Research Journal in Advanced Humanities

RJAH

https://doi.org/10.58256/0qqg4k27

Open Access

Check for updates

REVIEW ARTICLE

Section: *Literature, Linguistics & Crtiticism*

Green libraries as sustainability discourse communities a discourse analysis of environmental communication and ecological citizenship

Lama Mahmoud Saleh Hababi[1], Khaled Ahmed Abdel-Al Ibrahim[1], Nisar Ahmad Koka[2] & Ayman Ahmed Youssef Ibrahim[3]

[1]Department of Psychology, College of Education, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

[2]Department of English, College of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University Abha, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

[3]Applied College, Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

*Correspondence: l.hababi@psau.edu.sa

ABSTRACT

Green libraries are usually described through physical indicators such as sustainable buildings, efficient energy use, paper reduction, ecological collections, and environmentally responsible services. This article rewrites that account from a discourse-analysis perspective. It argues that a green library is not only a sustainable facility or a provider of climate-related information; it is also a sustainability discourse community that produces, circulates, legitimizes, and evaluates environmental meaning. The article examines how library language, institutional genres, public signs, digital interfaces, exhibitions, workshops, catalogues, social media messages, and user-service encounters transform environmental sustainability into a shared social practice. Drawing on discourse analysis, pragmatics, ecolinguistics, environmental communication, library sustainability research, and language-oriented sustainability studies, the article develops the Green Library Sustainability Discourse Model. The model identifies eight interrelated dimensions: ecological naming and framing, institutional commitment discourse, directive and instructional discourse, dialogic participation, multimodal spatial communication, multilingual and access-oriented discourse, ecological memory narratives, and accountability discourse. The article also integrates four studies by Sayed M. Ismail and collaborators to strengthen the linguistic and sustainability foundation of the argument: ecological consciousness in literature, eco-translation and environmental governance, Arabic linguistic foresight for sustainable development, and AI-driven heritage tourism. The study concludes that green-library sustainability depends not only on operational practice but also on the quality of the discourse through which libraries make environmental responsibility intelligible, credible, inclusive, and actionable. A discourse-analysis approach helps libraries avoid vague green branding, design clearer public communication, support ecological citizenship, and connect sustainability claims with evidence, participation, and continuous improvement.

KEYWORDS: green libraries, discourse analysis, environmental sustainability, ecological citizenship, ecolinguistics, sustainability communication, green information literacy, library discourse

Research Journal in Advanced Humanities

Volume 7, Issue 2, 2026

ISSN: 2708-5945 (Print)

ISSN: 2708-5953 (Online)

ARTICLE HISTORY

Submitted: 25 **April 2026**

Accepted: 05 **May 2026**

Published: 19 **May 2026**

HOW TO CITE

Hababi, L. M. S., Ibrahim, K. A. A.-A., Koka, N. A., & Ibrahim, A. A. Y. (2026). Green libraries as sustainability discourse communities a discourse analysis of environmental communication and ecological citizenship. *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities*, 7(2). https://doi.org/10.58256/0qqg4k27

Published in Nairobi, Kenya by Royallite Global, an imprint of Royallite Publishers Limited

1. Introduction

Environmental sustainability has become an urgent concern for universities, public institutions, cultural organizations, and knowledge infrastructures. Libraries occupy a distinctive position within this landscape because they are not only repositories of books and digital resources; they are also public communicative spaces in which knowledge is selected, named, classified, displayed, explained, questioned, and shared. The contemporary idea of the green library has therefore expanded beyond the narrow image of an energy-efficient building. A green library may include sustainable architectural design, reduced paper consumption, responsible procurement, climate-related collections, green information literacy, digital sustainability, community programming, and participation in the Sustainable Development Goals. Yet these practices acquire public meaning only through discourse. Users do not encounter sustainability as an abstract administrative intention. They encounter it through a sign near a recycling station, a message on a website, a workshop invitation, a policy statement, a catalogue subject heading, a library guide, a staff explanation, an exhibition narrative, or a social-media post.

For this reason, the present article approaches green libraries as sustainability discourse communities. A discourse community is not merely a group that shares vocabulary; it is an institution or social group that uses recognizable genres, communicative routines, values, and forms of evidence to pursue shared purposes. In the case of green libraries, the shared purpose is environmental responsibility mediated through knowledge services. The library communicates what sustainability means, why it matters, who is responsible for it, what actions are expected, how climate knowledge can be trusted, and how local communities can participate. Green-library discourse is therefore not decorative. It is constitutive. It helps build the conditions under which environmental sustainability becomes visible, understandable, credible, and practically usable.

The central problem addressed in this article is that much green-library scholarship has treated communication as a secondary layer attached to operational practice. Buildings, collections, digital services, and environmental programs have received substantial attention, while the language through which these practices are framed has received less systematic analysis. This gap matters because sustainability language can either clarify or obscure institutional responsibility. A phrase such as 'the library is committed to sustainability' may function as a meaningful institutional commitment if it is supported by measurable targets, transparent reporting, and user participation. The same phrase can also become a vague branding device if it is not connected to action. Similarly, a recycling sign may be clear, polite, and inclusive, or it may be confusing, inaccessible, or ineffective. A climate-literacy workshop may invite dialogue, or it may reproduce one-way expert discourse that leaves users passive. These differences are discourse-analytic and pragmatic differences.

