

What is the evidence on the role of libraries in supporting the climate change agenda?



IFLA Special Interest Group Evidence for Global and Disaster Health

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Evidence briefing produced by

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Question

This briefing summarises the research evidence, from 01/01/2005 to 30/04/2025, retrieved from bibliographic databases and grey literature, on the role of libraries in supporting the climate change agenda.

Abstract

The papers included in this briefing will demonstrate how librarians and libraries (LaLs) have adapted their services to ensure that they continue to support their communities in challenging circumstances, particularly issues related to climate change, and promote climate literacy. There will be a section sharing practical examples to illustrate exactly how libraries have evolved their services so that they can play a fundamental part of the health and wellbeing of their community.

Key messages

- Climate change is an urgent and serious world issue, and the scientific evidence is overwhelming, and accessibility to reliability and quality of information is hindered by mis- and dis-information.
- Climate change is already having negative impacts on the world, and it is impacting the global population in many, different ways.
- There is global disparity in access to good quality weather and climate information services.
- The impacts of climate change on human health are significant, and libraries have a critical service role in disaster response.
- Children and young people feel particularly vulnerable to climate anxiety, because they have limited power to make a difference and limit the harm of climate change to health.
- Climate anxiety is a healthy response to the current situation, although it will continue to increase until there is climate action.
- Recent natural and manmade disasters have emphasised how effectively public libraries support their community's resiliency and recovery efforts
- Librarians are seen not only as custodians of information but also as active participants in community engagement, awareness and social change.
- Many libraries feel unprepared for disasters because they do not have a disaster preparedness strategy in place.
- Medical schools are updating their curricula to reflect the potential impacts climate change can have on health, and librarians should factor this in when designing information skills training.
- Policy makers need to develop robust, evidence-based policies to protect human health from the impacts of climate change.
- Librarians are vital stakeholders to infodemic management because they have the required knowledge and skills relating to critical literacies.
- Libraries play an important part in democratising knowledge, by promoting literacy skills.
- By providing quick and easy access to those looking for reliable information about what to do in an emergency, libraries can demonstrate their position as a primary and valuable source of trustworthy information.
- Librarians are prepared, flexible, can adapt to all sorts of situations, and are willing to support patrons in times of need.

What is the evidence on the role of libraries in supporting the climate change agenda?

“To be truly sustainable organizations or communities must embody practices that are environmentally sound and economically feasible and socially equitable” (1)

Introduction

IFLA, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, has recently published two documents: a global survey, and a report of the findings and recommendations, on the crucial role that libraries play in addressing climate, sustainability, and environmental challenges through climate communication and education. Some of the recommendations include:

- Library associations actively providing locally relevant, and multi-language resources to local libraries;
- Libraries developing partnerships with local governments, communities, and schools;
- Local policymakers recognising public and community libraries as valuable partners for reaching residents; and
- National policymakers collaborating with national libraries to use libraries as community outreach centres for climate action (2, 3).

This evidence briefing (EB), produced by the IFLA Evidence for Global and Disaster Health (E4GDH) Special Interest Group (<https://www.ifla.org/units/e4gdh/>) seeks to support IFLA’s recommendations, and summarises the research on the role of knowledge and library services (KLS) in supporting climate literacy, while providing practical examples from libraries who are supporting climate change initiatives. An earlier EB, produced in partnership with HIFA (Healthcare Information For All), summarised the research about the role of KLS and knowledge management to support global health, and disaster and emergency preparedness (4, 5). That EB showed that libraries and librarians (LaLs) have a very important role to play in terms of providing support during, and after disasters. They provide a safe place for rescued citizens, and also support disaster teams, providing them with the best evidence to inform decision-making, and acting as knowledge brokers to ensure relevant knowledge and information is shared effectively. Furthermore, it found that libraries can demonstrate their position as a primary and valuable source of trustworthy information and support, by providing quick and easy access to those looking for reliable information in times of crisis. The recent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and lockdown has meant that libraries and librarians have had to change the way they deliver information services to their users (6) and this EB will describe how libraries and librarians continue to evolve and adapt to new, challenging situations, focusing particularly on climate issues.

To inform this EB, a literature search was conducted on four bibliographic databases (CINAHL, Embase, LISTA, Medline) and Google, and 112 peer-reviewed papers and grey literature were identified as relevant to this briefing. The majority of these papers (88) are openly accessible, but there are 24 that are behind pay-walls. However, those may be accessible in eligible lower income countries via the Research4Life program. (<https://portal.research4life.org/>).

