—a time characterized by political activism and challenging the status quo. The backdrop of the Progressive Era set the stage for the founding of the American Library Association (ALA)—which happened in 1876—and the launch of professional library education at Columbia University in 1887. The values of the time influenced ALA's core—or what Weissinger (2003) suggests would be a more appropriate term, *enduring*—set

of values, among them uninhibited access to information for the purposes of democracy, civic education, and social reform (American Library Association, 1996).

Libraries continue to be an arena for social reform. One reason for our commitment to social justice is that the nature of information itself is political. From its classification (Bowker and Star, 2000) to how people access it (Granka, 2010), the way people interact with information is politically-situated. Library historians write about libraries' roles in various social issues, like social inclusion policies (Gehner, 2010), access to government information (Jaeger and Bertot, 2011), and general support for democracy and human rights (Forsyth, 2005). These writings situate libraries as political and social institutions and question the place for the value-neutrality of information in the profession. Value-neutrality is a complicated issue in librarianship. On the one hand, librarians strive to provide fair, balanced, and value-neutral collections to address a range of interests. ALA's Bill of Rights states, "libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval" (American Library Association, 1996). In practicality, librarians are involved, at the very least, in the analysis, selection, and judgment of materials according to collection development policies and the needs of the community. By helping patrons evaluate sources or by critically selecting nonfiction materials, they are affirming that some information is better than other information. Librarians challenge the value-neutrality of information through careful selection of materials and are better librarians because of it

(Alfino and Pierce, 2001). Indeed, assuming an objective or value-neutral role for ourselves is not in the best interest of our communities (Gremmels, 1991). By assuming a value-critical stance, librarians are better able to participate in “developing an informed citizenry” and support a political community by encouraging patrons to consider resources that challenge their viewpoints (ibid.). Being an information professional means providing a balanced range of materials while being critical of their context.

Because librarianship was founded in a time of social activism and because the nature of information is political, librarianship is in an unabashedly political field. Indeed, its core values are democracy and public education. The foundation of democracy rests upon an informed citizenry and public spaces to engage in political and civil discussions; indeed, some have gone so far as to assert that “public libraries are an American innovation second only to the Constitution in their importance to the sustenance of democracy” (Baldwin, 2006, p. 11). Likewise, librarians often understand how supporting ideals of democracy and civic participation directly align with professional values of freedom of expression and equitable access to services (Phenix and De la Pena McCook, 2005).

To be better advocates for democracy and political action, librarians need a comprehensive knowledge of sociopolitical theories. There is a growing trend in library and information science (LIS) education towards developing and incorporating social justice metatheories in their curriculum (Rioux, 2010; UCLA's School of Information Science offers specializations in social justice topics). There are a number of different



social justice-oriented theories other social service curricula have developed (for examples, see Rioux 2010). Accordingly, LIS educators have begun to realize the need for comprehensive professional training as social justice advocates. Through activist work, libraries have a much greater chance of staying relevant and useful to their communities.

Staying relevant largely depends on libraries being community builders (Gehner, 2010). Libraries, especially public libraries, struggle to justify their budgets at best and existence at worse, to both city councils and tax payers. Ultimately, a library that has failed to prove itself as an invaluable resource has failed to participate in community building. Libraries, of course, are not solely responsible for building strong communities, though libraries are responsible for providing access to resources and services that strengthen community ties through education and civic participation. R. David Lankes recently published a tome to revitalize libraries in a digital age. The primary mission of libraries, he argues, is “to improve society through facilitating knowledge creation in their communities” (2011, p. 1).

Libraries-as-community-builders is better understood through a framework McCabe (2001) calls civic librarianship. McCabe advocates for civic librarianship, which he contrasts to libertarian librarianship. Where libertarian librarianship is primarily concerned with providing access to information, civic librarianship “seeks to strengthen communities through developmental strategies that renew the public library’s mission of education for a democratic society” (p. 75) This model argues that librarians’

role is as civil educators. As such, is it the libraries responsibility to establish collection development, reference, and readers' advisory services (among other services) that directly support the civic education needs of the community. McCabe essentially argues that library services, resources and programs must directly and strategically support community building. Furthermore, librarianship on a local level can support global humanitarian issues such as the promotion of the Millennium Development Goals (Forsyth, 2005). Again, civic librarianship is an inherently political position that directs libraries away from being simply warehouses of popular fiction to carefully managed portals for knowledge, democracy, and community building.

To best understand how librarianship applied its political and socially-oriented values, we need to turn to the Civil Rights movement during the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the next section, I will uncover some strategies librarians used to promote a professional culture oriented towards social justice.

### *The Professionalization of Social Responsibility*

As I've described above, librarianship has historically been situated as a sociopolitical institution. However, it wasn't until the Cold War of the late 1950s and through the Civil Rights movement during the 1960s that ALA took an official stance on a social and civil movement. Cold War paranoia created an environment rife with censorship, a trend that made ALA uncomfortable (Robbins, 1996). Starting during the Cold War and lasting through the Civil Rights movement, ALA began sharpening its stance on intellectual freedom. During these years, librarianship underwent a "social

responsibility movement” that “revealed an inherent discrepancy between the rhetoric of ideals associated with the library profession and the reality of what was being practiced in the library” (Samek, 2001, p.1)—that is to say, libraries were not practicing what they preached. ALA had an established Bill of Rights and a core set of values but there was nothing in place to guide individual library systems towards policies of inclusion and intellectual freedom. ALA needed to provide practical, professional tools to support librarian values. In particular, librarian Celeste West with a group of other librarians and library school students involved in the civil rights movement urged ALA to address the legal discrimination towards blacks by the federal government (ibid.). Through conferences, committees, and public announcements, ALA began the process of formalizing its stance on the United States policies of disenfranchisement and discrimination of blacks, and how that work would fit in with the day-to-day operations of libraries. Through those conferences and committees, ALA moved towards a practical application of its position of intellectual freedom and public education. In other words, from the ALA was beginning to formalize its priorities; a commitment to the right to intellectual freedom would henceforth be a primary commitment of librarianship (Samek, 2001, p. 29).

