Libraries earn gold for going green

Central Library in downtown Portland and Albina Library in Northeast Portland are among a growing list of businesses and nonprofits in Portland increasing their commitment to sustainable practices. Each library has earned City of Portland Sustainability at Work gold certification, the highest level of certification offered by the program.

As a public service organization built on sharing resources for the benefit of the community, the library is committed to sustainability practices. But operating 19 individual library branches across Multnomah County requires a more conscious effort to engage staff in sustainability practices and further environmental benefits.

“We felt strongly that there was a better answer than going along with all the waste we were creating,” said Greta G., administrator at Central Library. “We knew there was a way to incorporate sustainability solutions into day-to-day problem solving.”
Albina and Central libraries each incorporated more than 45 individual actions into their operations to improve sustainability in the workplace. Before the process began, the two libraries were already doing a number of sustainable actions, such as installing LED lights, printing on recycled paper and not purchasing plastic water bottles.

To begin working toward their certification, Central Library staff focused on small, detailed efforts. They created simple, visual signage to help others sort various types of specialty plastics for recycling that weren't allowed in the county's mixed recycling container.

In addition to implementing a more robust recycling plan, Central Library staff made facilities improvements, such as installing water-saving, low-flow faucets in staff restrooms (they're already installed in public restrooms).

A dedicated group of staff also organized a systemwide Environmental Team to help individual libraries make improvements in their overall footprint. The team also pushes for systemwide changes, such as switching to a Vitamin C based, non-toxic receipt paper and investing in green cleaning products.

“Libraries have an important role in the community to provide information and resources—organizing these sustainability efforts allows us to lead by example and put our best foot forward,” said Lili R., an access services assistant at Albina Library and lead organizer of Albina’s efforts to reach gold certification.

At Albina Library, staff partnered with neighbor Whole Foods to further their environmental efforts: “Albina Library is a leased space, so we weren't able to add a weekly compost pickup service, but thanks to an agreement with Whole Foods, staff can take a compost bucket from the lunch room over to the grocer for proper disposal in their larger composting bin,” said Lili.

While the certification is a notable milestone for the two libraries, staff noted it's important to stay informed of sustainability challenges and changes in the world and to advocate for action. “We're never going to be able to make change in our overall waste stream without working from the ground up,” said Greta.
Meet Eddie Arizaga, bilingual Spanish librarian

Spanish Bilingual Librarian Eddie Arizaga works across the library system, helping patrons get the materials they need: he provides informational services at Central Library; curates Central Library’s collection of Spanish language and other world language materials; conducts outreach at several local organizations; and supports multiple community focused projects. Through all of this, Eddie enjoys surprising people about what the library can offer.

“I want to break that myth of the ‘shushing librarian’ behind the desk,” said Eddie. “Librarians aren’t magicians. We aren’t trying to hide things. We want to not only give you the information you’re looking for but also show you how to find it.”

Before joining Multnomah County Library in 2016, Eddie began his library career working for public libraries in San Diego, near where he grew up. Though he eventually became a power user of the library as a teen, seeking out stories and information that would help
him navigate the world during a formative time, as a child, he was often left disappointed by the lack of materials in his native language.

“Spanish is my first language, and the library wasn't always about serving me. Now, we are working towards making the library more reflective of the community and encompassing more of the people who live there. It's a center of the community.”

Now, Eddie helps build the library's Spanish and other world languages collections so the community has access to a rich collection of diverse materials. In addition, he's also focusing his attention outward, visiting locations outside the library and introducing community members to the library's many services.

One location Eddie visits, along with other library staff, is the Mexican consulate in Portland. There, he joins other organizations for a monthly health fair that introduces community members to local health and information resources. At another site off Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd, Eddie speaks with day laborers, sharing information about the library's free classes on job searching and digital technology help; touting the benefits of a free library card; and inviting the workers to come visit one of the library's 19 locations.

“Today's library is about meeting people where they are,” said Eddie. “The library can be an invaluable resource for so many and sometimes it takes communicating with people directly and inviting them in.”

