

Curtis Memorial Library

Sustainable Libraries Certification Presentation



Background

- Curtis Memorial Library is located in Brunswick, Maine
- We serve two communities (Brunswick and Harpswell) with a combined service population of approx. 25,000
- The Library is 44,000 square feet and is comprised of two connected buildings; the original 1904 Library and an addition built in 1999.



Background



- Maine reveres its ocean and mountain ecosystems. Its pristine nature is a large part of what makes the state so special.
- Curtis Library has reflected that perspective, for many years, providing information, programming, and support for the environment and climate awareness.



Background



- The Library has worked to hire librarians with a passion for environmental stewardship as part of our core values.
- These librarians have created partnerships with multiple other community organizations to raise awareness and spark action around housing, racial equity and understanding, economic equity, food insecurity, and environmental issues.



Brunswick Housing Authority

Serving the Housing Needs of Low Income Persons since 1967



MIDCOAST
INDIGENOUS AWARENESS
GROUP



BRUNSWICK-TOPSHAM
LANDTRUST

Background



- In 2020 when George Floyd was killed and racial inequities become a national discussion, the Curtis Board of Directors committed to supporting social equity as a core initiative, along with three others:
- *Curtis Memorial Library strives to enrich the quality of life in Brunswick and Harpswell by:*
 1. *Building community*
 2. *Advocating for reading*
 3. *Championing social justice and digital equity*
 4. *Promoting sustainability*

Background



- Key steps taken to support this work:
 - Curtis Library stopped charging overdue fines in 2020



Background



- Key steps taken to support this work:
 - The Curtis Library Board of Directors committed to being a sustainable organization and acting as a role model in the community around sustainability. To support this Curtis joined the Sustainable Libraries Initiative certification program.



**Sustainable
Libraries
Initiative**

Background



- Key steps taken to support this work:
 - The Board of Directors started meeting in teams focused around diversity/equity/inclusion/social justice and sustainability to help drive that work at the Board level.



What have we accomplished?



- *Most important:*
- Increased awareness on the part of the Library Board of Directors about the need for sustainable practices in running Curtis Library
- Net, we are doing a more thorough job of using a “sustainability lens” for decision-making at both the day-to-day operations level and the longer term strategic level.



What have we accomplished?



- Examples of using the Sustainability lens:
 - The Board chair and DEI team has taken on the task of going through all of the Library's policies to make sure the language is inclusive and welcoming to all.
 - The Library Director is incorporating funding in the annual budget planning to purchase carbon offsets for commuting and business travel by Library staff.



What have we accomplished?



- Examples of using the Sustainability lens:
 - To acknowledge the reality of living in Maine which is primarily white, we are expanding our definition of diversity from racial to a broader spectrum – race, gender, economics, age, and physical restrictions to ensure that we are building a Board of Directors that reflects as much of the community as possible. “There is no diversity in Maine” is no longer an excuse for not exploring what diversity is in Maine!
 - As a result of the change above, the Board of Directors has developed a new, active process for bringing in a more diverse group of Board Directors.



What have we accomplished?

- *Also important:*
 - We are doing a better job of thinking about all three legs of sustainability as key components of library operations:



What have we accomplished?

- SLI three leg thinking
 - After 25 years of hard use the office furniture used by Library staff needed to be updated. In the past we probably would have taken that office furniture to the landfill. However, we decided to try to recycle as much of it as possible because of our focus on sustainability. Although it took time/energy we were able to recycle about 90% of our older furniture via promoting its availability and by communicating with the many community partners that we have about whether they could use some of the furniture.



What have we accomplished?

- SLI three leg thinking
 - Rather than purchase a new laptop bar, we asked a Library volunteer who is a woodworker to create a hand-made laptop bar, using existing Library materials such as unneeded wood endcaps from the book stacks. He did a beautiful job, the furniture cost about \$100 and is heavily used by our “work-from-home” crowd.



What have we accomplished?



- SLI three leg thinking
 - We continue to recycle many of our weeded books by boxing them up and sending them to Better World Books. The Curtis Friends also run a used bookstore with its entire inventory made up of used books donated by the community so the Library is also providing a book recycling system for the community.