The 112 references have been organised under the following 5 headings:

1. [Climate issues and impact](#)
2. [Climate anxiety](#)
3. [Climate literacy](#)
4. [Infodemiology](#)
5. [What librarians can do](#)

What is the evidence on the role of libraries in supporting the climate change agenda?

Context

“Access to reliable, accurate, timely, understandable, and actionable healthcare information” (7) has never been so important as it is now. Everybody has a right to good quality health and healthcare information (4, 8), and “*the right to health information sits within the right to health*” (9). HIFA (Healthcare Information For All – <https://www.hifa.org/>) is a “*global campaign to accelerate progress towards universal access to reliable healthcare information and thereby help prevent millions of deaths each year*”. HIFA has more than 20,000 members in 180 countries representing every part of the global evidence ecosystem. The social value of libraries is that they are free, safe, and physically and emotionally at the heart of the community (6, 10). They understand the needs of the community and they are trusted by their users. The papers included in this briefing will demonstrate how LaL have adapted their services to ensure that they can continue to support their communities in challenging circumstances. There will be a section on practice examples to illustrate exactly how specific libraries have evolved their services so that they can play a fundamental part of the health and wellbeing of their community.

A vital skill and quality of librarians is the ability to adapt quickly to rapidly changing circumstances. Sometimes it can take an emergency for librarians to realise how effective and vital they are to the communities they work, and often live in. They are quick to change the way they work, learn from each other and from things that did not work so well, and to make the best of technology to improve their service delivery (11, 12).

Climate change is creating conditions which can lead to natural hazards, such as flooding, tsunamis, wildfires, earthquakes, etc (13). The United Nations defines the term ‘disasters’ as “*a severe disruption to the work of an area or society at any level because of dangerous events interacting with exposure conditions, vulnerability, and ability that lead to the following: loss and impacts in human, material, economic and environmental areas*” (14). The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction has developed a comprehensive list of Hazard Information Profiles, which provides definitions of all hazards, including climate hazards (15). Another important document is the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, which is the roadmap for how communities can become safer and more resilient (16). The Sendai Framework works hand in hand with the other 2030 Agenda agreements, including The Paris Agreement on Climate Change, The Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the New Urban Agenda, and ultimately the Sustainable Development Goals (16-21). While many libraries around the world have experienced disasters, they often find that they are not always prepared for them in terms of service provision and having disaster management strategies in place (22, 23). This is problematic, because disaster management plans have been proven to reduce the impact of disasters on their communities (24). Knowledge management tools are also useful for disaster preparedness. After action reviews and lessons learned activities can be used to glean important information to inform future disaster management strategies. Communities of practice can be utilised to focus on specific solutions to support the preparedness process (24).

1. Climate issues and impact

Climate change is devastating and a major crisis for the modern world (25). “*Climate change is an ongoing public health issue*” (26). With the earth warming, changing rainfall patterns, and rising sea levels, climate change (CC) is already having long-term implications on the global population in terms of physical and mental health, as a result of acute and chronic environmental change, from storms and wildfires to changing landscapes, and increasing temperatures. For example, lack of rain can damage food production, and/or cause wildfires, leading to health issues. Flooding can cause infection to spread, death, and poor access to health services because of damage to local infrastructures. Poor health as a result of climate

What is the evidence on the role of libraries in supporting the climate change agenda?

change, can hinder the ability of people to work, which ultimately has an impact on the economy (27-29).

The United Nations (UN) defines 'disaster' as "a severe disruption to the work of an area or society at any level because of dangerous events interacting with exposure conditions, vulnerability, and ability that lead to the following: loss and impacts in human, material, economic and environmental areas" (14). Many disasters are exacerbated by climate change issues, and which are increasing in frequency and strength (16).

The UN defines CC as long-term changes in temperatures and weather patterns, some of which can be natural, but others as a result of human activities, such as burning fossil fuels, which generates gas emissions, trapping the sun's heat and raising temperatures (30). Climate change is a major threat to human health (31). Power outages mean, for example, that hospital equipment cannot operate effectively; at home, when the power fails, food cannot be cooked properly or cannot be cooled effectively, putting people at risk of food poisoning (32, 33).

The 2024 small island developing states (SIDS) report for the Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change shows that because SIDS have been exposed to increasing summer temperatures, over the past 9 years, their populations are at greatest risk of poor human health because of heat exposure. However, of 29 SIDS responding to the WHO Health and Climate survey (34), only six had early-warning systems in place for heat-related illnesses. (35).