Eddie is excited by the ever changing nature of his work, particularly the broader effort by the library to ask, “how can we do this better? What else can we be doing for our community?”

“It's never stagnant,” said Eddie. “We're barely scratching the surface of what libraries can do.”
Library celebrates “Bike to Books” bike lane art winners

On Tuesday, August 7, Director of Libraries Vailey Oehlke joined Portland City Commissioner Dan Saltzman and Portland Bureau of Transportation Interim Director Chris Warner at Portland City Hall for an award ceremony to celebrate the winners of the 2018 Bike to Books Bike Month coloring contest. Four grand prize winners will see their winning designs installed on a city bike lane later this year.

The contest was part of May’s “Bike to Books” campaign, a joint partnership between Portland Bureau of Transportation and Metro to promote biking and transportation safety to youth by encouraging biking to school or to a neighborhood library. Students in Pre-K through 12th grade were invited to participate in a bike lane coloring contest, with the grand prize being installation of their artwork on a city bike lane.

“We’re thrilled to partner with PBOT and Metro to help promote biking and bike safety across the county. It’s a great way for our organizations to work together in sharing the positive impact bike transportation has in creating healthier, more connected neighborhoods,” said Vailey.

At the ceremony, families joined the young winners as they received special recognition for their winning artwork, which ranged from bike riding unicorns to a submission by
Mr. Davidson’s fourth grade class at Sacramento Elementary of Portland Trail Blazers star Damian Lillard on a bike.

In addition to the coloring contest, libraries held special bike-themed storytime events throughout May, and with support from Metro, handed out nearly 3000 free bike lights to anyone who biked to the library.

The bike lane contest winning artwork is on display for the public in the Portland City Hall atrium through August 24, 2018.

Librarians offer personalized reading recommendations for kids this summer

Summer reading sounds idyllic to those of us who would like nothing better than to be in a hammock with a book. But for parents, finding the right books to keep kids reading and engaged so they don’t suffer from the “summer slide” — the tendency to lose achievement gains over the summer — can be a challenge. This year, the library came to their aid to help in selecting books that would keep kids reading all summer.

In July, an email message went out to library patrons with an offer: fill out a form telling us about your child, and we’ll send books selected just for them to their neighborhood library for pickup.

Over a two-week period in July, over 330 parents took us up on the offer, some of them asking for help selecting books for more than one child. The My Librarian team and Central Library information services staff placed over 1000 books on hold, with titles featuring princesses, monster trucks, dragons and fairies.

The response from parents was touching — one parent was at a loss for words and sent back the following response: 🎁❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️

Another said, “Wow! Thank you so much! What an amazing service. LIBRARIANS ROCK!”

Given the success of the initial campaign, the library plans to do more like it in the future.
Pageturners author visits: 2018-2019 season

The library's Pageturners book groups will welcome several authors during the 2018-19 season. No sign-up is required — just read the book, then join us for the author discussion:

**Andy Fisher, *Big Hunger***
Tuesday, September 11, Hillsdale Library, 6:30 pm

**Julia Stoops, *Parts Per Million***
Tuesday September 18, Kenton Library, 6:30 pm
Tuesday, October 16, Albina Library, 6:30 pm

**Molly Gloss, *The Jump-Off Creek***
Thursday, September 20, Hollywood Library, 6:30 pm

**Kenneth Coleman, *Dangerous Subjects***
Thursday, October 4, Capitol Hill Library, 1:30 pm
Tuesday, October 9, Capitol Hill Library, 6:30 pm
Tuesday, October 16, North Portland Library, 6:15 pm

See the full list of author visits at multcolib.org.

