

Satellite Meeting: Inspired and Engaged on Sustainability

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Ambassadors for Sustainable Development – Making Green Libraries Visible

With a Special Focus on European Examples on the Test Bench

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Abstract:

Against the background of IFLA's involvement in the 2030 Agenda, this paper asks about the visible commitment of libraries and library associations as ambassadors for the dissemination of the SDGs. On the other hand, it also examines to what extent this commitment – if any – is reflected in national sustainability strategies and in strategies for education for sustainable development. The result makes clear that there is still room for development on the part of the library associations, but the libraries themselves must clearly communicate their commitment so that the public and political stakeholders are aware of it.

Keywords: United Nations Agenda 2030, Sustainable Development Goals, Green and Sustainable Libraries, National Sustainability Strategies, Education for Sustainable Development

1 Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine how libraries are recognized as ambassadors for the United Nations 2030 Agenda. Are they mentioned and valued accordingly in national sustainability strategies and/or national sustainable development education strategies? Are national library associations promoting the important role of libraries as ambassadors of the SDGs? Librarians from the international Green Library community were interviewed and provided information about the situation in their country. The paper aims to encourage libraries, librarians and library associations to step up their efforts to raise the profile of Green Libraries as important ambassadors for the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

2 Libraries – essential partners for the 2030 Agenda

The demand for sustainability as a fundamental principle is currently omnipresent. Sustainability in all its dimensions – ecological, social and economic – has become a central principle for all forms of public action at the latest with the publication of the UN 2030 Agenda with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹

At the instigation of IFLA, the Agenda defined public access to information as an explicit sustainability goal.² In the meantime, it is becoming increasingly clear that libraries can and do much more in addition to their role as guarantors for reliable information. Knowledge transfer takes place in a variety of ways, be it through exhibitions, lectures, urban gardening projects, seed libraries, STEM or Citizen Science projects, etc.

In 2016, IFLA incorporated the Agenda into its International Advocacy Programme (IAP).³ Numerous countries/areas and library associations have signed an agreement with IFLA to conduct awareness-raising activities and meetings with policy makers to ensure that libraries are recognised as key partners in supporting the 2030 Agenda.

The call to take action is unmistakable:

„Take action! Take action now so that libraries have a say. Everyone in the library community and beyond can help promote the role of libraries as supporters of development.”⁴

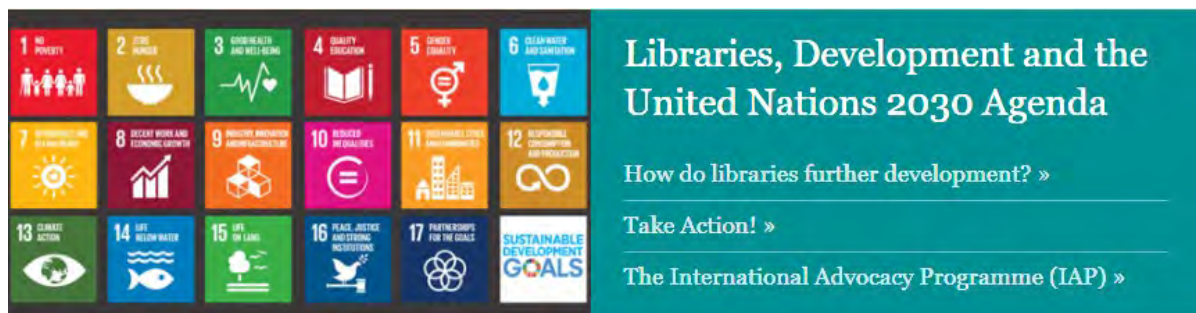


Figure 1: IFLA’s programme for supporting the SDGs.⁵

Today the motto is “Sustainability is Libraries” Business”⁶:

“As institutions with a societal mission, it is natural for libraries to seek to address the major societal challenges of today – and there are fewer greater than sustainability. With agreement of the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development three years ago, this has been recognised as major political priority, and governments have committed to act.”⁷

¹ United Nations (2015).

² <https://www.globalgoals.org/goals/16-peace-justice-and-strong-institutions/>

³ IFLA (2015); IFLA (2021).

⁴ <https://www.ifla.org/libraries-development/take-action>

⁵ <https://www.ifla.org/libraries-development>

⁶ IFLA (2018).

⁷ IFLA (2019b).

Libraries, librarians, all those working in libraries, the library system as a whole are called upon to position themselves as ambassadors of the 2030 Agenda and to make their claim as “Exemplars, Educators and Enablers” clear.

ENSULIB (IFLA’s Environment, Sustainability and Libraries Section)⁸ sees its role as helping libraries to convince their communities of the urgency of environmental sustainability in all areas of life and to activate them accordingly with their resources. It gives ecologically oriented libraries and library projects a voice around the world and offers opportunities for information and discussion through conference contributions, virtual conferences, publications and various projects⁹ – last but not least through the annual IFLA Green Library Award competition.¹⁰

3 Green and sustainable libraries – ambassadors of the Agenda 2030?!

3.1 Green Libraries – Sustainable Libraries

One thing is certain: “Green Libraries” stand for sustainability per se, but not all UN SDGs are “green” goals in the strict sense. About half of the UN’s SDGs are clearly environmental goals (13: Climate action, 13: Life on land, 14: Life under water etc.), but these goals can only be achieved if the other goals are taken into account. In this respect, the term “Green Library” seems legitimate, if not only ecological issues are on the agenda. “Green Libraries” take a broader view in line with the 2030 Agenda, and also take into account social and, if necessary, economic aspects, insofar as they serve to safeguard living conditions on this planet:

Green libraries are often associated with the green buildings, focusing on energy-saving and green architecture. But the development has gone more and more from green buildings to green practices and green services.¹¹

One of ENSULIB’s first projects after its establishment as an IFLA Section in 2021 was to develop and publish an official definition of the term “Green Library”¹²:

A green and sustainable library is a library which takes into account environmental, economic and social sustainability. Green and sustainable libraries may be of any size, but they should have a clear sustainability agenda which includes:

- *Green buildings and equipment*: The emissions, or carbon footprint, of the building and equipment are actively decreased.
- *Green office principles*: Operational routines and processes are environmentally sustainable.
- *Sustainable economy*: Consumption is restrained, circular and sharing economy practices are advanced and are made accessible to the community.
- *Sustainable library services*: Relevant and up-to-date information is easy to access for users, shared spaces, devices, and environmental education is offered, and operations are efficient. The library has a positive carbon handprint.¹³

⁸ <https://www.ifla.org/units/environment-sustainability-and-libraries/>

⁹ <https://www.ifla.org/g/environment-sustainability-and-libraries/projects/>

¹⁰ <https://www.ifla.org/g/environment-sustainability-and-libraries/ifla-green-library-award/>

¹¹ Sahavirta (2017) 127.

¹² ENSULIB (2021).

¹³ <https://carbonhandprint.org/>

- *Social sustainability*: Good education, literacy, community engagement, cross cultural diversity, social inclusion, and overall participation are considered. The library works actively to reduce inequality.
- *Environmental management*: Environmental goals are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound), and the library works to decrease its own negative impact on environment. The library's environmental policy, its implementation and the results of environmental work are communicated to a broader audience.
- *Commitment to general environmental goals and programmes*: Commitment is guided by the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Climate Agreement and related environmental certificates and programmes.

The definition makes clear that it is not enough to control the library's ecological footprint but to communicate clearly the necessity of sustainability engagement to the public, its stakeholders, political decision makers, to serve as exemplar, but also as educator and enabler for the community! This means to make the Green Library visible!

3.2 Green Libraries' visible commitment to environmental goals and programmes

Visible library commitment to ecological sustainability has already been evident, especially in the USA, since long time. In 2008, "The Green Library Movement"¹⁴ was identified.

In fact, (not only) in Germany the library community is having a hard time naming or even positioning itself as a "Green Library." An argument for the reticence may be the concern to be placed in party politics with a declared "green" commitment or focus, at least in countries with a "green" party, or to be no longer "neutral." Richard David Lankes' "Manifesto for Global Librarianship"¹⁵ on 13 September 2018 at the Next Library Conference in Berlin, emboldened us that this attitude has to be reconsidered.¹⁶

Some positive examples:

As the *United States* policy shifts with different national administrations, the policies of the Library associations such as ALA, ACRL (and even the government Library of Congress and National Archives) provide the long-term planning with regard to sustainability and other issues relating to libraries in the US. The American Library Association (ALA) added sustainability to its core values of librarianship.¹⁷

For commitment to environmental sustainability, the *Australian* Library and Information Association (ALIA) should also serve as exemplar with a clear statement on the website:

[...] ALIA is working towards a sustainable future, and supports libraries and library and information professionals to lead through promoting awareness, providing evidence-based information, supporting adaptation and helping to mitigate the impact on the most vulnerable in our society.¹⁸

¹⁴ Antonelli (2008).

¹⁵ Lankes (2018a).

¹⁶ See also Lankes (2018b) and Sahavirta (2013), 319, footnote.

¹⁷ American Library Association (ALA) (2019).

¹⁸ <https://www.alia.org.au/Web/About-Us/Advocacy/Greening-Libraries.aspx>

The *Croatian* Library Association maintains a “Working Group for Green Libraries”¹⁹ which, in collaboration with the National and University Library of Zagreb, organised the “1st International Conference on Green Libraries – Lets Go Green!”²⁰ in 2018.

Regardless of any association’s sponsorship or support, the *German* “Netzwerk Grüne Bibliothek” (Green Library Network)²¹ is enjoying increasing interest from the library “basic” with its virtual “Idea Cafés”²² with 100 participants (not only) from all over the German-speaking world. The network offers an international Bibliography on Green Libraries and an international collection on Green Library Clips.

3.3 Libraries’ visible commitment to the UN Agenda 2030

3.3.1 Global examples

As part of the “Library Map of the World”²³, IFLA documents global “SDG Stories” that illustrate how libraries are committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda.



Figure 2: Library Map of the World: SDG Stories.²⁴

Currently (14 June 2022), 56 stories from 34 countries are covered. The stories can be searched by country as well as by individual SDGs.

¹⁹ https://www.hkdrustvo.hr/en/strucna_tijela/50/

²⁰ <https://ipe.hr/en/events/lets-go-green-1st-international-conference-on-green-libraries/>

²¹ <https://www.netzwerk-gruene-bibliothek.de/>

²² Wagner (2022).

²³ <https://librarymap.ifla.org/map>

²⁴ <https://librarymap.ifla.org/stories>

One example comes from *Ukraine*, city of Lviv. The library created a programme called „Garbage Hero“ that educates participants in eco-thinking, caring for natural resources, reducing waste and subsequently passing on their knowledge to relatives and friends. The library also coordinates promotional activities such as organizing eco-excursions, producing marketing materials, and updating the library blog with relevant eco-friendly articles. The project was awarded as runner-up of the IFLA Green Library Award 2017. You may ask now: 2017 – but what about the Lviv EcoLibrary in 2022?

