

Environmentally-conscious best practices for library events

The categories below are frequent considerations for events in the library, and each describes environmentally friendly options for the MSU Libraries context: our kitchen equipment, campus composting, campus recycling, and the state of waste management in Michigan and the United States. This list was compiled by members of the Library Environmental Committee, May 2019.

Plates and cups

Reusable, ceramic plates and cups are the best option. If you must use disposable, paper (non-bleached, no wax or plastic coating) or fiber products are best. Bamboo is also a good option. For cups, the best choice is to encourage folks to provide their own water bottle or coffee mug/travel cup. If that is not an option, biodegradable hot and cold cups are a good disposable alternative (<https://greenpaperproducts.com/biodegradable-cups.aspx>). After use, they will have to go into the landfill as the library compost cannot break down these types of materials.

Silverware, serving implements

We recommend metal cutlery in library kitchen, if available. Second choice: wood cutlery is the most compostable/biodegradable - it takes more resources to produce, but has less impact at disposal. Bamboo sounds especially attractive since it grows quickly.

Table cloths

Rent table linens from Spartan Linen Services, <https://spartanlinen.rhs.msu.edu/> when needed. They more cost effective and eco-friendly than buying single-use plastic tablecloths. The library owns a few very large white table linens. Contact the library business office for more information.

Waste bins and liners

Work with the library's Facilities crew to set-up one or more waste stations that offer recycling, compost and landfill bins. Label each bin clearly. Infrastructure, Planning and Facilities (IPF) at MSU provides compost bins (large and medium sized), recycling bins and landfill bins. Request service: <http://ipf.msu.edu/services/events/index.html>

Event-related handouts and fliers

Consider the necessity of paper handouts and use online communication when possible. Use (or ask Graphic Services to use) 100% recycled paper, and print the appropriate amount for the event's expected attendance. Recycle or reuse unused quantities.

Food Choices

Fruits and vegetables can offer more environmentally friendly options than meat or dairy.