This Rose is Green: Embracing Environmental Sustainability in the Rose Library
Report and Recommendations

Meaghan O'Riordan
Laura Starratt
Anita Vannucci
Dorothy Waugh

This report is the outcome of work conducted by the Rose Library Environmental Sustainability Task Force from April – September, 2019.

Task Force members:
- Debra Madera (Pitts Theology Library)
- Julie Newton (Robert W. Woodruff Library, Preservation Office)
- Meaghan O'Riordan
- Sarah Quigley
- Laura Starratt
- Anita Vannucci
- Dorothy Waugh

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: THE TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE

Effective stewardship of rare books and archival materials requires that archivists and librarians make decisions that are rooted in sustainability. In all aspects of our work to balance the use and preservation of the materials in our care, we find evidence of the classic definition of sustainability: "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future." It is therefore unsurprising, given growing concern about the catastrophic impact of human activity on our climate and environment, that archivists are rallying around calls to evaluate the environmental sustainability of our work. The changing conditions related to the Anthropocene are in direct conflict with our ability to act as stewards of the collections in our care.

This growing interest in environmental sustainability is reflected in our professional literature, our conferences, and our organizations. In her 2012 article, "The Green Archivist," Heidi Abbey calls attention to the inclusion of a statement on social responsibility in the Society of American Archivist's Code of Ethics, which serves as "a reminder that archivists place a high value upon cultural heritage because it documents our collective memory, and that 'underlying all of the professional activities of archivists is their responsibility to a variety of groups in society and to the public good'" (93). A proactive engagement with issues related to environmental sustainability is in direct service to the public good.

This link between social responsibility and environmental sustainability draws on what Katy Lithgow, Head of Conservation at the UK's National Trust, has called "the triple bottom line" (1). This model emphasizes three integrated aspects of sustainability: (1) Social; (2) Environmental; and (3) Economic. The recommendations laid out in this document consider all three aspects of sustainability.

Social Sustainability

Social sustainability acknowledges that cultural heritage organizations are uniquely positioned to serve as leaders in developing environmental literacy among our user communities because, as Meyer argues, the mission of cultural heritage organizations elicits trust and creates influence (14). Emory has already set a series of ambitious goals related to sustainability, and the Rose Library should play an influential role in both helping the university reach these targets and in demonstrating their value to our diverse user communities. In fact, we would argue that the Rose Library's collections and the communities that they represent *demand* our engagement with this work.

The Rose Library actively collects materials related to human and civil rights. Our collections speak to the civil rights movement of the mid-20th century, suffrage and women's rights, the rights of LGBTQ communities, and equitable access to healthcare, education, and other core services. Implicit in the Rose Library's mission to continue building collections in these areas is our promise to the communities represented in them that we value their history and can be trusted as their stewards. Indeed, the Rose Library's 2019 strategic priorities state that we aspire to strengthen our identity as a community-focused library that is trusted to ethically and responsibly collect and steward resources of value to those we serve.

Our 2019 priorities also state that we will advance an explicitly justice-centered professional practice. The Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports that "people who are socially, economically, culturally, politically, institutionally or otherwise marginalized are especially vulnerable to climate change." Flavia Pansieri, the United Nations Deputy

High Commissioner for Human Rights, observes that "those who have contributed the least to greenhouse gas emissions will be the ones who bear the greatest burden; the poorest people, in the poorest countries, their children, and all of our children." The impact of human activity on our climate and our environment is a human rights issue, and the Rose Library cannot aspire to justice-centered professional practice without addressing the environmental impact of our work. If we are to fulfill the goals articulated in our 2019 strategic priorities in ways that are meaningful—both to us and to the communities that we serve—then a considered approach to environmental sustainability should play a role in all decision-making at the Rose Library.

Environmental Sustainability
Archivists and librarians are increasingly aware of the environmental footprint caused by cultural heritage organizations and are voicing their concerns at conferences and in the professional literature. Growing professional discourse supports Heidi Abbey's assertion that an ongoing and considered response to our environmental impact is necessary if we are to meet our professional obligations as a trusted and ethical resource to the public good.

Concern as to the environmental sustainability of libraries and archives focuses on three main areas: (1) the environmental cost of storing our collections; (2) the environmental cost of housing and supporting our staff and patrons; and (3) the environmental cost of storing our data (some but not all of which may be collection data).