Turning social responsibility into formal and accepted library work, though, was not an easy task. The struggles over the nature of librarianship and its role in the “creation of culture” was tumultuous and readily contested (Raber, 2007). While most librarians could agree that the primary mission of libraries was to support and promote

democracy, and could agree that the treatment of blacks, women, and other underrepresented user communities prior to the Civil Rights movement threatened democracy, librarians could not easily agree on what librarians were to do or if librarians should do anything at all (Berninghausen, 1972). What is the line that separates library issues from non-library issues? Furthermore, some librarians felt that ALA had already taken a formal stance to promote social responsibility in its Library Bill of Rights document; to expand the rights defined in the Bill would be to overstep the bounds of librarianship, stretch advocacy resources, and threaten community buy-in (ibid).

To better understand how social responsibility might intersect with the day-to-day work and objectives of librarianship, the 1961 ALA annual conference assembled an “Access to Libraries” study. When the report was delivered at the 1963 annual conference, it was concluded that the United States policies of discrimination towards blacks directly affected their access to library services and black librarians themselves who were not permitted to attend the ALA conference due to the headquarters hotel's discriminatory policies (for more examples, see Raber, 2007). The report also identified biases in collection development policies that failed to represent alternative presses and needs of ethnic community members (Samek, 2001). This report demonstrated that when discrimination prevails, public libraries fail to uphold their mission.

In 1968, ALA created a Round Table for Social Responsibilities in Libraries, now known as the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) (Raber, 2007). The Round Table's purpose was to investigate, discuss, research, and report on issues of race,

discrimination, gender, and social issues; in effect, SRRT legitimized the efforts of social responsibility as important to library work. While efforts were underway to legitimize social justice work, a committee was commissioned to help ALA itself re-structure and re-prioritize its activities in the light of a newfound sense of purpose. The ACONDA (Activities Committee on New Directions for ALA) team submitted a report that

articulate[d] a vision of an activist association engaged in support of librarianship to use the power of libraries to solve critical social problems. It is a plan and a call for action, identifying specific steps the association must take to realize the articulated vision. Finally, it is an invitation to discourse—to explore the moral responsibility of the profession to society and to discover ways to put principle into practice through service (Raber, 2007, p. 9).

In other words, in the light of the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movement, ALA concluded that social activist work necessary for strong communities and enduring democracy is inherently library work, particularly work that involves the intersection of librarianship with intellectual freedom and, more importantly, began to put standards and policies in place that remain today.

In addition to professionalizing social justice work, the momentum of the 1960s and 1970s established ALA as an influential political voice. Though prohibited from spending any substantial portion of its budget on direct lobbying due to its 501c(3) tax status, ALA often issues statements on social policy that influence advocacy and legislative outreach agendas (American Library Association, n.d.). In the next section, I will discuss recent social justice issues the ALA and library profession at large have addressed, such as the *USA PATRIOT Act* and *Freedom of Information Act*. Without the efforts of socially-conscious librarians and library administrators during the Civil Rights

era, librarianship would not have the tools or framework to tackle social issues facing libraries today.

### *Current Social Issues in Librarianship*

Thanks to the professionalization of social justice work in librarianship, ALA offers dozens of “toolkits” for librarians and library administrators to use as resources for a variety of social issues. Three of the more interesting topics librarians are currently investigating and taking stances on are the effects of the *USA PATRIOT Act*, how to accommodate the *Freedom of Information Act*, and a how to respond to a growing trend towards open source publishing.

In 2001, in response to the terror attacks on the World Trade Center, President Bush signed into act the *USA PATRIOT Act* (in full, “Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism”). This is a very long bill that reduces restrictions in law enforcement agencies' ability to gather intelligence on planned terrorist attacks. Among those provisions is what is commonly known as the “Library Provision,” because it permits law enforcement officials to gather personal records on suspected terrorists including but not limited to, their public library records. This allowance is in express conflict with the ALA value of privacy and its existing policy on the confidentiality of library records; as such, shortly thereafter becoming law, ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom issued a statement that

the American Library Association opposes any use of governmental power to suppress the free and open exchange of knowledge and information or to intimidate individuals exercising free inquiry; and, that the American Library Association encourages all librarians, library administrators, library governing

bodies, and library advocates to educate their users, staff, and communities about the process for compliance with the USA PATRIOT Act and other related measures and about the dangers to individual privacy and the confidentiality of library records resulting from those measures... (American Library Association, 2003).

The resolution goes on to encourage librarians to resist releasing patron records and provides a toolkit with resources on how to protect patron privacy, how to talk to patrons about the Act, and what to do if served with a search warrant. ALA made a concise, concerted stand against a federal mandate for the sake of civil liberties and supported individual librarians to do the same.

With the blessing of ALA, public libraries around the country staged protests in the form of “subversive book check-outs,” by shredding or deleting all patron records at the end of every day, or, cleverly, notifying patrons as to when the government had *not* requested any records since the Act prohibits libraries from informing patrons when records are collected (Oder, 2003). While the protests did little to change the vocabulary or provisions of the Act (indeed, in 2011 President Obama re-signed the particular “Library Records Provision,” with two other key components), ALA proved its ability to organize large-scale protests and, through education, made librarians care about a civil and social justice issue as a part of their daily work lives.

