

# ESTUDIOS E INFORMES

LINEA 1

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LIBRARIES' CONTRIBUTION TO UNIVERSITY SOCIAL  
RESPONSIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY



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Universidades  
Españolas

Red de Bibliotecas  
REBIUN

## **Libraries' contribution to university social responsibility and sustainability**

Madrid, October 2012

### **III REBIUN Strategic Plan, 2020**

- Strategic Line nº 1  
*Translated by Carmen Balsa, Consorcio Bugalicia*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

The study "*University Social responsibility and sustainable development*" published by the Secretaría General de Universidades<sup>1</sup>, points out the starring role of CRUE in university social responsibility and highlights the contributions of some of its sectorial commissions. Among them, REBIUN (Spanish Academic Libraries Network) is specifically named, and it is announced that "*REBIUN intends to incorporate new objectives related to social responsibility in the design of its III Strategic Plan 2011-2020*". The mentioned plan was finally launched at the XIX General Assembly of the network held in Barcelona from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2011.

REBIUN's Strategic Plan III declares to promote, among others, the values of "*quality and sustainability of university libraries*" and "*loyalty to the values and institutional objectives of the university*". This is the framework where **Strategic Line 1** is defined as **to improve REBIUN's organization, communication and leadership**. To carry out this strategic line, five objectives are considered, consisting **objective n. 5** in "**promoting the integration of the library in the university's objectives**" what includes the **involvement of libraries in the scope of university social responsibility**.

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<sup>1</sup> COMISIÓN TÉCNICA DE LA ESTRATEGIA UNIVERSIDAD 2015, *La responsabilidad social de la universidad y el desarrollo sostenible*, Secretaría General de Universidades, 2011.

Around these general approaches, the work group responsible for the development of **Line n. 1** set as a specific objective of its first **year to write a report on the contribution of university libraries to strategies and policies regarding social responsibility of universities.**

This report launches REBIUN's 3rd Strategic Plan goals related to social responsibility.

The report was created with the aim of presenting, from an approach as practical as possible, a set of considerations, criteria and ideas around the role of university libraries in the social responsibility of the institutions they belong to. Even more, the report goes further, suggesting the convenience that REBIUN integrates the social responsibility into its activity as an institution and not only as a simple aggregate of libraries. In this sense, the report moves along two levels:

- a) REBIUN's adoption of social responsibility and sustainability criteria
- b) Libraries' integration in the strategies, plans and policies on social responsibility of their universities.

Related to the second level, the one regarding libraries' contribution to university social responsibility, the report starts with the declaration made in REBIUN's Strategic Plan, defending library's integration into the university objectives. In accordance with it, **this report encourages libraries to act as part of the university and not as an element apart from it.** Libraries need to be integrated completely and definitely integrated in the global actions that are or may be taken by their institutions in the scope of social responsibility. To this extent, it is considered that we are referring to initiatives at an institutional level, which are not representative of particular services or units, as it happened in some cases with other initiatives, for example the implementation of quality or environmental management systems.

The report is structured in four sections. The first one presenting a brief description of the university social responsibility concept and it is suggested it should be substituted by the "university sustainability" notion, in the same way it has been recently used in the corporate field. This section also carries out a brief revision of the application of the concepts "social responsibility" and "sustainability" in the field of libraries, especially university libraries.

The second section presents some suggestions for REBIUN to integrate responsible/sustainable performance, as organization with its own legal personality.

The third section outlines some clues about the contribution of libraries to social responsibility and university sustainability from a double point of view. First, their contributions at a general level, that is, the one which is related to transversal fields like human resources management, environmental, social programs, etc. Second, the benefit of incorporating the most specific library aspects (library services, collections management, open access, etc) to the strategies and initiatives that universities may carry out in the scope of responsibility and sustainability.

The report ends with a summary and a conclusions section.

## **2 UNIVERSITY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY**

This section introduces some general ideas about university social responsibility aimed at easing the reading of the rest of the report and guiding the considerations that may arise. To reach this objective, some terminological questions that may make difficult the progress of social responsibility must be cleared up first.