This article therefore rewrites the role of green libraries from the perspective of discourse analysis. The title deliberately foregrounds discourse communities, environmental communication, and ecological citizenship because the article is concerned with how language organizes environmental responsibility inside library settings. Discourse analysis examines patterns of language in social use, including written, spoken, digital, visual, and institutional communication. Pragmatics examines how language performs actions in context: requesting, promising, warning, guiding, inviting, legitimizing, apologizing, including, excluding, or holding institutions accountable. Ecolinguistics adds the question of how language sustains, challenges, or normalizes particular relationships between humans, non-human life, place, technology, and the future. When these perspectives are brought together, the green library emerges as a linguistic and social formation rather than only a technical sustainability project.

The article makes three contributions. First, it conceptualizes green libraries as discourse communities whose environmental role depends on communicative practices as well as operational policies. Second, it develops a discourse-analytic model that can be used to examine sustainability policies, signage, webpages, exhibitions, catalogues, reference interactions, workshops, and digital platforms. Third, it shows how a discourse approach can strengthen institutional accountability by linking green claims to evidence, participation, access, and measurable improvement. The study is theoretical and integrative rather than empirical; it builds a framework for future research and for practical communication design in libraries. Its aim is not to replace architectural, managerial, or information-science accounts of green libraries, but to deepen them by asking how sustainability is made speakable and actionable through language.

Three research questions guide the article. First, how can green libraries be redefined through discourse analysis as sustainability discourse communities? Second, what communicative resources do green libraries

use to construct environmental responsibility, user participation, and institutional credibility? Third, how can a discourse-analysis model support more precise, inclusive, and accountable sustainability communication in library contexts? These questions allow the discussion to move beyond general claims about green libraries and toward a structured account of how words, genres, signs, narratives, and interactional practices support ecological citizenship.

2. Literature Review

Green-library research has developed across several overlapping areas. One strand focuses on sustainable buildings and interior design, including energy efficiency, lighting, ventilation, material choice, water conservation, and user comfort (Afacan, 2017). Another strand examines green librarianship as a professional orientation that includes sustainable collections, environmental programming, staff training, resource sharing, and institutional responsibility (Antonelli, 2008; Aulisio, 2013; Fedorowicz-Kruszewska, 2021). More recent studies have emphasized barriers to green-library development, including limited funding, weak policy support, low awareness, insufficient environmental literacy, and the absence of reliable sustainability metrics (Fedorowicz-Kruszewska, 2022, 2023). A further strand concerns digital sustainability. Digital libraries may reduce some material costs, but they also depend on servers, platforms, devices, energy use, metadata governance, and unequal access (Chowdhury, 2012, 2016). These studies show that green libraries are complex institutional systems rather than single environmental interventions.

Discourse analysis adds a different question: how are these institutional systems represented, justified, and made meaningful? Environmental communication research has shown that public understanding of ecological issues is shaped by frames, metaphors, narratives, values, and institutional voices (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004; Carvalho, 2007; Corner et al., 2014; Lakoff, 2010). A library does not simply transmit environmental information; it frames that information. It may frame climate change as a scientific topic, a local risk, a moral responsibility, a community project, a digital-literacy issue, a heritage question, or a youth-education concern. Each frame creates different expectations for action. If sustainability is framed as institutional compliance, users may see themselves as spectators. If it is framed as shared ecological citizenship, users may see themselves as participants. If it is framed as technology alone, social justice and access may disappear. Discourse analysis therefore helps evaluate not only what libraries say about sustainability, but how their language organizes agency and responsibility.

Pragmatics is equally important because green-library communication performs actions. A policy statement that says 'we will reduce energy consumption' is a commissive act; it commits the institution to a future course of action. A sign that says 'please sort paper, plastic, and food waste here' is a directive; it asks users to perform an immediate behavior. A workshop announcement is an invitation; it constructs a possible audience and anticipates participation. A label on a seed library shelf is partly instructional and partly symbolic; it tells users how to borrow seeds while presenting biodiversity as a community value. Searle's (1976) theory of speech acts is useful here, but library communication also involves politeness, stance, deixis, and audience design. The tone of a sustainability message matters. A highly technical message may be precise but exclusionary. A moralizing message may encourage responsibility but produce guilt or resistance. A participatory message may create community, but only if it is clear and feasible.

Ecolinguistics broadens the analysis by examining the stories through which institutions imagine human relationships with the environment. Stibbe (2021) argues that language can sustain destructive ecological stories or support more beneficial ones. In library contexts, sustainability discourse may reproduce a consumerist story in which users are treated mainly as resource consumers who must use less, or it may promote a stewardship story in which users, staff, and communities participate in shared ecological care. The language of green libraries may also construct nature as a resource, a partner, a heritage object, a risk zone, or a living system. These linguistic choices are not neutral; they shape how environmental responsibility is imagined.