Librarianship is also entangled with federal legislation regarding the *Freedom of Information Act* (FOIA). This Act affords more transparency and accountability in government by allowing citizens the ability to request official records. Though signed into law in 1966 by President Johnson, FOIA is once again topical as the Internet

becomes an important tool for accessing government information. Jaeger and Bertot (2011) call the services, resources, and information that the government makes available online “e-government.” They note that people access e-government information “to fulfill an important personal need” and when they lack the resources or ability to access that information on their own, they turn to public libraries (p. 99). For many communities, libraries are the only place for citizens to use Internet-ready computers or to get assistance in requesting government documents and navigating government websites. The *Freedom of Information Act* made it easier for private citizens to obtain e-government information and, therefore, FOIA inadvertently transformed libraries into e-government information portals.

Access to information is a core value of librarianship and access to government information is a core value of democracy (which, as it happens, is another core value of librarianship). As a primary access point to important e-government information, libraries have a stake in advocating for transparent government information. Libraries, then, do not just play a passive role in providing access to e-government, but should assume a role in policy making decisions related to government access (Jaeger and Bertot 2011). When social services and social rights are at the core of librarianship, library professionals must be proactive in responding to the needs of the community.

Yet another way librarians are shaping policy is in the domain of open-access electronic data sharing. Academic and public libraries have long been subjected to what are often astronomically high subscription prices to proprietary scholarly databases.



According to the ALA State of American Libraries Report 2012, “library expenditures for ebooks, electronic journals, and database subscriptions increased 23% (more than \$264 million) since 2008” (p. 29). Because both public and academic library patrons depend on the literature these databases provide, library administrators have to choose between patron satisfaction and cutting costs elsewhere in the budget. As budgets decrease and subscription prices increase, universities and municipalities are looking for ways to ease the reliance on pricey databases while still providing access to necessary scholarly publishing. Enter, then, the open-access scholarly communications movement.

The open-access scholarly publishing movement is predicated on a shift “from a closed world dominated private publishers driven by profit to a system of scholarship founded on “open access software/technology and democratized copyrights” (Shuler, 2007). The movement envisions a model where high quality scholarly publishing is available for free to, and owned by, the public; indeed, since much scholarly research uses public funds, open-source proponents recognize most research as a product of public intellectual property. Therefore, scholarly publishing should not be restricted to those affiliated with an institution wealthy enough to purchase journal subscriptions.

Librarians have spear-headed a movement towards open-source publishing because they recognize it as a social justice concern. The principle of open access applied to scholarly works is a tool for social good by allowing important and academic literature to be accessible to anyone through the Internet. Once again, this movement demonstrates the conflict between professional librarian values—free and open access to

information for everyone—and institutional values—protecting investments by restricting access to library members. The fact that librarians are pushing for a more democratized model reinforces librarians' roles as primarily civil servants. Additionally, information professionals are beginning to think critically about the Internet as a tool for knowledge creation and distribution, and engage in conversations about the “digital revolution's social and economic implications” (Shuler, 2007). Indeed, more and more information disciplines are considering the economic and social implications of digital materials. It is in the consideration of material format that environmental sustainability becomes a part of information science. In the final section of this literature review, I will discuss the way cognate disciplines are discussing environmental sustainability as a central part of their work.

#### *Environmental Work as Information Work*

The need to develop comprehensive strategies to combat climate change was first recognized in a higher education setting in 1990 by the Association for University Leaders for a Sustainable Future. Composed at an international conference in Talloires, France, the Talloires Declaration is the first official statement made by university administrators of a commitment to environmental sustainability in higher education (The Association of University Leaders for a Sustainable Future, 2001). The Talloires Declaration is a ten-point action plan for incorporating sustainability and environmental literacy in teaching, research, operations, and outreach at colleges and universities. Then, in a 2007 publication, the American College and University Presidents' Climate

Commitment (ACUPCC) expanded the groundwork laid by the Talloires Declaration by recognizing the need for institutions of higher education to develop policies and curriculum standards to help communities adapt to climate changes. Its mission is to “accelerate progress towards climate neutrality and sustainability by empowering the higher education sector to educate students, create solutions, and provide leadership-by-example for the rest of society” (American College and University Presidents' Climate commitment, 2007). The ACUPCC document provides a framework for higher education institutions to develop policies and practices that support a “climate-neutral” agenda. This organization understands that as creators and curators of information, higher education needs to take seriously the threat of climate change. Among strategies for prioritizing an awareness of and response to climate change are 1) providing research that supports climate change science and adaptation strategies; 2) increase curricular offerings on climate adaptation; 3) improve facilities to reduce carbon emissions; and 4) serve as a community-wide hub for local knowledge related to climate changes, impact of climate changes, and as participants in creating local solutions for climate change.

While neither the Talloires Document nor the ACUPCC report do not directly acknowledge the role of the university library in the pursuit of climate-neutrality, there are clear ways the library can and should be involved. As part of the university community, academic libraries support this mission by developing environmental research collections, providing access to environmental information, and supporting “environmental literacy” to help students and staff adopt environmentally-sustainable

lifestyle practices (Jankowska, 2010; Connell, 2010). Green collection development policies should also include medium (print or electronic) selection decisions that uphold sustainability and involve a sustainable deaccession process (Connell, 2010). In addition, Jankowska (2010) argues that academic libraries need to develop concrete institution-wide green policies encompassing collection development, access, facilities, licenses, and purchasing considerations. An example of an institution-wide purchasing consideration is developing a standardized rubric to calculate the environmental impact of using e-books compared to print books (Christensen and Siever, 2010).

The university library is not the only place where environmental concerns are taking a front seat. The information technology (IT) field for years has understood the role it plays in environmental sustainability and has been working towards developing frameworks to mitigate environmental concerns and orient the profession towards long-term environmental sustainability. While IT has focused on the reduction of energy consumption and a shift to renewable energy sources, there is mounting literature to develop an integrated sustainability framework which builds a relationship between several types of IT infrastructures in an institution (Dao, Langella, and Carbo, 2011). Likewise, the human-computer interaction (HCI) discipline plays a pivotal role in environmental sustainability through technology obsolescence cycles. HCI can improve sustainability practices by sustainability in design (using sustainable raw materials) and sustainability through design (encouraging sustainable lifestyles). Again, there has been a surge in literature to address the need to develop sound research methodologies to

mediate environmental concerns (di Salvo, Sengers, and Brynjarsdottlr, 2010).

