**April 2012**

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- May 10, 21st Minitex Interlibrary Loan Conference, Continuing Education and Conference Center, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, for program and registration, see: https://www.minitex.umn.edu/Events/Conferences/ILL2012.aspx
- June 18, 10th Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Digital Library, Continuing Education and Conference Center, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, for program and registration, see: http://www.mndigital.org/training/meetings/
- Aug. 10, Minitex Public Library Node Meeting, Hennepin County’s Brookdale Library, Brooklyn Center, MN. This meeting is designed for frontline interlibrary loan staff and supervisors of public libraries in Minnesota. Information will be distributed to node library staff.

**40 Years of Collaboration – the Story of Minitex**

*Cecelia Boone*

We would like to welcome you to this special issue of the *Minitex MESSENGER* - an issue that helps tell the story of what Minitex and participating libraries have accomplished in the past 40 years and where libraries and Minitex will go in the future.

- A special article describes the history of Minitex. The story by Tim Brady, a Twin Cities freelance journalist, discusses the strength of the “wow factor” that has helped Minitex grow.
- We note the retirement of Bill DeJohn and his 27+ years of leadership of Minitex and its participating libraries.
- Sara Ring of the Minitex staff writes about interviewing library leaders about their careers and their experiences with Minitex.
- We report on 40th Anniversary observances and note events to come.

And, we have new news too!
The Libraries’ Library
Tim Brady

Conceived as a way to bring the University of Minnesota Libraries to every citizen of the state, Minitex celebrates 40 years of excelling at that mission and much, much more.

Minitex has always kept a low profile, yet few state and University enterprises have had as much praise heaped upon them by patrons over the years. Born 40 years ago as a means to share the library resources of the University of Minnesota with libraries throughout the state. Minitex was housed initially in borrowed space in Wilson Library. It has since moved to the ground level of Elmer L. Andersen Library on the west bank of the Twin Cities Campus, where it continues to thrive unobtrusively while the rest of the University of Minnesota hums around it.

Minitex’s quiet effectiveness was noted almost from the start. In 1971, John Robson, Director of Instructional Resources at Southwest Minnesota State College in Marshall, called the newly invented state and University of Minnesota library resource system “a revolutionary and innovative concept. Its success is due mainly to the willingness of the University to make its materials available, and to provide necessary support services. I can think of no better way that the University can serve the entire state than by making the wealth of its resources available to all its citizens. MINITEX is a giant step in that direction.”

Speaking in the same year, Jan Schroeder, Assistant Director of the Duluth Public Library, said, “The informational impact of Minitex has been tremendous for a region that is remote from large resource institutions [like the U of M, Twin Cities].”

“When students are asked how they feel about Minitex, they say, ‘Wow!,’” added Rudy Johnson, Assistant Professor and Librarian at the University of Minnesota, Duluth.

The “revolutionary and innovative concept” -- the “wow factor” that Robson, Schroeder, and Johnson were raving about 40 years ago -- was a pilot project, initially funded in 1969 through a grant from the Louis and Maude Hill Foundation and state and federal grant funds from the Minnesota State Department of Education. Over the next two years, a system was developed that allowed quick delivery of library materials from the University’s numerous libraries on the Minneapolis and St. Paul campuses to the University of Minnesota, Duluth; the University of Minnesota, Morris; and nine other public and private colleges and universities and public libraries around the state.

Each cooperating library was hooked into the Minitex offices at Wilson Library by means of a teletype machine. In fact, the acronym for the enterprise — MINITEX (the service’s name, now rendered with only an initial capital letter) — is a reminder of the institution’s history: initially, it stood for Minnesota Interlibrary Teletype Experiment.

Requests for materials could be sent day or night via the teletype machine. The requests for material would arrive at the Minitex office in Minneapolis and be printed in duplicate by the machine. Minitex workers -- primarily University of Minnesota, Twin Cities students -- would search the University’s card catalog for the materials requested, and then, these same workers would hustle to the various libraries around campus to collect the volumes and articles needed, which were then shipped to outstate libraries. All in a day’s time.

