

# **METRO NEWS**

June 2006

## Jerry Baldwin and Mn/DOT's Special Librarians offer a world of information

A favorite poster hangs on the wall of Mn/DOT Library's reference office. The caption on the seaside photo reads, "A horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight. There's more to the library than the eye can see." Those words sum up the philosophy behind the work done by Jerry Baldwin and his staff of "special" librarians.



Mn/DOT Library Director Jerry Baldwin.  
Photo by Teresa Callies

What is the difference between a "special library" and an academic or public library? A special library is not based on self-service as are the other two library models. Special librarians offer in-depth knowledge of the library, and have the know-how to track down and locate existing information.

"We can get you any piece of information, even if it hasn't been published. We can put you in touch with any expert," Baldwin said. "We have connections with 50,000 libraries around the world."

He added, "If you don't know exactly what you need, we can help you refine your question. If you are working on a problem and don't know if anyone else has worked on it, the library team can find out for you."

This service-oriented library staff offers speed and accuracy in helping Mn/DOT employees. For example, an employee in maintenance recently requested four specific articles and reports. The library team located all the information within two hours, said Baldwin. That's quite a change from 34 years ago, when Baldwin began his career.

At that time, everything was in print—now information can be accessed electronically.

"In addition to the library services our team offers, everything is provided to the customer on the desktop," explained Baldwin. "You have the resources of the leading state DOT library in the United States at your fingertips. All you have to do is access our library page on the web." (The library page is located on both [iHub.library](http://iHub.library) and the external web site [www.dot.state.mn.us/library](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/library).)

The library offers a full range of electronic documents. More than 2,300 Mn/DOT publications are listed in their catalog, with more than 500 accessible, full-text online. There are 18,000 items in the overall catalog, with 2,000 available full-text online.

Along with a strong knowledge base, Mn/DOT's special librarians offer an intangible factor to Mn/DOT employees: a passion for helping people find information. In Baldwin's case, his love of information began as a child--his trips to the St. Paul Public library were among his favorite activities. As a student worker at the University of Minnesota's St. Paul campus library, he discovered he liked reference and enjoyed helping patrons. He even remembers the first questions he researched, which had to do with marshmallows and snowshoes.

Mn/DOT's library, which will be marking its 50th anniversary next April, is located in room 175 at the Transportation Building in downtown St. Paul. The telephone numbers are 651/296-2385 or 800/657-3774.

By Teresa Callies, Metro Public Affairs