Medical schools are updating their curricula to reflect the potential impacts climate change can have on health, whether it is creating new conditions, such as novel disease outbreaks, or exacerbating existing conditions, such as asthma (36). Academic LaLs should bear this in mind when designing information skills training.

Policy makers need to develop robust, evidence-based policies to protect human health from the impacts of climate change (37). There is global disparity in access to good quality weather and climate information services (38). The evidence in this briefing shows that in order to support the climate agenda, LaLs need to become more informed about additional resources and work with researchers and policy-makers to identify the best research evidence to inform policy. The usual databases used to identify biomedical research include Cochrane, Embase, Medline, CINAHL, Scopus, and Web of Science. However, research on climate change can be found on other databases, including GreenFILE (freely available - <https://www.elsevier.com/products/research-databases/greenfile>), Global Health, and Global Index Medicus (freely available - <https://www.globalindexmedicus.net/>).

2. Climate anxiety

Climate affect or eco-anxiety (fear of environmental doom) or 'solastalgia' (distress caused by environmental change) is caused by the distress resulting from climate and ecological crises (18, 26, 29), and it is on the increase (39). It is an emotion that alerts us of danger, which incites people to search for more information about the situation and find potential solutions (29). Perhaps LaLs could support this by helping the public find reliable and accurate information to make informed choices about their options, enabling them to stay positive and less overwhelmed.

A paper analysing Google Trends data, between 2014 and 2023, on people's online information-seeking behaviour to identify how the global population engages with health and climate change, showed that there has been an increasing number of searches on health and climate change over time. The authors found that people living in low- and middle-income countries were more likely to search for climate change and health, which demonstrates an increasing concern with this issue (40).

What is the evidence on the role of libraries in supporting the climate change agenda?

Across the globe, climate anxiety and dissatisfaction with government responses are widespread in children and young people and it is impacting their daily activity. They feel particularly vulnerable to climate anxiety, because they have limited power to make a difference and limit the harm of climate change to health (26, 29). Teachers have the responsibility of balancing the anxiety associated with climate change, by teaching them about positive outcomes, such as hope and action, thus channelling the emotion into action (41). This could also be an area which LaLs could support, for example delivering age-appropriate climate literacy activities. One paper that explored interventions for individuals and communities, identified 5 themes for teachers, that LaLs could also endeavour to support:

1. *“Climate anxiety is a healthy response to the current situation”*
2. *“Climate anxiety will continue to increase until there is climate action”*
3. *“Climate anxiety interventions should be individualised”*
4. *“Climate anxiety interventions need to include the community and societal level”*
5. *“Climate-aware practitioners are required”* (39)

LaLs in particular could support themes 4 and 5, as they:

- are trusted members of the community;
- are often part of the local authority and are knowledgeable about, and promote, local government action, and
- have access to the best research.

3. Climate literacy

Literacy is an important social determinant of health, as it means that people with better education can make more informed decisions about their health, including lifestyle choices, and treatment options (42, 43). The public needs to be equipped with information literacy skills to manage the excess of information they receive in their daily lives via various types of resources, both good and bad quality (44).

Climate change literacy, climate literacy, or environmental literacy (CL) describes the ability of people to find, understand and use information and services to make decisions about the environment, and recognise misinformation related to environment concerns. *“A climate-literate person understands the essential principles of Earth’s climate system, knows how to assess scientifically credible climate information, communicates about climate change in a meaningful way, and can make informed and responsible decisions regarding actions that may affect climate”* (45). CL covers a range of behaviours, including transport choices, reducing electricity use, buying appliances, voting, etc. It is all about understanding what causes climate change and how to fix it and how our choices influence the future of the planet (45). For example, people might want to know what activities create greenhouse gases and what they can do differently to reduce the impact on the environment (19, 20).

Green literacy or sustainability literacy is another form of CL (46). IFLA has adapted the UN2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (47) green or sustainable literacy focuses and its global vision is of a *“strong and united library field powering literate informed and participative societies”*. LaLs are being asked to take action and support communities as they make the changes needed to face global challenges, such as climate action (48). LaLs need guidelines on how to embed green/sustainable practices in their services, particularly how artificial intelligence technologies could be used in library services to become more sustainable (49, 50). Some examples of international and national organisations include (42, 51, 52):

What is the evidence on the role of libraries in supporting the climate change agenda?

