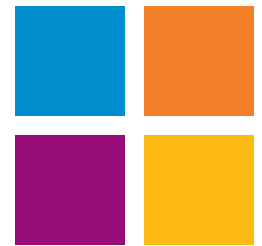# United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Study 2021

Findings from the 2020 OCLC Global Council Survey

OCLC Global Council (in conjunction with OCLC Research) surveyed library staff for insights on how they are using and thinking about the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to inform their strategic directions. A total of 1,722 library professionals from 99 countries completed the survey, including 1,125 respondents from 16 countries in the Americas, 448 respondents from 63 countries in EMEA (Europe, Middle East, and Africa), and 148 respondents from 20 countries in Asia Pacific. With 17 SDG goals in total, OCLC Global Council delegates selected the top five goals they perceive libraries could impact the most:

- **SDG 4:** Quality Education
- **SDG 8:** Decent Work and Economic Growth
- **SDG 10:** Reduced Inequalities
- **SDG 16:** Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
- **SDG 17:** Partnerships for the Goals

The selected SDGs specifically address economic and social inequalities, and provide insight into what specific activities libraries are involved in that support these goals.
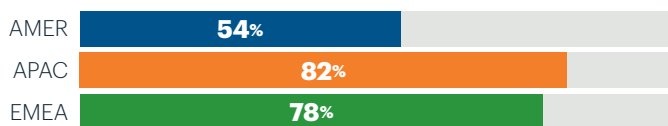
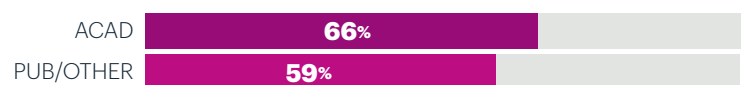|			
Global regions:	■ **AMER** = Americas	■ **APAC** = Asia Pacific	■ **EMEA** = Europe, Middle East, and Africa
Library types:	■ **ACAD** = Academics	■ **PUB/OTHER** = Publics/other	

The majority of respondents have some familiarity with the UN SDGs

Respondents in the Asia Pacific (APAC) and Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA) regions are significantly more likely to be at least somewhat familiar with the UN SDGs compared to those in the Americas (AMER) region. Academic and "other" library respondents are significantly more likely to be at least somewhat familiar compared to those from public libraries.

Familiarity with SDGs by region

AMER **54**%
APAC **82**%
EMEA **78**%

Familiarity with SDGs by library type

ACAD **66**%
PUB/OTHER **59**%

"Because we are part of our communities and cities, we operate as part of the culture of the environments in which we exist, so we can have an influence on increasing inclusivity, safety, resiliency, and sustainability in our communities."

Academic library, United States

Explicitly incorporating the SDGs into library strategic planning was low across all regions

Respondents in EMEA are the most likely to have explicitly referenced the SDGs in their strategic plans or have considered SDGs as part of their strategice planning efforts compared to respondents in the AMER and APAC regions, but do not explicitly reference them.

Incorporated SDGs in strategic planning

	Explicitly referenced	Considered

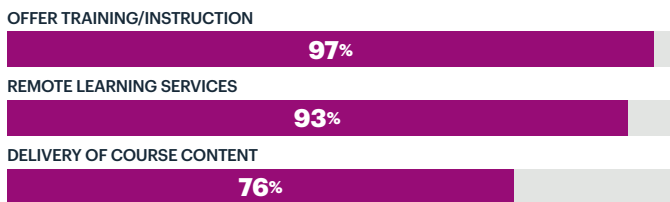| Region	Explicitly referenced	Considered
AMER	2%	20%
APAC	9%	39%
EMEA	13%	43%

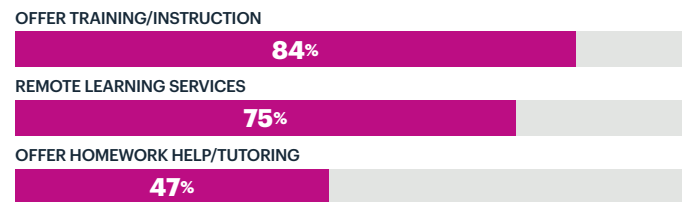# Top goals where respondents believe libraries could have the greatest impact

Two-thirds or more of respondents across regions and library types ranked "Quality Education" (SDG 4) as their first priority among the SDGs. They report that "Offering training/instruction/classes/courses, etc., for students, faculty and/or staff" and "Providing services and/or facilities specifically for remote learning" are the top activities respondents participate in related to SDG 4.

TOP SDG 4, "QUALITY EDUCATION" ACTIVITIES

Academic

Activity	%
OFFER TRAINING/INSTRUCTION	97%
REMOTE LEARNING SERVICES	93%
DELIVERY OF COURSE CONTENT	76%

Public/other

Activity	%
OFFER TRAINING/INSTRUCTION	84%
REMOTE LEARNING SERVICES	75%
OFFER HOMEWORK HELP/TUTORING	47%

TOP ACTIVITIES FOR OTHER SDGS

SDG	Top academic library activities		Top public/other library activities	
SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth	Campus strategic planning	83%	Job preparedness	57%
	Hosting office space/workspace for other campus departments	73%	Participate in community strategic planning	56%
SDG 10 Reduced inequalities	Offer programs, services, and collections to promote diversity awareness and education	82%	Offer services, programs, and collections to promote awareness and education around diversity	73%
	Provide inclusive facilities	72%	Provide employee training around equity, diversity, and inclusion	69%
SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions	Serve as a welcoming space on campus	90%	Serve as a welcoming space in the community	83%
	Provide an environment to facilitate engagement between different populations	73%	Promote active involvement in civic activities	69%
SDG 17 Partnership for the goals	Develop strong partnerships with other libraries and librarians through associations, consortia	95%	Develop strong partnerships with other libraries and librarians through associations, consortia	93%
	Collaborate with other academic departments or community agencies to provide classes	77%	Collaborate with other community agencies to provide classes for the community	75%

Conclusions

Whether explicitly or implicitly, libraries are contributing to all 17 of the SDGs. Some SDGs, however, see greater levels of library involvement. Librarians generally see themselves as playing a much greater role in quality education than they do in the other SDGs. Outside of the five SDGs focused on in this survey, respondents across the regions and different library types feel Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3), Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11) and Gender Equality (SDG 5) are the top goals where libraries could have the biggest impact.

Efforts on the part of library organizations, especially OCLC and IFLA, do appear to be increasing awareness of the SDGs. Most survey respondents were aware of the SDGs, though there was regional variation, with the SDGs being less well known in the Americas.

In some cases, library activities to further the SDGs are associated with strategic planning, but more commonly they are the result of efforts that libraries undertake as part of their overall mission. Nonetheless, the results suggest that explicitly including the SDGs in strategic planning can help libraries maximize their contributions.

"As one of the MOST trusted government institutions we can be instrumental in implementing these goals."

Public library, United States

"The library can provide the resources needed for the development of SDGs."

Academic library, Taiwan

"More should be done to promote the ways in which libraries provide information and support for projects which directly achieve SDGs."

National library, United Kingdom

To learn more about the survey, visit oc.lc/sdg-report.

Because what is known must be shared.®

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