One Step at a Time: Shrinking Our Carbon Footprint

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Abstract:

The Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC) recently commissioned a carbon footprint study to better understand our energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions. Developed in consultation with a local firm that specializes in environmental inventories, this report established a benchmark of our current climate impact and is a roadmap for future action to reduce environmentally harmful emissions.

This report used the Corporate Accounting and Reporting Standard established by the World Resources Institute and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development to measure the metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions we produce. This standard defines three "scopes" of greenhouse gas emissions to be measured: emissions from sources directly owned or controlled (Scope 1); emissions from the generation of purchased electricity (Scope 2); and any other indirect emissions (Scope 3). The RAC carbon footprint study mostly covers Scope 1 and 2 activities, along with some Scope 3 activities, for 2016, 2018 and 2020.

Although some of the report's conclusions were expected – for example, about half of the RAC's energy use derives from facility heating and cooling – some of the other insights were unanticipated. For example, although the COVID pandemic resulted in fewer emissions from employee commuting in 2020, our overall carbon footprint did not decline significantly. Perhaps most striking was the revelation that in-house IT infrastructure accounted for 35 percent of our energy use.

As a result of this study, we have undertaken a comprehensive replacement of existing lighting with LED fixtures and bulbs, and we will evaluate use, reuse, recycling, and disposal of office-related supplies broadly across the organization. We have also begun an additional study to understand IT-specific environmental impact, including cloud infrastructure. Finally, we hope to collaborate with other archives and archivists who are considering similar studies to collectively understand our impact and find ways to minimize it.

About the authors:

Brigite Requeijo is the Director of HR and Operations at the Rockefeller Archive Center. In this leadership position, Brigite is responsible for overseeing the RAC's human resources and operations programs. With over 15 years of experience working in the field of HR and operations, Brigite plays a key role in developing organizational strategies related to human resources and operations. In this role she is responsible for overseeing all facilities related functions as well as the Information Technology team. She also supports various functions within the finance team. Brigite is a first-generation Portuguese-American who was born in France and raised in Sleepy Hollow, NY. She holds a Juris Doctor from UMass Law and a BA in

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Hillel Arnold heads the Rockefeller Archive Center's Digital Strategies Team, which develops, implements, and maintains the organization's archival systems and digital infrastructure; builds capacity through training designed to empower colleagues; centers user perspectives to continually improve the usability and accessibility of systems and collections; and participates in professional communities to further the team's work as well as the archival profession. He has also contributed to the maintenance of archival standards, including EAD and DACS, and has published on topics including the role of recordkeeping in grassroots organizations and the importance of maintenance theory to archival practice.