This article also draws on the language-and-sustainability scholarship of Sayed M. Ismail and collaborators. Alhomoud and Ismail (2025) show how ecological consciousness in poetry can connect environmental sustainability with human needs, memory, and ethical perception. Their argument is relevant to green libraries because libraries often preserve literary and cultural resources that help communities imagine ecological relations. Alshaikhi, Sagir Khan, Alharahsheh, and Ismail (2025) examine eco-translation and

demonstrate that environmental governance, food security, and water sanitation are not only technical issues but also linguistic issues, because public participation depends on accessible and accurate terminology. Al-Dosari, Ismail, and Koka (2026) develop the idea of Arabic linguistic foresight as development infrastructure, showing that terminology modernization can make sustainable-development problems nameable, indicators measurable, and policies teachable. Ismail (2025) further shows how AI-driven heritage tourism connects digital transformation, cultural preservation, and sustainable development. Together, these studies support the view that sustainability is mediated by language, translation, digital infrastructure, and cultural interpretation. They also justify treating green libraries as communicative institutions that link environmental knowledge with public understanding.

The relationship between green libraries and discourse analysis can therefore be summarized as follows. A green library promotes sustainability through what it builds, buys, preserves, teaches, digitizes, and reports; but it also promotes sustainability through how it names, frames, explains, invites, warns, translates, archives, and accounts for these practices. The discourse dimension is not merely a matter of style. It affects whether users understand sustainability practices, whether staff can implement them consistently, whether communities trust institutional claims, and whether environmental knowledge becomes actionable. This is why a discourse-analysis approach can improve both research and practice. It provides a way to examine whether library sustainability communication is specific, inclusive, evidence-based, dialogic, and accountable.

3. Methodology

This article uses an integrative discourse-analysis methodology. It does not present a corpus frequency study of one library's website, nor does it analyze transcripts from a specific workshop. Instead, it synthesizes scholarship in green librarianship, discourse analysis, pragmatics, ecolinguistics, environmental communication, digital sustainability, and language-oriented sustainable development. The purpose is to produce a conceptual and analytical article that can guide future empirical studies and practical communication design.

The methodology proceeds in four stages. The first stage identifies the main sustainability functions commonly associated with green libraries: sustainable buildings and operations, environmental collections, green information literacy, digital access, community engagement, ecological memory, and accountability. The second stage asks what types of discourse make these functions visible. For example, sustainable operations become visible through policies, reports, signs, procurement language, and public commitments. Green information literacy becomes visible through LibGuides, workshops, reference interactions, and learning outcomes. Community engagement becomes visible through invitations, event descriptions, partnership statements, and feedback channels. The third stage maps these communicative forms onto discourse-analytic and pragmatic categories such as framing, speech acts, modality, stance, audience design, deixis, multimodality, and accountability markers. The fourth stage synthesizes these categories into the Green Library Sustainability Discourse Model presented below.

The study treats library communication as a broad semiotic field. Relevant texts include sustainability policies, annual reports, webpages, catalogue metadata, signage, building labels, training materials, social media posts, exhibition descriptions, workshop scripts, public consultation documents, user surveys, and service encounters. This broad understanding is necessary because green-library discourse is not confined to one genre. It appears in formal documents and in everyday communication; in written language and in visual design; in digital interfaces and in physical spaces. A discourse-analysis approach must therefore examine how different genres work together to create a coherent or incoherent sustainability message.

Because the present article is theoretical, examples are illustrative rather than institution-specific. A phrase such as 'please recycle paper here' is used as a generic example of directive signage. A phrase such as 'the library is committed to reducing carbon emissions' is treated as a generic example of institutional commitment discourse. Future empirical studies can collect actual texts from libraries and apply the model more systematically. Such studies could use corpus-assisted discourse analysis, multimodal analysis, conversation analysis, user-experience research, or participatory evaluation. The present article provides the conceptual framework for that work.

The methodological stance is both critical and constructive. It is critical because sustainability discourse can conceal as well as reveal. Vague phrases such as 'eco-friendly', 'green', or 'sustainable' may create symbolic

legitimacy without measurable change. It is constructive because the aim is not only to criticize green-library language but to improve it. A well-designed sustainability discourse can guide behavior, reduce misunderstanding, include diverse users, support environmental learning, and strengthen accountability. The model therefore asks not only what green libraries say, but how their language can become more accurate, inclusive, measurable, and socially useful.

4. Green Library Sustainability Discourse Model

The Green Library Sustainability Discourse Model proposed here treats sustainability communication as a set of interdependent discourse functions. These functions do not replace operational sustainability; they make it interpretable and actionable. The model is designed for researchers who wish to analyze library texts and for practitioners who wish to improve sustainability communication. It identifies eight dimensions that can be examined separately but are usually connected in practice.

