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Law Librarians Face the Energy Crisis

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California's near-term energy future is expected to consist of rolling blackouts, rate increases and shortages. What steps can a law librarian take to help deal with the immediate crisis and to develop habits that will also prove useful in the long run? Perhaps some of the following suggestions offered by other law librarians will be of help to you in your library. They may seem very basic and simple, but sometimes we just need to be reminded of the obvious.

Library and general office equipment

- Turn off computers when they're not in use, especially at night and on weekends. By the way, not only will this save energy, it allows your virus protection software to update when you reboot. If you can't turn off the entire computer, turn off the monitor and printer.
- When possible, use laptop computers; they consume 90% less energy than standard desktops. Ink-jet printers also use 90% less energy than laser printers.
- Don't turn on all your public terminals. You may not need to have all your OPACs or CD-ROM stations going all the time.
- During the day, save work often on your computer, so it won't be lost in the event of a blackout. Be prepared. Do you know what your outage block at work is? Plan what you need to do when the electricity goes off. Shut down all printers, copiers and computers to lessen the load when the power returns.

Lighting

- Turn off as many unnecessary lights as possible. Keep lights off in staff lounges or bathrooms or other areas when they are not in use. Turn off your office lights at night or when you step out of the office.
- In certain stack areas, you might want to turn down the lights. Don't turn on a full bank. During times of the day when there is lots of sunlight, you may not need the lights at all in areas near windows.
- Use energy-efficient light bulbs.

Miscellaneous

- Share suggestions with your Office Manager or MIS department so the entire firm might benefit.
- Educate staff and encourage them to follow these suggestions.
- Cut back on running the air conditioner at full blast. Set the thermostat to 78 degrees during work hours and raise it to 85 when the library is unoccupied.
- Purchase "Energy Star" equipment that powers down after periods of inactivity.

- Consider whether alternate energy sources, such as solar panels, are in your future.

Additional resources

- The Consumer Energy Center at the California Energy Commission site www.energy.ca.gov/ is an excellent source of practical tips on conservation.
- PG&E's Energy Tips for Business, can be found at www.pge.com. (Go to Save Energy & Money/Business). It is another good web site filled with helpful ideas.
- If you want to examine the issues of energy and conservation in more depth, rather than a few quick suggestions, Donald Wulfinghoff has prepared two publications for the SLA and ALA. You can get a copy of his 27-page guide "The Modern History of Energy Conservation: An Overview for Information Professionals" (SLA Annual Meeting, 2000) at <http://egj.lib.uidaho.edu> and click "Back Issues/Issue 13." For the ALA meeting held in San Francisco this month, he prepared "Spend More of Your Budget for Books by Spending Less for Energy..." Contact him at DW@energybooks.com and he will send you a copy in MS Word format.

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