

Date: 14 February 2006
Site: Washington State DOT Library
Staff: Leni Oman, Director, Office of Research & Library Services; Steve Cochran, Librarian

## Site Visit Summary

### History & Overview

Washington State Department of Transportation was formerly the Washington Department of Highways until it merged into the Department of Transportation in 1977. It now has approximately 6,000 employees. The WSDOT Library was operated as a place-based branch library of the Washington State Library (WSL) until 2003. During this time, librarians were WSL employees place-based at the WSDOT Library. In 2003, the single staff position was transferred to WSDOT into the Office of Research & Library Services. The operating budget (including staff costs) started at \$172,500 and has increased to nearly \$380,000. The collection budget remains around \$30,000 biennium, a figure Leni and Steve are working at growing slowly. Other offices also pay for some online subscriptions and purchases for the library.

The library's most recent move was to a smaller space in the basement of the WSDOT headquarters in 2001. In 2003 there was a proposed 59% cut to the WSL's budget. The actual cut ended up being 27%. This followed an earlier cut and move to a smaller facility. In 2003, the WSL was also directed to provide support to the public but not to state agencies. As a result, several services were cut, including subscriptions to a number of databases used by WSDOT (Compendex and Biosis), and direct mailing to state agencies. WSDOT is currently the only agency not staffed by state library although one other state agency is interested in using the WSDOT model. Leni and Steve feel that it is in the best interest of WSDOT library to remain independent due to the downward trend of the WSL in recent years.

A WSL Digital Library Initiative was laid out in 2004, but not funded. Despite that, the digital library initiative moves forward, but at a slower pace than originally anticipated.

Marketing library services is a major focus at WSDOT. Leni writes a monthly report to the agency executives including library news and statistics, and details of recent reference requests. This has helped agency executives understand that employees are using the Library and value many of the services offered such as interlibrary loan and reference support. A survey<sup>1</sup> was conducted of library use and awareness within the department. The survey was introduced with a story, *The Case of the Missing Library*<sup>2</sup>, which intrigued respondents. The conclusion<sup>3</sup> of the tale was presented with the results of the survey. This is an example of a clever dual-purpose marketing effort. The survey collected information to aid the library in better serving their clientele, and the interesting presentation raised awareness of the library. Leni has developed a relationship with the Communications Office to discuss knowledge management make Public Information Officers aware of the resources available in the library. Steve continues to meet with them whenever possible. Leni asked to submit a one page flyer into new employee orientation packets but was turned down. However, she is interested in pursuing a tactic employed at the Montana DOT, Oregon DOT and others, to send out a welcome email to new employees describing library

<sup>1</sup> WSDOT Library Survey, November 2003, © 1996-2000.

<sup>2</sup> *The Case of the Missing Library*, a Sherlock Holmes-style detective narrative introduction to a library awareness survey (WSDOT Library Survey, November 2003), was posted on the WSDOT intranet 12/23/03.

<sup>3</sup> *Episode 2: The Case of the Missing Library*, posted 11/8/04.

services and resources. A folio (descriptive pamphlet) is in development for the library as well. Many WSDOT offices and activities are described in folios with useful information and contacts. Steve plans to make a complete folio collection available in the library.

Leni describes WSDOT as an innovative agency continually interested in improvement opportunities. Steve and Leni hope to use this spirit of innovation to apply cutting edge technology to improve information gathering and delivery methods. There is interest in developing wikis as a project tool for their unparalleled utility in presenting collaborative expertise. There is also interest in expanding the use RSS feeds (WSDOT is using Google News alerts now) to deliver news feeds directly to users email. Leni and Steve also expressed interest in blogs as a way to communicate and disseminate information.

We discussed the development of a knowledge management portal at WSDOT. Leni and Steve agree it is time to ask *What do we know?* A knowledge management portal would bring together internal and external information resources and make them available to users via tools on their desktops. Communities of practice could follow.

## **Staff**

### *Steve Cochran, Librarian*

Steve began his position at WSDOT in December, 2005. He comes from Indiana, where he was the director of the Alexandrian Public Library in Mount Vernon. He was assistant director for four years prior to that, and was a rare book cataloger at the Old Cathedral Library and Museum in Vincennes, Indiana.

### *Michel Wendt, Reference/Research Librarian*

Mike began in October of 2005 as a permanent part-time employee, and moves to full time effective April of 2006. He comes from Wisconsin by way of Missouri, and has worked as a Technology Support Librarian at the Medical College of Wisconsin, and as a References and Instruction Librarian at Southwest Missouri State University.

### *Andrew Poultridge, Interlibrary Loan and Collection Services Associate*

Andrew began in August of 2004 as a permanent part-time employee. He has previous experience in collection management and interlibrary Loan, and bibliographic instruction at the South Puget Sound Community College Library.

## **Physical Space**

The WSDOT library was moved to a smaller space in the basement of the headquarters offices in 2001. At the time of the move, there was a perception that removal to the basement was a sign that the library was being closed. Leni and Steve continue to raise the library's profile through marketing efforts. The library has been remodeled once since July 2003 and is planning to expand by at least 10 ft. in the coming months. Leni plans to continue making requests for more space in anticipation of growth.

## **Collection**

The collection contains multimodal subject coverage, strongly geared toward highway due to availability of materials and usage of highways as major mode of transportation. A unique mode in the collection is ferries, which are a common form of transportation in the Pacific Northwest. WSDOT's budget has always been heavily funded in highways and ferries. Currently there are two organizational schemes in the collection. Most of the materials are cataloged and classified in

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Dewey, and some 3,000-4,000 reports are in a now obsolete numerical scheme, making it ideal for recon project.

### **WSDOT Expectations for the Pooled Fund Study**

WSDOT is looking for collection management tools, a way to unify the ability to search for and find highly diverse types of information such as GIS, raw data, records, as-built drawings, and CAD drawings. Steve believes the Transportation Research Thesaurus is perhaps not robust enough to meet the need for a precise controlled vocabulary, and needs to be heavily enriched with both "See/Use" and "See also/Related terms" references. WSDOT is happy with their technical services contract with the state library for interlibrary loan and original cataloging. Collection management tools and ILL rate reduction are Leni's priorities for the pooled fund and would like to see costs reduced further through participation in the pooled fund. Both Steve and Leni feel a collection management policy is needed. They both echoed John Cherney's insight into the need to tame the proliferation of documents that continue to result from PDF publishing. They both see an enormous value in locating, organizing and accessing valuable PDF documents in a centralized location to eliminate duplication. Overall, both express keen interest in participating in formation of national transportation knowledge network, and are looking forward to evaluating the pooled fund's first year results.

### **Photos:**





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[Organizational Chart](#)