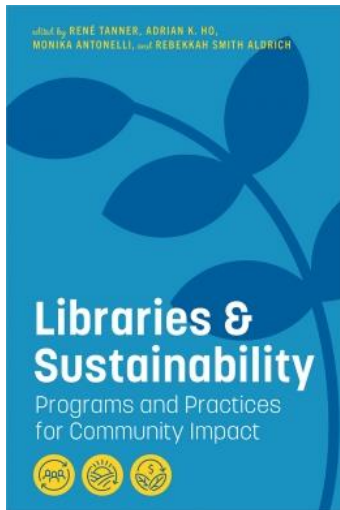


IJIDI: Book Review



Tanner, R., Ho, A. K., Antonelli, M., & Aldrich, R. S. (2021). *Libraries & sustainability: Programs and practices for community impact*. ALA Editions.

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The newest offering from René Tanner, Adrian K. Ho, Monika Antonelli, and Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, *Libraries & Sustainability: Programs and Practices for Community Impact* (2021), is a clever, practical continuation of the conversation around applying sustainability to libraries. Tanner et al. have included something for everyone within the text no matter where their library is in the conversation of sustainability. Built on the sustainability definition of the triple-bottom-line (environmentally sound, socially equitable, and economically feasible) officially adopted by the American Library Association (ALA) (p. x), the book is divided into four sections of focus which are Leadership, Planning, Programming, and Transformation. Aldrich's introduction is a strong setup for the rest of the text, providing background information of how sustainability in the American library world rose from conversations in the New York Library Association (NYLA) to become one of ALA's core values of librarianship. In her introduction, Aldrich sets the tone for the book, that she and her coauthors':

[H]ope is that what you read in this book is not just interesting to you, not just food for thought, but content that helps you actively reimagine your role in the library profession to one as an ardent advocate interested in joining us in the work to not only help libraries step into the necessary role as leaders on the topic of sustainability, but to transform the world in a way that combats climate change and builds community resilience. (p. xii)

Tanner et al. have been key players in leading the charge for sustainability in America's libraries, and, per their introduction, have tapped other leading voices for the pages of this text, making it an excellent book for diving into the multi-faceted arena of sustainability. The changes the contributors and editors decided to highlight show the breadth of ways that sustainability can be applied in libraries.

Leadership

There were some creative choices in part one of this text. Davis, Ferriss, and Kropp's chapter, focusing on how these libraries have continued sustainability practices post-certification, was written almost as if in an interview style, which made it an engaging alternative to the typical chapter format. In one paragraph, Davis noted that, "The certification process provided us with a whole new way to look at just about everything we do. From policy writing and staffing to building use/design and programming the decisions we make are always with our commitment to sustainable practices in the forefront" (p. 11). Stricker's chapter dealing with the intersection of rapid library disaster response and recovery and community resilience offers useful and practical advice for facing a disaster holistically. However, it largely fails to deliver on connecting the practical portions of disaster planning to what it promises: community resilience, which is suggested to be a key portion of the chapter by the title and introduction. Similarly, though other claims for sustainability could be made throughout the chapter, the readers are left to connect these dots and come to their own conclusions.

Overall, this chapter could do with more explanation of some of the key portions of disaster response and recovery that she is covering, such as, "A Seat at the Table Document" and "Librarians as Community Preparedness Facilitators Tabletop Exercises." A chapter appendix with some sample documents, and extra allotted space to tackle some of the details and connections that were lacking would have served this chapter well. This is not to say that this chapter has no value however, because the skills in disaster response and recovery are imperative for a library, and not all libraries have as detailed of an approach as Stricker is recommending. Kaufman, Cohen, and Eller describe the problem with information-based campaigns that led them to choose a different approach, noting that "Information-based campaigns make the erroneous assumption that if one knows more, one will care more, and if one cares more, one will do more. Both of these lines of thinking are fallacies" (p. 29). Instead, they used community-based social marketing to lead the change of behavior in their library. Their outline of the concepts of community-based social marketing is detailed and provides relevant, usable examples. By sharing the failures and successes of their library's Wellness and Sustainability Committee, they have provided a roadmap to similar adoption of sustainability efforts. This section is an excellent launchpad into the rest of the book.