Much of the literature written about the environmental impact of cultural heritage organizations has focused on increased energy efficiency. Archivists and preservation specialists are encouraged to reconsider the parameters for climate-controlled storage of materials in order to reduce energy consumption or to advocate for clean, renewable energy sources (Abbey, Meyer, Linden). While such changes are undoubtedly positive, others have argued that they are of limited value when implemented in isolation (Goldman, Tansey, Pendergrass et al). In particular, Mark Wolfe draws on Jevon's Paradox to argue that increased efficiencies rarely result in decreased consumption of resources. On the contrary, Wolfe maintains that institutions regularly view the resources saved through more efficient practices as available for new uses. For example, savings in energy usage, and costs are seen as an opportunity to acquire additional collections. Wolfe argues that libraries and archives have been conditioned to understand success in terms of growth, and warns that the environmental sustainability of our repositories depends on a behavioral shift away from this mindset and towards one that makes intentional choices about how, where and what we collect. This new mindset must be grounded in a firm understanding of the responsibilities that we bear to our collections and our communities.

Economic Sustainability
In order for any institution to meet its obligations to its users and donors, it must be economically sustainable. Whatever changes are made in order to achieve greater environmental or social sustainability must be balanced so as to be financially viable. The cost benefits associated with many environmental practices have long been lauded as a motivator for going green. Reduced energy usage, for example, comes with significant cost savings in addition to environmental benefits. Similarly, recommendations encouraging reuse reduce demand for costly supplies.

By the same token, any steps taken to increase the environmental sustainability of an institution must also be economically sustainable. For example, the administration of Emory's waste management program is incredibly expensive—in particular, it costs a great deal to support the recycling

component. In line with Mark Wolfe's argument based on Jevon's Paradox, there is a real risk that by thinking of recycling as a zero-waste strategy, Emory will increase consumption of recyclable materials rather than encouraging reduced—and sustainable—consumption and reuse.

SUSTAINABILITY AT EMORY, 2019

Current Initiatives and Goals
Emory University has set a series of ambitious goals intended to create a culture of sustainability, many of which directly impact the Rose Library's daily operations. Most notably perhaps, Emory's commitment to the diversion of 95% of non-construction waste from municipal waste landfills by 2025 has raised awareness among Rose Library staff regarding the types of waste that our organization generates and what happens to it after disposal. The appropriate bins are provided throughout the Rose Library, allowing staff to sort waste for composting or recycling, and making it relatively easy to support a zero-waste culture for staff and visitors.

In particular, Emory's zero waste policy focuses on events and functions, where food, drink, and related items are often brought in from external sources. Emory's target for 2020 is to reduce all municipal landfill waste generated during university events to zero. By 2025, all university functions will be plastic bottle free. The Rose Library is already making strides towards achieving these goals. To date, Rose Library events have typically offered buffet-style catering, which reduces waste associated with individually packaged meals and snacks. Hydration stations are conveniently located for both staff and visitors, reducing the necessity for bottled water. Rose Library staff are already accustomed to refilling reusable water bottles, and the staff breakroom is stocked with silverware and equipped with hot water and soap so that kitchenware can be cleaned and reused.

Reduction in energy consumption is another key area of focus for Emory and targets are in place to reduce energy usage by 50% from 2005 levels over the next six years. In many ways, energy consumption is outside the control of Rose Library staff. With that said, knowing that this is a priority for the university puts the Rose Library in a strong position to advocate for improved energy-saving facilities. Renovations to the Rose Library's public spaces have equipped level ten with motion-sensor lighting using energy efficient light sources. It is unclear to what extent renovations associated with Emory libraries' master planning might result in improved energy efficiencies, but a new and more efficient HVAC system is slated to be installed as part of that work. If this work is completed, it will likely result in a significant reduction in energy consumption at the Rose Library.

Ongoing Concerns
Emory's ambitious goals certainly move the university in the right direction if we are to become a more sustainable organization. However, there remain some areas for improvement not effectively addressed by current Office of Sustainability policy.

