



Medical and health libraries and sustainability

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Why a themed issue on sustainability in medical and health libraries? Is "sustainability" not something we are doing anyway - and have been doing for quite a while?

At the end of an EAHIL gathering a small group of colleagues were not so sure. There were mountains of empty plastic bottles piling up. Every evening each of us had to put another bag full of unwanted glossy brochures in the wastebasket at our hotel rooms. Most attendees had flown to the venue - some even over distances where the train would hardly have taken longer. It was quite obvious that the biggest immediate impact on the environment that a professional body like EAHIL has, manifests itself in the way it organises its conferences. And we felt EAHIL could do better.

But the term sustainability today means a lot more than just the carbon footprint. Gerhard realised that when a student of his, Franziska Corradini, wanted to write her BSc thesis about the United Nations' 'Sustainable Development Goals' (UN SDGs). The SDGs encompass goals such as "no poverty" and "good health and wellbeing" along with "clean energy" and "responsible consumption".

With this in mind, we accepted the invitation to edit a themed issue of *JEAHIL* on sustainability projects in medical and health libraries. But the official channels, such as the IFLA world map of SDG related activities in libraries, had nothing to report about medical and health libraries. It seemed that our profession either had not made the link yet with this UN/IFLA scheme - even though in our daily work, we do contribute towards achieving one or several of the SDGs -, or that our focus was too narrow: by merely looking at libraries as individual entities, we were missing larger, e.g., university-wide projects. So we decided to change the focus of the themed issue, from reporting actual projects towards a wider perspective on the SDG concept.

Petra Hauke, chair of the IFLA SIG "Environment and Sustainability in Libraries" (ENSULIB), kindly agreed to an interview in which she outlines the aim and concept of the SDGs, and encourages medical libraries to become aware of them and commit to their support.

Franziska Corradini shows in an article derived from her BSc thesis how libraries mainly in the German-speaking countries have approached the SDGs so far, and what potential there may be especially for medical and health libraries.

Irma Klerings gives an overview of practical toolkits for making events such as conferences more sustainable.

And, finally, Tuulevi Ovaska presents an example of university library involvement in a university-wide sustainability strategy based on the UN SDGs.

Medical libraries already contribute to a more sustainable society, and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals show us how we could do even more. Should they not become part of our everyday thinking and planning just as Evidence Based Medicine did thirty years ago?