This was a new service, not just to Minnesota, but to the nation as a whole. While more efficient and comprehensive interlibrary service had been a much-discussed, and much-longed-for, innovation in the world of libraries prior to Minitex, this project was the first of its kind in the country. The pilot was a test to see if rapid service was feasible, if the costs of such a program were manageable, and whether the shared resource service would strain the heart and core of the program -- the
University’s own library service. On each count, Minitex passed with flying colors.

Today the “wow factor” at Minitex is outlined by an alphabet soup of services provided by and through Minitex and its library partners around the state and region:

- **The Electronic Library of Minnesota (ELM)** is an extensive collection of online publications made available to all Minnesota residents through their libraries or the ELM portal (elm4you.org).

- **The Minnesota Library Information Network (MnLINK) Gateway** is a search engine and interlibrary loan system that allows home access to the online catalogs of almost all libraries in Minnesota and other resources like ELM, electronic books, and online journals (mnlinkgateway.org).

- **The Minnesota Library Access Center (MLAC)**, a gigantic library storage facility for lesser-used important volumes owned by Minnesota libraries, is housed within the limestone cliffs on the banks of the Mississippi River, deep in the recesses beneath Elmer L. Andersen Library (minitex.umn.edu/storage).

- **AskMN** is an online chat reference service that puts information seekers in touch with a live librarian, day or night, 24/7 (askmn.org).

- **Minitex is the administrative home for the Minnesota Digital Library (MDL)**, which helps provide the technical foundation for the digitization of materials from libraries and the state’s other cultural heritage organizations. Its signature collection, Minnesota Reflections, contains more than 100,000 images, maps, and documents (mndigital.org).

- And, of course, Minitex’s document delivery service -- now called **Resource Sharing** -- continues as it has from the beginning, delivering materials to libraries from Rapid City to Rochester and from Williston to Winona with remarkable promptness and efficiency through participating academic and regional libraries. The system has evolved through the use of new technologies to include delivery of materials in print and electronic formats. (minitex.umn.edu/sharing).

For all this, Minitex is well known by librarians but nearly invisible to the thousands of patrons whose libraries rely on Minitex services. To help raise that visibility, Minitex created MnKnows -- Dig Deeper @ Your Library (mnknows.org), a public-facing portal to give Minnesotans one-stop access to these online library services. In addition to connecting users directly to Minitex services, the site solicits stories from those users, “not only to make improvements, but also to share with legislators and ... library administrators about the usefulness of this site.”

The comments have been overwhelmingly positive, with ELM alone generating a 60-page collection of over 200 stories, including one from a high school librarian who said ELM “is like an Emergency Room of knowledge. Without ELM resources, we would struggle mightily to provide accurate, timely and reliable resources for our students.” One middle school student even reported that ELM “saved my school career and kept me from detention about 9000 times.”

Other Minitex services have generated equally enthusiastic responses, like this one sent from a user—she signed herself “Grateful” in Northwest Minnesota—who was searching for a book for a study group:

*I am AMAZED! . . . Late Tuesday evening, I search [my regional library] for author Edward Carpenter’s 1912 book, ‘Towards Democracy’. No book. No luck on Google either. I search MnLINK immediately. Results: All University of Minnesota campuses have this book, as does Hennepin County. . . .This morning as I checked my email at 8:15 am, my Bemidji Public Library notified me the book: ‘Towards Democracy’ was in Bemidji. I picked the book up as the library opened one hour later. THIS is SERVICE. This is beyond amazement that anything can happen this quickly in any business. AND I didn’t have to pay overnight shipping or extra for less than 3 day service. Truly I am grateful for knowing I can get any book in Minnesota, right here in Bemidji, and sometimes in less than 3 days.*
The Early Years: Tight Quarters and Beer Boxes

Funded by the state legislature in 1971, Minitex was created under the auspices of the Minnesota Higher Education Coordinating Board, which contracted with the University of Minnesota library system to provide space for Minitex as well as access to its collections. Minitex's original mission was “to facilitate resource sharing among academic and other libraries in Minnesota in order to strengthen the library services provided to students, faculty, and researchers in Minnesota and to contribute to cost effectiveness of library services to individual libraries.”

