

Environmental Literacy of Academic Librarians

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The importance of environmental literacy as well as environmental issues has long been recognized and became a major area of research in the twenty-first century. Environmental literacy, environmental awareness, and environmental sustainability are interwoven concepts. Environmental literacy is defined as the awareness and concern about the environment and its associated problems, as well as the knowledge, skills and motivation to work towards solutions of current problems and the prevention of new ones (NAAEE, 2004).

Today, not only organizations but also individuals are expected to develop environmentally responsible behaviours and attitudes for their preferences, consumption and purchasing habits (McBride, Brewer, Berkowitz and Borrie, 2013). On one hand, it is known that many organizations including libraries (Stark, 2011) are taking measures to reduce their damage on the environment. On the other hand, there is evidence that leaders in business, government, and civic affairs lack of basic environmental literacy and often ignore environmental impact of their decisions (Coyle, 2005).

Libraries today are incorporating green thinking into action within the green library movement by reducing carbon footprints resulting from their operations, developing more environmentally responsible practices and services, and helping communities they serve to become green and sustainable (Jankowska, 2011; Stark, 2011). Undoubtedly, green libraries and green library movement require librarians with environmental literacy.

The aim of this paper is to discuss the importance of environmental literacy for librarians and present the findings of a study carried out on environmental literacy, attitudes and awareness of academic librarians. A survey was conducted in Ankara, Turkey and 81 librarians from 13 universities (with a 48.5% response rate) participated in the survey. Findings have shown that the rate of environmental awareness level of participants was higher than the rate of adaptation of green practices. Data has also proved that green practices within personal initiatives such as using public transportation, reducing the use of plastics, and saving electricity indicated higher level of adaptation and certain green practices require institutional level of policy development and determination. The majority of the librarians has shown interest in participating in training programs on environmental themes.

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