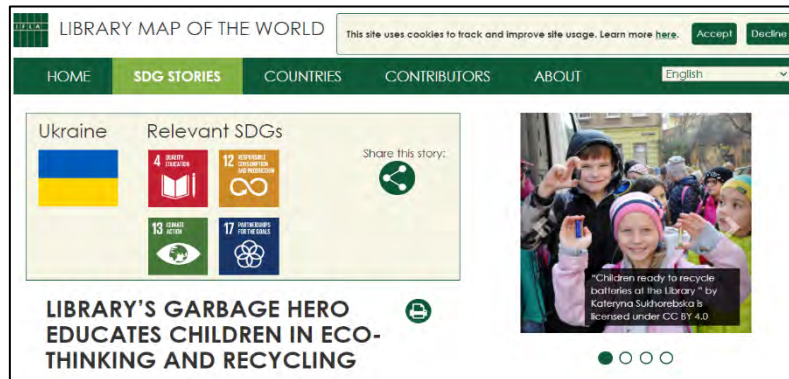


Figure 3: The Lviv Regional Children’s Library (Ukraine) launched the Garbage Hero educational project.²⁵

As one can see at the library’s FB²⁶ page: After five years, despite the terrible war in Ukraine, the EcoLibrary runs still its eco-education programme. On one hand the library tries to give the children a safe place to be. The library also runs an education programme on compost – focusing on the issue of harvest in Ukraine which really impacts the whole world than ever. On 5 June 2022, UNESCO’S World Heritage Day, facing the terrible war in their country, they still pay attention to environmental issues.

²⁵ <https://librarymap.ifla.org/stories/Ukraine/LIBRARY%E2%80%99S-GARBAGE-HERO-EDUCATES-CHILDREN-IN-ECO-THINKING-AND-RECYCLING/150>

²⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/ecobiblioteka/>

3.3.2 Regional examples



Figure 4: Portal of German speaking countries: Libraries and their contribution to the UN Agenda 2030²⁷

The “Biblio2030” platform shows a wide range of 53 projects from *Germany, Austria, Switzerland and South Tyrol (D-A-CH-S)* addressing one or more agenda goals. Examples range from a “bee library” to various upcycling projects, the introduction of elderly people into the digital library world, media boxes for refugee accommodation, sustainable events, a seed exchange, OER projects etc. Each example is illustrated with photos, SDG symbols denote the reference to the 2030 Agenda. The platform should serve as a marketing tool and is therefore aimed at political decision-makers.

There are 8.970 libraries in Germany alone.²⁸ But can almost 60 randomly submitted examples from all over the German-speaking world really convince the political decision-makers of these countries of the relevance of libraries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, especially since the libraries themselves have often not (yet) recognised their own role in communicating the SDGs?²⁹

²⁷ <https://www.biblio2030.de/>

²⁸ <https://de.statista.com/themen/1189/bibliotheken/#dossierKeyfigures>

²⁹ Corradini (2020a); Corradini (2020b).