Dimension	Core question	Typical library genres	Discourse-analytic focus
Ecological naming and framing	How is sustainability named and what meanings are attached to it?	Policies, mission statements, webpages, event titles	Frames, metaphors, keyword patterns, ideological emphasis
Institutional commitment discourse	How does the library present its responsibilities and promises?	Strategic plans, sustainability reports, public commitments	Commissive speech acts, modality, evidence, timelines
Directive and instructional discourse	How are users guided toward sustainable behavior?	Signs, labels, recycling instructions, digital prompts	Imperatives, politeness, clarity, accessibility, uptake
Dialogic participation	How are users invited to question, respond, and co-create sustainability action?	Workshops, consultations, forums, surveys, reference interviews	Turn-taking, stance, questions, repair, inclusion
Multimodal spatial communication	How do space, image, color, icon, and text work together?	Building labels, exhibitions, posters, infographics, dashboards	Visual grammar, placement, salience, user pathway
Multilingual and access-oriented discourse	Who can understand and use sustainability information?	Translated materials, accessibility guides, plain-language notices	Audience design, multilingual pragmatics, disability access
Ecological memory narratives	How does the library connect sustainability to place, history, and cultural memory?	Archives, exhibitions, oral histories, local-history collections	Narrative structure, identity, memory, place attachment
Accountability discourse	How are green claims linked to evidence, targets, and improvement?	Annual reports, metrics, dashboards, audits, feedback summaries	Specificity, verifiability, transparency, anti-greenwashing

4.1 Analytical Dimensions

The first dimension, ecological naming and framing, concerns the vocabulary through which the library constructs sustainability. Words such as green, sustainable, climate action, resilience, carbon reduction, stewardship, biodiversity, circular economy, environmental justice, and ecological literacy do not merely describe reality. They organize a semantic field. Some terms are familiar but vague; others are precise but technical. A discourse analyst asks which terms are foregrounded, which are absent, and what type of user identity is implied. If a library repeatedly uses the word 'green' without explaining what is being measured, the discourse may remain symbolic. If it specifies energy reduction, waste diversion, responsible purchasing, climate literacy, and community participation, the discourse becomes more accountable.

The second dimension, institutional commitment discourse, examines how libraries make commitments. Institutional commitments are often expressed through modal verbs and future-oriented verbs: will, shall, commit, aim, seek, reduce, report, monitor, or improve. These words matter because they determine whether a sustainability statement is strong, weak, conditional, or aspirational. A green-library policy that says 'we aim

to encourage sustainable practice' is less accountable than one that says 'we will reduce paper-based internal forms by a defined percentage and publish annual progress data.' Discourse analysis can therefore identify the difference between aspiration and obligation. In NCAAA-style quality language, this distinction would be similar to the difference between intention, implementation, evidence, and improvement. In library sustainability, it separates green branding from verifiable institutional action.

The third dimension, directive and instructional discourse, focuses on the language that asks users to do something. Library users are frequently instructed to recycle, save energy, return reusable materials, avoid waste, use digital forms, participate in repair cafes, borrow seeds responsibly, or attend climate-literacy events. The effectiveness of these messages depends on clarity, tone, visibility, and feasibility. A sign that says 'dispose responsibly' may sound positive, but it may not tell users what to do. A sign that says 'paper only in this bin; food and plastic go to the marked bins beside the exit' is more practical. Politeness also matters. Direct imperatives may be suitable in high-speed contexts such as waste sorting, while more explanatory language may be appropriate in workshops or community events. Pragmatic design therefore connects linguistic form with user context.

The fourth dimension, dialogic participation, concerns the extent to which green-library discourse creates opportunities for users to speak back. Sustainability communication can be one-way or dialogic. One-way communication tells users what the library has decided; dialogic communication invites users to ask questions, offer local knowledge, report barriers, contribute stories, suggest improvements, and evaluate programs. Workshops, consultations, surveys, community forums, and reference interactions are important because they convert sustainability from institutional messaging into social participation. Conversation analysis would examine how librarians open discussions, manage questions, handle disagreement, repair misunderstanding, and position users as knowledgeable participants rather than passive recipients. This dimension is essential for ecological citizenship because citizenship is not only compliance; it is participation in shared decision-making.
The fifth dimension, multimodal spatial communication, recognizes that libraries communicate through space as much as through words. Green buildings, recycling points, energy dashboards, seed libraries, environmental exhibitions, and climate displays are multimodal texts. Their meaning is produced by the relation between written language, images, color, iconography, layout, material objects, and user movement. A water-saving display near a washroom, for example, has different pragmatic force from the same information hidden on a website. A dashboard showing energy use creates a public relationship between data and behavior. An exhibition about local climate history may use photographs, maps, captions, personal stories, and archival documents. Multimodal discourse analysis helps explain how environmental responsibility becomes spatially visible.