For a start, it should be noted that the **concept and denomination "social responsibility" is being reviewed in the corporate world.** In this sense we cannot forget that the social responsibility concept was born in the corporate world (corporate social responsibility or CSR) and after that it was incorporated into other sectors: public administration, universities and other public organizations. The truth is that, according to experts, society and public opinion tend to identify CSR with philanthropy and social action,

which is contributing to deprive it from its significance. Due to this **nowadays it is considered that CSR has to evolve towards the idea of “corporate sustainability”**. In fact, it has been detected that CSR is being distorted by a halo effect that links it to social programs and corporate philanthropy and that *“has stolen its true nature”*<sup>2</sup> in such a way that it is being perceived as a mean to form and improve the company’s image. Given this situation, it is being considered to replace it with the notion of “corporate sustainability”, even this expression has an environmental origin, which however, seems easier to attenuate or correct.

The second terminological clarification concerns the adjective “university” applied to social responsibility and/or sustainability. It is important to keep in mind that a part of the REBIUN libraries does not belong to universities but to another type of institutions dedicated to research or tertiary education. For this reason, **the use of the expressions “university social responsibility” or “university sustainability” is not exempt from difficulties inside REBIUN**. Nevertheless due to economy of language, it has been decided to use the terms “university sustainability” and “university social responsibility” (USR) where applicable, **always considering that in the framework of this report, the contribution of libraries to sustainability and social responsibility strategies and policies must stem from their matrix institutions, either universities or other**.

All these considerations form the basis of this report which, as one of its first recommendations, **advises libraries** wherever possible, **to avoid developing alone actions or projects in social responsibility and sustainability matters**.

As stated above, the library is meant to be a part of the sustainability of the university, not an element apart so it has to adjust to the lines and strategies defined by the institution it belongs to.

In any case, the corporate sustainability approach is not completely oblivious to the university environment, because, as the mentioned study of the Secretaría General de Universidades points out:

*“the perception of university social responsibility and sustainability has to surpass its first conception, more restricted, as philanthropy or university extension, in order to deploy a transversal, plural, progressive and multidimensional commitment referring both to the overall activities of the university and its social projection”*<sup>3</sup>

Broadly, the USR (or, as suggested, university sustainability) has been defined as,

*“The way the university contributes voluntarily to create a better society in a cleaner environment”*<sup>4</sup>

From that idea, we can consider a conception of sustainability in terms of the impacts produced by the educational, researching, extension and management activity of universities in the society, the economy and the environment. This is in short, the context where the contribution of REBIUN libraries to social responsibility or sustainability initiatives carried out by their institutions must be verified.

The preference for **the notion of sustainability to the detriment of the social responsibility concept is not strange to libraries either**. So, it must be remembered that in the beginning, the concept “social responsibility of libraries” was closely associated basically to social aspects regarding fight against discrimination, attention to specific groups, fight against AIDS, equality of opportunities, free and equal

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<sup>2</sup> A. ANDREU PINILLOS, J.L. FERNÁNDEZ FERNÁNDEZ, “De la RSC a la sostenibilidad corporativa: una evolución necesaria para la creación de valor”, *Harvard-Deusto Business Review*, 207 (2011), pp. 5-21.

<sup>3</sup> COMISIÓN TÉCNICA DE LA ESTRATEGIA UNIVERSIDAD 2015, *Op.cit.*, pág. 17.

<sup>4</sup> M. NÚÑEZ CHICHARRO, I. ALONSO CARRILLO, “La Responsabilidad Social en el mapa estratégico de las universidades públicas”, *Pecvnia*, 9 (2009), p. 166.

access to information, etc. These social concerns of libraries although laudable, are not enough in terms of sustainability and social responsibility as they are understood nowadays. However, in 2002, IFLA approved in Glasgow a Declaration on libraries and sustainable development stating that libraries promote sustainable development by ensuring free access to information and made a call to libraries and information services in order to defend and spread the principles of sustainable development. More recently, the American ACRL (Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) agreed to integrate sustainability into every aspect of its organizational life.