Planning

Griffith's contribution, with its focus on small libraries, and its practical-meets-theory approach to sustainability for those who may be limited on time, focuses on pulling permaculture into libraries in a refreshing path to sustainability. Griffith notes how "the principles of permaculture provide a scalable, intentional approach that can be used to reframe how libraries can shape operations, providing a model both for other organizations as well as for individuals" (p. 61), sharing how the library's commitment to change had inspired community members to take steps in their own lives as well. Meszaros and Goodsett's chapter, outlining considerations for sustainable event planning, is a strong finish and launch into the next section. Containing an overview of in-person event sustainability and touching upon the opportunities for more sustainable programming through online events, this chapter includes a plethora of facets to consider. Its section on setting ground rules for sustainability in the library brings the conversation into the sphere

of the resilience of this planning, by suggesting (amongst other things) integrating sustainability into the library's mission, policies, and even designating a sustainability officer within the staff to help coordinate future efforts.

Programming

The section on programming connects sustainability directly to larger community resilience. Griffis' chapter on integrating repair events into library programming shows how repairing broken items encourages sustainability and community. According to Griffis, "Repair events change peoples' relationships to their neighbors and to one another, by seeing the beauty in repairing that which is broken. Ultimately, if culture is defined by the customs and practice of a people, each repair and repair event teaches individuals, especially young people, a way of being that honors the inherent value of all things and all life" (p. 81). The next chapter by Clotildes starts off with practical advice for working with families, specifically in taking children's programming work already done in libraries and shifting the priorities but fails to connect later ideas like collection development back to these groups. However, with ideas like turning waste management from children's programs into a learning opportunity and broadening the definition of library space to encourage programming beyond the library's physical walls, Clotildes shows how simple and effective thinking sustainably can be.

Transformation

The transformation section of this book stretches the practical aspects of the previous sections, injecting more discussion into how these can be changes made for the long term. Elzi's chapter explores the intersection of sustainability and racism in libraries through the Four I's of Oppression (ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized), which "show how power and privilege come into play and overlap in the ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized domains" (p. 108). While acknowledging that her chapter is merely an introduction to the framework, Elzi moves through truths that may be difficult for some to read, ending with suggestions for moving forward thoughtfully and meaningfully. Jeng on the other hand, offers a vision of community-based librarianship meant as both a starting point, and a path towards something more resilient. Jeng argues that "an asset-based, rather than need-based, community development approach recognizes community members to be resourceful and to utilize their own assets on the principle of regenerating new resources to contribute back into the same community where the resources come from" (p. 120), which requires community input, participation, cooperation, action, and buy-in to the process. The final chapter, delivered by Antonelli, Tanner, Aldrich, and Ho, considers how doughnut economics can be applied to sustainability and libraries to create the mind shift necessary to prioritize sustainability.

Conclusion

This book does an excellent job of showing its audience that sustainability is not just recycling, planting trees, and electric cars; it is a model for how we approach the world on a larger scale. However, the largely environmental focus of the book outweighed the other aspects of sustainability, missing some opportunity for a more nuanced conversation on what it could mean for libraries if we took the initiative to embrace sustainability more fully as a core value of our individual institutions. This reflects the difficulty of tackling

sustainability's more encompassing definition overall—a common problem. It is not until the final section that some of the deeper conversations around equity and sustainability occur. In the end, Tanner, Ho, Antonelli, and Aldrich's newest endeavor is a solid and engaging contribution to the literature of sustainability in libraries, and a great addition to any library looking to shift their narrative to align with one of ALA's newest core values.

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