Perhaps most significantly, the energy goals put in place at Emory are undermined by the university's decision to contract with Amazon Web Services (AWS) for much of our data storage. A 2015 report prepared by Greenpeace rated AWS poorly due to its lack of transparency and commitment around sustainability and its reliance on coal-powered data centers. This reliance on vendor services for substantial data storage allows Emory to outsource its energy consumption, a scenario that Linda Tadic has noted is not uncommon among universities who might otherwise promote ambitious goals internally. Further research into how this move to AWS might result in data that misrepresents Emory's energy consumption. We may appear to reach our 2025 target for reduced energy usage, but that progress will mean little if we achieve it only by outsourcing our consumption.

There is also a risk that Emory's zero waste policy portrays the recycling of single-use products as a viable long-term alternative to the overall reduction in use of single-use products. The production of plastics in particular is a resource intensive process, and recycling—while preferable to immediate disposal in a landfill—is an imperfect and unsustainable solution. Unlike glass and metal, which can be recycled repeatedly with no loss in quality, the quality of plastics is diminished each time it is recycled until it reaches the point that it is no longer recyclable. Moreover, virgin plastic is often added during the recycling process in order to counter the loss in quality. This means that, conversely, the recycling of plastics regularly ends up generating more new plastic. While the waste policy implemented by Emory in 2018 has had and will continue to have a huge positive effect on landfill diversion, long-term impact can only be achieved with a commitment to reduce consumption and our dependence on recycling as well.

Contamination also poses a problem for Emory's multi-stream waste management program, which depends on its users correctly sorting waste into the appropriate bins. It is evident that there is still confusion across campus regarding how waste should be sorted and training isn't currently part of standard practice for staff. While the management of Emory's program does allow some room for error (although it should be noted that this comes with a financial cost), certain recycling streams are more vulnerable to irreversible contamination than others. Staff investment and education are crucial if the new policy is to be effective and, crucially, sustainable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Create a culture of sustainability

1. **Make sustainability a factor in decision making:** Recent studies have shown that while librarians and archivists believe that policies and programs supporting sustainability are important, few institutions actually discuss sustainability-related issues with any regularity (Calle). We recommend that sustainability be consistently considered and discussed as a meaningful factor in all decision-making at the Rose Library, in the same way that budget, staffing, and other Rose Library priorities are considered. In particular, we recommend that questions around sustainability be incorporated into operational impact statements and acquisition decisions, criteria for digitization, Rose Library policy development and revision, and exhibits and events planning.
2. **Establish an ongoing sustainability working group:** We recommend that the Rose Library form an ongoing sustainability working group to champion these efforts, support the education of staff on sustainability-related issues, and help implement the recommendations laid out in this report. We recommend that this group take steps to charter a library-wide sustainability committee in order to further develop cross-departmental goals and a culture of sustainability beyond the Rose Library.
3. **Partner with the exhibits team:** Sustainability as it relates to exhibits is another area that warrants further discussion. The Rose Library hosts and curates multiple exhibits each year, all of which require the creation of panels, stands, and other props. These items are often created using materials chosen for their durability, cost, and suitability from a preservation perspective. However, the very characteristics that make materials desirable for preservation are often the same characteristics that pose threats to our environment. Ongoing conversations with the exhibits team regarding opportunities for more sustainable exhibits could result in innovative choices that not only allow us to reduce the environmental impact of exhibits, but also educate visitors and advocate for sustainability within the broader Emory community. Due to the exhibits team's busy schedule at this time of year, we have been unable to discuss these issues with them at the time of writing but see opportunity for collaboration in the future.

Develop green habits

1. **Apply sustainable practice to the day-to-day operations of the Rose Library:**
   a. **Choose sustainable options when purchasing supplies:** By using the sustainable purchasing option in Emory Express, staff are able to find the most environmentally sustainable products. In particular, we recommend exclusively purchasing tree-free office paper, remanufactured ink and toner cartridges, and recycled cardboard shipping containers.
   b. **Stock the breakroom with reusable dishes, cups, and utensils, and dish soap.**
   c. **Stock the breakroom with compostable dishes, cups, and utensils.**
   d. **Prioritize caterers that comply with Emory's zero waste policy for Rose Library events, meetings, and lunches:** Wherever possible, choose buffet-style catering over individually boxed meals. Ask upfront that the caterer provide no disposable utensils, plates, or straws, etc. Do not use caterers that use Styrofoam packaging.

e. **Ensure that all staff and student employees understand the zero-waste policy and include annual training as part of onboarding and beyond:** Zero waste ambassadors and Office of Sustainability staff are available to provide training sessions and answer questions about the kinds of specialist materials the Rose Library needs to discard. This should be provided at event(s) where all staff can attend.