However, it seems that the library environment has tended to consider that libraries already contribute sufficiently and properly to the progress of societies by fulfilling their own functions, being exonerated from obligations in terms of corporate<sup>5</sup> sustainability and social responsibility. In relation to this, it is not out of place to remember the considerations of MARIA ANNA JANKOWSKA and JAMES M. MARCUM regarding academic libraries<sup>6</sup>:

*“it is a moral imperative for libraries to become sustainable organizations not only in the sense of sustaining their collections and services but also in becoming more aware of the need to “green” their buildings and operations, reduce their “ecological footprint” and ensure a better strategic position for meeting future challenges”*

Thus, **the sustainable development of collections and library services shows up as something critical for university libraries**, which must begin to focus on creating more sustainable operational models in terms of environmental impact, economic sustainability and social responsibility if they intend to continue providing free and costless information to all their users. Therefore, sustainability is not only part of the essence of university libraries but must be one of the cornerstones of their performance and even of their configuration.

According to this reality, **we can study the integration of sustainability into libraries based on the conceptual framework of the “triple bottom line” that considers sustainability around three dimensions: social, economic and environmental. From this point of view, it is considered that the survival of the university and its libraries both in the medium and long term depends on its economic feasibility, commitment with the environmental sustainability and socially responsible performance.** It must be considered that a responsible management of the library budget is extremely important in such a moment like this, marked by the economic crisis. An efficient and responsible management of library budget resources has social implications to the extent that the whole society is interested in education expenses. Thus, it can be said that financial sustainability of libraries is a socially responsible action since it is related to the survival and improvement of higher education and research.

Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that, according to the study of the Secretaría General de Universidades<sup>7</sup>, **along with the three mentioned dimensions of sustainability and USR (social, environmental and economic), universities incorporate a fourth one: culture.**

Another important aspect to consider is that this same study rejects the uniform and closed conception of USR, defending its adaptation to the context and characteristics of each university. Thereby, universities are invited to set up their commitments in this field according to their singularities, strategic objectives and starting point. Along these lines, it is pointed out that *“it is strategic that incorporating university social responsibility and sustainability will be conducted on a cross-cutting basis transversely”*.

However, given the exemplary connotations existing in this area, this report considers that REBIUN must go further of the barely formal support to the sustainability and social responsibility of its member libraries. Thus, it is considered convenient for REBIUN to carry out effective actions to integrate sustainability and social responsibility into its own management and performance. The next section of the report is dedicated to this proposal.

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<sup>5</sup> J. ROWLEY, “Libraries and environmental management”, *Library Management*, 27, 4/5 (2006), p. 271.

<sup>6</sup> M.A. JANKOWSKA and J.W. MARCUM, “Sustainability Challenge for Academic Libraries: Planning for the Future”, *College & Research Libraries*, 71, 2 (2010), p. 167.

<sup>7</sup> COMISIÓN TÉCNICA DE LA ESTRATEGIA UNIVERSIDAD 2015, *Op.cit.*, p. 16.

### 3 REBIUN AND SUSTAINABILITY

As just mentioned, there is an important exemplary dimension in the scope of social responsibility and sustainability. Due to this fact, **it is not enough for REBIUN just to encourage its libraries to contribute to the triple bottom line of their institutions, but REBIUN itself, as an institution, should try to incorporate environmental and economic sustainability as well as social responsibility into its activities, services and plans.**

Among the initiatives that can be undertaken by REBIUN to that effect, the following ones could be suggested:

- **Review its definition of library/LRC (Learning Resources Centre)**, in order to incorporate the notion of sustainability and social responsibility where appropriate.
- **Reconsider some of the data collected for its *Statistic Yearbook***. The recording of the number of titles of electronic serial publications subject to the payment of a subscription fee or under license would be a good example. In this regard it is worth questioning if that recording works in favor of the sustainability of the electronic collections or rather is offering the opposite message: the number of titles is more important than its accordance to the user's needs.
- Still with the statistical data compiled by REBIUN, the opportunity **to include some kind of data or information on the participation of libraries in the initiatives and sustainability programs** of their institutions could be considered. In this context, it is not just about incorporating more data or indicators regarding sustainability in libraries, but to make public their commitment to the cause.
- In connection with the same Yearbook and other documents published on the Internet, it would be interesting **REBIUN defining and undertaking a sustainable publication policy**.
- **The organization of REBIUN events under sustainability criteria** could be the aspect having, a priori, the widest external projection. Annual meetings, workshops, meetings of collegiate bodies, workgroups etc bring about environmental and economic impacts. Location of the venue, mobility management, catering, signage and advertising, documentation for attendee use, etc, are aspects that must be reviewed considering those criteria.
- As a complement to this action, **the opening speech** of some of the upcoming assemblies could be **dedicated to sustainability in libraries**.
- The activity REBIUN may eventually develop in the **negotiation of national site licensing of electronic resources** should also be considered under the light of economic sustainability and social responsibility concern, as well as its policies and actions in support of the open access movement. In this field, **REBIUN could offer itself inside CRUE as a valid representative before the right Ministry to promote legislative actions aimed to at reinforcing the role of open access repositories**.
- In its role as CRUE's sectorial commission, REBIUN should seek collaboration with other sectorial commissions related to social responsibility and sustainability: CADEP, Manager Boards, ITC...

In any case, this is not a closed list, but it remains open to modifications and enrichment by the assembly members and the professional library community in general.

## 4 LIBRARIES AND UNIVERSITY SUSTAINABILITY

Regarding libraries, two levels of performance arise in terms of university sustainability, though both converge towards the idea (repeated all along this report) that any action or initiative of libraries should be inserted whenever possible in the strategies, plans and programs developed by their institutions. In particular, these two levels are:

- **Participation of the library in the institutional initiatives of sustainability and social responsibility:** environmental management, eco-efficiency, consumption reduction, green purchasing policies, gender equality, labor practices, mobility policies, social action, cooperation, etc, as well as participation in awareness campaigns, certification processes and sustainability reporting.
- **Integration of sustainability criteria, in its triple dimension, into services and activities specifically for libraries,** as well as an effort to incorporate all these actions into the strategies and global policies of the institution, including its reflection on sustainability reports.

### A) Integrating the library in the institutional strategy

According to the University Organic Law (Ley Orgánica de Universidades), “*The University provides the higher education’s public service through research, teaching and study*”. In relation to this and to the inclusion of libraries in the sustainability and social responsibility policies of their institutions, we cannot forget that **libraries are a part of the service that universities offer** both to their external users and society in general. If a university wants to act in a responsible and sustainable way, it will have to take into account the social, environmental and economic aspects involved in the delivery of services, including library service. In conclusion, it is about providing services which are environmentally friendly, economically sustainable and supportive of social problems, in order to contribute to the solution of global problems. Moreover, taking advantage of the university’s educational role (and the library itself), best practices for the responsible use of the services and resources provided should be instilled into the recipients of them.

Another relevant aspect in this section consists on the involvement and participation of the library leaders and in general the library staff, in the committees, workgroups, and others that might be created in order to promote and coordinate the sustainability and social responsibility strategy and programs.

When integrating into the sustainability and social responsibility policies and plans of their institutions, libraries have to act consistently with that and internalize it in their specific area of activity. The following section is dedicated to this point where some ways to implement sustainability to library services and activities are indicated.

### B) The sustainable and responsible library

Regarding the most specific activities of libraries (which are the ones where libraries obviously have more control and scope for action), contributions in terms of university sustainability can be arranged in four parts:

- Library buildings
- Collections
- Library processes and services
- User training

## I Library buildings

Along with the condition of work space for the library staff, library building represent a major part of the service as they are utilized by their users as a place to study, learn and research (the space as a service). **The daily operation of library buildings produces high levels of energy consumption for heating, cooling and lighting involving negative environmental impacts and considerable economic costs too.** In this regard, what was mentioned before about integration of libraries into the institutional initiatives and plans is stated again, in this case referring to energy efficiency and savings plans. University libraries, on their own, lack the technical and financial resources required to undertake projects to improve the sustainability of their buildings.

New library buildings are not likely to be built in the coming years, so library leaders should include existing premises in the institutional projects and plans for a sustainable management of campus buildings. As a part of this effort, **libraries can offer their facilities so that their universities can undertake pilot experiments aimed at energy saving, application of new energy sources**, etc.

