

Date: 2 February 2006
Site: Minnesota DOT Library
Staff: Jerry Baldwin, Library Directory

Site Visit Summary

History & Overview

The Minnesota Department of Transportation library has been part of many different units within the department since its beginnings in 1957, when it was in the training department of what was then the Minnesota Department of Highways. They began with one librarian and now have three, a decline from their highest staffing levels in 1998, when there were 5.75 professional librarians on staff. The Mn/DOT library's customers are 50% Mn/DOT employees, 30% general public, 10% city and county workers, and 10% academic users.

Transportation Knowledge Networks have been in practice in Minnesota for some time. The Minnesota Transportation Libraries (MTL) program provides library and information services to transportation practitioners throughout the state including employees of municipal, county and regional transportation agencies as a part of Minnesota's LTAP program. MTKN was conceived as a way to implement similar services throughout the Midwestern region. Jerry believes library and information services are an essential component of technology transfer efforts.

The Mn/DOT library offers a hybrid approach to virtual and onsite library services. The goal is to provide anything patrons would find in the library also on the web site so that remote users get the same benefits as onsite users. Consequently, the web site is heavily used because of the extent of content and service levels, and Jerry monitors it daily. The content is evolving to local use, with an average of 100 unique visitors and 250 page hits per day. Usage of the site is increasingly from the Midwest, with an average of 65% from the region. The most frequently accessed page on the site is the Directory of DOT libraries at <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/library/dotlist.html>. Bookmarks and direct links (versus searching) account for around 50% of the hits. All of this detailed information comes from Site Meter, a powerful free website tracking tool. Click on the Site Meter icon at the bottom of any of the Mn/DOT web pages to see the information Jerry can gather on the utility of their web content: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/library/access.html>.

Staff

Jerry Baldwin, Director
Jim Byerly, Systems Librarian
Qin Tang, Technical Services Librarian
Barb Hogan, Library Technician – Acquisitions
Olive Nerem, Library Technician - Interlibrary Loans
Linda Christen, Check-Out & Reception
Pam Gonzalez , Periodicals/Routing Clerk

Physical Space

The Mn/DOT library is an exceptional facility with a very traditional library feel, with the exception of the reference area. The reference desk is located in an office space with a glass front, and while it's not positioned at the entry and out in the open as reference desks often are, it's visible and very accessible. There is a reference area with a large table, map case, public use PCs and quiet study carrels. The library is very spacious with plenty of room for the collection and the staff's work spaces. Everyone has their own private cubicle at the back of the library, and there is a work area for processing newly cataloged items. The library is the only work space in the Mn/DOT building open to the public. View the floorplan [here](#).

Collection

17,800 monographs (titles)

700 periodicals – 350 active titles

35,000 reports on microfiche

1,000 VHS tapes

Online databases: Dialog, TRANSPORT, Factiva, many others through statewide program

300 CD-ROMS; 10 DVDs

24 linear feet of vertical files

Mn/DOT has an extensive reference collection that contains many of the customary reference sources used across disciplines and library types. Jerry tries to impress upon the department that the answer isn't always in print – he stresses that access to experts is really key. So keeping sources like the Encyclopedia of Associations in the reference collection is an example of where more general resources have been very effective in leading the librarians at Mn/DOT and their customers to the best sources of knowledge – the practitioners.