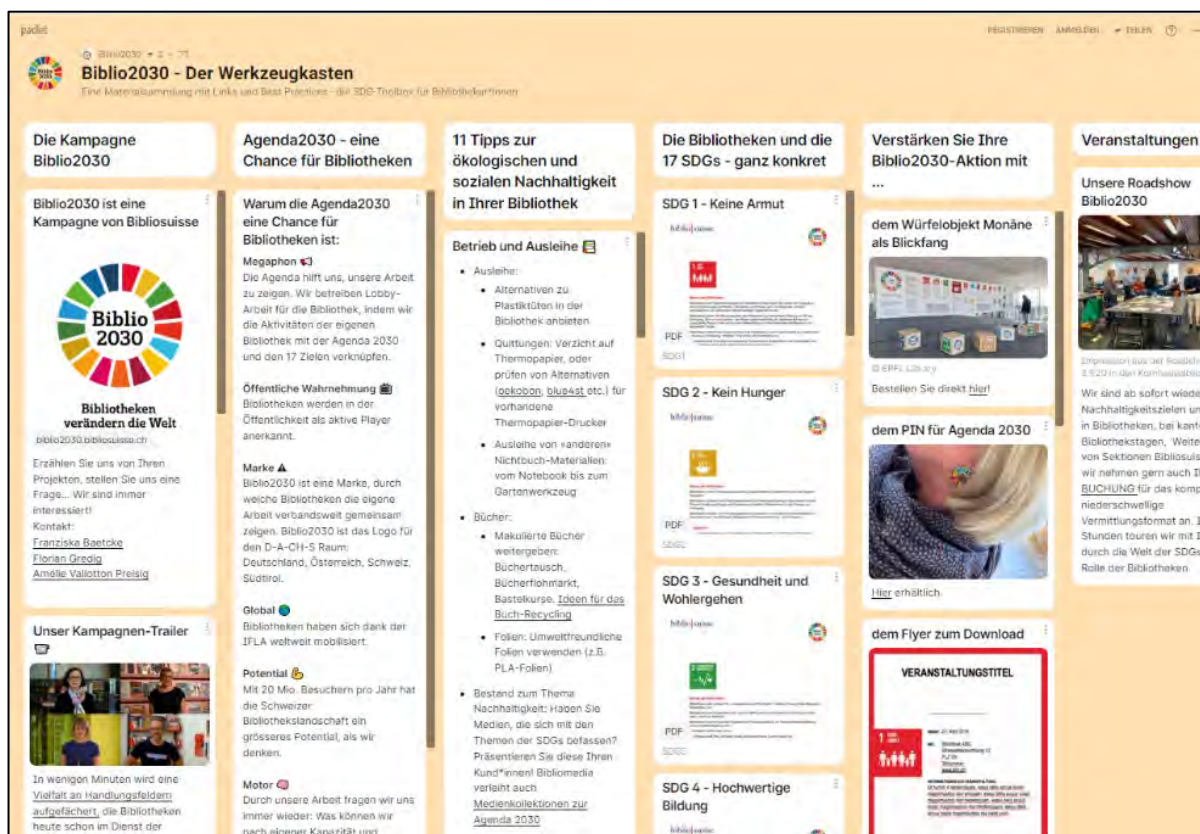


Figure 5: Biblio2030 – Der Werkzeugkasten.³⁰

Due to the fact that *Switzerland* is a federal state, national politics have nothing to do with libraries which work on the cantonal level. After having tried to act at the federal level, the Swiss library association has understood that its political efforts should rather be spread on the cantonal level, which raises capacity issues. With the Biblio2030 Commission, Bibliosuisse supports libraries in Switzerland to take an active stand for sustainability.³¹ The motto of the working group on Agenda 2030, that follows IFLA's International Advocacy Programme, is "Libraries change the world!" Bibliosuisse offers "Biblio2030 – The Toolbox", an inspiring SDG toolbox with links and best practices, available in German and French.³²

Enssib, the *French* « École nationale supérieure des sciences de l'information et des bibliothèques » shows a clear commitment to the Agenda 2030. Beside conferences focusing on environmental and sustainability themes³³, it provides a useful website on « Bibliothèques et changement climatique » to support libraries contributing to the achievement of the SDGs.³⁴

³⁰ Bibliosuisse (n.d.).

³¹ <https://bibliosuisse.ch/%C3%9Cber-uns/Kommissionen/Biblio2030>

³² Bibliosuisse (n.d.).

³³ For example: <https://www.enssib.fr/bibliotheque-numerique/notices/70574-responsabilite-societale-et-environnementale-quelles-competences-pour-les-professionnels-des-bibliotheques>

³⁴ <https://enssib.libguides.com/c.php?g=682683>

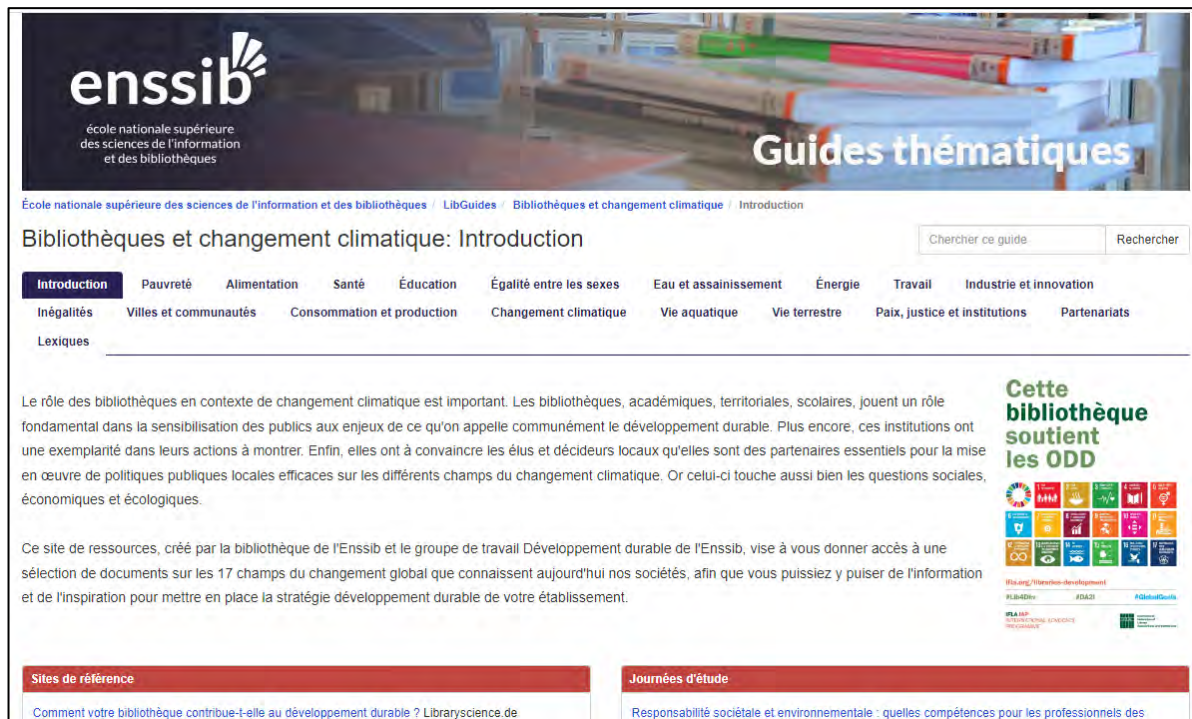


Figure 6: Enssib's commitment to the SDGs.³⁵

3.3.3 Local examples

The author is aware of public and academic libraries that offer a programme of ecologically sustainable topics, but do not communicate this publicly, via their websites or via the relevant journals. Communicating, even “marketing” one’s own achievements, even if it is as a stimulus and inspiration for others, seems to be difficult for some.

If libraries are to be perceived as relevant actors for sustainability and as ambassadors of the SDGs, it is not enough to appear with individual actions or with individual examples randomly collected on any platform. Sustainability commitment can only be convincing if it is enshrined as a cornerstone in a programme or mission statement of the library – even if not all SDGs have to be addressed at all times. Examples can be found among the winning projects of the IFLA Green Library Award competition.³⁶

The Philological Library in Berlin, *Germany*, takes part in the Free University’s sustainability programme.³⁷ The library placed the IFLA poster prominently and effectively on its website. The poster is freely available in all official IFLA languages from the IFLA repository.