Patron comments

[patron commented after connecting with library staff via the online chat feature]

“... thank you for the mention of the library’s page all about researching a home’s history. That is actually how I got started on this and I agree it has so much good information! I actually just got teary-eyed thinking about you all at the library and the incredible job that you do to help those looking for knowledge. You make something that can be so overwhelming to a person become so accessible, it is really such a gift.” — online patron, August 14

"Yesterday I went to Midland looking for help accessing information on new career directions. I am a 44-year-old single mom in a low-wage job, and I’m finally ready to consider going back to school and improve my life. I have two disabled kids and my dreams have been on the back burner a long time. I was lucky enough to find Regional Manager Mike B. working the information desk. I wasn't sure if he could help me, but bow howdy I was in for a surprise; I had NO idea the library had access to hundreds of databases that"
had info I needed on medical careers and colleges and job prospects. Not only did he show me those, he knew what websites were reputable and trustworthy (as you know, there is a ton of info out there, but it's so hard for a layperson to know which is the GOOD info!). He also made me an appt. with a librarian to learn more. Wow! He/you are making a HUGE difference in my life at a crucial time. I can't thank you enough! Big love + respect." — Midland patron, August 3

“Having done most of my project research online over the past five years, I signed up for a Multnomah County Library card only recently. I can't say enough good about what an amazing resource you are for the community, but I try: I tell everyone how much I love the services you provide! Your pleasant, ever-helpful staff is high tribute to a level of professionalism seldom found in services available to all, at no additional cost. Libraries are repositories that can be enhanced, but never replaced by digital replicates. Many thanks for all you offer and all you do.” — Cindy, July 12

"Natasha [at Hollywood Library] was amazing! Fantastic teaching and engagement with the children. My daughter loves the preschool story time, and though we can't always attend, she often asks for it. We always come home with a handful of books, and the idea of spelling her own name for her name tag has encouraged her to learn letters. Thanks for this awesome event. Please keep it running!" — Nathaniel, July 9

"Thank you ever so much, Morgan [at St. Johns Library], for your time and patience helping me search for 'The Cross & the Switchblade.' AND for your technical skills setting up my account and sharing ways to understand maneuvering through the system. You are awesome!! Women (young ladies) like you restore my faith in people, that you were very kind and non condescending to help those with less computer savvy. Thank you!" — Dena, June 2
In the news

**Man ‘lunged’ at Central Library worker Wednesday, spokesman says** (Oregonlive.com, September 2)

**Kids looking for help with homework can find it at their local library** (KATU News, August 28)

**What do Damian Lillard, a wizard, and a unicorn have in common?** (Oregonlive.com, August 7)

**Multnomah County Library Music Project** (ElevenPDX, August 3)

**Opioid Epidemic: Librarians in Oregon Trained to Administer Drug Used To Prevent Deaths** (Shadowproof.com, August 2)

**City Announces Winners of ‘Bike to Books’ Contest** (Portland Patch, August 1)

**The Library Music Project Will Surprise and Delight Your Ears** (Portland Mercury, July 25)

**Title Wave Used Bookstore is a Retirement Home for Portland’s Used Library Books** (Willamette Week, July 12)

**What’s Gresham reading?** (Gresham Outlook, July 10)

**Libraries rock with summer reading fun** (Gresham Outlook, July 9)

Upcoming events

**Start a Food Cart Business in Portland**
- Tuesday, September 11
- 5:30 pm
- Central Library

**Freezer Jam Class**
- Wednesday, September 12
- 3:30 pm
- Capitol Hill Library

**Mexican Salsas**
- Saturday, September 15
- 12:00 pm
- Gresham Library

**Weatherization Workshop**
- Sunday, September 16
- 2:00 pm
- Belmont Library

**Sculpted Paper Masks for Teens**
- Wednesday, September 19
- 4:00 pm
- Troutdale Library

**Music from Latin America/Música de Latinoamérica**
- Saturday, September 22
- 10:30 am
- Albina Library

**Drag Queen Storytime with Poison Waters**
- Monday, September 24
- 6:30 pm
- Fairview-Columbia Library

**Vanport: A City That Was**
- Tuesday, September 25
- 6:30 pm
- Capitol Hill Library
Cooking Around the World: Mooncakes
Sunday, September 16
3:15 pm
Holgate Library

Slabtown’s Ghosts and Murders
Sunday, September 30
3:00 pm
Hollywood Library