As this literature review demonstrated, not only is social just work at the core of librarianship, designing and implementing environmentally sustainable policies supports our missions and visions. Environmental challenges affect not only the quality of life of our communities, but “will influence the type of information resources and programs libraries can provide” (Antonelli, 2008, p. 1). In the next section, I will discuss one instantiation of an environmentally sustainable weeding policy at Austin Public Library (APL). The Recycled Reads used bookstore is an example of a comprehensive, environmentally conscious post-weeding practice. I will explain its organization, just how much good it does for the library system and city of Austin, how community partnerships make the operation possible, and why it is an excellent model for any library to use when designing its own sustainability work.

## **Beyond the Book Sale: The Recycled Reads Model for Sustainable Weeding**

APL has developed an innovative and successful model for sustainable weeding practices. The Recycled Reads bookstore is owned and operated by APL. Its goals are two-fold: first, as a bookstore, it makes materials available for residents to add to their personal libraries; secondly, as a recycling facility, it keeps over 130 tons of books and media out of landfills each year. In the words of the manager of Recycled Reads, Mindy Reed, “the goal of the store is to extend the life, and maximize the use of library materials” (personal communication, February 29, 2012). By going beyond an annual book sale for weeded and donated materials, Recycled Reads provides a consistent revenue stream, keeps hundreds of tons of materials out of the city's landfill, and engages the community in a strategic and on-going way. Through cooperation with city departments, community partnerships with recycling organizations, hosting upcycling programs and environmental awareness events, and creating strong relationships with the library system's branches, Recycled Reads offers an innovative and practical solution for sustainable and responsible weeding.

### *History and Background*

Before 2009, weeded library materials from APL branches that were still in good condition and donations that could not be put into circulation would be sold at an annual “Monster Book Sale” run by the Friends organization, a practice followed by many other library systems. These book sales were profitable for the library system but would inevitably leave a huge amount of unsold materials that the library shipped to the city's

landfill. Mindy Reed, then a librarian at a branch library, saw potential for a more consistent revenue source by opening a bookstore that would serve customers year-round instead of once a year at the Monster Book Sale. The store would not only sell the books typically reserved for the annual book sale, but would also accept donations from the community. Around the same time, the city council began to develop a citywide carbon-neutral plan to direct 90% of city waste away from landfills and achieve carbon neutrality by 2040 (see Appendix). In that moment, the concept for Recycled Reads was born.

Recycled Reads opened in February of 2010. First and foremost, the bookstore provides good-quality reading materials, CDs, VHS and cassette tapes, and vinyl records at very low prices. Secondly, it operates as the library's only recycling facility for books and media. The library's administrators hoped Recycled Reads would generate revenue for the system, divert costs away from storage and transportation of weeded materials, reduce landfill tipping fees, and create an environmentally sustainable solution to dealing with the library's waste. Now in its third year, Recycled Reads has more than exceeded expectations. Between January 1 and December 31, 2011, Recycled Reads kept over 130 tons of materials out of landfills and generated approximately \$150,000 of gross income for the library system (M. Reed, personal communication, February 24, 2012). Nearly 100 percent of all library materials are recycled and never enter a landfill. In addition to the revenue stream produced by selling discarded library materials and donated items, the bookstore has saved the library system over \$100,000 a year in what Reed calls "opportunity costs": the absorbed costs of transportation, storage, landfill fees, and the

operating costs of the Monster Book Sale.

The success of Recycled Reads depends on several factors, one of which is low operating costs. Primarily, the bookstore relies on volunteers. In its first year, Reed was the only paid staff member, with approximately 30 volunteers for support. Entering its third year, the store is now staffed by two full-time librarians and two part-time, temporary staff members and has retained its nearly 30 weekly volunteers. The volunteers and staff at Recycled Reads sort and shelve four palettes per week of weeded library books plus community donations; they plan and host programs in upcycling—the process of turning an unwanted item into an item of better quality—and composting; they research the price of vintage and rare books; and they provide excellent customer service and readers’ advisory services to customers.

The second important tool in Recycled Reads’ success is its relationships with city departments, the library system, and partnerships with community organizations. This record of success will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. Recycled Reads’ operations intersect with the objectives of several other city departments, local community organizations, and rely on the cooperation of APL librarians. Without Recycled Reads’ two community partners, the zero-landfill recycling component would not happen. The local Goodwill handles the recycling of printed materials and Image Microsystems handles the recycling of all media materials, such as VHS and cassette tapes, CDs, and vinyl records. These partners not only recycle all of Recycled Reads’ materials, but they uphold their promise that no library or donated property will go to a



landfill at any stage of its life. Ensuring that promise is kept means APL conducts regular audits and site visits to make sure that its partners honor the zero-landfill pledge.

### *Buy-in and the Challenges of Starting Something New*

When I asked Mindy Reed what the most difficult part of getting the bookstore up and running was, she said, in a word, “buy-in.” The importance of getting institutional (internal) and societal (external) buy-in is well-documented in business and management literature. Buy-in is, simply, the process of gaining support for a particular project or program. Creating buy-in is important in carrying out the mission and goals of an organization (Fitsimmons, 2009; Hung, 2011). Essentially, every organization is a collection of stakeholders—those who “literally have a stake in the success and failure of the organization” (Fitsimmons, 2009, p. 21). Furthermore, when an organization is starting a social responsibility project, a manager must show how that project supports the mission of the organization and its community—what is commonly called organization-centered and society-centered responsibility roles (Hung, 2011). Thus, gaining buy-in for a project or program relies on showing stakeholders how that program or project supports the success of the organization and its community. For Recycled Reads, then, the two largest stakeholders are the City of Austin and the APL system.