f. **Commit to no longer purchasing bottled water:** It is estimated that Americans throw away more than 60 million plastic bottles every day, the manufacture of which requires 15 million barrels of oil annually and 1.63 liters of water for every liter bottle. The production of plastics, even recyclable plastics, is unsustainable. We recommend that the Rose Library stop purchasing bottled water for any purpose. This recommendation is in line with Emory's goal that all university functions be plastic bottle free by 2025. Given that this target is university-wide, we can expect buy-in from university employees. Language can be included in meeting invites where necessary to explain the Rose Library's commitment to sustainability and encourage attendees to bring reusable bottles. Hydration stations on levels 9 and 10 allow for staff and visitors to refill reusable water bottles. Carafes and glasses can be purchased and used for guests when necessary. Additionally, Rose Library branded reusable water bottles could be made available to special guests as needed.

g. **Wherever possible, take the stairs to move between levels 9, 10, and 11:** The average elevator uses roughly 350 watts of electricity to move between a single floor. Taking the stairs reduces energy consumption and, often, saves staff time. Access to the staircase located on the east side of the building is currently a barrier to their use for staff whose desks are located on the other side of level 9. As a result, we recommend that the staircase located behind the main elevator bank be opened to staff use and that staff be encouraged to use the stairs instead of the elevators whenever possible.

h. **Turn off all lights in unoccupied rooms and at the end of the day:** Lighting accounts for an estimated 26% of the energy used to power a building. Unlike level 10, there are few motion-sensor lights on the ninth floor and no energy efficient light fittings. Conversations with facilities suggest that retrofitting low energy lighting would be a costly project. Nonetheless, we would recommend that Rose Library leadership advocate for such a change if opportunities arise as part of the master planning work. In the meantime, staff should be encouraged to ensure that all lights are turned off when leaving a room unoccupied or at the end of the day.

i. **Partner with vendors to reduce packaging waste and increase use of sustainable packaging:** At this year's RBMS, Meaghan O'Riordan formed a small working group with archivists from a number of other institutions to draft recommendations for vendors and dealers on how to more sustainably package materials.

j. **Reuse materials whenever possible:** Save scrap paper for staff and student use. Save shipping boxes in good condition for re-use, whether within the Rose Library or through co-ordination with other groups across campus.

k. See *Developing Green Habits: Detailed Recommendations* for additional information.

Build resiliency

Writing about archival adaptation to climate change, Eira Tansey notes that in addition to becoming more sustainable, libraries and archives must also work on developing their resiliency if we are to maintain our collections and services in the face of a warming planet. In light of this, we recommend

that the Rose Library form a task force to assess the risk and possible effects of man-made or natural disaster, including climate change, and help lead the development of a continuity of operations plan (COOP). See appendix a.

APPENDIX A: CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS INITIATIVE PROPOSAL

What would we like the Rose Library to commit to?

In consideration of the substantial environmental, technological and man-made disaster situations to which the Rose Library is vulnerable, we advise leadership to assess the present likelihood that Rose could conduct its essential missions and functions following an emergency and address any identified gaps. While the severity and consequences of an emergency cannot be predicted, effective contingency planning can minimize the impact on Rose's mission, personnel, and facilities.

What is our justification for this?

Rose Library must consider the threat to its essential records – the working records of the organization as opposed to collection material - and document the actions needed to respond to and recover from an emergency and allow for the continuation of the Rose Library's work. Essential records are the mission-critical records necessary for responding to an emergency or disaster, necessary to resume or continue operations, or that would require an enormous amount of resources to reconstruct. The essential functions of our organization determine what records are essential. Threats from acts of nature, including hurricanes, tornados, and flooding, technological emergencies, such as cyber-attack, and physical emergencies, such as burst pipes, and civil emergencies, such as active shooter situations or arson, have increased the need for viable continuity of operations capabilities and plans that enable Rose Library to continue its essential functions across a spectrum of emergencies.

How do we propose implementing these changes?

