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# Emory University Libraries' Environmental Action Force

By Elaine Wagner

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## *Project LEAF recycles tons of paper*

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**E**mory Recycles, Emory University's white paper recycling program, began as a pilot project in the Woodruff and Candler libraries, expanding to a campuswide campaign in September of 1990. Fifty-eight campus buildings are currently participating in the program using an operational guide prepared by members of the Libraries Environmental Action Force and the Emory Recycles coordinator. The Emory Recycles Steering Committee reported in March that 37.46 tons of white paper have been recycled since the beginning of the project.

On August 16, 1989, a group of concerned library employees met to discuss the possibility of recycling some of the paper discarded daily, such as office paper, superseded loose-leaf pages, computer paper, etc. It was agreed to focus initially on recyclable white paper, and the committee formulated the following statement of purpose: "The primary purpose of the recycling committee will be to investigate possibilities and implement policies for recycling waste white paper produced by the General Libraries, and to serve as an educational resource for the General Libraries community."

Members of the group researched local companies accepting paper for recycling, called other libraries and computing centers to see if anyone had a similar program, and contacted other interested groups on campus to coordinate activities.

The preliminary survey of other libraries and computing centers in the area indicated that some institutions were considering white

paper recycling; others had stopped recycling because of such problems as waste paper in the bins which required sorting, and contractual requirements (some recycling companies require a large amount of paper). Some libraries which reported no recycling in August 1989 now have begun programs, probably due to increased public awareness of the need for recycling programs and in response to growing community pressure to reduce waste of all kinds.

The next step involved promotion, motivation, and dissemination of information. It

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was decided that articles would be written for *General News*, a newsletter for library employees, and that a bulletin board should be provided in the library staff room with information about the committees's activities. There were several suggestions for a name and suitable acronym, and LEAF (Libraries Environmental Action Force) was chosen. LEAF is a subcommittee of GLEAC, the General Libraries Employee Advisory Committee.

The test phase of the recycling project began January 29, 1990, in Woodruff Library. Desk folders and recycling bins were provided and labelled to indicate types of paper which could be recycled. The LEAF logo identified folders and bins. Electronic mail messages and an article in the general libraries' newsletter announced the advent of the program. We

quickly discovered that many people, especially students, did not notice the bins, possibly because of the neutral color of the receptacles. (With the expansion of the project to the entire campus came bins with a green top and a larger "Paper Recycling Bin" label.)

The procedures for collecting paper and delivery to the recycling center were carefully worked out by LEAF, the Emory administrative coordinator, and representatives from the recycling company. When the intermediate containers are full, they are emptied into larger containers which are located in the Copy Center. The large containers are then moved to the library loading dock for collection by the recycling company. Custodial staff are in charge of emptying and moving filled receptacles.

Much of the success of the LEAF program can be attributed to the support of the library director and to continuing reports to the library staff on progress and plans for the future. The selection of Woodruff Library as a test site for a Universitywide recycling program motivated library staff, and they were encouraged to contact members of the LEAF

committee with comments and suggestions. Most students also seemed enthusiastic about the project after they became aware of the recycling bins.

The onset of the test project coincided with a phone book recycling project initiated, organized, and carried out by members of LEAF. In January 1991 the entire campus was invited to participate in a second phone book drive; this effort resulted in the recycling of 38.5 tons of old telephone books.

The recycling information bulletin board has been used to disseminate information on the project and other environmental issues. Newspaper clippings, news of new library books on related subjects, and a directory of recycling organizations have been among the information displayed.

The first part of LEAF's purpose—"to investigate possibilities and implement policies for recycling waste white paper"—has been successfully accomplished; we will continue to concentrate on serving as an environmental "educational resource for the General Libraries community." ■





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