However, libraries can undertake some initiatives related to the sustainability of their buildings by promoting a responsible use by their staff and users. In this field, some measures, as an example, could be considered:

- Ensuring that **maintenance and cleaning** of buildings is made without toxic or harmful chemicals, but with cleaning products with low carbon footprint and energy saving.
- **Raising awareness among staff and users for a responsible usage of the building** especially in terms of energy consumption.
- Introducing the environmental sustainability as well as economic dimensions when programming the **opening hours of libraries in special periods** (night opening times, weekends, 24 h-opening).

Another field of activity regarding the use of library buildings is related to the **organization and reorganization of their physical spaces**, in order to accommodate services **for general public**. Contemporary conceptions of libraries tend to organize them as spaces focused on users in spite of spaces for library holdings. This trend, joint together with the economic and technological evolution of libraries is leading to compact installation of holdings (including open stacks), creation of offsite storage, diversification of spaces for the public (including more attention to issues of comfort and aesthetics) and offshoring of the workplaces for part of the staff. All these things **may require plans and projects of redesigning or renovation of library spaces in which environmental and economic impacts should be considered**. Furniture provision would be an example of this, which from a sustainability perspective should lead to the installation of long-lasting and easy-maintenance furniture, made with eco-efficient and non-toxic materials, to ensure its proper distribution in order to facilitate adequate power and lighting circulation, etc. In short, it is about designing efficient and environmentally respectful furniture projects.

## II Collections

Collections are another major scope of action when talking about sustainability in university libraries. Gathering and availability of library collections has been historically based on sustainability criteria focused on the idea of sharing resources (eg. via loan) and providing free access to holdings. This idea of library service connects with one of the modern axioms of sustainability, reuse, which together with consumption reduction and recycling are the three R's

of sustainability. In recent years, that library paradigm has been broadened with the free access to scientific literature thanks to the open access movement in which libraries play a starring role.

Nowadays, most libraries manage hybrid collections, part in print and part in electronic formats (which includes digital publications not linked to a physical medium and supplied online through the internet). This circumstance has changed the very definition of library collection so today<sup>8</sup>...

*"Instead of describing collections as 'those things owned', a better definition may be 'information resources for which the library invests financial resources — directly or indirectly — to manage, service, or preserve on behalf of library users, regardless of the location of content'. Collections now include resources owned by the library and those accessed in remote locations; the norm is now an interdependent mix of ownership and access, with the location of the material increasingly irrelevant to users"*

Within this mixed or hybrid condition of library collections, it is usually highlighted the superiority of digital materials versus print publications in terms of environmental impact. However, as some studies<sup>9</sup> point out, it still needs to be demonstrated, further research is still needed on this issue<sup>10</sup>. Electronic publications are not exempt from negative environmental impacts and it is even possible that their impacts are greater than those generated by paper editions, due to the energy costs they incur in and the need to recycle electronic equipment and devices required to use these digital publications (computers, printers, etc) as well as associated computer consumables (printing supplies, storage supplies and other consumables like batteries, wires, etc).

The use and management of electronic information requires electronic and computer equipment whose fast obsolescence produces significant amounts of what is known as "e-waste", "digital debris" or "e-scrap". These wastes produce significant environmental and social impacts (health) caused by pollutants and toxic elements such as lead, mercury or cadmium, which are used in their manufacture. This fact makes necessary to take precautions with the disposal and treatment of this type of waste, with consequent economic costs.

In this line, it has also been noted that the generalization of the electronic information has led to increasing paper consumption, because users tend to get print copies of the documents. This trend has been favored for the fact that most libraries offer free printing.

To relieve these impacts, along with carrying out their institutions' policies in terms of consumption reduction, e-waste reduction, electronic equipment recycling, virtualization and cloud computing, etc, libraries should:

- Endeavor to **properly calculate the computer equipment and the services associated they really need**, applying the so called Green Technology lessons or Green ICT

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<sup>8</sup> M.A. KELLER, V.A. REICH and A.C. HERKOVIC, "What is a library anymore, anyway?", *First Monday*, 8, 5 (2003).