What have we accomplished?



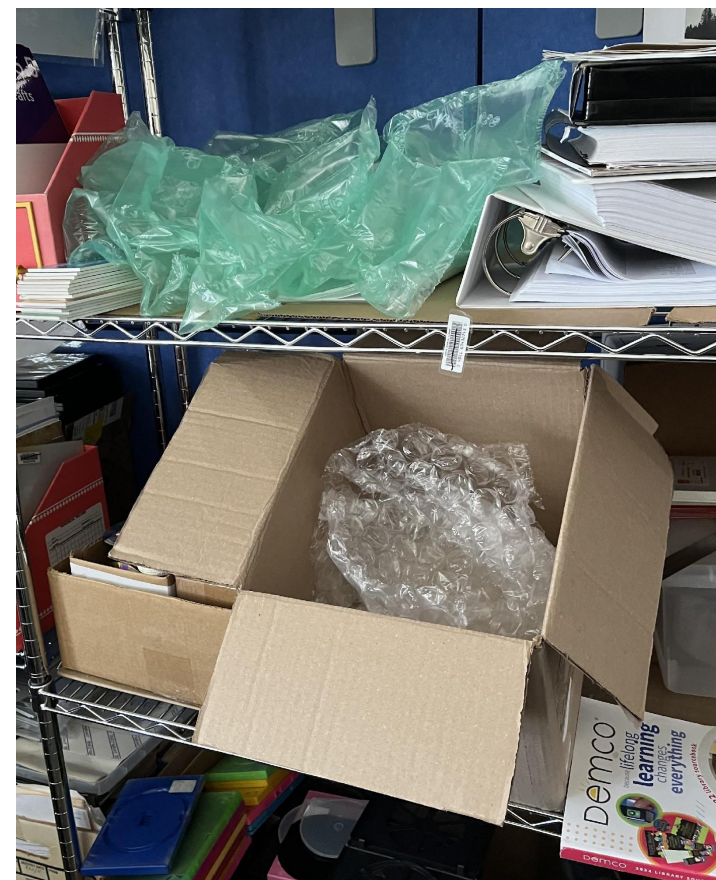
- SLI three leg thinking
 - We became a member of “Garbage to Garden” in Brunswick which picks up food waste from community members every week and composts it.



What have we accomplished?



- SLI three leg thinking
 - We are exploring how we can regularly recycle plastic bubble wrap used by book manufacturers in the shipping of large quantities of books. We are working with one of our community partners – Hannaford Supermarkets – in this process since they already provide recycling for plastic bags in the community.



What have we accomplished?



- SLI three leg thinking
 - Based on community feedback, rather than have a shred-and-then-recycle event once a quarter we have transitioned to providing a locked shredding container in the Library's entry that is shredded and recycled by a commercial firm once a month.

What have we accomplished?



- SLI three leg thinking
 - We started a regular “Repair Café” at the Library to help community members in Brunswick and the community of Bath to “fix instead of throw away” clothing, electronics, and many other items.

How have your policies, building, programming, and collections changed?

- Our programming and collections have had a focus on the “three legs” for the past 5-8 years so that work was and still is progressing nicely.



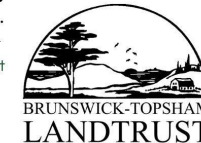
GROWING LITERACY

WINTER GARDEN WORKSHOPS

Sundays
3:00-4:30pm

Bring your curiosity, questions, and join us!
All gardening abilities welcome.

- JAN 22** Let's Diversify! Minimizing Lawn and Maximizing Habitat with Gary Fish - via zoom
- JAN 29** Home-based (backyard) Aerobic Composting with Mark King - via zoom
- FEB 5** Sowing Native Seeds for the Community with Ellen Maling - at Curtis Memorial Library
- MAR 5** Scalable No-Till Gardening: Prioritizing Soil Health for Better Yields with Theda Lyden & Carrie Asselin - at Growing to Give
- MAR 12** Seed Starting and Greenhouse Tour at Whatley Farm with Ben Whatley - at Whatley Farm
- MAR 19** Planting and Growing by the Lunar Calendar: The Biodynamic Approach to Growing Our Food with Barbara Shinn - via zoom



Thanks to our sponsor!