It’s hard to say if early Minitex users who sent those encomiums from Marshall and Duluth would have been as impressed with the system had they taken a peek at its offices. Crammed into a basement space at Wilson Library, Minitex was stuck at the far end of “the restroom hall,” to borrow the words of Mary Rae Oxborrow, who, along with first director, Alice Wilcox, constituted the original professional staff at Minitex. To soften the concrete walls and floors, Wilcox brought in some indoor/outdoor sample carpeting. A Peter Max-style illustration of a winged messenger was painted by one of the workers to liven up the entrance, and a pair of Indian blankets was hung by Wilcox to give color to the interior.

For more than a decade, Minitex remained a tightly packed office primarily composed of Wilcox, Oxborrow, a limited number of other fulltime staff, and a growing number of student workers trying to navigate through desks, boxes of books, the teletype machine, and stacks of library requests from the ever-expanding number of patrons.

Nancy Walton, the current Minnesota State Librarian, was working then in the Ames Library, which was housed near Minitex. “I can still remember hearing the clacking of the teletype machines through the walls,” she says.

Kathy Drozd, who started out as a student worker in the early 1970s and is now Assistant Director for Delivery Services and MLAC, says, “‘Excuse me,’ was the most commonly heard phrase in the office.” In the early years, the delivery service used sturdy beer boxes, painted and color-coded, to hold books and documents that were shipped out to various libraries. “These were coded according to the cities that they were being sent to,” says Drozd. “I think Northfield was green, for instance. So we’d pack up the green beer boxes headed for Northfield and drive them in a University van to the Greyhound bus depot in Minneapolis, where we’d buy tickets for the boxes to be delivered. We’d also pick up any returning boxes at the station coming up from Northfield.”

“Everybody did everything,” says Oxborrow, who recently retired from her position as reference librarian in the Plum Creek [Minnesota] Library System, “whether it was checking the card catalog or going to the libraries to pull documents and books, or heading to the bus depot.”

Minitex grew quickly. Between 1969 and 1971, the number of requests at Minitex more than tripled, from around 20,000 to over 70,000. From 1971 to

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There were three printed editions of MULS 1972 - 1983. Updates and complete MULS sets were issued on microfiche 1976- 2001. Holdings have been available online since 1987.

Winged Minitex Messenger

Kathy Drozd, Dave Paulson, and Alice Wilcox in 1994

Mike O’Rourke with delivery boxes in the 1970’s.
1976, requests doubled to over 140,000. “Here we were, starting to get a national reputation,” recalls Drozd, “but if you stepped into our offices, you just saw boxes on shelves getting set for delivery.”

By the mid-1970s, the original staff had doubled. New services -- like a very popular reference referral system -- were instituted, and the number of libraries in the system expanded dramatically. For the first time, libraries from South Dakota and North Dakota were included in the service. Because the number of requests for journal articles at Minitex grew exponentially, a project to create a unified list of journals owned by Minnesota libraries was started. Nicknamed MULS (initially, Minnesota Union List of Serials, and later, Minitex Union List of Serials), the painstaking efforts to discover and collate the holdings of libraries around the state and region required the hand-coding work of about 30 students of all backgrounds and stripes—“They came from everywhere: Cyprus, Greece, and Thailand to Brainerd,” according to Cecelia Boone, who joined the Minitex staff in 1978 and soon began to supervise the student workers.

Alice Wilcox, the original director of Minitex, was a “visionary leader,” according to Drozd, and “a very special person,” in Boone’s estimation. “She was delightful company,” says Oxborrow. But, all agree she could be demanding and impatient. Wilcox expected a lot from her staff, and the staff delivered. Dave Paulson, Minitex Resource Sharing manager, recalls being asked at a management seminar in the early 1980s how many requests Minitex could handle in a given day? He was stumped, trying to come up with a number. “All I could think to say was, ‘We have to do whatever comes in.’”