³⁵ <https://enssib.libguides.com/c.php?g=682683>

³⁶ <https://www.ifla.org/node/10159>

³⁷ <https://www.fu-berlin.de/en/sites/nachhaltigkeit/index.html>

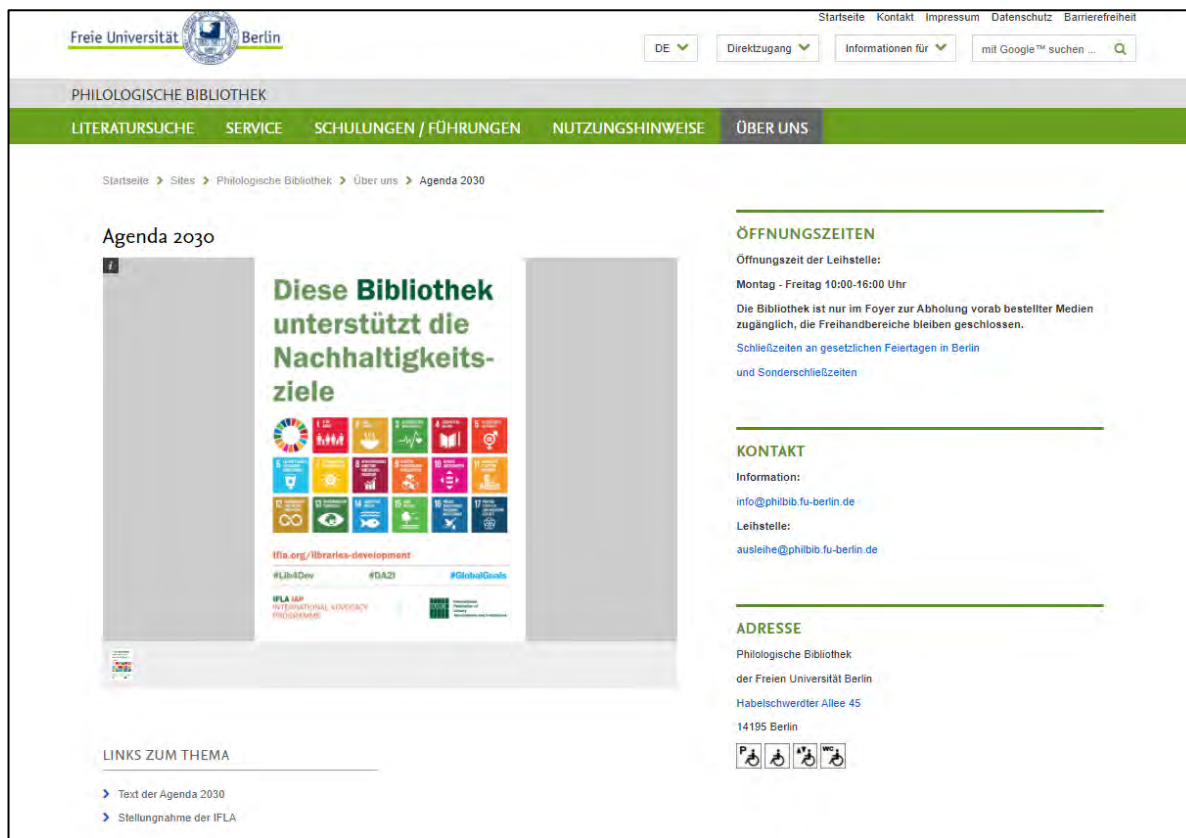


Figure 7: The Philological Library in Berlin as ambassador of the Agenda 2030.³⁸

During 2019–2020, the Oulu City Library in *Finland* implemented “A Responsible Library as Promoter of Environmental Awareness” project. During the project, environmental communication for both customers and staff was significantly increased. All available channels and means were used as means of communication, from social media updates and newsletters to trainings, events, environmental book exhibitions and reading tips.³⁹

³⁸ <https://www.fu-berlin.de/sites/philbib/05Ueber-uns/Agenda-203011>

³⁹ <https://www.ifla.org/ensulib-announces-6th-ifla-green-library-award-2021-shortlist-green-library-project-a-responsible-library-as-promoter-of-environmental-awareness/>

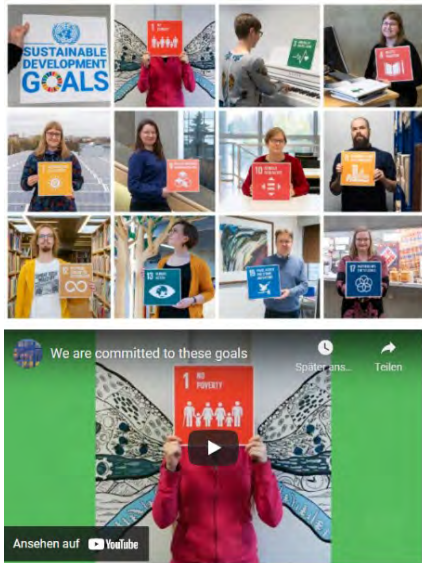


Figure 8: Oulu City Library’s Sustainable Library 2030 Roadmap.⁴⁰

The Komitat Tolna Illyés Gyula Library in *Hungary* organized in 2022 a conference on Green Libraries with the aim to start a Green Library Network of Hungarian Public Libraries. The library’s website (in Hungarian and in English) presents a clear, exemplary mission statement making the green commitment visible.⁴¹