To learn more and register:
www.btl.org/growing-literacy-2023/

How have your policies, building, programming, and collections changed?

- Our building is relatively new (1999) so it is ADA compliant, has Braille signage for directions, and is gender-neutral with respect to bathrooms, establishing a good base for building additional sustainability practices.



How have your policies, building, programming, and collections changed?



- The following are some of the building projects that have been accomplished or are in planning:
 - We are in the process of working with a landscape artist to update the landscaping around the original 1904 Library building. Our plan is to use native plants and hardscaping to minimize need for water but also to enhance the space and encourage the community to use it.

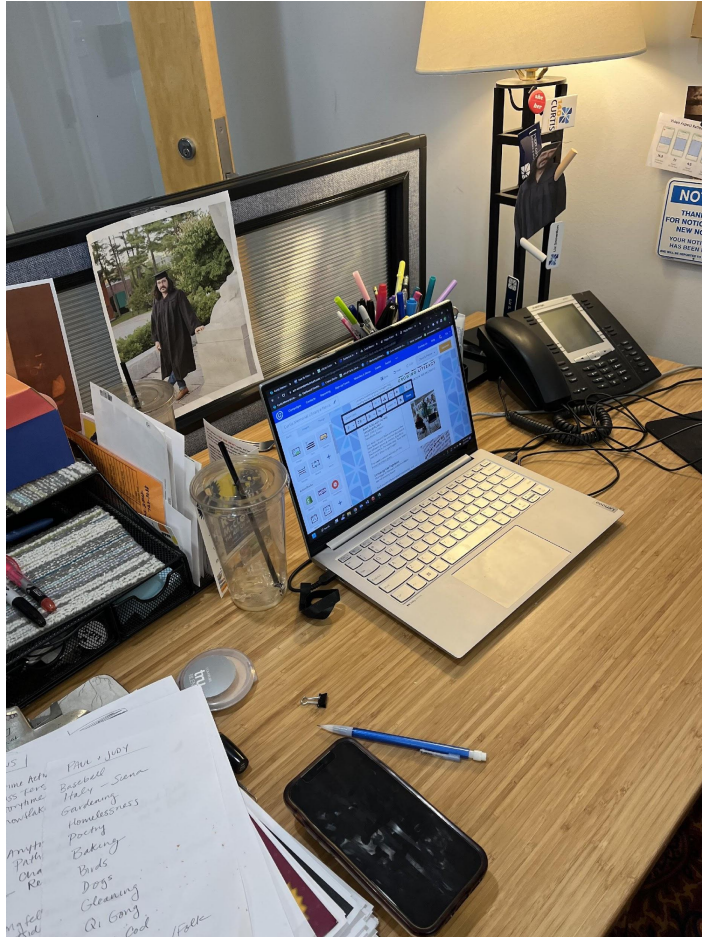


How have your policies, building, programming, and collections changed?



- The entire building was recently carpeted with carpeting made from recycled materials, purchased from a company that has a net-zero carbon footprint.
- When it comes time to replace this carpeting, it can all be recycled versus going into the landfill.

How have your policies, building, programming, and collections changed?



- We have updated staff desktops to laptops which use less electricity.

How have your policies, building, programming, and collections changed?



- We have installed small pocket gardens around the Library that are pollinator gardens or local plant habitats that provide seeds that the community can take.



Building plans for the future

- We are working to update the heating in the original 1904 Building to commercial heat-pumps so that we can eliminate the less-than-efficient HVAC system there.
- We are planning to install EV chargers at the Library for staff, our new EV bookmobile, and the public.
- We are researching how to fund solar panels for the sections of the building roof that can hold panels.
 - The photo at right shows where panels can go on the library's roof.



How has the program benefitted your staff and community?



- The SLI project has also made sustainability more relevant at a personal level to many of the staff.
- Some of the staff who might never have considered buying an EV are now researching the options.
- And, in March 2023 the community will benefit from our new EV bookmobile!