The sixth dimension, multilingual and access-oriented discourse, asks who can understand sustainability communication. Green-library discourse that is available only in one language, or that uses technical terminology without explanation, may exclude users who most need public environmental information. This is where the language-planning work of Al-Dosari et al. (2026) and the eco-translation work of Alshaikhi et al. (2025) become especially relevant. If sustainable development depends on terms that ordinary users cannot understand, then institutional communication fails. Libraries are well positioned to solve this problem because they already work with information access, translation, community literacy, and user education. A green library should therefore consider multilingual signage, plain-language climate guides, accessible formats, disability-friendly design, and culturally responsive examples.

The seventh dimension, ecological memory narratives, frames libraries as guardians of environmental memory. A library can preserve more than official climate data. It can preserve photographs of changing landscapes, oral histories of farming communities, local records of floods and droughts, maps of urban development, community accounts of heat and water use, and literary representations of place. Alhomoud and Ismail (2025) are useful here because their work on ecological consciousness in poetry shows how literary language can deepen environmental perception and connect ecological concerns with human needs. In library contexts, ecological memory discourse helps users understand that sustainability is not only a future policy; it is also a history of relationships between people, land, water, technology, and community identity.

The eighth dimension, accountability discourse, links sustainability claims to evidence. Without accountability, sustainability language can become vague. Accountability discourse includes targets, indicators, annual reports, audits, dashboards, feedback summaries, and improvement plans. It also includes the language

used to explain failure. A credible green library does not only celebrate achievements; it reports limitations and next steps. This is particularly important because environmental communication is vulnerable to greenwashing. Discourse analysis can identify whether a library's claims are measurable, time-bound, and supported by evidence. It can also examine whether users are invited to evaluate those claims. Accountability discourse therefore converts sustainability from a symbolic identity into a public institutional practice.

5. Green-Library Discourse in Institutional Practice

Applying the model to library practice shows that green-library discourse is distributed across multiple institutional sites. Policy discourse is the most formal site. It defines responsibilities, goals, standards, and expected outcomes. A sustainability policy can frame environmental responsibility as part of governance, service quality, user education, public accountability, or community partnership. The strongest policies avoid vague language and state what the institution will measure, who is responsible, how progress will be reported, and how users can participate. In discourse terms, a policy is both a text and a speech act. It does not simply describe an institutional position; it performs a commitment that can later be evaluated.

Signage is another major site of discourse. Green signage includes recycling instructions, energy-saving reminders, water-use notices, bike-rack signs, low-energy room labels, noise and comfort guidance, printing-reduction messages, and event posters. Although signs are often short, they carry strong pragmatic effects. They may command, invite, explain, warn, or encourage. They also reveal assumptions about users. A sign that relies only on technical icons may exclude some users; a sign with too much text may be ignored; a sign that moralizes behavior may create resistance. Effective signage combines clarity, brevity, visual design, and context. It tells users what to do, why the action matters, and how to comply without confusion.

Green information literacy is a third site. Libraries have long taught users how to find, evaluate, and use information. In the context of sustainability, this role includes teaching users how to identify reliable climate sources, interpret environmental data, recognize misinformation, understand policy documents, evaluate corporate sustainability claims, and use scientific databases. Discourse analysis can examine the language of LibGuides, workshop titles, learning outcomes, examples, and assessment tools. Does the library present environmental information as neutral data only, or does it also teach users how discourse shapes environmental politics? Does it help users distinguish scientific uncertainty from denial? Does it address emotional responses such as climate anxiety? Such questions show that green information literacy is not just database training; it is critical language education.

Digital interfaces are a fourth site. A digital library may provide access to e-books, open educational resources, climate datasets, archival collections, AI-assisted discovery tools, and online exhibitions. These services can reduce some material forms of consumption, yet they also raise questions about energy use, platform dependency, privacy, algorithmic visibility, metadata bias, and unequal access. Ismail's (2025) work on AI-driven heritage tourism is relevant because it shows that digital systems can support cultural preservation and sustainable development, but only when they are designed with attention to community value, economic sustainability, and responsible governance. Green-library digital discourse should therefore avoid presenting technology as automatically sustainable. It should explain what digital tools enable, what their limits are, and how users can access them ethically and effectively.

Exhibitions and public programs are a fifth site. Libraries frequently host climate displays, seed-exchange programs, repair workshops, sustainability reading clubs, environmental film screenings, local-history exhibitions, and community forums. These events are discourse events. They create topics, audiences, roles, questions, forms of evidence, and possible actions. A seed-library workshop, for example, may frame biodiversity as a local practice rather than an abstract scientific term. A climate exhibition may frame environmental change through local photographs and personal stories rather than distant statistics. A repair cafe may frame sustainability as skill-sharing and community care rather than consumption reduction alone. Discourse analysis can examine how these events construct ecological agency.