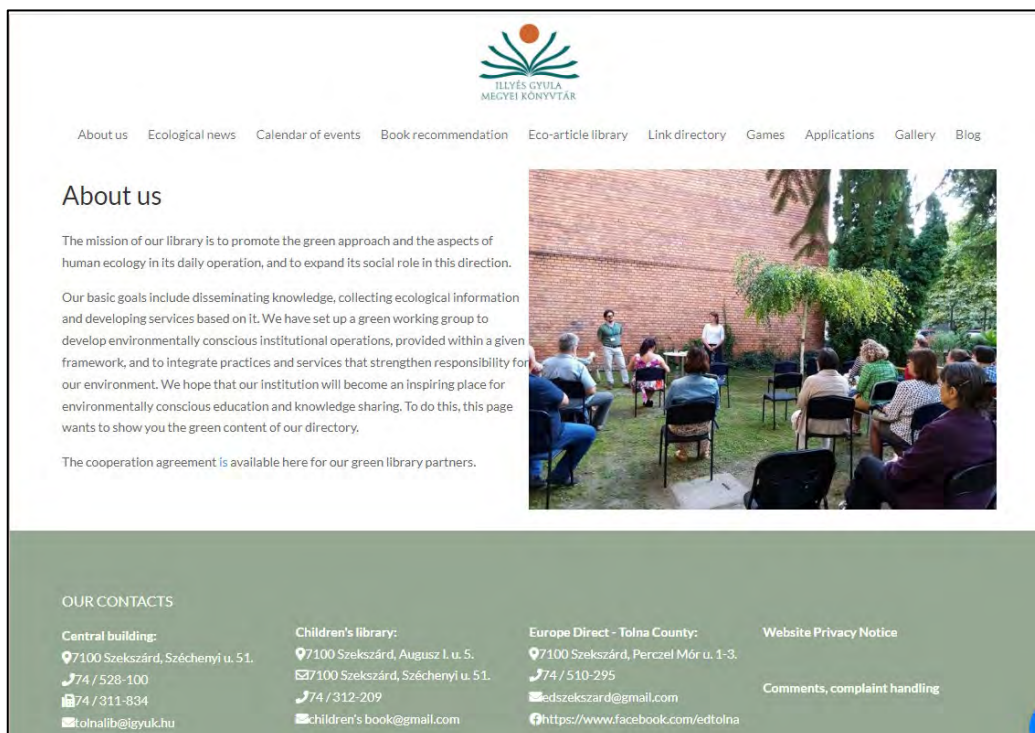


Figure 9: The Illyés Gyula Library’s exemplary mission statement [automatic translation from Hungarian].⁴²

⁴⁰ <https://www.ouka.fi/oulu/library/sustainable-library>

⁴¹ <https://www.igyuk.hu/zold-konyvtar/rolunk/>

⁴² <https://www.igyuk.hu/zold-konyvtar/rolunk/>

3.4 Libraries as reflected in national sustainability strategies

The “United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development” provides an overview to national “Voluntary National Reviews” (VNR).⁴³ Only ten UN member states have highlighted the role of libraries in delivering the Sustainable Development Goals, through reports submitted as part of their VNR.⁴⁴ Why only ten?

When starting the research for this paper the author asked colleagues from the Green Library community:

- Is there any national sustainability strategy and/or national education strategy for sustainable development in your country?
- If so: is it officially published and online available?
- Does it say anything about the role of libraries in achieving the SDGs?
- Does your national library association foster the role of libraries as ambassadors for the SDGs?

The received answers were few and of course not representative. But most answers showed:

- Yes, there is a national sustainability strategy.
- Yes, it is officially published and online available.
- No, nothing is said about the role of libraries in achieving the SDGs.
- Only some national library associations foster the role of libraries as ambassadors/mediators for the SDGs.

Some outcomes of the research:

Since the publication of the Sustainable Development Goals, the *German-speaking* library associations have been campaigning for libraries to be named in the political SDG action plans. That is why they called on libraries to place their services on the web platform Biblio2030⁴⁵. But, as Corradini in 2020⁴⁶ stated, only a few libraries are actively communicating the SDGs and many do not even know the SDGs. It is to be feared that this does not only apply to the German-speaking area.

In Germany, since 2016, the German Library Association (DBV) has followed IFLA's request to ensure that libraries are recognized as key partners in supporting the 2030 Agenda. The DBV published statements, organized publications and also events at the German Library Congresses, also workshops and the already mentioned platform “Biblio2030”. The DBV also offers freely downloadable materials for public relations, and translation of IFLA publications on the topic. Their “Guidelines for public libraries” say explicitly:

Libraries must be involved from the outset in the development of measures to achieve the sustainability goals of the Federal Government, the Länder and municipalities as well as the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations.⁴⁷

⁴³ <https://hlpf.un.org/vnrs>

⁴⁴ IFLA (2020, July).

⁴⁵ <https://www.biblio2030.de/>

⁴⁶ Corradini (2020a); Corradini (2020b).

⁴⁷ Deutscher Bibliotheksverband (2021).

One could therefore assume that everything was done well with that. But is that so? Is the message getting through to policymakers?

If you follow the “German Sustainability Strategy⁴⁸ published in April 2021, you can clearly see, sustainability is an issue for libraries. As stated in Chapter 7, Non-formal and Informal Education:

The preservation of the cultural heritage and access to testimonies of history and the diversity of literary book production in archives and libraries is also an ongoing task and challenge for the Federal Government in order to preserve available knowledge and to preserve it permanently.⁴⁹ [Automatic translation]

In the German Voluntary National Review “Report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development”⁵⁰ libraries are mentioned with SDG 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities, as providers of “Access to cultural heritage” with their “Number of objects in the German Digital Library”.⁵¹

Both papers speak about the traditional role of libraries as preservers for cultural heritage, but nothing is said about the real potential of libraries!