<http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/1053/973%3E>

<sup>9</sup> V. CONNELL, "Greening the Library: Collection Development Decisions", *Endnotes: The Journal of the New Members Round Table*, 1, 1 (2010); A. MOBERG, C. BORGGREN, G. FINNVEDEN, "Books from an environmental perspective – Part 2: e-books as an alternative to paper books", *International Journal of Life Cycle Assessment*, 16 (2011) pp. 238-246

<sup>10</sup> G. CHOWDHURY, "Building Environmentally Sustainable Information Services: A Green IS Research Agenda", *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 63, 4 (2012) pp. 633-647.

- With regard to the indiscriminate printing of documents, **measures to stimulate and inspire responsible behaviors to users and library staff limiting their consumption of paper, ink and toner cartridge should be adopted.** Along with awareness campaigns, user's training could be a good formula.

Besides the environmental impacts of the e-resources collection, financial ones must be taken into account too. High subscription costs may make it advisable for libraries to **include subscription problems in their institutional social responsibility and sustainability agendas**, appealing to the concept of responsible management of finances. An adequate and explicit institutional support when negotiating e-resources agreements as well as **the creation and reinforcement of consortia or the negotiation of national site licensing** are important steps to achieve a sustainable electronic provision.

The current economic crisis context obliges to responsibly manage university finances, requiring more efficient formulae in the subscription of e-resources (more accurate selection of titles, revision of the big deal model, national licensing, etc), which demand close and loyal collaboration between consortia, libraries and other public institutions involved in negotiation.

On the other hand in their search for greater efficiency and profitability of their e-collections, libraries could also carry out specific actions aimed to:

- Continuing with their efforts of **promotion and practice of open access**, including digitalization and preservation initiatives always under open access philosophy.
- Fostering **far-reaching agreements to share resources**; in this field, REBIUN may represent an appropriate platform
- Inserting **"decision points"** <sup>11</sup> **into the services they provide, focused on users encouraging a responsible usage of library collections**, reducing paper and consumables consumption due to document reproduction and printing.
- **Widespreading print copies systems based on network printers and double-sided copies.**

The concern about sustainability of e-resources provision has also its social dimensions, since the growing importance of these e-resources may compromise the library economic model, perhaps sustainable till now, based on reusing (for eg. through the different library loan types) and costless access to information. According to JANKOWSKA<sup>12</sup>, the expansion of the digital library leads to a growing burden on library budgets and energetic requirements that may harm the economic sustainability of libraries and bear the risk of limiting the access to information for a large number of users.

The impact of the financial crisis on university budgets is negatively affecting the contracting of e-resources on the part of libraries and consortia. Total or partial cancellation of e-resources may make users find themselves in the situation of "new information poors", that is, communities that have computer and Internet access as well as good or very good computer skills, but cannot

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<sup>11</sup> According the authors of "Decision Points: a Theory Emerges" a decision point occurs as a result of any intervention that is designed to get an individual to pause and think about the consumption that he or she is currently engaged in, and can be created in several ways, including inserting transaction costs, creating interruptions to the consumption activity or providing reminders and information.  
D. SOMAN, J. XU, A. CHEEMA, "Decision Points: a Theory Emerges", *Rotman Magazine*, (2010).

<sup>12</sup> M.A. JANKOWSKA and J.W. MARCUM, "Sustainability Challenge for Academic Libraries...", p. 164.

access that scholarly information due to cost and licensing restrictions. Trying to increase its power of purchase and negotiation through the creation of consortia, libraries have tried to avoid the generation of that information poverty accepting the contracting model known as big deal. As SCHONFELD and HOUSEWRIGHT<sup>13</sup> point out, faculty members (teachers and researchers) place a high value on the library role as purchasing agent and administrator of restrictions originated from copyright<sup>14</sup> of the resources they need to carry out their research and teaching tasks; a role that in any case, is valued above all other functions of the library. However, sustainability problems of *big deal* contracts, which begin to be rejected by libraries and to be replaced by licenses with a more accurate selection of titles based in usage, can worsen the impact of that new information poverty.

