Building Sustainable Libraries Preliminary Survey Results

Justin Miller
jumiller@ncf.edu

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Karen Christensen is a publisher and writer who specializes in sustainability, social networking, and China. She is the owner and CEO of Berkshire Publishing Group, which she cofounded in 1998. She was senior academic editor of the award-winning Encyclopedia of Community (Sage 2004) and is the author of popular environmental books translated into French, German, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Thai. She began her career in London, working at Blackwell Science and for Faber & Faber and the T.S. Eliot Estate. This range — from science to literature — characterizes her activities today. She is the author of Home Ecology, Eco Living, The Green Home, and The Armchair Environmentalist, about which Lester Brown wrote, “Filled with wisdom…[there is] more environmental advice in this crisp, tightly written volume than in anything I’ve seen to date.” She divides her time between the Berkshires and New York City and is writing a book about the search for community entitled A Smaller Circle (www.asmallercircle.com).

Building Sustainable Libraries Preliminary Survey Results

by Justin Miller, M.P.A. (Doctoral Student, Adult, Higher & Community Education, Green Funding Specialist, Council on the Environment; Phone: 765-285-5085) <jmmiller5@bsu.edu>

Guest Editor’s Note: The “Building Sustainable Libraries Survey” gathers information on sustainability efforts at academic libraries across the United States. These preliminary results will be followed by a final report, in greater depth, released next year by Berkshire Publishing Group and Against The Grain. — KC

Over 1/4 (26.9%) of respondents have a sustainability-related degree or research center.

On average, over 1/2 (56.1%) have taken steps to green computer equipment purchasing and services, with the most popular being sharing printers (95.8%), recycling of equipment (87%), and examining cloud computing (71.4%).

As an area for improvement, on average, only 1/4 (23.7%) of institutions chose books based on sustainability criteria, and no institutions report asking suppliers about books sourcing or supply chain.

While over half (56%) of respondents favor electronic resources, fewer (40%) have data on the printing of these resources, and no institutions have inquired on the vendor holding an Environmental Product Declaration.

With the exception of scientific and economics/business journals, the majority of respondents feel that available resources on environmental sustainability are “satisfactory.”

On average, almost 1/3 (30.8%) of respondents have implemented some sustainably positive physical changes, with natural lighting, LCD monitors, computer shut downs, and low-water landscaping being the most popular.

On average, almost 3/4 (72.6%) of respondents have implemented sustainably positive changes in terms of supplies, with paper recycling bins (100%), recycle-content paper supplies (96.2%) and the encouragement to reduce office supplies and paper (96.2%) being the most popular.

Over half of respondents belong to AASHE and/or are signatories of the ACUPCC. None of the respondents thought their institution had signed the Talloires Declaration (see pages 18 and 30).