Social media is a sixth site. Green-library social media posts often use short text, hashtags, images, calls to action, and affective language. They may celebrate Earth Day, advertise workshops, share climate resources, display recycling achievements, or invite volunteers. Social media discourse is important because it extends the library beyond the building and can reach users who do not attend events. However, it also risks simplifying

sustainability into promotional slogans. A discourse-analysis approach asks whether social media posts provide credible information, link to resources, invite participation, acknowledge local concerns, and avoid superficial green branding.

Cataloguing and metadata form a seventh and less visible site of discourse. Subject headings, classification systems, tags, database descriptions, and metadata fields shape how users discover environmental knowledge. If local ecological history is poorly described, it becomes difficult to find. If sustainability resources are classified only under narrow technical categories, users may miss their social, ethical, and cultural dimensions. Green libraries should therefore consider how metadata can support interdisciplinary discovery. This may include connecting climate change with health, urban planning, agriculture, literature, economics, religion, environmental justice, and community memory. Metadata is not neutral organization; it is discourse embedded in information infrastructure.

Service encounters are an eighth site. In reference interviews, circulation desks, workshops, chat services, and community programs, staff and users negotiate meaning in real time. A user may ask whether a climate source is reliable, whether a grant database includes environmental projects, how to access a digital archive, or how to participate in a community event. The staff response may clarify, redirect, encourage, or close down participation. Pragmatic competence is therefore essential. Staff need not be climate scientists, but they do need discourse skills: asking clarifying questions, explaining uncertainty, avoiding condescension, translating technical language, and guiding users toward credible resources. A green library is therefore also a site of environmental conversation.

6. Discussion

The discourse-analysis perspective changes the way green libraries are evaluated. A traditional assessment may ask whether a library has reduced energy use, increased digital access, or delivered environmental programs. These are necessary questions, but they are incomplete. A discourse-analysis assessment also asks whether users understand the library's sustainability goals, whether messages are inclusive, whether claims are evidence-based, whether signs guide behavior effectively, whether workshops invite participation, whether digital systems are explained responsibly, and whether sustainability commitments are linked to accountability. In other words, discourse quality becomes part of sustainability quality.

This shift is important because sustainability depends on public interpretation. An institution may implement meaningful environmental practices, but if users do not understand them, the social impact is reduced. Conversely, an institution may communicate sustainability attractively while doing little. Discourse analysis helps distinguish between these situations. It examines whether language is connected to practice. It also examines whether practice is communicated in ways that users can understand and use. The strongest green libraries will therefore be those that combine operational sustainability with communicative transparency.

The model also clarifies the difference between ecological citizenship and user compliance. Compliance asks users to follow instructions: recycle here, print less, turn off lights, return reusable items. Ecological citizenship asks users to understand, deliberate, participate, and contribute. Libraries are especially suited to this broader role because they are educational and civic spaces. They can provide climate information, host public dialogue, preserve local memory, support multilingual access, and encourage informed participation. A discourse-analysis approach shows how ecological citizenship is built through language: through invitations rather than commands alone, through explanations rather than slogans, through evidence rather than vague claims, and through feedback rather than one-way messaging.

The article also shows why green-library discourse must be attentive to environmental justice. Communication can include or exclude. If sustainability messages assume that all users have equal time, money, digital access, language proficiency, or mobility, they may reproduce inequality. A notice encouraging users to access all services online may ignore users without reliable internet. A climate guide written in technical English may exclude non-specialists or multilingual communities. A recycling campaign that blames users may ignore institutional procurement decisions. Just sustainability discourse recognizes that users have different resources and constraints. It invites participation without shifting structural responsibility entirely onto individuals.

The four Ismail-related studies cited in this article reinforce this conclusion from different directions. Alhomoud and Ismail (2025) demonstrate that ecological consciousness is cultivated through language,

imagination, and human meaning. Alshaikhi et al. (2025) show that translation choices affect environmental governance and public understanding. Al-Dosari et al. (2026) argue that terminology foresight can make development knowledge more accessible and implementable. Ismail (2025) shows that digital futures in heritage tourism require responsible integration of technology, culture, and sustainability. Together, these studies support a central claim of the present article: sustainability is not only a matter of infrastructure and policy, but also a matter of discourse, terminology, cultural memory, and digital mediation.

The discourse-analysis approach can also help libraries resist greenwashing. Greenwashing occurs when institutions present themselves as environmentally responsible without sufficient evidence or when they use vague language to create the appearance of sustainability. Libraries are generally trusted institutions, and this trust makes their communication powerful. However, trust must be protected. A green library should avoid unsupported claims such as 'we are fully sustainable' or 'our services are eco-friendly' unless such claims are defined and measured. Better discourse would specify what has been achieved, what remains difficult, and what will be done next. Transparent limitation is often more credible than exaggerated success.

Another implication concerns staff development. Sustainability communication is not only the responsibility of senior administrators or marketing units. Frontline librarians, cataloguers, digital-services staff, archivists, event coordinators, and student workers all participate in sustainability discourse. Staff training should therefore include language and communication practices: how to explain environmental resources, how to design accessible signs, how to avoid jargon, how to respond to misinformation, how to facilitate dialogue, and how to document user feedback. In this sense, discourse analysis has practical value. It can become a training tool for institutional communication.

