

Roles of libraries in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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Sustainable development has become prominence across the globe while travelling towards transforming the world in 2030 based on the United Nations' (UN) proclamation. The UN has formulated 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 targets in 2015 that span 15 years to be achieved. The action plan for SDG proclaims to realize the development based on people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership, which are the major notions, and SDGs consider mainly three aspects, such as Economic, Social, and Environmental perspectives. UN expects "a world free of poverty, hunger, disease, fear, and violence". Furthermore, it expects "a world with universal literacy, equitable and universal access to education, and health care". Social protection, human rights, safe drinking water, sanitation, and improved hygiene, sufficient and nutritious food, and universal access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy are some more expectations. So far, 10 years have passed in this venture, and nearly five years more to work to achieve these goals.

At present, most of the higher education institutions are designing and progressively instigating deliberate actions steering towards SDGs; libraries should think about how they could contribute. Do the activities of libraries align with the parent organizations related to SDGs? Academic libraries are recognised as pivotal role players under the higher education system, contributing significantly to the achievement of the SDGs. There is a notion that university libraries are defined as the 'heart' of the academic institutions. While revising the concept, communities are considered the 'heart' of the libraries. This may be an academic or public, or any other type of library. They serve the closer or wider communities based on their requirements. Without a certain community, libraries no more to exist.

Libraries can commit to transforming the community, society, and nation through knowledge and to become essential stakeholders in this venture. For instance, "public libraries play a key socio-cultural role acting as cultural hubs that promote learning and development" (Summers & Buchanan, 2018). As cultural heritage institutions, libraries provide equitable access to knowledge and literature. "They foster strong community links, including partnerships with local schools, youth groups, higher education institutions and other organisations" (Acevedo & Forsyth, 2021, p. 76). Most of the countries march forward towards achieving the SDGs, based on IFLA's agenda. For instance, the Australian Library Association has listed 24 targets that must be achieved to meet 12 SDGs. Sri Lanka has already enacted the Sustainable Development Act No. 19 of 2017 to provide the legal framework for implementing the SDGs. In addition, Sri Lanka has established a 'Sustainable Development Council'. Mashroofa (2022)

conducted a study and concluded that while nine SDGs have directly included the necessity of library resources and services, 'access to information' is a basic requirement to achieve all 17 goals.

In this regard, Libraries should formulate policies and dramatize by concrete action plans to bridge the digital divide, develop a knowledge society, reduce social and gender inequalities, diffuse the use of ICT, improve the literacy level of citizens, promote open scholarships, promote peace, social harmony, and social cohesion, improve technological innovation, and establish global interconnectedness.

All librarians should be conscious of the roles that they must play from the perspective of the SDGs. We may perform numerous activities needed to promote the SDGs persistently or purposelessly. Mapping of our activities will support determining strengths and gaps. Moreover, we need to formulate a few extra strategies and draw up agendas to make sure that we can reach at least a few of the SDGs by 2030.

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