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## **Leaving no one Behind: Marketing Sustainable Libraries**

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### **Abstract:**

*We are in what the UN has called the decade of action. This is a decisive decade for our world in which must include everyone in our efforts towards development. Invariably, when we work towards this goal, we are going to have to advocate for libraries and this inherently includes marketing sustainable libraries. Libraries are helping to achieve development for a better world through programs and services that promote culture, equity, justice, and environmental resilience and advocate for broadband for all.*

*The goal of the ALA UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Task Force was to support libraries helping communities achieve the SDGs by creating a multi-year strategic plan for the American Library Association. One of the results was the developing of marketing resources for libraries to demonstrate how they are accelerating development in their communities.*

*Recommendations include using the marketing resources developed by ALA, developing guides for librarians and library patrons, and position libraries as key players at the national and global level to generate change.*

**Keywords:** SDGs, Lib4Dev, Advocacy, Marketing, Sustainability

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”Leaving no one Behind: Marketing Sustainable Libraries” is all about working together to help countries around the globe achieve the SDGs.

We are in what the UN has called the decade of action (2022). This is a decisive decade for our world in which must include everyone in our efforts towards development. We cannot leave people behind. Invariably, when we work towards this goal, we are going to have to advocate for libraries and this inherently includes marketing sustainable libraries.

What is happening today? Our world is impacted by Covid-19, climate change and technological transformation.

This is a momentous time for the libraries and the communities we serve. Libraries have jumped into action, serving communities in academic, public, and school libraries.

What do we want tomorrow? We all want a better world! A united world, not a divided one. We want everyone to be able to cover their needs with dignity, security, justice, and freedom and peace while preserving democracy. Libraries are helping to achieve development for a better world through programs and services that promote culture, equity, justice, and environmental resilience and advocate for broadband for all.

### **Why are libraries important in delivering the SDGs?**

Libraries are development accelerators (2019). Libraries play an important and unique role by providing access to information that can help eradicate hunger, improve people's education, increase equity in cities, and help the prospects of people in all areas of the world. In addition, the information supports the promotion of community awareness about resilience, climate change and a sustainable future. Libraries are also leading by example by taking steps to reduce their environmental footprint.

For instance, librarians are also advocating for broadband for everyone! As we have seen during this pandemic, Internet access is a must. I invite you to continue advocating for broadband that allows all citizens to access the Internet for education, health, work, connect with government agencies and with their family and friends. Countries including Finland, Estonia, Spain, Greece, and Costa Rica have made basic Internet access part of their citizens' fundamental rights. We deserve this service. Let's continue advocating for broadband.

### **Culture, equity, justice and environmental resilience**

Libraries are strengthening the central fiber of our societies and contributing to the social and cultural capital of our societies through the work they do daily providing information in different ways and formats. Libraries are contributing to the areas of culture, equity, justice and environmental resilience to leave no one behind. By doing so, libraries also market sustainable libraries. My purpose is to motivate librarians to think about how their libraries can contribute to the development of their country and communities in their area.

An overview of how **culture** is included in the SDGs and how libraries are supporting communities in this area includes various targets from the SDGs (2022).

Target 4.7 refers to the objective of ensuring that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development, including but not limited to the work that libraries do in education - for global education, citizenship and the appreciation of cultural diversity and the contribution of culture to the sustainability of development.

Target 8.3 addresses the promotion of development-oriented policies that support productive activities, as well as, among others, creativity, and innovation.

Libraries support these with, for example, computer classes for people of all ages.

Goals 8.9 and 12.b refer to the need to design and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism, including through local culture and products, and to the need to develop monitoring tools in this area.

Libraries can help small entrepreneurs to understand how to make their business plan, how to understand the market and do a study of needs to establish their businesses. This helps in the production of local products and to promote the local culture.

Target 11.4 highlights the need to intensify efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage. As we know, libraries have preserved people's history for centuries. The work carried out by libraries, librarians and all those who work in libraries contributes directly to the success of societies and to the communities, cities and countries reaching levels of development as is the purpose of the ODS.

**Equity and justice** can be best shown within the SDGs in Goal 10 which is about reducing inequalities in and among countries (2020) and Goal 16.

Goal 10 calls us to reduce inequality within and between countries. Inequality had fallen in countries before Covid-19 and after this pandemic that has not ended, the panorama is showing that there may be a worldwide recession. Which would mainly impact vulnerable communities: the elderly, people living in poverty, people with different abilities, children, women, migrants, and refugees.

For instance, libraries can help our communities through a library card that can be used by people in many cities to access books, databases, and other materials that help them access information that helps them prepare for have jobs and improve your education and your chances in life.