- The Green Library Website (<https://www.ifla.org/the-green-library-website/>) - a project developed by the IFLA Section Environment, Sustainability and Libraries, which provides resources to support libraries as they become green and sustainable .
- The UK Green Libraries Partnership (<https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/greenlibraries>) - set up by CILIP: The Library and Information Association (CILIP), Arts Council England, Libraries Connected, Julie's Bicycle, NHS England, National Library of Scotland, Society of College, National and University Libraries, Research Libraries UK, the British Library, and Consortium of National and University Libraries (53, 54).
- The US National Climate Action Strategy for Libraries (<https://www.sustainablelibrariesinitiative.org/national-climate-action-strategy-libraries>) – produced by the American Library Association (ALA) and the Sustainable Libraries Initiative, provides guidance and case studies to help libraries educate about, and engage their users in climate change activities (55).
- Navigating uncertainty: Libraries and the climate crisis – a briefing produced for the Canadian British Columbia Library Association highlights several, intersecting areas where LaLs can help mitigate the impacts of global warming, and these are:
 - supporting community resilience
 - building partnerships
 - developing library green spaces
 - reducing climate change inequities (climate/environmental justice)
 - facilitating climate literacy
 - reducing consumerism, through re-use and re-purposing
 - visualising the future
 - identifying underlying tensions (56)

For some libraries, the role of promoting eco-friendly reading spaces in green libraries, is an aspiration that they might struggle to achieve, due to insufficient resources and planning. More funding, initiatives for capacity-building, integration of renewable energy, and strategic awareness campaigns are required (57).

Disaster literacy (DL) is a broader definition, but ensures that people know which hazards, including climate incidents, might affect them, their families, and their communities (58-60). It helps them understand how best to handle these situations, in order to maintain their safety, health and wellbeing during those stressful times. The aim of DL is to help communities enhance their resistance to disasters, such as floods and wildfires, by teaching people about preparedness and mitigation, and the skills needed for disaster response and behaviours (58). Low levels of disaster literacy can make communities vulnerable, because they do not understand the need for disaster preparedness. There are similar concepts to DL, including disaster prevention literacy (61, 62), and disaster health literacy (63).

The lack of access to good quality information is '*a social injustice that the global health community cannot afford to ignore*' (9) and governments are obliged, both morally and legally, to ensure that everyone has access to reliable information (43). Public libraries provide a range of spaces, including welcoming spaces, safe spaces, community spaces, work spaces, and most importantly learning and information spaces (64); they are trusted by their communities (4, 5), and they are essential for helping their community members find the information they need to make informed choices. Libraries and librarians (LaLs) have the resources and skills to help people make educated lifestyle choices to tackle the climate crisis (65, 66). They can also provide accurate information to overcome misinformation around causes of climate issues. They can advance public knowledge and support active participation in climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, enabling their communities to become well-informed and poised to address environmental challenges (67).

What is the evidence on the role of libraries in supporting the climate change agenda?

One paper suggests five workplace principles (empowerment, equitable, inclusive, collaborative and integrated) to provide directions for public libraries for improving the climate health literacy of individuals and their communities (64).

4. Infodemiology

An infodemic is a combination of *information* and *epidemic* and refers to the quick and far-reaching spread of both accurate and inaccurate information during a disease outbreak or other catastrophic event (68).

The World Health Organization (WHO) describes an “*infodemic as too much information including false or misleading information, in digital and physical environments, during a disease outbreak*” (69). Infodemics also mean that people lose trust in the information dispensed by health authorities and therefore they can undermine the public health response (69). An infodemic can intensify or lengthen outbreaks when people are unsure about what they need to do to protect their health and the health of people around them. “*An ‘infodemic’ is defined as “an overabundance of information - some accurate and some not - occurring during an epidemic”*” (70). Three of the main issues with infodemics are the:

1. high volume of information produced, which makes it difficult to:
 - find and store it;
 - guarantee the quality, visibility, and validity of it.
2. speed at which the information is produced, which results in issues such as:
 - assessing its value;
 - managing the gatekeeping process;
 - applying results;
 - tracking its version history, particularly with preprints, which are research papers that have not undergone a peer review process yet – during the COVID-19 pandemic, to make sure their results were published quickly, many researchers published them on preprint servers, which meant that their results were not checked for accuracy;
 - waste of research efforts, meaning that many researchers were producing research on similar or the same topics, which leads to time wasted for both the researcher and the information consumer (70).
3. issues with mis- and dis-information/fake news – mis-information is false or inaccurate information that has been shared unintentionally, while dis-information is false or inaccurate information that has been deliberately shared to spread fear, confusion, mental distress, and suspicion (44, 68, 71, 72) and potentially lead to risk-taking behaviours (69). This type of inaccurate information impedes the implementation of best public health policies during a public health crisis such as COVID-19 (73). The incredible amount of mis-information spread during the pandemic has been described as a tsunami (44), and as Linton Weeks, a journalist from the Washington Post said, “*In the nonstop tsunami of global information, librarians provide us with floaties and teach us to swim.*”