1. We recommend that Rose Library form a task force in order to:
   - Complete a risk assessment to identify risks to business records.
   - Complete a risk analysis to determine (1) the probability that risks to records will occur, and (2) the likely impact such an occurrence will have on records.
   - Determine the threshold for action and identify which probability and impact combinations require action to protect the records and reduce the risks.
   - Prioritize actions and set these priorities for planning and protection efforts, taking into consideration the cost to reconstruct records and the reputational damage caused by the destruction of them. Recommendations may need to be incorporated into Emory Libraries Master Plan.
   - Develop an approved, implemented, and periodically tested records emergency action plan (REAP) that includes the information and actions needed to respond to and recover from an emergency. The plan should address probable and existing vulnerabilities identified in the risk analysis and give detailed guidance on the response to an emergency that affects records.
   - Research potential disaster response vendors (see Recommendation #2)

   Membership in the task force should include representation from:
   - All departments of Rose Library
   - LITS: Facilities
   - LITS: Operations & Access Services

- LITS: Preservation

The task force should consult stakeholders from:

- Campus Services Public Safety
- Campus Services Information Technology
- Library Service Center
- Library Technology and Digital Strategy
- Office of Risk and Insurance Services

2. Rose Library, in connection with or apart from Emory Libraries, should establish a standing contract with a disaster response vendor to ensure priority response in the event of a city or region-wide disaster. In an emergency, vendors will prioritize those with whom they have a contract, which places Rose at an advantage in a scenario of region-wide impact if we have an established standing contract.

3. Rose Library, in connection with or apart from Emory Libraries, should develop a continuity of operations plan (COOP) to address all aspects of protecting employees and resuming critical operations in the event of an emergency impacting the Robert W. Woodruff Library. The work performed by the task force will inform next steps in developing the COOP.

   Without a comprehensive COOP, Rose Library is currently unable to re-open and resume operations within an established timeline following an emergency, regardless of how well collection material has been protected. A COOP should address the functions, operations, and resources necessary to ensure the continuation of Rose Library's essential functions in the event its normal operations are disrupted or threatened with disruption so that operation can continue throughout, or resume rapidly after, an event. If the Rose Library cannot re-open and resume operations in a timely manner, we are not fulfilling our obligation to provide access to important and valuable collections, even if we have fulfilled our obligation to preserve that history.

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Centering Environmental Sustainability at the Rose Library: an addendum to the This Rose is Green

In 2019, Dorothy Waugh organized this committee through the creation *This Rose is Green: Embracing Environmental Sustainability in the Rose Library*. That report set forth Rose Library's responsibility to environmental sustainability based on our own strategic goals and set forth a plan to:
- Create a culture of sustainability,
- Develop green habits, and
- Build resiliency.

In *This Rose is Green*, Waugh also acknowledged "the triple bottom line," a combination of social, environmental, and economic factors that are the link between social responsibility and environmental sustainability.

Per the initial instance of *This Rose is Green*:
- Rose Library is uniquely positioned to develop environmental literacy among our user communities and has already identified justice-centered professional practice as a priority of our work especially as environmental justice continues to be the most affecting issue of our time. The Rose Library cannot aspire to justice-centered professional practice without addressing the environmental impact of our work.
- Professional discourse supports the assertion that ongoing and considered response to our environmental impact is necessary to meet our professional obligations as a trusted and ethical resource to the public good. While this response focuses on storing our physical and digital collections, Rose Library must not fall into the trap of creating more efficient models just increase collection and negate the effect of those sustainable choices. We must be wary of viewing success in terms of growth. This new mindset must be grounded in a firm understanding of the responsibilities that we bear to our collections and our communities.
- Rose Library should understand that to create a viable environmental sustainability plan, it must be economically sustainable. The cost benefits associated with many environmental practices have long been lauded as a motivator for going green, but there is an initial buy-in that must be overcome. After three years of moving environmental sustainability forward at that Rose Library, it is time review the Rose Library Environmental Sustainability Committee's (RLESC) direction to encourage continued momentum.

Current Initiatives and Goals

Since 2019, the RLESC has looked for ways to increase Rose Library's environmental sustainability. Because there was little involvement between the committee and Rose Library Leadership (RLL), smaller, more individual-focused projects were undertaken. This is not to discount the work and the impact of the projects complete, but RLESC broke with the initial recommendations of *This Rose is Green*. Over the past two years, RLESC has worked on individual or socially focused projects, centering the education and training on staff members. However, to make an impactful change, the RLESC must look to operational projects and decision-making centered on the Rose Library. The goal should not be for the RLESC to start and work on projects; it should be to ensure that, at every step in every workflow, Rose Library staff are asking whether this is the most environmentally

sustainable option. The updated projects slated for 2020-2021 show a renewed attention to changes at the organizational level that will make increased impact to Rose Library's carbon footprint.