Reed first had to get buy-in from the city in order to get the necessary start-up funds and utilize existing city departments. Generating buy-in from municipalities is often difficult because

processes through which government policy-makers define state interests and formulate policies to deal with complex social, political, and technical issues can

be influenced significantly on the basis of how the issue is presented (Hung, 2011, p. 391).

Reed had to provide a compelling and convincing argument that the bookstore would provide a comparable revenue stream to the annual Monster Book Sale and that the recycling component would efficiently support the Zero Waste and Carbon-Neutral initiative. Reed achieved this through a combination of networking and participating (Hung, 2011).

First, she prepared and presented evidence to a network of key city officials and administrators that Recycled Reads would prove to be a reliable revenue stream for the city. As opposed to the annual Monster Book Sale that only generated income once a year, the bookstore proved to be a steady stream of revenue. Add to that the amount of money the bookstore saves the city in opportunity costs, and there was more than enough evidence to convince the city that the bookstore was a sound return on investment.

Another important component to garnering buy-in was Recycled Reads' zero-landfill promise. Around the time the bookstore was in its planning stages, the city passed the Austin Climate Protection Plan (ACPP). The ACPP is a multi-stage plan with a goal to create a carbon-neutral Austin by the year 2040 with a variety of benchmarks to meet before then; see the Appendix for the full text of the resolution. The city tasked each department to develop long-term plans to improve their own policies to reduce waste to support the ACPP and to improve its carbon emissions by 3 percent each year. By developing a large-scale recycling facility, the library is well on its way to helping the city meet its zero waste and carbon-neutral goals. I asked the Outreach Coordinator for

the Austin Climate Protection office if APL was on track to meet these goals. Due to the efforts of Recycled Reads, she says, “it's hard to find anywhere the library could improve its carbon emissions” (M. Priddy, personal communication March 26, 2012). Priddy continued that because of its revenue generation and zero-landfill promise, getting buy-in for Recycled Reads from the city was a “no brainer.”

Demonstrating how Recycled Reads supports the goals and values of the city was an effective way to generate buy-in from the city, but to create long-term support for the bookstore, Reed also had to allow city departments to participate in the operation of the bookstore. Now, Recycled Reads works closely with other city departments, such as Austin Resource Recovery, Materials Management, and the Office of Sustainability to develop priorities and participate in outreach programs. In addition to ensuring that the goals of the city and the objectives of Recycled Reads are in sync, this network of participation positions the library as an essential component for a successfully run Austin.

After getting the green light from the City of Austin, Reed then had the challenge of convincing the library system itself that Recycled Reads should be a critical part of the library's operations. According to Reed, many librarians had legitimate concerns about opening a permanent storefront. She reports two main obstacles to garnering the support of librarians. First, APL, like all public libraries around the country, is constantly being asked to do more with less money, and the biggest concern was that Recycled Reads would put more strain on the library system. There are twenty-one branches in the APL system; adequately staffing and stocking those branches is often challenging. For some

librarians, Recycled Reads was perceived to be just another branch to divert funds away from existing branches and programs. At the time, librarians were unsure if Recycled Reads would save the city or library system money. Many saw the risk of opening a storefront during an economic recession to be too great. Additionally, before Recycled Reads, individual branches would host their own book sales from donated items, of which the entirety of profits would go to that branch. Some were concerned that Recycled Reads would eliminate the possibility of branch book sales because all donated materials would now be there, and would consequently reduce their own revenue stream. The second largest concern that librarians had was that, simply put, a large-scale recycling operation was outside the scope of library work.

As the manager of Recycled Reads, it was Reed's job to address these reasonable concerns. Achieving buy-in from library employees is a continuous challenge that requires three things. First, Reed works with employees to develop a solution to individual branches wanting their own book sales and demonstrate how the bookstore is good for the library as a whole. Next, Reed appeals to librarians' professionalism by her insistence that it is the library's responsibility to oversee materials purchased by the library from “womb to tomb”, the entire life cycle of the material. Lastly, Reed develops strategies to operationalize the bookstore as another branch through programming and offering traditional library services like readers' advisory.

Through cooperation and coordination, Reed worked with other library administrators and branch managers to work out a solution to individual branch book

sales. Prior to Recycled Reads, weeded and donated materials would be kept in various storage sites, but primarily in the basement of the central library and the library warehouse. When a branch wanted to host a book sale, it would take its own donated materials and peruse the selection in the basement and warehouse. Then, that branch would be able to keep the entirety of money made by the sale. The worry was that if instead of being housed in the basement, Recycled Reads would have the majority of the system's weeded and donated books and branches would not have access to them. As a solution, branch personnel are invited to treat the bookstore as the central basement—in other words, branch staff can simply come to the bookstore and take whatever materials they'd like for their own book sale. Additionally, Reed frequently makes all financial statements and reporting available to the library through the library's intranet. This tactic allows the rest of the library system to better understand how the bookstore saves the library money in storage, shipping, and transportation costs. This kind of disclosure creates trust between the branches and the bookstore and demonstrates how the bookstore operates in the library's best interest. Along the same lines, Reed has developed a way to incorporate the bookstore as an acting library branch. Creating and implementing programs that support the bookstore's and library's mission has been a successful way of creating buy-in. Upcycling and altered book programs to turn discarded materials into crafts and gifts is a popular way to maximize an item's use. These programs attract attention to the bookstore and to the values of the APL system, which turns those customers on to the library. Treating the bookstore as a useful, important branch through

programs and library services has ensured that Recycled Reads is a respected part of the library system.

