The academic libraries & the social responsibility challenge: REBIUN report

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REBIUN Strategic Line nr.1 Group

Background

REBIUN, the Spanish Network of University Libraries, has as one of its strategic goals to promote the integration of the libraries in the university's objectives, including the integration of social responsibility or CSR. As a first stage to achieve it, REBIUN has prepared a report on libraries' contribution to university social responsibility.

The daily operation of library buildings produces high levels of energy consumption for heating, cooling and lighting involving negative environmental impacts and high economic costs. Raising awareness among staff and users for a responsible usage of the building is essential. Maintenance and cleaning without toxic or harmful chemicals and Environmental sustainability criteria when programming opening hours are key aspects. Efficient and environmentally respectful furniture projects are also important.

Basic approach

The survival of the university and its libraries both in the medium and long term depends on its economic feasibility, commitment with environmental sustainability and socially responsible performance.

The sustainable and responsible (academic) library

Collections

E-resources have negative environmental impacts due to energy use and the need to recycle electronic devices required to use them as well as computer consumables. Applying green ICT stimulates responsible behaviors to users about consumption of paper, ink and toner.

Consortia and national site licensing

Open access promotion and practice

Just-in-time acquisitions policies

Print copies systems based on network printers and double-sided copies

De-selection, weeding and duplicates policies

Processes & services

The bureaucratic tradition of university administration generates and handles a large amount of printed documents that along with the printed collections, turns paper use into the main source of carbon footprint and waste generation.

Generalization of e-administration

Redesigning library processes to reduce their documentary and bureaucratic requirements

Provision of bibliographic services

Creation and maintenance of open access repositories

Library buildings

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User training

Libraries have a strong educational dimension (user training, informational literacy, reference services). Incorporating sustainability into the training activities fosters also its promotion and dissemination.

Provide training in responsible and sustainable use of libraries in all the courses

Organizing monographic courses or activities on the implications on sustainability in library

Co-organizing actions in the field of environmental literacy

Keys

2 Levels of the library contribution

Integrating the library in the institutional strategy (participation of the library in the institutional initiatives of social responsibility)

The sustainable and responsible library (integrating social, economic and environmental sustainability into library services and activities)

From CSR to corporate sustainability

Sustainable development

The triple bottom line

The three R's rule

Decision dots theory

Pillars of the REBIUN report

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The report

http://eprints.rclis.org/19547/

http://eprints.rclis.org/18193/

Conclusions

To improve the contribution of libraries to the viability, reputation and responsible performance of their universities, libraries should:

Adjust themselves to what their institutions decide with regard to CSR, which includes participation in the general strategies, plans and projects, as well as collaboration in the committees, workgroups, etc. created to drive them.

Become promoters of sustainability and social responsibility initiatives.

Enhance the sustainability philosophy and criteria and integrate them deeper into typical library services and activities.

Try to integrate the components and initiatives which can be developed by libraries in their genuine field of activity, into the CSR strategies, plans and projects of their universities.