Finally, the model provides a bridge between library studies, applied linguistics, environmental humanities, and public policy. Green libraries are not isolated from broader social debates about climate change, digital responsibility, heritage preservation, language access, and institutional accountability. They are places where these debates become concrete. A student reads a climate report; a community member contributes an oral history; a librarian teaches source evaluation; a child joins a biodiversity program; a researcher searches an environmental archive; a staff member writes a sustainability report. Each action is mediated by discourse. By studying this mediation, researchers can better understand how knowledge institutions contribute to environmental sustainability.

7. Implications and Future Research

The first practical implication is that libraries should create sustainability communication plans alongside operational sustainability plans. Such a plan would define preferred terms, clarify the difference between commitments and aspirations, set plain-language standards, require evidence for green claims, specify multilingual and accessibility requirements, and identify responsible units for updating sustainability information. It would also guide the tone of user-facing messages so that they are clear, respectful, specific, and action-oriented.

The second implication is that libraries should audit their sustainability discourse. A discourse audit could examine policies, webpages, signs, social media posts, event titles, catalogue metadata, and annual reports. The audit could ask whether key messages are consistent, whether claims are measurable, whether users are invited to participate, whether local ecological memory is represented, whether marginalized communities are addressed, and whether the library explains digital sustainability honestly. This audit would complement, not replace, energy or waste audits.

The third implication is that libraries should evaluate user understanding. It is not enough to publish sustainability messages. Libraries should ask whether users understand them. Evaluation could include short surveys, usability studies, focus groups, observation, interviews, and analysis of user questions. Indicators might include comprehension of sustainability terms, perceived credibility of library claims, accessibility of signage, usefulness of climate guides, and willingness to participate in programs. Such indicators would make discourse quality measurable.

The fourth implication is that green libraries should integrate ecological memory into community programming. Local archives, oral histories, photographs, maps, and literary collections can help users connect sustainability with place. Instead of presenting climate change only as a global scientific problem, libraries can also present it as a local cultural and historical issue. This does not weaken scientific communication; it makes

it meaningful. Ecological memory gives sustainability a human context.

The fifth implication is that digital sustainability must be communicated carefully. Digital services should not be described as automatically green. Libraries should explain how digital access can reduce some material barriers while also requiring energy, infrastructure, devices, and data governance. Users should be informed about digital preservation, privacy, equitable access, and responsible AI use where relevant. This balanced discourse can prevent techno-optimism and support more responsible digital transformation.

Future research can build on the model empirically. Corpus-assisted discourse analysis could compare sustainability webpages across public, academic, school, and national libraries. Multimodal discourse analysis could study signs, dashboards, exhibitions, and digital interfaces. Conversation analysis could examine workshops and reference interviews. Translation studies could investigate multilingual sustainability communication in libraries serving diverse communities. Critical discourse analysis could evaluate whether green-library language reproduces or challenges environmental inequality. These future studies would move the field from conceptual modeling to evidence-based discourse evaluation.

8. Limitations of the Study

The article has two limitations that should be acknowledged. First, it develops a conceptual discourse-analysis framework rather than analyzing a collected corpus of library texts. This means that the model should be treated as an analytical guide and not as a claim about one specific library system. Second, the examples are illustrative and are designed to show how discourse categories can be applied. Future empirical work should test the model against actual sustainability policies, building signs, digital interfaces, workshop transcripts, catalogues, annual reports, and social media datasets. Such work would make it possible to compare different types of libraries and to identify patterns across institutional settings.

Despite these limitations, a conceptual model is necessary because green-library research still needs a clearer language for describing communication itself. Without such a model, sustainability discourse may remain scattered across policy, marketing, instruction, and public programming. The framework offered here gives researchers and practitioners a shared vocabulary for evaluating whether library communication is clear, inclusive, evidence-based, dialogic, multimodal, and accountable. It also supports practical decision-making by identifying the types of discourse that should be designed, reviewed, and improved when a library claims to be green.

9. Conclusion

This article has rewritten the role of green libraries from a discourse-analysis perspective. It has argued that green libraries are sustainability discourse communities: institutions that do not merely store environmental information or operate sustainable buildings, but also produce the language through which sustainability becomes public, credible, inclusive, and actionable. Their contribution to environmental sustainability is therefore communicative as well as operational.

The Green Library Sustainability Discourse Model identifies eight dimensions that can guide research and practice: ecological naming and framing, institutional commitment discourse, directive and instructional discourse, dialogic participation, multimodal spatial communication, multilingual and access-oriented discourse, ecological memory narratives, and accountability discourse. These dimensions show how policy statements, signs, workshops, digital interfaces, catalogues, exhibitions, social media posts, and service encounters work together to shape environmental understanding and ecological citizenship.