A big obstacle to creating buy-in is convincing librarians that developing an environmentally sustainable solution to weeding is a librarian's job. The City of Austin is fortunate to have many departments involved in waste management and environmental concerns. It is a reasonable opinion that with the library's stretched resources that Resource Recovery or Materials Management or the Office of Sustainability should manage the library's weeded materials. Adding theoretical and practical scope to librarians' professional identity requires work, but is not impossible. Information professionals are not strangers to change and in the last few years, library professionals have been asked to develop IT and programming skills (Matthews and Pardue, 2009), become teachers (Walter, 2008), and undergo digital curating (Kunda and Anderson-Wilk, 2011). Reed, understanding that a core tenet of librarianship is caring for our communities, adds to that list being community stewards (Reed, 2010). Being a community steward does not mean simply providing access to information services but also ensuring the well-being and sustainability of our communities. Therefore, she advocates for a “womb to tomb” framework. Her belief is that when a library purchases something—be it a paperback book, DVD, or disc with software—it is that library's responsibility to oversee its entire life cycle. As “community stewards, libraries have a responsibility to ensure that their core commodity—namely, books—is being handled responsibly” (M. Reed, personal communication, February 24, 2012). Developing a way

to incorporate environmental sustainability and responsibility into the library's professional identity is challenging, but one Reed faces with ongoing education, community partnerships, and strategic cooperation. Her goal is for the library to adopt a philosophy that "if we don't save the planet, there's little point in doing anything else" (personal communication, February 24, 2012).

### *Making it Happen with Community Partnerships*

Without Recycled Reads' ongoing support through community partnerships, the recycling aspect of the bookstore would be impossible. Partnerships benefit libraries by raising the library's social capital and empowering the library to offer services it would otherwise be unable to offer (Marcum, 2008). Sustaining partnerships are accomplished through a commitment to mutual goals and objectives, open communication and accountability, and a willingness to develop creative solutions (Marcum, 2008, p. 83).

Libraries have relied on partnerships for decades, from small systems creating consortiums to offer a wider variety of materials, to sharing copy cataloging, to interlibrary loan programs. As a matter of tradition and necessity, APL depends on partnerships for the success of Recycled Reads. It was important to Reed for recycling partners to be close by; from her perspective, it doesn't make much environmental sense to ship tons of materials across the country for recycling. Austin is fortunate enough to have compatible local resources. In addition to its partnerships with city departments, Recycled Reads works with two recycling partners: Goodwill Industries of Central Texas to recycle printed materials and Image Microsystems to recycle media. Through close

collaboration with these organizations, Recycled Reads maintains its zero-landfill promise and creates a sustaining, mutually beneficial relationship for the APL system and the City of Austin.

Once a need for a partner has been identified, it is crucial that the library choose a compatible organization (Crowther and Trott, 2004 p. 61). Compatibility is based on several factors, but chief among them are that the partner organization has resources to benefit the library's program, and that the partner organization's mission is aligned with that of the library. Goodwill Industries of Central Texas (GICT) is an obvious partner for Recycled Reads because of its triple bottom line: "people, profits, and planet" (J. Kendall, personal communication, March 13, 2012). First and foremost, Goodwill's mission is to create lifelong connections to work. To put people to work, Goodwill offers job training seminars, resume writing workshops, mock interviews, consultations with employment specialists, and help for people with obstacles to unemployment. To provide those services, Goodwill must generate revenue. In addition to community donations, Goodwill Industries operates retail stores, contracts with federal, state, and local businesses, and recycles and sells used computers. In 2009, due to these services, over 13,000 individuals in central Texas found work (Goodwill Industries of Central Texas, n.d.). Jeff Kendall, a district manager of GICT, informed me that to maximize community donations and revenue streams, GICT had to become more environmentally responsible and consider local environment impact in all of their operations. In other words, maximizing an item's use is good both for generating revenue and supporting the



environment (personal communication, March 13, 2012). Because APL shares a commitment to improving the lives of community members and protecting the local environment, Goodwill Industries of Central Texas is a compatible partner.

Likewise, Image Microsystems, the partner responsible for all media recycling, is one of a kind. Image Microsystems is the “only certified zero-landfill reverse logistics provider that also manufactures and markets quality, environmentally friendly products made from recycled e-waste plastic components” (Image Microsystems, 2011). Their four principles of sustainability, security, innovation, and community are aligned with the goals of Recycled Reads. In particular, Image Microsystems ensures a zero landfill and no overseas dumping policy. With the revenue they generate through creating signage made from e-waste recycling, they are ardent supporters of Texas School for the Deaf and actively hire deaf workers. Like Recycled Reads, they practice the understanding that being good for the environment means being good for the community.

It is not enough that Goodwill Industries of Central Texas’ and Image Microsystems’ values and missions are aligned with APL’s, partnerships must also have services to benefit Recycled Reads’ operation. Recycled Reads needs an organization to pick up and recycle unsold materials each week, totaling around 4 palettes of books, or about 500 individual books. The Goodwill of Central Texas’ “e-book” operation serves that purpose. In this context “e-book” does not refer to digital books, but is their name for their book recycling process. Each year, GICT receives 2.5 million book donations. When books are donated to Goodwill retail stores, some of them are sold and some of

them aren't. Those that aren't sold are moved to the GICT headquarters where they are scanned into a database which determines if that book could be sold online for profit. Those that can be sold online are put on various used book selling websites like Amazon, Abe's Books, Alibris, and Books.com. Those that get sold, get shipped off to their new owners. If a book is determined to not be sellable online, they are moved to the Goodwill Outlet store where they are on sale for \$1.29 per pound or per item (J. Kendall, personal communication, March 13, 2012). Everything that does not get sold either online or at the outlet store gets sold to bulk book buyers who pay one cent per pound and use the books for mulch, building insulation, or other sustainable uses. To make a long story short, when a book is donated to GICT, it has several chances to be sold and never ends up in a landfill. The Goodwill triple bottom-line of people, profits, and planet for book recycling employs seven people, generates over \$1 million in revenue and keeps more than two million books out of landfills each year. A good and enduring partnership requires that both organizations benefit (Crowther and Trott, 2004 p. 101). Recycling APL's books in this system is good for the library and for GICT: it ensures that the life of the book is maximized and that the e-book operation at GICT always has a steady commodity stream.