By the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 800,000 research papers had been published. As a comparison, during the Ebola outbreak, only 27,000 research papers were published. During the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers and librarians worked together to reduce duplication of research effort and avoid wastage. The World Health Organization created the WHO Evidence Collaborative for COVID-19, a network of researchers and librarians from key, international research organisations, including Cochrane Library, UK Health Security Agency, Ottawa University, and McMaster University. One of the key outputs, lead by McMaster University, was the COVID-19 Evidence Network to support

What is the evidence on the role of libraries in supporting the climate change agenda?

Decision-making (COVID-END). Librarians are in a unique role, because they know what projects people are working on, so they can make connections and reduce duplication of research effort. One of the vital roles for LaLs during the pandemic was to facilitate access to the best research of information consumers, such as policy-makers, and this was done with quality, comprehensive literature searches, and current awareness products. Because the terminology for COVID-19 changed so much during the early days of the pandemic, that to ensure consistency, librarians shared search strategies which meant that the strategies were reliable, robust, and accurate (74). Following on from this, an expert panel of librarians from around the world developed best practices, including recommendations and examples for searching during public health emergencies (75).

Since the pandemic, public health organisations, including the World Health Organization (WHO), have acknowledged that infodemiology is “*an important emerging scientific field and critical area of practice during a pandemic*” (76). LaLs are ideally skilled to become infodemiologists, as they know how to search effectively and timely, assess the quality of information that they are retrieving, and teach their patrons health information literacy skills, so that they are better able to manage mis- and dis-information (71). Gunther Eysenbach first coined the term “infodemiology” almost two decades ago, and there are four pillars of infodemic management:

1. information monitoring (infoveillance) – this could involve horizon-scanning and current awareness;
2. building eHealth Literacy and science literacy capacity – through information skills training, and raising awareness of quality information sources;
3. encouraging quality improvement processes such as fact checking and peer-review;
4. accurate and timely knowledge translation and minimisation of bias such as political or commercial influences (76).

Access to authentic sources of information is critical to informing public health practices (73). The public need health information literacy skills to protect their well-being during public health crises, particularly as people are using social media so much to get their information. Social media has huge potential for spreading mis- and dis-information, such as unproven and informal data (44). Owners of social media rely on advertising to provide revenue and they aim to facilitate getting information published quickly rather than accurately, which exacerbates the spread of mis-/dis-information (44). Governments are unable to control information published by news media, such as tabloid newspapers, or social media, so it is vital that individuals protect themselves from unreliable information by learning health information skills, and LaLs, particularly public libraries are ideally placed to support their community as they seek high quality information related to public health crises (44, 68). Librarians are vital stakeholders to infodemic management because they have the required knowledge and skills relating to critical literacies (68, 77). “*Libraries have a long history of dispelling myths and promoting the truth in an unbiased way*”. LaLs can serve as effective mediators in dispensing reliable and accurate information on any number of topics, including public health subjects such as how to behave during viral outbreaks, and how to safely return to areas and homes impacted by extreme weather events (78).

5. What librarians can do

Libraries play an important part in democratising knowledge, by promoting literacy skills (79). Librarians from all sectors – public, academic, health, etc – can support climate literacy through all stages of life, by providing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to understand and address how human activity can impact climate change. Particularly when they work in partnership, librarians can empower people to recognise credible information and make

What is the evidence on the role of libraries in supporting the climate change agenda?

informed decisions about their study, career, and health choices, influence their attitudes and beliefs, and communicate accurate information to their peers and families (80-84).

Recent natural and manmade disasters have emphasised how effectively public libraries support their community's resiliency and recovery efforts (85). During times of crisis, communities have basic psychological, physical, safety, and informational needs, all of which can be provided by LaLs (86). Libraries have always had a good relationship with the communities they are part of (78). They are an essential community service who can help people get back on their feet more quickly, by getting them back to their regular lives, and this also helps with the community's economic recovery (85). In South Carolina, U.S. several counties experienced catastrophic flooding, causing extensive damage to the communities. Libraries created disaster-recovery centres which highlighted their value in supporting emergency response and recovery (87). More and more, librarians are being recognised as "Information First Responders", and libraries as disaster recovery and technology communication centres, because of their:

- ability to adapt quickly to new situations;
- trusted, local connections;
- physical resources, such as buildings, telecommunications, etc (85).