Veterans of Minitex’s early years are unanimous in applauding the collegial staff. Boone remembers students singing the alphabet song as they labored over MULS coding; Paulson remembers organizing a Minitex softball team and a particular game in which Minitex challenged the staff of the University’s Bio-Medical Library to a game at Riverside Park. “Alice offered us a case of beer for every run we beat them by,” he recalls. “We won by 17. She wound up giving us $85, so we bought a couple of kegs.”

The team’s pitcher was Mary Rae Oxborrow, whose memories of those early years include the pleasures and difficulties of traveling around the region to help teach librarians new to the Minitex system its ins-and-outs. On one late fall excursion to Rapid City, South Dakota, she found herself with a day off in the Black Hills and decided to visit the Crazy Horse monument that was being constructed in the south end of the mountains. On her way back to Rapid City, she decided to cut through the Hills by means of the narrow, winding Needles Highway -- a mistake. About six miles from Custer State Park, she got stuck in a snow-packed mountain pass as the sun was setting over South Dakota. “I was raised in the Midwest and knew that I was supposed to stay with my car when it got stuck in snow,” says Oxborrow, “but I just didn’t think it was advisable there.”

She got out of her car and trudged for an hour or two before finally finding a cabin. She knocked on the door, but found no one home. The sun had long-since disappeared, and she knew she had to stay there for the night. Using some of that beer-box ingenuity accrued at Minitex, she scrounged around until she found some plastic garbage bags on the property, clothed herself in these, and cuddled up on the porch for a long, cold night. The next day, still wearing the garbage sacks, she slogged back toward the highway where she was rescued by a Custer Park employee, who was no doubt impressed by the perseverance of this Minitex ambassador.
A Modern Minitex: From Teletype to World Wide Web

There were seventeen inches of snow on the ground at airport when Bill DeJohn got off the plane in Minneapolis to interview for the position as the second director of Minitex in 1984. He came with a long and distinguished background in complex and multi-state library systems. After growing up in St. Louis and getting an undergraduate degree in Russian Civilization at the University of Missouri and a graduate degree in library science at the University of Pittsburgh, DeJohn worked in a succession of libraries, including the state libraries of Missouri and Illinois. He arrived at Minitex from the University of Washington in Seattle, where he'd headed a resource system that also included the Pacific Northwest states, two Canadian provinces, and Alaska. “I felt like I knew the landscape of this kind of system,” says DeJohn.

The framework of Minitex was in good shape when he came to Minnesota. In fact, DeJohn was surprised to discover the depth of collaboration between Minitex and the libraries around the state. Soon after his arrival, he learned that the Minitex central offices was housed at the University of Minnesota in the Twin Cities, but Minitex lives and breathes throughout its network of participating libraries of all types. DeJohn says, “While I was traveling to libraries to touch base and introduce myself, I noticed in several of the academic libraries a sign hanging from the ceiling that said ‘Minitex.’ I thought that was novel! That libraries all through the system were calling their interlibrary loan offices ‘Minitex’ just seemed neat!”

For all its good works, however, DeJohn knew that if Minitex were to continue to thrive it would need to head in new directions. “The question was, how do we make this place better?” says DeJohn.

The technological revolution helped steer DeJohn and Minitex toward an answer to that question. So did the inclinations of state funding sources. “Ann Kelley from the [Minnesota] Office of Higher Education let us know early on that if we wanted money from the state legislature, we should go after technology funds,” says DeJohn.

Many members of the Minnesota Legislature, like state senator LeRoy Stumpf, former state senator Steve Kelley, and long-time member of the Minnesota State House of Representatives, the late Irvin Anderson, were instrumental in advocating for Minitex. “There was an idea of a virtual library floating around in the early to mid-90s and people in the legislature saw it as an exciting notion,” says Senator Kelley, “Minitex was seen as a great vehicle because it had this history of being in the business of sharing resources, which was also central to the idea of creating a virtual library. Minitex had a good story. It was built around cooperation and was a national leader in what it did. It was a model of efficient use of resources, too.”