Community and commercial partnerships are important for the success of Recycled Reads and will no doubt be a critical component to its operations in the future, but Reed is always looking forward. To improve Recycled Reads' impact, Reed would like to begin more enduring partnerships with city departments. As of April 2012, nearly

100 percent of books and media in the library system are processed and recycled through Recycled Reads. Reed would like to involve city departments, particularly Austin Resource Recovery, in developing a measure to determine how many books and media are being thrown away by Austin residents. Do most people know they can donate or recycle unwanted books and media at Recycled Reads? In other words, Recycled Reads is working for the library system, but how can it begin to work better for the community? Outreach measures are already in place, and Recycled Reads works closely with the Office of Sustainability and Austin Resource Recovery to conduct programs and events that promote the values of a green Austin. Recycled Reads wants to begin to quantify and improve Recycled Reads' impact on the whole of the community.

Mary Priddy would like to develop more structured ways to use Recycled Reads and APL as examples to other city departments and other cities. According to her, APL's commitment to the Austin Climate Protection Plan is exemplary; with one of the smallest budgets in the city, the public library has been the most successful in implementing carbon-neutrality. Priddy would like to partner with the library for conference presentations, department meetings, and publications to demonstrate how a department can incorporate carbon-neutrality at a benefit to the department. She says, "if the public library can do it, and do it so well, anyone can" (M. Priddy, personal communication, March 26, 2012).

The success of a large-scale recycling facility for an urban public library requires patience, cooperation, and communication—and the benefits far outweigh the effort. By

opening Recycled Reads, APL has improved Austin's quality of life by offering low-cost and high-quality reading materials, offering relevant outreach and creative programming, and keeping tons of materials out of city landfills. Moreover, by integrating into other city departments and delivering community services, APL has created social capital and proven itself to be an important part in the everyday operations of the city. Simply doing what libraries have always done—serving as community stewards—Recycled Reads is a case study in how an environmentally sustainable operating framework has far-reaching benefits.

## **Conclusion**

Between the economic recession, growing unemployment, and rising costs of living, communities need libraries more than ever. Unfortunately, as any librarian knows too well, when communities need libraries the most, they are typically funded the least. “Overall, funding for public libraries continues to be suppressed in 2011–2012 budgets, with 5% more states reporting decreased state funding for public libraries than in 2010–2011,” though visits and circulation in many cities are on the rise, with Seattle Public Library experiencing 50% more circulation than in 2010 (American Library Association, 2012, p. 9). Librarianship has, and will continue to endure tough social and economic times because of our creativity and innovation to serve our patrons. Librarianship is comprised of dedicated professionals who rarely leave their work at the door; indeed, librarians are activists, community builders, and public servants. Whether fighting discrimination, advocating for marginalized, or bringing awareness to climate change, libraries are political and social forces. But instead of being willing to simply do less with more, it is time for libraries to develop our own long-lasting solutions to problems in our communities.

Climate change, like illiteracy or unemployment, is a real problem affecting our services. In addition to impacting our buildings or changing how patrons can access resources, an unstable climate affects how municipalities and institutions prioritize distributing money. Because climate change is a social issue, and because librarianship has a professional framework for addressing social justice issues, libraries need to

develop a cost-effective process to implement environmentally sustainable practices. As our core commodity is books, it only makes sense to start with there. As Recycled Reads has shown, tackling climate change is hard work, but not impossible. In fact, developing our own solutions makes us a force to be reckoned with, and establishes us as an essential component to a healthy community.

Recycled Reads was born out of a specific set of conditions: the Monster Book Sale was becoming an unsustainable solution to weeded materials, the city of Austin was developing policies for city departments to improve their carbon footprints, and the library was looking for ways to become entrenched in the daily operations of the city. These are conditions faced by many libraries, public and academic, across the country today. The Recycled Reads model is one example of how libraries can apply values of stewardship and social responsibility to the problem of climate change.

For other libraries that are interested in developing a comprehensive weeding and recycling facility, there are a few guidelines I can recommend. First and foremost, a library must identify its stakeholders. The most likely stakeholders are the municipality or institution that oversees the library budget and operation, the internal library employees, and the community. It is critical that for each stakeholder, the library can clearly articulate how the recycling operation will benefit that stakeholder and appeal to their values.

First, a library will need support from the municipality. To secure support, the library should demonstrate the value of the recycling service. Will it generate revenue?

Will it increase or improve services? Will it act as an important tool to meeting other municipal goals and objectives? An important reason Recycled Reads was able to get off the ground was because it could demonstrate that not only would a zero-landfill recycling operation contribute to meeting the Zero Waste goals, but it would also generate revenue for the library system. If the library can tie the goals of the recycling operation to the goals and objectives of the municipality, it is more likely to get the external support it needs.

Mindy Reed's personal and professional motto is "work to a yes." This means that if the municipality initially vetoes all or part of the recycling operation, sit down with city administrators to find out why they say no. Then, through collaboration and teamwork, the library and the city can work together towards a solution. This requires the library to be flexible, accommodating, and strong in its recycling convictions.

Next, to obtain internal agreement within the library system, the recycling facility must support the library's missions and goals. If the library is interested in creating a "green" nonfiction collection, for example, offer the recycling facility as a place for that collection. The facility's librarian should be able to articulate the facility's goals and be open to sharing and promoting those goals through internal publications and at meetings. To be successful, the facility's librarian should be open to hearing concerns and willing to collaborate to develop solutions.