The article also emphasizes that sustainability language must be accountable. Green libraries should avoid vague claims and connect their discourse to measurable actions, user participation, and continuous improvement. They should communicate sustainability in ways that recognize linguistic diversity, social inequality, digital access, local memory, and institutional responsibility. A green library is ultimately not only a place that reduces environmental impact; it is a public language institution that helps communities name environmental problems, evaluate ecological information, remember place, participate in shared action, and imagine sustainable futures.

Funding:
The author extends their appreciation to Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University for funding this research work through the Project number (PSAU/2026/02/39936).

References

Afacan, Y. (2017). Sustainable library buildings: Green design needs and interior architecture students' ideas for special collection rooms. The Journal of Academic Librarianship, 43(5), 375–383. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2017.07.002

Ajani, Y. A., Tella, A., & Enakrire, R. T. (2024). The green library revolution: A catalyst for climate change action. Collection and Curation, 43(2), 60–67. https://doi.org/10.1108/CC-10-2023-0032

Al-Dosari, M. bin M., Ismail, S. M., & Koka, N. A. (2026). Arabic linguistic foresight as development infrastructure: Terminology modernization for the SDGs across health, sustainability, public services, the energy transition, and future economies. Research Journal in Advanced Humanities, 7(1). https://doi.org/10.58256/dt4f2s40

Alhomoud, G. N. J., & Ismail, S. M. (2025). A critical review of the ecological consciousness and human needs in Alice Oswald's poetry: An exploration of environmental sustainability in modern English verse. Research Journal in Advanced Humanities, 6(3). https://doi.org/10.58256/anemyj85

Alshaikhi, T., Sagir Khan, A., Alharahsheh, A. M., & Ismail, S. M. (2025). Linguistic sustainability: A tripartite analysis of eco-translation's impact on environmental governance, food security, and water sanitation across selected SDGs. Research Journal in Advanced Humanities, 6(4). https://doi.org/10.58256/v87zhg97

Antonelli, M. (2008). The green library movement: An overview and beyond. Electronic Green Journal, 1(27), 1–11.

Aulisio, G. J. (2013). Green libraries are more than just buildings. Electronic Green Journal, 1(35), 1–10.

Baker, P., Gabrielatos, C., KhosraviNik, M., Krzyzanowski, M., McEnery, T., & Wodak, R. (2008). A useful methodological synergy? Combining critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics. Discourse & Society, 19(3), 273–306. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926508088962

Blum-Kulka, S. (1987). Indirectness and politeness in requests: Same or different? Journal of Pragmatics, 11(2), 131–146. https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(87)90192-5

Boykoff, M. T., & Boykoff, J. M. (2004). Balance as bias: Global warming and the US prestige press. Global Environmental Change, 14(2), 125–136. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2003.10.001

Carvalho, A. (2007). Ideological cultures and media discourses on scientific knowledge: Re-reading news on climate change. Public Understanding of Science, 16(2), 223–243. https://doi.org/10.1177/0963662506066775

Chowdhury, G. (2012). Building environmentally sustainable information services: A green IS research agenda. Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology, 63(4), 633–647. https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.21703

Chowdhury, G. (2016). How to improve the sustainability of digital libraries and information services? Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology, 67(10), 2379–2391. https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.23599

Corner, A., Markowitz, E., & Pidgeon, N. (2014). Public engagement with climate change: The role of human values. WIREs Climate Change, 5(3), 411–422. https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.269

Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. Journal of Communication, 43(4), 51–58. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x

Fairclough, N. (1992). Discourse and social change. Polity Press.

Fedorowicz-Kruszewska, M. (2021). Green libraries and green librarianship: Towards conceptualization. Journal of Librarianship and Information Science, 53(4), 645–654. https://doi.org/10.1177/0961000620980830

Fedorowicz-Kruszewska, M. (2022). Green library as a subject of research: A quantitative and qualitative perspective. Journal of Documentation, 78(4), 912–932. https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-08-2021-0156

Fedorowicz-Kruszewska, M. (2023). Green libraries: Barriers to concept development. Library Management, 44(1/2), 111–119. https://doi.org/10.1108/LM-04-2022-0041

Fraser, B. (1990). Perspectives on politeness. Journal of Pragmatics, 14(2), 219–236. https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(90)90008-N

Halliday, M. A. K. (1994). An introduction to functional grammar (2nd ed.). Edward Arnold.

Ismail, S. M. (2025). Digital futures of heritage tourism: AI-driven economic models for sustainable development in Saudi Arabia (SDGs 8, 9, 11). Research Journal in Advanced Humanities, 6(3). https://

doi.org/10.58256/7ydq1e27
Lakoff, G. (2010). Why it matters how we frame the environment. Environmental Communication, 4(1), 70–81. https://doi.org/10.1080/17524030903529749
Searle, J. R. (1976). A classification of illocutionary acts. Language in Society, 5(1), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404500006837
Stibbe, A. (2021). Ecolinguistics: Language, ecology and the stories we live by (2nd ed.). Routledge.
Van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. Discourse & Society, 4(2), 249–283. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002006