Obviously, it does not mean that libraries turn their back on the technological development and become again traditional libraries with print collections only (first of all because it is not possible or convenient anymore for many users). However, concern about sustainability **should really be incorporated into gathering, management and maintenance of e-collections:** renegotiation of big deal contracts, promotion of open access based publication formulae, joint development of collections, etc, in order to improve sustainability of collections.

Finally, the explicit and effective support to open access represents another resource available to libraries thanks to their main role in the **creation and maintenance of repositories (green way) and the publication of open access journals (golden way)**. In this area, the main contribution of libraries has to do with the achievement of a sustainable system of scientific communication that, based on open access, also represents a socially responsible action to the extent that ensures the diffusion of scientific knowledge and the research output without barriers.

Regarding print collections, besides their reusing dimension based on the loan and interlibrary loan services, greater attention should be paid to the other two R's of sustainability, that is, reduce and recycle. In the first case, it is about **reducing the accumulation of unnecessary bibliographic materials, designing acquisitions policies focused on what it is really needed**, a fact that implies a deep change in the traditional library acquisitions model in anticipation of demand or *just in case*. This reorientation of the acquisitions model may require a refinement in the existing selection mechanisms and above all, a deeper knowledge of the needs of the user communities libraries provide service to.

In the same way, **de-selection, weeding and duplicates management policies must be undertaken** to avoid accumulation of unwanted materials by setting donation policies, distributing duplicates to other libraries or institutions and recycling where appropriate, trying to minimize the environmental impact of waste generation.

### III Processes and library services

“Processes” can be defined as the set of tasks and activities that libraries perform to produce their services and ensure management functions. The bureaucratic tradition of university administration generates and handles a large amount of printed documents that along with the high weight of paper in library collections, makes that besides the emission of greenhouse gases caused by energy consumption, the main source of carbon footprint and waste generation in libraries is paper use.

In the area of processes, the **implementation or generalization of e-administration** in universities should be a priority, as well as packaging reuse, paper recycling or eco-paper policies.

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<sup>13</sup> R.C. SCHONFELD and R. HOUSEWRIGHT, *Faculty survey 2009 key strategic insights for libraries, publishers, and societies*, Ithaka S+R, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> L. BRADLEY, B. SOLDI, “The New Information Poor: How Limited Access to Digital Scholarly Resources Impacts Higher Education”, *The Serials Librarian*, 61 (2011), pp. 366-376.

Another way of acting on this issue **is improving and redesigning library processes in order to reduce their documentary and bureaucratic requirements**. Similarly, the services that libraries provide to their users consume huge amounts of paper and generate different types of waste. Therefore libraries should strive equally to redesign their services in order to reduce their negative impact in both waste generation and energy consumption.

Other aspects connected to the use of technological means in carrying out processes and provision of library services are identical to those discussed in the section on electronic collections.

The dimensions of social responsibility and sustainability of the university research activity (defined as generation and dissemination of new knowledge) have also library implications. If, as it has been pointed out, a responsible university is the one that wonders what type of knowledge it produces, its relevance and its recipients<sup>15</sup>, what invites to a **“reasonable choice of research lines to be developed from the university”**<sup>16</sup>, **it is admissible to suggest, as a contribution of libraries in this field, the provision of bibliometric services than can contribute to decision-taking in research selection.**

In a similar way, libraries’ **creation and maintenance of open access repositories can also be considered from the perspective of a socially responsible performance since it meets another dimension of university sustainability and social responsibility which is promoting universal access to science and knowledge.**

#### IV User training

University libraries have a significant educational dimension which is reflected in their services portfolio, in their actions in user training and Ci2 (computer and informational competences), not to mention the educational component of a large part of the reference and bibliographic information services. Therefore, even it may be obvious, we must begin with recalling that user training should be subject to the same sustainability requirements than the rest of the library services.

Incorporating sustainability into the training activities developed by libraries fosters also its promotion and dissemination. Due to this, we suggest going beyond awareness actions **taking advantage of training activities provided by libraries in order to stimulate a responsible behavior in users regarding the use of library buildings, resources and services**. Specific suggestions could be:

- Inclusion of aspects related to a responsible and sustainable use of the library in all the courses they offer.
- Organizing monographic courses or activities on the implications of sustainability in libraries, including aspects regarding ethic and responsible use of academic and scientific information.
- Co-organizing, together with the relevant units at each university, actions in the field of environmental alphabetization taking advantage of the experience of libraries in other types of alphabetization (informational, digital, etc).