Libraries in South Australia have a network providing library patrons one card to access resources in more than 130 public libraries online (2020). The Los Angeles Library provides more than 900 free online courses and classes to earn your high school diploma (2022). Many libraries in different countries partner with Girls Who Code to provide classes for girls to learn how to write code which increases their possibilities in the technological field (2022).

Goal 16 is about Peace, **Justice** and Strong institutions. How can we contribute to equal access and justice for all? Three arguments why libraries are unique in achieving SDG 16 (2019):

- *Because democracy depends on informed societies*
- *Because open government is more than a website*
- *Because the best decisions are based on the best information*

During these times of pandemic, libraries are providing information to dispel misinformation about Covid-19 and many argue that by doing this, libraries are helping to save lives.

Environmental Resilience which encompass resilience and the biodiversity-land and water nexus is related to 1, 6, 7, 9, 12, 14 and 15: poverty eradication, clean water and sanitation, clean and accessible energy, industry, innovation and infrastructure, responsible consumption and production, life under water, and life on earth (2021). As we know climate action is paramount for our world, the presidents of the world's powers gather about this issue and there is a worldwide clamour for action (2021).

The UN has said that environmental resilience is the capacity of environmental systems to adapt to changes and conserve their services. How can this be achieved amid so much pollution? Libraries are contributing to Development in the area of environmental resilience by helping villages obtain removable energy through solar panels. Placing clean water wells on library premises. Collaborating with scientists to study the environment, librarians are hosting

events where they talk about our role in providing information by collections and guides so that people understand their behaviour and how humans can help preserve the planet. Libraries have also become leaders in sustainable buildings. Librarians are also teaching sustainable planting practices through community gardens they host within the library's property.

In addition, library associations such as ALA help countries that have experienced destruction of their libraries by natural or man-made disasters through grants to rebuild libraries. As ALA President-Elect (2017-2019), I visited Puerto Rican libraries destroyed by Hurricane Maria to encourage members to donate to help rebuild libraries (2018). Thanks to the donations ALA received, it was able to give grants to help in rebuilding libraries in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. ALA has also donated to the Ukraine, Haiti, Mexico and places in the Pacific.

### **ALA's UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals Task Force**

The goal of the ALA UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Task Force was to support libraries helping communities achieve the SDGs by creating a multi-year strategic plan for the American Library Association (2021). One of the results was the developing of marketing resources for libraries to demonstrate how they are accelerating development in their communities.

Resources include charts with examples for academic, public, and school libraries to learn about library services provided by each type of library and the SDG each one of them support. Additionally, templates for libraries to write their library services according to the SDG they support.

For example, using a chart developed by the Task Force, the Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL) demonstrated, during ongoing library advocacy efforts, to the Los Angeles Mayor that the library is contributing to the development of the city in all the 17 goals. From those, I am going to highlight SDGs 3, 5, 10.

SDG 3 Good Health and Wellbeing- LAPL partnerships with local agencies and organizations provide Angelenos with free dental and eye exams, eyeglasses, flu vaccines, and access to health insurance.

SDG 5 Gender Equality- To actively encourage empowerment of girls, LAPL, offers workshops on biodiversity, coding, and more.

SDG 10 Reduced inequalities- LAPL libraries are free for all and welcome everyone regardless of status. LAPL makes information available and accessible to all and provide equal services. LAPL New Americans Initiative makes all the library locations gateways to citizenship.

Academic and school libraries can also create a table like the one LAPL using a template created by the Task Force. Librarians can also download a table template featuring all the SDGs to which they can add their library's name, logo, address and a custom message to share with stakeholders and library patrons that they are helping to bring development to their city.

In addition to these examples, libraries are hosting SDGs book clubs with children and teens. These can also be presented with people of all ages. To support this activity, they can use free bookmarks prepared by the Task Force to show how libraries are accelerating development in the communities. Libraries can download and print them for book clubs or library patrons.

## Recommendations

The strategy I recommend for libraries and library associations to support the development of our communities and country, which is intrinsically related to marketing sustainable libraries, must be long-term for response and work. Leave no one behind. We must change paradigms. Collaborate in all sectors. Show the value of our proposals: the value of libraries. We can all contribute from where we are.

My recommendation is to use the marketing resources develop by ALA to support advocacy efforts of libraries and show elected officials, library patrons and different stakeholders how libraries are accelerating development in their communities. Librarians can also develop guides to help colleagues provide information and programming that helps their communities in the areas of culture, equity, justice, and environmental resilience. Mirroring these guides, libraries could develop guides for library patrons as well. There are many examples of what libraries are already doing and librarians can compile those examples into documents that librarians can download from the website and use for their strategic planning.

Librarians, we, are the ones we were waiting for! Librarians, we, can position libraries as key players at the national and global level to generate change! We need a united world, not divided. Everyone deserves basic needs, dignity, and a fair shot at success. Together, united, regional, and national library associations, librarians can help rebuild a just and equitable society.

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