With the help of libraries throughout the state and in response to the needs of the University Libraries and other participating libraries, Minitex services again expanded. A $12 million state grant funded the development of MnLINK and the MnLINK Gateway system between 1997 and 2004. Funding for ELM and the Minnesota Digital Library became available in the late 1990s into the 2000s. The teletype machines were replaced by computers and email, and the Web emerged.

Most recently, Minitex was a partner with the University of Minnesota in creation of a lasting library storage facility, which culminated in the April 8, 2000, dedication of the Elmer L. Andersen Library. Built into the banks along the Mississippi River, the Minitex offices are now located only partially underground, with a reading room for users of MLAC materials, windows overlooking the Mississippi, and enough space to make all the “Excuse me’s” a recollection of yesteryear.

The beer box–themed distribution center is ancient history as well. Now, a lengthy conveyor belt winds its way from the ground floor offices, down 85 feet to a spacious loading dock in the bowels of Andersen. There, little trains of plastic-covered bins,
full of books and documents, are picked up by privately contracted delivery services (not Greyhound buses) and driven off to academic, state, and regional libraries in the three-state region.

Next to the loading docks are two gigantic, climate-controlled caverns—each two stories high and the length of two football fields—that house row after row of shelved documents. In one cavern are the University Libraries’ archives and special collections; the other holds the Minnesota Library Access Center (MLAC), which is managed by Minitex.

MLAC was first proposed by the Minnesota Library Planning Task Force to house lesser-used, but important, print materials from the University and other libraries across the state. Minitex was designated to operate MLAC as part of the University of Minnesota Libraries.

While the number of services provided through the Minitex system continues to expand, those that have existed from the beginning continue to grow and meet new challenges. The document delivery service, the organization’s original function that’s now called Resource Sharing, processed 431,000 requests for books, journal articles, and other materials in 2010. The Minitex Delivery Service staff handled a staggering 1.07 million items that same year.

A Minitex service called MEDD (Minitex Electronic Document Delivery) is an increasingly busy and important part of the Resource Sharing department. Through MEDD, about 85 percent of all copy requests were scanned and delivered electronically to individual patrons or requesting libraries.

As Minitex moves into its next 40 years of operations, it does so without the man who served as director for the last 27 years. Having interviewed for the position in the wake of a snowstorm, it is fitting that Bill DeJohn’s last days as director were in the midst of winter 2012. He retired effective January 11, following a retirement celebration attended by more than 250 of his colleagues and friends from across the state and the Dakotas.

The backbone of Minitex remains the University of Minnesota Libraries, and its director, University Librarian Wendy Pradt Lougee, has high praise for Bill DeJohn and his tenure at Minitex. “He’s always been concerned about and understood what people really need from this service.”

Lougee expects the “symbiotic” relationship between the University Libraries and Minitex will continue for many years to come. “Minitex has a home here and serves a great function for University. This is a wonderful outward-facing part of what we do.”

So Minitex moves forward . . . .

Farewell for Bill DeJohn

Cecelia Boone

Bill DeJohn’s retirement celebration on Jan. 10 was a time to look back – and forward – and recognize Bill’s immense contributions to Minitex, to Minitex participating libraries, and to the three-state Minitex region.

The Jan. 10 event, scheduled one day before Bill’s actual Jan. 11 retirement date, was held in the Willey Hall Atrium at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. Yes, the crowd of more than 250 was too large for the space originally planned in Elmer L. Andersen Library so it was moved to more spacious quarters. Terri Fishel, Library Director, Macalester College; Joan Roca, Dean of Library Services, Minnesota State University, Mankato; Tom Shaughnessy, former University Librarian, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities; and Wendy Lougee, current University Librarian, shared remarks and reminiscences.

Video from the event is available on the From the Director page of the Minitex website (http://www.minitex.umn.edu/Communications/ Director/) as is a parting message from Bill. Photos are also available on the Minitex Flickr site (http://www.flickr.com/groups/minitex/)

From Bill’s message: “I look forward to seeing you around library gatherings over the next several years, and I wish all of you the best in the years to come as you maintain and improve library services to meet the evolving challenges that are before all of us.”