Since there is a new

North Macedonia “is fully committed to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”⁵² The Voluntary National Review claims the country’s “main commitment [...] to fight poverty, inequality and social exclusion.”⁵³ While schools and universities are mentioned as promoters to achieve the SDGs, only school libraries are mentioned as “key challenges in the area of education” because of “lack of didactical materials, equipment and school libraries”.⁵⁴ Things might change when the National and University Library St. Clement of Ohrid in Skopje is planning a 3-days-workshop about the green future of libraries in 2023.

Same in *Austria*: Although the national library association Bibliotheksverband Österreichs is fostering green and sustainable library engagement through special issues of their journal *Büchereiperspektiven*⁵⁵ and workshops, Universities, schools and kindergartens are mentioned among the actors and target groups for the systematic implementation of the 2030 Agenda, but you will look in vain for libraries.⁵⁶

Also nothing about libraries in the *Slovenian* Development Strategy 2030⁵⁷. Nevertheless Slovenian libraries were runner-ups in the IFLA Green Library Award competition: Ljubljana City Library in 2019⁵⁸ and Franc Ksaver Meško Ormož Library in 2021⁵⁹. The success in the

⁴⁸ Deutschland. Bundesregierung [2021a].

⁴⁹ Deutschland. Bundesregierung [2021a], 170.

⁵⁰ Germany. Federal Government (2021).

⁵¹ Germany. Federal Government (2021), 85.

⁵² <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/macedonia>

⁵³ North Macedonia (2020), 6.

⁵⁴ North Macedonia (2020), 34.

⁵⁵ <https://www.bvoe.at/serviceangebote/buechereiperspektiven>

⁵⁶ Austria (2020).

⁵⁷ Slovenia (2017).

⁵⁸ <https://www.ifla.org/ifla-green-library-award-2019-winners-announced/>

⁵⁹ <https://www.ifla.org/news/6th-ifla-green-library-award-2021-results/>

IFLA Green Library Award 2021 had a huge impact on both, the library and the local community and libraries in Slovenia in general. For example, the library was invited to join the Destination Jerusalem Slovenia's green team, which is trying to obtain the Green Destination label (the highest, platinum label) in the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism⁶⁰.

The Dutch government (*Netherlands*) has committed to the Paris climate accords⁶¹ and the circular economy⁶², but without explicitly mentioning libraries. The role of libraries is indirectly (as a 'public institution') mentioned in official Dutch sites.⁶³ Nevertheless the Dutch national library (KB) acknowledges in general the importance of SDG's and the role that libraries can play in promoting these goals. The KB has picked four SDG's as their main goals.⁶⁴

Same – or even less – must be said about other Voluntary National Reviews and national sustainability strategies. But there are also – though few – positive examples:

The roadmap of *France* for the implementation of the Agenda 2030 recognizes the libraries' network: « Le réseau des bibliothèques est par exemple un de ces relais mobilisables dans tous les territoires. » [Engl. transl.: The library network, for example, is one of those relays that can be mobilized in all the territories.]⁶⁵ A national working group, organized by Enssib⁶⁶, ABF⁶⁷, Bpi⁶⁸ and Cfidb⁶⁹, succeeded to be quoted in this document. They organized a large mobilization of French libraries in 2019 for the Agenda 2030 4th anniversary (25 Sept 2019). 1600 libraries participated.⁷⁰ French libraries also participated successfully in the IFLA Green Library Award competition 2022.⁷¹

Like two of three member states of the European Union (EU)⁷² *Finland* has a library law. In its Government Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda, Finland describes its situation as follows: "Finland is recognised as a leading nation in education and training. The rate of library usage in Finland is also among the highest in the world."⁷³ The Finnish Library Association is aware of the role of libraries in the fight against climate change and libraries are included in the Finnish National Development Plan.⁷⁴

⁶⁰ <https://www.slovenia.info/en/business/green-scheme-of-slovenian-tourism>

⁶¹ <https://www.klimaatkoord.nl/actueel/nieuws/2022/06/02/kabinet-presenteert-uitwerking-klimaatbeleid>

⁶² <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/circulaire-economie>

⁶³ E.g. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/ontwikkelingssamenwerking/internationale-afspraken-ontwikkelingssamenwerking/global-goals-werelddoelen-voor-duurzame-ontwikkeling>

⁶⁴ <https://www.bibliotheeknetwerk.nl/nieuws/kb-steekt-vlag-uit-voor-jarige-duurzaamheidsdoelen>

⁶⁵ France. Gouvernement (2019), 17.

⁶⁶ <https://www.enssib.fr/>

⁶⁷ <https://www.abf.asso.fr/>

⁶⁸ <https://www.bpi.fr/en/home/>

⁶⁹ <https://www.cfibd.fr/le-cfibd/about-cfibd/>

⁷⁰ Email from Raphaëlle Bats, 27 June 2022.

⁷¹ <https://www.ifla.org/news/ensulib-announces-7th-ifla-green-library-award-2022-longlist-in-two-categories/>

⁷² Schleihagen (2009).

⁷³ Finland (2020).

⁷⁴ IFLA (2017).