Librarians are leading in the field of environmentally friendly and sustainable practices and policies (88). Librarians are seen not only as custodians of information but also as active participants and essential stakeholders in the climate change agenda because they:

- disseminate unbiased knowledge;
- lead sustainability projects;
- demonstrate social responsibility by incorporating green/sustainable activities into library operations;
- work with local advocacy groups to improve community engagement;
- raise awareness;
- support social change; and
- provide invaluable resilience-boosting community services (20, 25, 89, 90).

Because they are trusted and safe places in the community, LaLs have an important role to play in supporting and promoting the health of people and protecting the environment in their communities. They curate and signpost to credible and reliable, evidence-based information on climate health and provide free information skills training (91). Even when their physical facilities are closed, "*libraries are generally well-positioned to continue to fulfill their core mission*" (92). Libraries, especially public libraries are critical community facilities particularly before, during, and after natural disasters such as floods and hurricanes, and have a critical service role in disaster response, and community well-being. "*Local public libraries act as resilience hubs in the face of economic stressors and extreme weather events*" (90). They have the potential to make a difference to current and future issues (57, 93, 94). Libraries are located all over the world, in the community, schools, universities, organisations, and they are trusted by the people they serve (55). Communities rely on public libraries to support them during catastrophic weather events, such as floods or wildfires, but many public libraries do not have disaster policies or they may be out of date, so public librarians use their personal experiences to inform their practice. They often have to prioritise community service over their own personal needs, such as damaged homes and power outages. During Hurricane Michael in 2018, public librarians felt that reestablishing library functions was more important than their own needs (95). Public libraries are based in the community, and as such are often staffed by members of the community, understanding the needs of the places where they live (17), and often having the ability to speak the same languages in multilingual populations (87, 96). Libraries are being inspired to:

What is the evidence on the role of libraries in supporting the climate change agenda?

- increase the scope of their climate education activities;
- expand their digital collections;
- build strategic collaborations;
- take ethical responsibility (97).

A Canadian paper provides a checklist, in Table 1 (98), stating the qualifications required for becoming an environmentally sustainable library. There are three sections to the checklist:

1. Acknowledgement includes statements showing whether or not the library service has acknowledged climate change and the need for the service to be environmentally sustainable;
2. Engagement includes statements showing that the library service is actively engaged with environmental sustainability and climate change mitigation activities or not;
3. Activist includes statements showing if the library has accepted the role as advocate for environmental sustainability and climate justice in its community (99).

By providing quick and easy access to those looking for reliable information about what to do in an emergency, libraries can demonstrate their position as a primary and valuable source of trustworthy information (4, 5).

Public health evidence changes so rapidly, particularly during outbreaks. Policy-makers need researchers to produce evidence syntheses rather than lengthy pieces of research, because they need evidence quickly to make informed policy-decisions (100). Librarians are not just curators of information collections. They are information skills trainers, researchers, and information managers, and possess expert knowledge on research methodologies and information retrieval techniques, both critical for evidence synthesis. In order to become climate literacy facilitators and environmental champions, LaLs not only need dedication to enhance climate literacy, but they need specific skills, namely:

- strategic planning;
- greater user engagement; and
- capacity building (98).

The table below shows the types of activities that librarians from public, academic, school, medical, and government libraries might offer to their patrons to support their climate health literacy, along with the references for more information.

The activity examples below are there to inspire, not just individual libraries, but library associations and institutions too, and not just within sector, but cross-sector. The activities are organised into 5 themes:

1. [Information access](#)
2. [Strategic priorities and partnerships](#)
3. [Educational programmes](#)
4. [Practical activities](#)
5. [Green initiatives](#)

1. Information access

<i>Library and librarian activity</i>	<i>Type of library</i>	<i>Related references</i>
Encouraging greater use of reliable disaster and health digital resources, by making collections open access and user-friendly	Public, academic, school, medical, government	(23, 55, 87, 92, 96)

What is the evidence on the role of libraries in supporting the climate change agenda?