We all wish you all the best, Bill (and Kathi, too)!
Passing of Alice Wilcox

Cecelia Boone

Minitex staff are saddened to learn of the passing of Alice Wilcox, Minitex’s founding director who led the organization from 1969-1982. Alice died March 21 after an extended illness. Her vision and dedication were indispensable to the creation of the Minitex network that exists today.

Alice was selected to head the Minitex pilot project after working as a circulation librarian on the staff of the University of Minnesota Libraries since 1964. She served on the National Commission on New Technological Users of Copyright Works and the National Commission on Libraries and Information Sciences’ Committee on Periodical System. She also received numerous state and national awards. Her early employment included working with World War II refugees in Germany for the Lutheran World Federation from 1948-1951 after receiving her bachelor’s degree from St. Olaf College in 1948.

Many of the individuals interviewed for the Minitex Oral History Project (http://www.minitex.umn.edu/40th/OralHistory.aspx) spoke of the essential role that Alice played in Minitex’s history. In preparing for my interview, I found the following quotation that seemed so thoroughly Alice, I could almost hear her voice speaking the words. She was talking about those 1970s-1980s steps toward library automation.

Lost Opportunities

1. We frequently lost the opportunity to use library automation to rethink the total library system instead of providing tools to perform specific tasks. Planning for automation should include a process to reassert and/or redefine the mission of the individual library. It should include asking what we are trying to do and how can we utilize new technology instead of how to automate. Automation will necessitate procedural and organizational change.

2. We lost the opportunity to maintain a healthy balance between the public and private sector. Instead of appreciating the unique roles and contributions of each, we blurred the distinctions. We failed to understand the difference between being business-like and being a business. In addition to sitting on the sidelines as observers, we have often participated in the diminution of the not-for-profit sector. Witness the member/OCLC relationship change from cooperative to vendor. Witness the professional migration to the marketing arm of the corporation specializing in library products and services. . . . (This is from a presentation that Alice gave in 1984 to a symposium entitled “Experiences of Library Network Administrators.” See Resource Sharing and Information Networks, Vol. 2, No. 1 / 2, Fall/Winter 1984)

We do not have information other than that included in the brief item about Alice’s passing that appeared in the StarTribune on March 25-27. A private funeral was held. A guest book is available on the StarTribune website (http://tinyurl.com/79fajdh)

Minitex Transition News

Two quick items:

• Until a new permanent director is in place, Associate Directors Mary Parker and Becky Ringwelski will serve as interim co-directors. Feel free to continue to contact Minitex staff with questions as you have in the past — and, questions for the Director should go to Becky (e-ring@umn.edu, 612-624-0375) and/or Mary (m-park1@umn.edu, 612-624-1025). (Or 800-462-5348)

• The work of the Minitex Director search committee is proceeding. For more information see the website: http://www.lib.umn.edu/about/MinitexSearch
Minitex Oral History Project – How Minitex Came To Be
Sara Ring

When I started my professional library career in Minnesota, I was told that library services in the state were excellent, ahead of most others, especially in the area of resource sharing. For me, that statement always prompted the question, “Why do we have excellent library services, and what were the events or people that led us to where we are today?” For me, the question remained unanswered at that time, so I filed it away for later.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of Minitex as a legislatively funded program of the Minnesota Office of Higher Education and University of Minnesota Libraries (July 2011 – June 2012). In true Minitex fashion, we formed a small committee in Fall 2010 to begin planning ways to celebrate. For certain projects, it meant having to look in our central files to find answers to questions like, “When did our relationship with OCLC begin?” Or, “How many requests were filled in the very first year that Minitex was funded?” Some of these questions were answered easily by looking at past annual reports. Some were not so easily answered and required more research, and many times it involved talking to staff who were working at Minitex in the early 1970s and relying on memory and first-hand accounts. In addition to the more factual answers to our questions, some of the stories I heard about our early beginnings were so wonderful, yet only a few knew about them.