COMING SOON MOBILE MICRO-BRANCH/BOOKMOBILE 2023 FORD E-TRANSIT CARGO VAN



Artist rendering

How has the program benefitted your staff and community?



- The Library benefited from the knowledge base of the librarians. Several individuals on the staff use “Garbage to Garden” and they did the research to find out how the Library could participate in the composting project.



How has the program benefitted your staff and community?



- Because the Library has a high profile in the community, our focus on sustainability has supported an increased focus on the part of the Town of Brunswick on the topic.
- The Town is also actively addressing housing as an issue (there is a moratorium on development in Brunswick as the Town tries to develop a process to encourage affordable housing options be provided by developers).
- The Library can't take credit for this work but by supporting the community interest in sustainability and housing equity, we can take credit for helping "spark" the discussion by the community. In essence, we are "the flutter of the butterfly's wings"!

*It has been said
something as small as the flutter of a butterfly's wing
can ultimately cause a typhoon halfway around the world.*

-Chaos Theory-

How will Curtis Library continue to work towards Triple Bottom Line sustainability in the future?



- The Library Board and staff will continue to support and execute DEI programming at the Library.
 - The Board of Directors has established a formal process for increasing the diversity of the Board. This will mean that the Board will very quickly start to show more diversity in its composition.
 - The Library has taken the first steps toward increasing the diversity of the staff by advertising for new jobs in locations that we know will reach a broader audience than we have done in the past. Our goal is to ensure that the pool of candidates for each job at the Library is diverse and more representative of our community than it has been in the past. A diverse pool of candidates should result in a more diverse staff and that's our long-term goal.

How will Curtis Library continue to work towards Triple Bottom Line sustainability in the future?



- We will continue to build community partnerships that support all aspects of the SLI work but specifically focus on food security, BIPOC support, and housing because these are particular issues in Maine.
- As Library Director I will be working to get more funding to support our SLI work over the long-term. The library building will continue to evolve with the long-term goals of installing heat pumps, solar panels, and possibly a building “battery” that can be used to run the building when electric power goes out.
- Library staff will need more training about all aspects of sustainability, as will the Library Board.
- We would like to do more training and thinking about community resilience and how the Library can better support that moving forward. Post-Covid we ended up supporting community resilience quite well but we haven’t codified any of the learning from that experience. That is another long-term project.
- We will also focus more on “green purchasing” based on the staff identifying this as an opportunity in original SLI survey.

How will Curtis Library continue to work towards Triple Bottom Line sustainability in the future?



- The staff also indicated that when we do give-aways or presents to the staff to make sure we do things that people won't end up throwing away. So, to celebrate the start of the SLI initiative we purchased native tree saplings and gave them to all staff who were willing to grow and nurture the plants - we will continue this type of thinking moving forward.



How will Curtis Library continue to work towards Triple Bottom Line sustainability in the future?



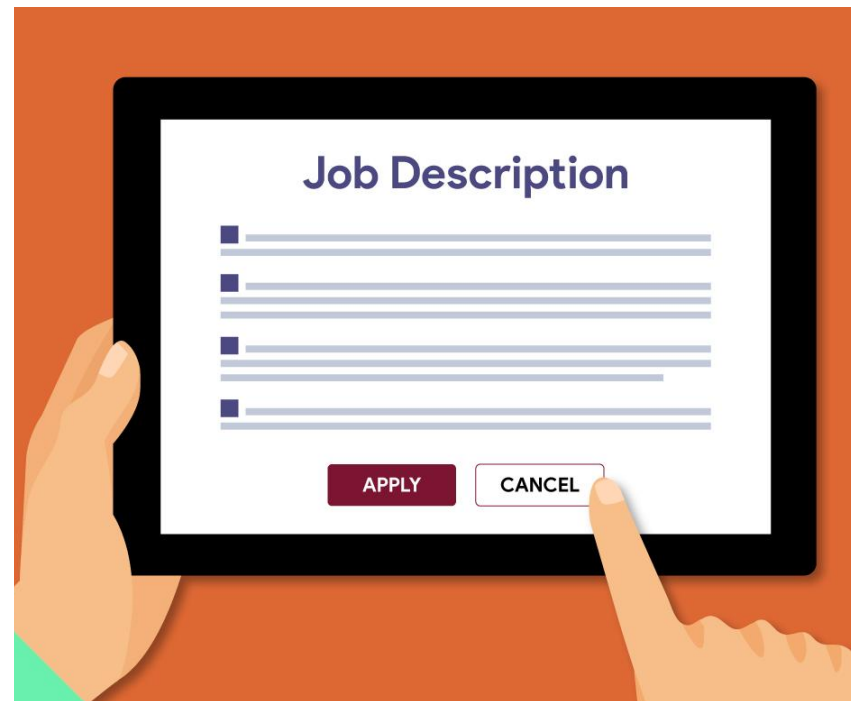
- Information sharing is a challenge in libraries where staff work varying shifts in different departments. Based on employee feedback the senior staff will focus more energy on communicating about how we are working to diversify our pool of candidates for jobs; how the Board is working to diversify; the demographics of our communities of service; and the financial wellness of the Library. Transparency and openness is an ongoing goal!