Completed projects include:
- Working with CCR to ensure that all events held in Rose Library are certified zero-waste (CCR already has a system for zero-waste events)
- Creating relationships with OSI and Sustainability representatives within the Emory University Libraries
- Completion of the card reader access to the stairs behind the elevators between the ninth and tenth floors
- Green Office certification at the Silver level.
- Eliminating staff lunches to reduce unseen environmental impact Read/Act Program implementation for education on personal sustainable options
- Off-site/zoom capable meetings included in onboarding documentation
- Report on Rose Library's work from home survey

In-process projects include:
- Complete Sustainable Purchasing policy
- Plan for the Resilient Communities grant programming, and if the program is not funding, to create programming that would mimic this project
- Revamp the Read/Act program to be more participatory and aimed at changes for the organization
- Create Rose Library Climate Action Plan
- Identify options for reducing digital footprint and limiting digital storage carbon footprint
- Compiling a sustainability curriculum for Rose Library Leadership

Identified projects for 2021:
- Adding zero waste requirement language to documents for using Rose Library spaces
- Adding sustainability language to the collection development documentation (onepager)/operational impact statement
- "Energy tree," to ensure that all electronics on the ninth and tenth floors are shut down and unplugged every evening.
- Continue identifying telework opportunities for Rose Library staff
- Work with Outreach Archivist and Campus and Community Relations (CCR) to identify a social media strategy to highlight Rose Library work
- Review all workflows to identify sustainable options

In turn, the RLESC is looking to create an overall proposal for Rose Library to meet the goals established by Emory University, and for this to happen, RLESC requires a commitment from RLL to move forward. The following points are outside the abilities of any member of or the whole of the RLESC and require leadership participation.

Identify a change metric:
The triple bottom line includes social, environmental, and economic aspects. The Rose Library staff have already shown a dedication to environmental sustainability, so the key component missing in

this metric is economic. Studies show that sustainable options are becoming more cost effective than obsolete or fossil fuel components, but there is always an upfront cost to making a change. RLL will need to agree to the $% change whatever that might be.

- Ensure that no single use plastic is purchased by Rose Library even if this means we are responsible for washing dishes.
- Identify more sustainable digital storage options since AWS is not transparent and the current server sites we use are coal powered.
- Identifying recycled and reused options for all supplies, relying primarily on reused materials.
- Where can we increase the allowable operational costs to consider more sustainable options?
  - Should this number be identified as a $%?
  - Should RLESC be given a budget and would that be a percentage of the RL budget?

Creating an assessment for success

Over the past year, any forward movement was success, but the committee needs to identify how Rose Library can be a leader in environmental sustainability. RLESC should identify current levels of waste and energy consumption with help from OSI. This is likely to require Emory University Library buy-in since the Rose Library shares only three floors in the Woodruff Library[1]. Currently, there is no statistic in which to gauge success or failure.

Current goals of Emory University[2] include[2]:

- Diversion of 95% of non-construction waste from municipal waste landfills by 2025.
- Reduction of all municipal landfill waste generated during university events to zero by 2020.
- Stop the use of plastic bottles by 2025
- Reduction of energy usage by 50% from 2005 numbers.

A Rose Library Climate Action Plan is one of the goals for the upcoming year, and that document should direct the rest of the goals for the year, if not for a span of years. This document should be aspirational, and we should identify plans to meet these goals as best we can. RLL should be involved in the creation (or, at least, the approval of the plan).

Every goal set by the Committee should move the Rose Library in line with the Emory University's strategic goals. This is currently difficult to gauge as most of the goals deal in change numbers, and as explained earlier, Rose Library does not have current statistics. However, once these numbers are identified, the Rose Library strategic plan must include this objective. In cases where there is not a change metric, Rose Library should plan to meet the university's goal.

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[1] Current chair, Laura Starratt, is working to create a EUL Environmental Sustainability Committee. This will allow RLESC to work with the library-wide group to identify these numbers.

[2] Taken from the Emory Sustainability Vision and Strategic Plan