



Caltrans Division of Research,
Innovation and System Information

Research

Notes

Planning, Policy,
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Programming

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Project Title:
Transportation Library Connectivity

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Transportation Library Connectivity, TPF-5(442)

A forum for public agencies to identify and address the key issues and challenges in National Transportation Knowledge Network (NTKN) and identify gaps in coverage.

WHAT IS THE NEED?

Traditionally, a small group of libraries were responsible for providing information services within the transportation community. They played an important part in connecting organization staff with the resources they need to perform their jobs more efficiently; resources that included library catalogs, training materials, information services, expert connections within the organizations, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) ePub gatekeeping, and other activities, thereby increasing job satisfaction and assisting in workforce retention.

Yet, the transportation research community faces increasing challenges. Many state Department of Transportations (DOTs) are experiencing a knowledge retention crisis as more employees either leave the workforce and are not replaced or are lured into the private sector. Knowledge management strategies, often researched and employed by librarians, are increasingly becoming vital for the smooth functioning of organizations.

Additionally, several state DOTs have shut down their libraries in the past several years, and many organizations rely on non-librarian knowledge resource managers to fill this role, if this role is filled at all. This has led to a lack of standardization among knowledge resource professionals.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

The research team will work with the National Transportation Knowledge Network (NTKN) to gauge effectiveness of current libguides and identify gaps in coverage. Additionally, they will work with the National Transportation Library (NTL) to further the goal of cooperative digitization, assisting members in carrying out best practices when digitizing materials, and assisting with



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American Disability Act (ADA) compliance issues as needed. Lastly, the researchers will hold an annual meeting in conjunction with the AASHTO-RAC conference to discuss implementation of the study's goals and facilitate communication between member organizations.

WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

The goal of this study is to support coordinated development of transportation libraries as well as research organizations without dedicated libraries, the following objectives will be undertaken. These objectives will be accomplished through member activities and partnerships with professional groups such as the Transportation Research Board (TRB) Library and Information Science for Transportation Committee (LIST), the Special Libraries Association (SLA) Transportation Division, and NTKN.

Completed projects will be stored permanently at the NTKN and the NTL for public use and will be completed within the three-year span of the pooled fund study.

1. Develop a toolkit of recommendations and best practices for transportation research organizations that do not have a transportation librarian.
2. Partner with the NTKN to analyze effectiveness of libguides, identify gaps in coverage, and survey the needs of DOTs.
3. Develop a white paper analyzing the current condition of transportation information infrastructure, including review of pertinent knowledge management resources.
4. Develop a cooperative digitization project among members, in partnership with the NTL, to convert copies of older materials to digital formats, as well as providing ADA compliance support for digital documents.
5. Enhance communication between group members (hold annual pooled fund meeting in conjunction with the AASHTO-RAC conference).

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT?

With the number of transportation librarians shrinking nationwide and the number of complex issues facing transportation researchers only increasing, several solutions will be developed in the proposed study to remedy the aforementioned problems. To increase professionalism and standardization among non-library information managers, a toolkit will be developed that will offer guidance on best practices and be scalable to the research organization's size and abilities.

Separately, a white paper on the changing nature of transportation libraries in the 21st century will be produced. This document will provide a roadmap for transportation organizations to follow with respect to current conditions of transportation information infrastructure. It will identify recurring problems, recommend solutions, and help organizations adapt to the rapid change that is occurring across the research landscape.

WHAT IS THE PROGRESS TO DATE?

Project manager, Michael Mlina continued to work with pooled fund members on their digitization requests.

Pooled fund members discussed further development of Section 508 support. CTC & Associates continued to provide remediation assistance by reviewing documents submitted by members.

The Resource Guide Working group reviewed potential topics on which CTC could create more guides.

CTC submitted a draft of the white paper (now called a synthesis of practice) entitled Transportation Libraries and Information Centers: Current Practices and Future Directions. The white paper working group reviewed the draft and sent feedback to CTC.

- Michael worked with group members to arrange travel for the AASHTO RAC summer meeting.
- The initial draft of the toolkit for non-librarians was reviewed by the toolkit working group and provided feedback to CTC.
- Group members voted to extend the pooled fund until February 2025.
- Throughout this period Michael answered emails and maintained correspondence with pooled fund members over various topics and questions they had.

Plan For Next Quarter:

Conduct regular meetings between CTC and working groups to review progress on objectives.

Work with pooled fund members on the digitization objective.

Review drafts of resource guides, white paper surveys, and toolkit for non-librarians.

Schedule meetings with pooled fund members to review progress and answer any questions they may have.