Given the fact that this is our 40th year and that I had my own questions about our library history in Minnesota, I decided to start an oral history project dubbed the Minitex Oral History Project. The project’s intent was to hear staff of Minitex participating institutions tell, in their own words, what it was like to work together in the early days (1971-1990s) on projects to improve library services. At the same time, I interviewed a few Minitex staff members in an attempt to capture a bit of our own institutional memory. I thought if I was lucky, perhaps when finished I would glean a few answers to the question “how did things come to be this way?” from the interviewees.

This article won’t answer that question (see the article by Tim Brady on page 2 to read the full history of Minitex), but I thought it would be interesting to look at the answers to a few of the questions. As you read on, you may notice underlying commonalities. I would add that the Minitex Oral History Project is just one approach to telling our story in the Upper Midwest. I hope it inspires other projects, and, at the very least, provides some context for new librarians who are just beginning their career in Minnesota.

At present, there are 15 Oral History Project recordings on the Minitex website. Visit the following webpage to listen: http://www.minitex.umn.edu/40th/OralHistory.aspx (The names and past positions of individuals I mention in this article are included at the very end.) Most were asked the same set of questions, with the exception of the Minitex staff members whom I interviewed. The questions were:

• Tell me about your first experience working in a library.
• Do you remember what first attracted you to the profession?
• Minitex started as a pilot project in 1969. Can you describe what you were doing around this time?
• Describe how library resources were shared at that time.
• In your experience, what were some of the events that led to the idea that eventually became Minitex? What would you like to tell me about your experience as a staff member of a Minitex participating library?
• Tell me about the first time you met Bill DeJohn, director of Minitex (or Alice Wilcox, the founding director of Minitex).
• Can you describe a memorable event (good/bad) during your tenure?
• If you could impart some words of wisdom to library staff today, what would they be?

Let’s take a look at how the interviewees responded to the question: “Do you remember what first attracted you to the profession?” The majority of interviewees admitted they just sort of “fell into it,” working at a library as a college student and, then, realizing that librarianship was a career they wished to pursue. What was it about working in a library that inspired the interviewees?

Bill Asp remarked:

As an undergrad here at the U of M, I majored in American History and I was all set to go on and become a history professor...but the spring of my senior year, I was hired as student assistant by a professor in the library school here who had a grant to study the libraries in the state's prison. So he and I would go out and visit the prisons and talk first to the staff and then to some of the prisoners and evaluate the library and, I was so inspired by what I saw in terms of the difference that information and libraries...
and materials can make in the lives of people who were under pretty stressful and bleak circumstances…but it really impacted me to see the power that having access to information had and so I abandoned my plans…and got my library degree... (Minutes: 01:08 - 03:20 of the interview)

One started working in a library at an even earlier age, as Charlene Mason remarked in her interview:

...I just grew into it having worked what, 5, 6 years when I was in junior high and another 3, 4 years in college. By the time I got to that point it seemed like a natural path for me. I will say that, I think over the years, as I worked, I started to understand how valuable libraries were, what libraries did to enhance people’s lives. That was another attraction for me... (01:0-02:01)

One unsurprisingly common thread was that most of the interviewees spent a lot of time in the library as children or a lot of time reading and became inspired by the library at a very young age.

I’d used libraries all my life, since I was a kid. One of my earliest memories was my father taking me to the central library downtown in St. Paul and getting a library card. And he made a big deal of it. Now I was a big kid and had a library card. So, I had always respected and used them. (Jerry Baldwin, 00:45 – 04:31)

Well, books mainly, I suppose, but also I was fascinated by some of the tools that the librarian used. She had this pencil that she used to sign out books. It had a metal thing attached to it where you could slide in little rubber letters and numbers for the date due, and she would write your name on the card and just tip the pencil forward a bit and stamp the date due on the card, and I wanted one of those. And the catalog, all those drawers and drawers of cards in the catalog fascinated me. (Mary Rae Oxborrow, 01:14 - -2:50)