Changing collection policies to more digital media, so they are available at home and elsewhere	Public, academic, school	(101)
Serves as the knowledge repository of the public to ensure that relevant information is disseminated to the public to educate, inform and mobilise the public towards understanding climate change and how to mitigate against it	Public, school, academic	(102)
Creating awareness of climate change events and 'theme' days/weeks	Public, school, academic	(101)
Provide multi-lingual content, particularly for refugees and asylum-seekers	Public, school	(103)
Promoting media related to environmental education	All	(101)
Supporting evidence synthesis production – librarians are not just curators of information collections; they are information skills trainers, researchers, and information managers, and possess expert knowledge on research methodologies and information retrieval techniques, both critical for evidence synthesis, and need to support researchers who are under increasing pressure to produce evidence syntheses to inform practice and policymaking	Academic, government	(75 , 100)
Bridging social, political and economic barriers, making information available to everyone	Public, academic, school, medical, government	(104)
Providing preparedness information such as creating an emergency evacuation, or “go” kits, how to develop a family evacuation plan, and what information resources can be trusted during emergencies, etc.	Public	(78)
Leveraging different tools and channels to communicate vital public health information to their users about reliable websites, social media apps and tools, and print and e-newsletters	Public	(35)
Create current awareness resources, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pages with frequently updated information so that everyone would know where to get the best news • specific premade searches that can be quickly accessed • saved search alerts from relevant literature databases so that frontline workers could keep up-to-date with the latest research 	Public, academic, school, medical, government	(72)

What is the evidence on the role of libraries in supporting the climate change agenda?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teaching people how to create and edit their own and existing search alerts creating digests of evidence to send to frontline workers developing LibGuides (https://www.springshare.com/libguides) with curated links to local, regional, national, and international agencies and organisations 		
Providing information at the point-of-need, by developing mobile health platforms and one stop online platforms, which provide evidence-based research to frontline workers so that they can make evidence-informed decisions quickly	Public, academic, government	(21)
Provide access to reliable news sources that can raise unbiased awareness about climate change	Public, academic, school, medical	(94)
Providing information about responding to extreme weather events caused by climate change	All	(101)
Adding comics/graphic novels to the collections as these may be more accessible to some members of the community	Public, school, academic	(105)

2. Strategic priorities and partnerships

Library and librarian activity	Type of library	Related references
Building collaborative partnerships, for example, medical librarians teaching public librarians about accessing good quality health information so that they can support their users, or between libraries and other governmental and non-governmental agencies in response to natural disasters	Public, academic, school, medical	(5 , 56 , 74 , 82 , 97 , 106)
Planners seeking to enhance community resilience can work with their local public libraries to build disaster preparedness and response capacity	Public, academic, school, medical, government	(90)
Fair compensation for library workers, by providing a living minimum wage, at the very least	Public, academic, school, medical	(1 , 55)
Being proactive and developing risk and disaster preparedness manuals and community resilience programmes, including making sure that transportation is available for smaller, rural populations	Public, academic, school, medical	(22 , 23 , 92-94 , 96)

What is the evidence on the role of libraries in supporting the climate change agenda?

3. Educational programmes

Library and librarian activity	Type of library	Related references
Delivering climate literacy programmes	Public, academic, school, medical, government	(17 , 56)
Embed sustainable development and living into programmes and curricula, to allow individuals and communities to think and act upon how they mitigate and adapt to climate change, for example the Healthy Me, Healthy Planet program, an evidence-informed pilot program delivered by local libraries to promote the health co-benefits of action on climate change.	Public, school, academic	(17 , 91 , 107)
Climate health promotion outreach programmes and tailored climate literacy training for specialist groups - public librarians reaching out to rural farmers by organising focus group discussions, and bringing information knowledge to rural farmers via public address systems, television, radio broadcast, and the distribution of leaflets about sustainability and climate change	Public	(108)
Set up learning hubs for children and adults	Public	(86)
Organising regular community resilience programming, in the face of economic hardships, extreme weather events, etc.	Public, school, academic	(55 , 56 , 90 , 109)
Community engagement programs, such as workshops and climate events	Public	(97)
Hosting workshops, events, exhibitions, screenings, and discussions, on the following themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'do-it-yourself' • upcycling • sustainable food provision • zero-waste practices • funding projects • environmental and sustainability projects for businesses • celebrating local wildlife and eco-systems • highlighting intersection of climate change, race and gender (climate/environmental justice) • eco-themed events covering climate-related topics • children's events, such as book recycling, building bug hotels and wormeries, green-themed storytime, 	Public, school	(1 , 53 , 101 , 110)

What is the evidence on the role of libraries in supporting the climate change agenda?

with songs and stories for preschoolers, nature-based play sessions		
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4. Practical activities