In 2019, the capital of Finland, Helsinki, became the first city in Europe and the second city in the world to submit a Voluntary National Review to the United Nations. In this paper it is said “As a result of the VLR process Helsinki aims to develop wide-reaching understanding of and commitment to the SDGs.” One aspect is said to be “societal engagement through the vast library system in Helsinki”.⁷⁵

In *Spain* we find explicit political appreciation of libraries in their role in achieving the Agenda goals.⁷⁶ The government’s report on the progress of SDGs in Spain “Informe de Progreso 2021 y Estrategia de Desarrollo Sostenible 2030”⁷⁷ appreciates libraries’ contribution on a high level. The Libraries and 2030 Agenda Strategic Working Group was created by the Library Cooperation Council (depending on the Ministry of Culture and Sports) and is promoted by FESABID (Spanish Federation of Archival, Library, Documentation and Museum Societies). This group published a proposal for a national strategy for information and libraries as agents for achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda.⁷⁸ FESABID is a member of the Spanish Development Council, which brings together civil society and which is part of the governance of the 2030 Agenda in Spain. FESABID also coordinates the ELSIA working group in EBLIDA, which is a working group that focuses on both the assessment and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Europe in relation to EU Structural Funds and public policies on libraries. Finally, FESABID has developed a network of partners such as the Spanish Sustainable Development Network and the Musol Foundation, with whom it works actively to make libraries and culture visible in local/regional development strategies. FESABID was appointed by IFLA as Spain's representative in the International Advocacy Programme (IAP) 2016–2018. Since then, it has been constantly working on awareness raising and advocacy for the library sector but also in non-librarian forums (civil society and public administrations) too, work and studies in the framework of the Library Cooperation Council through the creation of a working group “Library and Agenda 2030” (together with all types of libraries), gathering of good practices and data analysis, drafting of the national strategy on libraries and development, proposals for the evaluation and monitoring of library actions.

SEDIC, the Spanish Society for Scientific Documentation and Information, held a Conference on Sustainability in Libraries, Archives and Museums in April 2022, with the title “Sustainability and Environment from Cultural Institutions, Are we very green?” In addition, the SDGs are taken into account in their activities, making them visible. SEDIC plans to carry out a Sustainability Plan for the Association. More meetings and also publications are already on the agenda.

Also RECIDA⁷⁹, the Network of Environmental Information and Documentation Centers, coordinated by the National Center for Environmental Education (CENEAM) has recently established as a national association.⁸⁰ Furthermore at RIPO, the International Network of SDG Promoters in Spain, although not a library association, involves libraries in some of its actions.⁸¹

⁷⁵ Finland (2020).

⁷⁶ Bernal (2021); Sellés Carot & Martínez González (2021).

⁷⁷ Gobierno de España. Ministerio de Derechos Sociales y Agenda 2030 (2021).

⁷⁸ Gobierno de España. Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte (2019).

⁷⁹ RECIDA (2019).

⁸⁰ Toril Moreno (2020).

⁸¹ <https://promotoresods-es.org/>

3.5 Libraries' potential for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) would be a topic for which libraries are at least as predestined and would have to appear as prominent actors like schools, universities, kindergartens, adult education centers. But is that so?

In fact, the Unesco roadmap "Education for Sustainable Development" names schools and universities as "main actors", but libraries' potentials are not mentioned in any way.⁸²

Consequently libraries appear in the German "National Action Plan on Education for Sustainable Development" only together with "places that operate at the interface between aesthetics, the media and participation in the arts and culture – such as libraries – [that] are to be identified, brought on board and harnessed for ESD".⁸³ And also in the Federal government report on education for sustainable development (Bericht der Bundesregierung zur Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung) libraries are just mentioned as preservers of cultural heritage for future generations (as shown above) – not more.⁸⁴

Recently, however, there has been a growing number of initiatives by regional library associations in Germany to develop programmes for libraries as ESD partners.⁸⁵ The important role that libraries play for the SDGs seems to be more and more reflected in the specialist literature, albeit slowly.⁸⁶ Also the new government that came to power in December 2021 plans to "strengthen the National Action Plan on ESD in all educational phases and areas and to develop a 'Green Culture' desk, which assists cultural institutions with regard to their green transformation. These plans provide some hope that libraries will be able to set a foot in the door of national discussions on sustainability and hence help them demonstrate their invaluable societal role".⁸⁷

4 Conclusion

Libraries are rarely recognized or simply ignored despite their great potential in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, but reflected as preservers of cultural heritage. Not only in Germany, it seems difficult to convey the fact that libraries are no longer the (more or less antiquated) book stores that preserve cultural heritage for "future generations".

As ambassadors of the 2030 Agenda or as role models or educational actors, libraries with their corresponding potential are hardly or not at all noticed nor by the public nor by political actors. The few examples of green and sustainable libraries in relation to the number of libraries on the Library Map of the World or the Biblio 2030 platform are obviously not enough to make their potential convincingly visible.

The question comes up: is it possible that with all SDG Stories, Biblio 2030 examples, the articles in our library journals, we only ever reflect ourselves, only reach our own professional

⁸² Unesco (2020).

⁸³ Germany. Federal Ministry of Education and Research (2019), 83.

⁸⁴ Deutschland. Bundesregierung [2021b], 161.

⁸⁵ Langer (2021); <https://www.bz-niedersachsen.de/bildung-nachhaltigkeit-bibliothek-binabi.html>; <https://www.bibliothekerverband.de/bildung-fuer-nachhaltige-entwicklung-bne-und-durch-bibliotheken-eine-einfuehrung-und-best-practice>; <https://www.netzwerk-gruene-bibliothek.de/bne-festival-nrw-2021/>

⁸⁶ Willems (2022).

⁸⁷ Breidlid (2022a), 5; see also Breidlid (2022b).

community, but that none of it arrives the world "outside"? Perhaps we need to think about more publishing in non library journals?

What else needs to be done? "Take action!" is relevant, more than ever. Let's make ourselves aware that it is not enough to do good, but it must be communicated and made visible! Every opportunity to get involved in SDG implementation planning in our communities should be used to make the library's potentials and contributions visible! We should become marketing experts in making the potential of our libraries visible!

We do need to spending time and to market and promote what we do outside our library world. Work together globally to get the word out that libraries are an entity that does this work, or could as a partner.

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