

GROWING GREENER: STEP BY STEP

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WHERE WE WERE

Our staff journal club discussed an article about environmental issues in academic libraries. After this discussion, an interested staff member solicited others to talk about greening our library. This task force identified existing green practices:

- Separate bins for paper, glass and bottles, and waste in both public and staff areas
- A box of scrap paper available for students to use for note-taking
- Pay-for-print system substantially reduciing the amount of paper wasted in the library
- Public computers set to print double-sided by default
- Recycling printer toner cartridges and fusers

The Green Himmelfarb task force next created an online survey to try to determine what environmentally friendly practices the staff was already engaged in and to what extent. The results were generally good, but we discovered a few areas for improvement.

SELECTED SURVEY RESULTS

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	Print on both sides of a piece of paper (either by sending	Always 15.8%	3
	it to the printer for double-sided printing or by reprinting on the blank side) and make other efforts to minimize the	More often than not 47.4% Not as much as I could 26.3%	9 5
	amount of paper used for printing?	Never 10.5%	2
	Recycle glass and plastic bottles?	Always 57.9%	11
		Sometimes 42.1%	8
	Recycle paper/mail/catalogs when no longer needed?	Always 68.4%	13
		Sometimes 31.6%	6
	Recycle cardboard shipping boxes	Always 33.3%	6
		Sometimes 44.4%	8
		Never 22.2%	4
	Have your monitor set to go to sleep when your computer is	Yes 78.9%	15
	idle after a period of time?	No 21.1%	4

Comments from the survey were limited but included suggestions to make it easier to recycle cardboard boxes and to help staff members turn off the automatic banner sheet function when printing.

WHERE WE ARE

The Green Himmelfarb task force identified areas in which the staff could easily improve our environmental impact. These no/low cost activities included reduction of waste from paper, eating and drinking, and general trash handling practices. Each area was highlighted with a friendly informational email to the entire staff.

The first email about paper reduction included an invitation to a bring-your-own-mug coffee break during which staff could get assistance with their computer settings (ex. changing defaults to no banner page, printing double-sided, and setting monitor to shut off when not in use). The Green Himmelfarb task force members donated cookies, coffee, and tea. Two subsequent email messages were sent to library staff covering reducing food trash, and general trash.

We also hosted a speaker from GW's new Sustainability Initiative sponsored by our incoming President. The speaker outlined campus-wide plans and provided staff with a history of the University's green initiatives.



WHERE WE ARE GOING

The Green Himmelfarb task force has a lot of ideas for future activities. Members are pursuing several initiatives that require more planning.

Re-using shipping boxes

- We would save shipping boxes through the semester
- Host an event for students to get moving materials
- Currently looking for space to store the boxes

Reducing energy usage

- Current lighting installation has all lights turned on most or all of the time
- Would like to install lighting occupancy sensors in study rooms and lesser-used areas
- Currently investigating the issue with the facilities department

Improving air quality

- Exploring the idea of hosting a plant sale/show
- Would focus on plants that thrive in low-light and improve air quality
- Looking to partner with students/faculty from the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health

Recycled Paper

- At the advice of our vendors, we don't currently stock printers with recycled paper
- Would like to test using recycled paper on staff printers
- We have ordered a carton of recycled paper

EMAIL #1: PAPER TIPS

Are you overwhelmed with paper (even in this electronic age)? Here are a few hints that can help reduce the amount of paper in your life:

- -- Feed the scrap paper bins
- Scrap paper collection bins are located by both Xerox staff printers. Please put any unneeded (and non-confidential) one-sided print outs/faxes facedown in these bins. These supply the bigger and much used scrap paper bin for patrons at the Reference/Circulation desk.
- -- Put the Xerox printers on a diet
- Your printer settings can be adjusted so that you no longer print a banner page before each print job. Also, setting your default print setting to double-sided will save a lot of paper.
- -- Stuff the paper recycle bins
- Remember that all sorts of paper can go in the recycle bins: printer paper, envelopes, old catalogs, paper ream wrappers, junk mail, worn-out file folders, and even the backs of used up note pads.

Need help?

If you'd like some help with your printer settings or have questions, the Green Himmelfarb group is sponsoring a short cookie/coffee and tea break (bring your own mug!) on June 3rd at 3:30 pm in 103.

Hear from the expert

The hands-on help/cookie session will be a great lead-in to the Staff Development speaker, Professor Mark Starik, who will be speaking at 4:00 pm on the GW Sustainability Initiative sponsored by President Knapp (room B103).

EMAIL #2: GREEN EGGS AND HAM, AND COFFEE AND LUNCH, Too!

We all need food and drink during the work day. But the packaging from our food and drinks can produce a lot of unnecessary waste. Here are a few tips for reducing the waste we create eating and drinking here at Himmelfarb, so we can all be 'greener'.

Use reusable dishware and utensils as much as possible.

- Bring reusable mugs, bottles, and other beverage containers for your drinks. You can even use these for your coffee fix at Starbucks or 7-11 (we checked and it's OK!).
- Keep a stash of real utensils in your desk and use those instead of plastic ones.
- If you bring a lunch, use reusable containers.

Recycle the cans and glass or plastic bottles for purchased beverages.

Reduce the amount of packaging that is thrown away.

- Keep a stash of shopping bags in your desk and bring them with you to reuse at Trader Joe's, Safeway, CVS, or the farmer's market.
- Donate clean used shopping bags (plastic or paper) to the Circulation desk for patrons to carry books. The daycare center at GW can also use plastic bags (drop-off at Laura's desk).
- Try to purchase food and beverages with minimal packaging.

Don't forget the weekly farmer's market.

It is a great place for fruit and vegetables, eggs, dairy, and baked goods. Buying local food helps reduce the environmental impact of shipping and keep more land green. The farmer's market is held right outside our building on I and 24th Streets every Wednesday 2:30-7:00 through November.

EMAIL #3: WASTE NOT, WANT NOT....

In our last email message we listed steps we can each take to reduce waste related to eating and drinking here at Himmelfarb. However, there's a lot of waste generated in other work areas as well. Here are some waste reduction tips for other aspects of our work day.

Reduce

- Consider whether you'll actually use a vendor freebie before taking one. Do you really need that cold drink cozy or squishy toy? If you won't use it, then don't take it.
- Check the supply closet for a needed office supply before ordering something new from a supplier.

Reuse

- · Hang on to shipping boxes and packing materials and use them again for future shipments.
- Place any unneeded manila file folders, hanging file folders, 3-ring binders, paper trays or magazine files in the supply closet so others can reuse them.
- Keep disposable plastic trays/bowls and excess cups and napkins from catered functions to reuse at other events.

Recycle

• Gently used books and videos can be donated to the Himmefarb book sales or placed in the leisure reading collection on the third floor in the Bloedorn Technology Center.

Thanks for contributing to our efforts to minimize the amount of waste generated from our daily office practices.