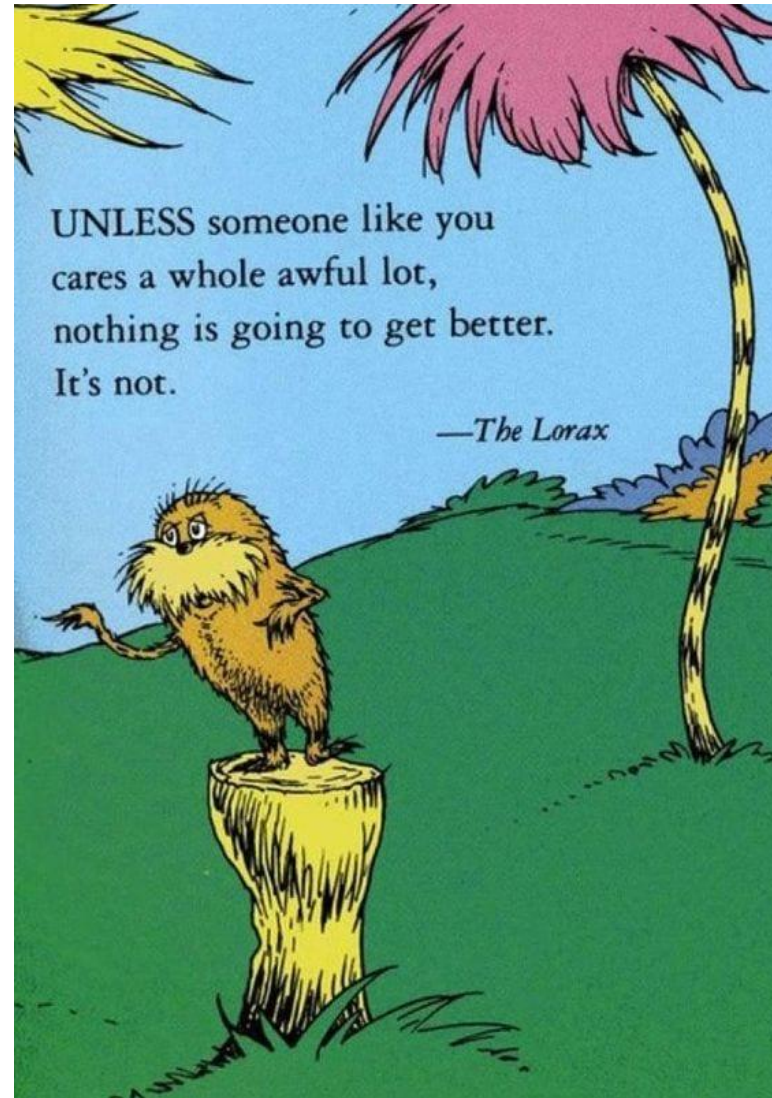
How will Curtis Library continue to work towards Triple Bottom Line sustainability in the future?



- Our Board and staff are working to update job descriptions to include inclusive language and a sustainability focus.



Our guiding light moving forward...



UNLESS someone like you
cares a whole awful lot,
nothing is going to get better.
It's not.

—*The Lorax*