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<sup>15</sup> F.VALLAEYS, C. DE LA CRUZ, P.M. SASIA *Responsabilidad social universitaria: manual de primeros pasos*, McGraw-Hill, 2009, p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> F. PÉREZ DOMÍNGUEZ, “Aproximación a la responsabilidad social universitaria (RSU)”, s.a.  
<https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/empleo/responsabilidad/index.php?modo=descargas&idcat=309>

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

Social responsibility and sustainability are closely connected concepts with not a single definition and, what's more, in a continuous evolution. As it has been pointed out, it is advisable to adapt university social responsibility and sustainability to the context, starting point and specific features of each university. Taking this approach, **this report does not intend to be a guide or a set of instructions to introduce social responsibility and sustainability into libraries, but a source of inspiration and reflection to improve the contribution of libraries to the viability, reputation and responsible performance of their institutions.**

In this idea, we must take advantage of the library transversal condition and its connection with university members' everyday activities related to information management and use (reading, studying, writing, surfing the net...), activities on which it is important to induce respectful behaviors with the environment and the economic sustainability. As MARIA ANNA JANKOWSKA states:

*“sustainability progress for academic libraries is synonymous with fiscally responsible, environmentally and socially acceptable growth that limits waste and thus enables equal and long-term access to library services and information resources for current and future users”<sup>17</sup>..*

Beyond the obligation libraries have to contribute to university viability, it seems that the viability of libraries themselves is at stake too, or at least, the historical library model based on sustainability and social responsibility. As this author highlights<sup>18</sup>:

*“Academic libraries are ironic places of contradiction: environmental consumption within libraries is skyrocketing, but the very model of a library is built on sustainability. The economic model libraries have established based on the sharing of resources rather than unnecessary duplications was developed as a logical consequence of the increasing costs of scholarly publications and the changing needs of library users.*

*Today the sustainability tradition has been overshadowed as digitization, collection development, and providing adequate technologies have become core library missions. Academic libraries must keep up with user demands and needs, but that does not mean that we should turn our backs on the very concepts that libraries were founded upon. This is not even a matter of maintaining the past; it is an issue of developing and planning for a future that is realistic, achievable, and most importantly—sustainable. The current rate of environmental consumption within academic libraries cannot be maintained and is actively damaging the environment around us. Furthermore, library consumption is becoming economically unsustainable, and through various fees on users, is threatening the core library mission of providing free and open access to information for all users.*

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<sup>17</sup> M.A. JANKOWSKA and J.W. MARCUM, “Sustainability Challenge for Academic Libraries...”, p. 164.

<sup>18</sup> M.A. JANKOWSKA, “A call for sustainable library operations and services: A response to ACRL’s 2007 environmental scan” *C&RL News*, 69, 6 (2008), p. 323-324.

To correct the evolution of this situation and contribute to sustainability in libraries according to what has been said in this report, libraries should:

- First, adjust themselves to what their institutions decide, which includes participation in the general strategies, plans and projects, as well as collaboration in the committees, workgroups, etc created to drive them.
- In a similar way, become promoters of sustainability and social responsibility initiatives.
- In third place, enhance the sustainability philosophy and criteria and integrate them deeper into typical library services and activities: library buildings, collections, library processes and services and user training. To accomplish this, besides acting according to the three R's axioms (reduce, reuse, recycle) libraries have their own resources like acting through consortia, open access, library cooperation or the provision of research support services.
- Fourth, try to integrate the components and initiatives which can be developed by libraries in their genuine field of activity, into the sustainability and social responsibility strategies, plans and projects of their universities.

Nevertheless, the success of sustainability and social responsibility in libraries also requires of a more active role on the part of REBIUN beyond support declarations or calls for sustainable and social responsible behavior to libraries affiliated to the network. For this reason, this report invites REBIUN as an organization with legal personality, to integrate corporate sustainability criteria in its performance.