Mn/DOT Expectations for the Pooled Fund Study

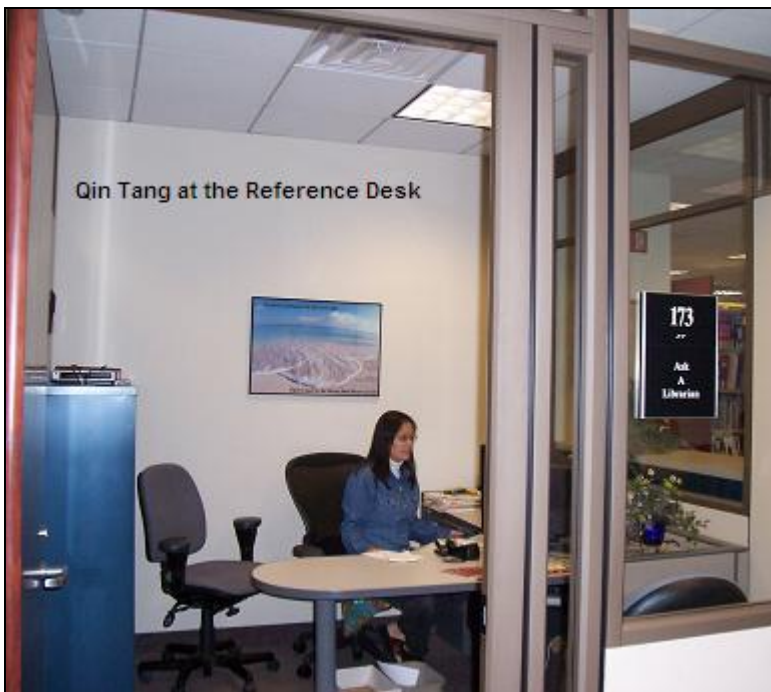
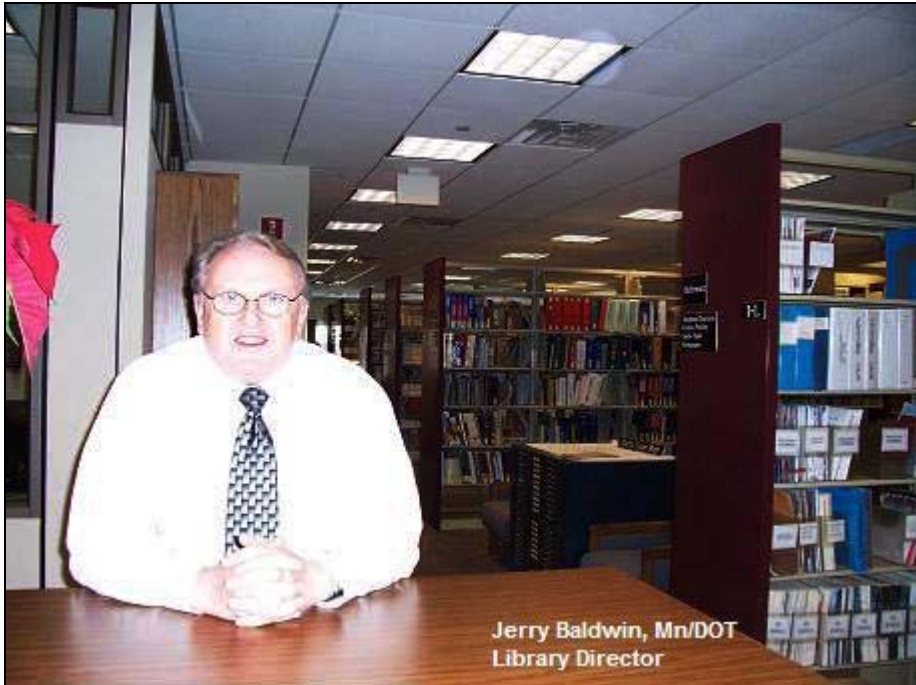
Mn/DOT values technology and has allowed the library to lead in its development since the beginning. They had the first authorized PCs, the first CD-ROM network, the first-online searching capability, used bulletin boards and gophers from the start of the internet and led the development of the department's first web site. In 1994 the library was part of the Communications department which was in charge of internet services from those very earliest days. Minnesota state agency libraries are included in most library programs funded by the state legislature and therefore Mn/DOT Library can provide its customers many services that would otherwise not be available. Jerry points out that this is a factor missing in the transportation sector as a whole. He believes that if we can grow a national network we could provide sophisticated library and information services across the board.

Mn/DOT is well-positioned with-in the department as a valued part of the Research department. Jerry is very good with numbers and has been able to quantify the value of library services and justify the library's budget with easily understood cost/benefit analyses¹. Their staffing level, although less than their peak in 1998, is sufficient to maintain critical services due to decreased demand as a result of department layoffs, but not to develop and maintain the collections or providing adequate marketing and outreach. Available funding allows the library to maintain a deposit account with MINITEX, their regional OCLC services provider sufficient to cover online services. However, Jerry points out that the library, at present, does not have a dedicated budget and is always aware that the library could be eliminated at anytime. What is Mn/DOT's motive for joining the pooled fund study? Everyone who has worked with Jerry over the years knows the answer – a deep commitment to establishing transportation knowledge networks and helping other transportation libraries achieve more with the help of libraries who are more secure within

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their organizations. Jerry's position on the trend of doing more with less is that this is a myth. Due to increasing costs and the growing number of producers of transportation information, just staying even requires more investment in information services. Jerry believes that TKNs are part of the answer. He has been working toward this, as have others in our group, for many years.

Photos:



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More about Mn/DOT

[Mn/DOT Library](#)
[Mn/DOT Library Catalog](#)