Library and librarian activity	Type of library	Related references
Providing and extending wi-fi to multiple locations	Public, academic, school, medical, government	(55 , 90 , 92 , 93)
Creating solar-power device charging areas	Public, academic, school, medical, government	(55)
Using less new materials and recycling existing materials	Public, academic, school, medical, government	(17 , 54 , 103)
Promoting reduction of resource consumption	Public, academic, school, medical	(101)
Boosting re-use and recycling, and sending nothing to landfill, by installing recycling/unwanted media collection points	Public, school, academic	(1 , 20 , 54 , 101 , 103)
Lending energy reduction equipment	Public, academic, school, medical	(101)
Hosting repair cafes to empower people to fix items rather than dispose of them, and repurpose and re-use old clothes	Public	(1 , 53 , 101 , 110)
Organise workshops on making crafts from recycled materials	Public, school	(103)
Expanding the range of items available for lending e.g. electronic DIY equipment, energy reduction equipment, etc to encourage borrowing rather than buying, e.g. the Library of Things	Public, school, academic	(55 , 101)
Providing food and clothing banks	Public	(111)
Tips to reduce food waste and transform gardens into havens for nature	Public, school, academic	(53)
Providing emotional support centres	Public	(86)
Place of refuge for people who have damaged homes	Public	(95)
Provide daytime shelters during extreme heat and cold events, which is particularly important for unhoused and underhoused individuals	Public, school, academic	(55 , 86 , 90)
Training librarians to act as second responders, providing overdose support to drug users	Public, school, academic	(55)

What is the evidence on the role of libraries in supporting the climate change agenda?

Going to places where the young people are, and working with schools, experts, social media content creators, organizations, and youth centres to support young people's environmental emotions and environmental activities	Public, school, academic	(110)
Curate displays, workshops, recommend reads and run events raising awareness of important climate change themes	Public, academic, school, medical, government	(102)
Offering “cooking on a budget” workshops	Public	(111)
Providing life-saving information, such as what to pack during a 1 hour/1 day/1 week/1 month evacuation	Public, school, academic	(55)

5. Green initiatives

<i>Library and librarian activity</i>	<i>Type of library</i>	<i>Related references</i>
Promoting and supporting reducing, reusing, and recycling (3Rs) activities	Public, academic, school	(20)
Providing green spaces, for example, library or community gardens, large planters, and/or an environmental classroom garden with space for green activities, growing vegetables, composting, and family workshops	Public, academic, school,	(1 , 53 , 55 , 56)
Creating roles for community gardeners	Public	(53)
Telling climate stories through exhibitions, events, learning programmes and collections	Public	(54)
Improve the environmental impact of the library space with air source heat pumps, new double-glazing, smart electric lighting, new rooftop solar panels, an updated heating system enabling the use of renewable energy sources and electric vehicle charging points being installed	Public, academic, school, medical, government	(53)
Building Net-Zero energy branches and decarbonising buildings with energy efficient facilities, prioritizing energy efficiency, renewable energy, green cleaning, recycling, indoor air quality, using electric vehicles, and ethical carbon offsets	Public, academic, school, medical	(1 , 17 , 55)
Restoring and ensuring that library buildings and digital infrastructures are optimised for environmental sustainability	Public, academic, school, medical, government	(53 , 94)
Using electric cargo bikes or Tukxi Electro vehicles around the city to provide environmentally sustainable library delivery services	Public, academic, school, medical, government	(53)

What is the evidence on the role of libraries in supporting the climate change agenda?

Signposting to more environmentally friendly transport	Public, academic, school, medical	(55, 101)
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Summary

"These are unprecedented times for all of us. Libraries around the world are moving into the new and an insecure environment. Their commitment to sharing information and serving the communities has never been shaken." (112)

Climate change is an urgent and serious world issue, and the scientific evidence is overwhelming, and accessibility to reliability and quality of information is hindered by mis- and dis-information. Librarians are prepared, flexible, can adapt to all sorts of situations, and are willing to support patrons in times of need. They have the skills and community relations to signpost their users to good quality information and help educate them about climate change, with a view to reducing climate-damaging behaviour and help protect our planet from future decay, enabling it to flourish once again. This evidence briefing seeks to highlight ways in which librarians can support their patrons as they implement interventions to mitigate against climate change.

About us

The IFLA Evidence for Global and Disaster Health Special Interest Group (<https://www.ifla.org/units/e4gdh/>) works to promote and strengthen the roles that librarians play in times of disaster, developing innovative responses to global health challenges, and contributing to achieving the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>).

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