Finally, reach out to the library's biggest stakeholders: the community. Partnerships are such a blessing to library services and a recycling facility can be an

integral tool in developing long-lasting relationships with community organizations. To begin forming relationships, the recycling facility's librarian should identify the needs of the facility. Does it need an external partnership to provide moving and storage trucks? Does it need an organization that can process and recycle media? Once those needs are identified, the librarian can reach out to local organizations. A successful partnership is a reciprocal relationship, so consider how the recycling facility can benefit the community partners. Of course, having open and clear lines of communication to assess the success of the relationship and have a protocol to work out any difficulties will make the partnership sustainable.

Developing a recycling solution is good for the library, the city, and the community. By encouraging responsible disposal of library materials, the library is positioning itself as an integral part of the community's operations and demonstrates that librarians are more than book-pushers: we truly are community stewards.



## **Appendix**

### **Austin City Council Resolution No. 20070215-023**

WHEREAS, the City of Austin's mission is to make Austin the most livable city in the country; and

WHEREAS, the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change has found unequivocally that climate change constitutes a serious and growing threat and that human activities are the primary source of increased atmospheric concentrations of global warming gases; and

WHEREAS, global scientific consensus predicts as a consequence of global warming costly and dangerous disruptions, including increased risk of flooding, drought and coastal storms, accelerated spread of disease and invasive species, severe property damage, economic loss, and threat to human life; and

WHEREAS, the United States represents less than five percent of the world's population but contributes more than thirty percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions; and

WHEREAS, climate change calls for national and international responses, but ultimately greenhouse gas emissions are generated locally; and

WHEREAS, the federal government has failed to enact meaningful responses to reverse the threat of global warming; and

WHEREAS, leading U.S. companies have called for immediate measures to halt and reverse the threat of global warming; and

WHEREAS, cities and states throughout the U.S. are adopting greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and strategies; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin continues to take a leadership role in addressing worldwide environmental concerns; NOW, THEREFORE,

**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:**

That the City Council directs the City Manager to develop and implement, and to report to the City Council annually upon the implementation and progress of, such policies, procedures, timelines and targets as are necessary to make

Austin the leading city in the nation in the effort to reduce and reverse the negative impacts of global warming, including but not limited to the following initiatives:

1) Make all City of Austin facilities, fleets and operations totally carbon neutral by 2020 through measures including:

- a. powering all City facilities with renewable energy by 2012;
- b. making the entire City fleet of vehicles carbon neutral by 2020 through the use of electric power, non-petroleum fuels, new technologies, mitigation, and other measures as necessary, prioritizing the earliest possible conversion to such fuels and technologies and establishing timelines and benchmarks for such conversions;
- c. developing and implementing departmental climate protection plans, including policies, procedures, targets, benchmarks and reporting for maximum achievable reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption in all City departments;
- d. developing an employee climate protection education program, programs and incentives to help employees reduce their personal impact on climate change, and training to help employees engage in community outreach for climate protection.

2) Make Austin Energy the leading utility in the nation for greenhouse gas reductions through measures including:

- a. achieving 700 MW of new savings through energy efficiency and conservation efforts by 2020;
- b. meeting 30 percent of all energy needs through the use of renewable resources by 2020, including at least 100 MW of solar power;
- c. establishing a CO<sub>2</sub> cap and developing and implementing a CO<sub>2</sub> reduction plan for existing utility emissions;
- d. achieving carbon neutrality on any new generation units using carbon-based fuels through the utilization of lowest-emission technologies, carbon capture and sequestration if it is proven to be reliable, mitigation and other prudent measures.

- 3) Implement the most energy efficient building codes in the nation and aggressively pursue energy efficiency retrofits and upgrades to existing building stock through measures including:
- a. implementing building codes requiring all new single-family homes to be zero net energy capable by 2015;
  - b. implementing building codes to increase energy efficiency in all other new private and public sector buildings by at least 75 percent by 2015;
  - c. implementing policies identifying opportunities for energy efficiency retrofits and upgrades, and requiring all cost-effective retrofits and upgrades for all properties at the point of sale;
  - d. developing enhanced technical assistance and marketing incentives and standards for the Green Building Program, developing policies requiring achievement of upper-tier ratings in cases where green building is mandated as a product of City programs or negotiations, and developing an optional "Carbon Neutral" certification to accompany green building ratings.
- 4) Establish an interdepartmental City Climate Action Team responsible for creating an inventory of greenhouse gases generated from all sources community-wide, working with stakeholders and technical advisors, establishing short-term and long-term targets for reducing these emissions, and reporting back to the City Council in no more than one year with a comprehensive plan for meeting those targets. Key areas for study and policy development include but are not limited to:
- a. transportation;
  - b. land use planning;
  - c. emerging technologies;
  - d. waste management;
  - e. natural areas, landscapes and other carbon sinks;
  - f. multi-generational community education.
- 5) Develop and implement a program to assist all citizens, businesses, organizations and visitors in achieving carbon neutrality through the following measures:
- a. develop an Austin-specific online "carbon footprint calculator;"
  - b. make available individually-tailored carbon footprint appraisals to organizations as necessary;

- c. develop a menu of greenhouse gas reduction strategies for local implementation that citizens and organizations can fund through the purchase of "carbon offset" credits, thereby reducing their own carbon footprint;
  - d. develop a program for recognition of households, businesses and other organizations achieving carbon neutrality;
  - e. promote carbon neutrality among visitors by providing mechanisms and incentives for the purchase of offset credits by travelers, conventions, tradeshow and festivals.
- 6) Cooperate with other local and regional entities to provide technical and investigational assistance and to coordinate region-wide greenhouse gas reduction strategies.
- 7) Support all appropriate Federal and State policies and legislation that will lead to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

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