For the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade, there were only two teachers for three grades. So we sat with everyone together in one room, and we went with the teacher that was going to teach the topic... apparently I got all my lessons done faster than other people...They gave me workbooks, I would go through all of those...And so they put me into the room beside the stage and in that room was the remainders of the high school library... [The high school had been consolidated into another town] And they would just put me in there for hours at a time, so I started reading the books. I decided to read them alphabetically by author, and I was amazed at what was in those books because I had been reading things like Nancy Drew. And the words, how beautifully, and what they conveyed, the excitement that I found. But I also wanted to talk about them, and there was no one. And I kept thinking, these need a person. (Susanne Mahmoodi, 03:26 - 07:03)

When I asked the question, “In your experience, what were some of the events that led to the idea that eventually became Minitex,” there were a variety of responses. Some went back in library history to 1906 and spoke of an organization called the Twin City Library Club. As Mary Treacy remarked: “Twin City Library Club was very multi-institutional and it was public private. I mean, H.W. Wilson was at the same table with the State Historical Society librarian and the University of Minnesota librarian...I’m sure we built on the shoulders of giants” (06:30-10:22). Bill Asp also mentioned the Twin City Library Club, along with the Minnesota Regional Public Library Systems, and other events that laid the foundation for many early Minitex services:

...In many ways Minitex follows in a logical context of other developments in the history of Minnesota’s libraries. With the Twin Cities Library Club, there’s that very early example of cooperation and camaraderie among librarians. But I think... that has gone on for, a long, long, long time, and so there has been a very positive attitude among librarians about cooperating and working together. That’s benefited not just Minitex but lots of other things as well. In the 1950s, the Minnesota Regional Public Library Systems began to be formed...the whole idea there also is complementary to the idea...
of Minitex, and that is that no library can have everything that its customers might need. No library can be self-sufficient...The State Library in those days had a collection, which was a backup interlibrary loan collection, and this went on in to the early 70s...so they [public libraries] were used to lending when Minitex came along. (Bill Asp, 07:41-14:33)

Other interviewees spoke of visionary people affecting the development of Minitex. When asked the question, Mike Kathman reflected:

I think it was people with vision, was a really big part of it. People like Alice [Wilcox], Ralph Hopp, Hannis Smith. I think it was also, Minnesota, in the 60s/early 70s, was a very populist state. There was a real sense that you ought to have equal access to everything no matter where you lived in the state...I think that the vision was, and, in part, when the state funding began to come in, was the sense that we could do more with less if Minitex was strong...The ability of any library to meet their needs is impossible to do. So it was a really, I think, visionary process that started it, but it was also based on a sense of just people in Minnesota and what their expectations are, and I think the legislature really picked up on that. (07:25-09:37)

Jerry Baldwin saw a connection between the shift from using books for research to using periodical literature in the 1960s and how that influenced the creation of the MULS (Minitex Union List of Serials) program:

...I knew Alice Wilcox who was the real power behind it, and I knew she was involved in something called the Minnesota Union List of Serials. And, I believe the impetus behind the Minnesota Union List of Serials was the need to do interlibrary loans on periodical literature. During the 60s scientific research, the speed of it, everything speeded up, because of NASA and just the number of people who were graduating from college...And, it was the academics turn from using, primarily, book literature to, primarily, periodical literature, and libraries were trying to expand their periodical collection, but they could never keep up with the growth in publishing. So they had to find some way to get interlibrary loans on periodical literature... (07:21)

And, when I interviewed Bill DeJohn, Minitex Director, 1984-2012, he answered:

As I understand it in talking to the former University [of Minnesota] Librarian, Edward Stanford, during that time, the President of the University called him in and told him that if the U was going to receive more state funding, the Libraries, as well as other units on the campus, needed to figure out how to serve the state more, instead of just the [Twin Cities] campus. So how could they contribute to serving the rest of the State? And, Edward Stanford, as I understand it, was sent to Great Britain... by the Association of Research Libraries to... study the British Lending Library, and determine what might work here in the United States. So he came back and wrote a paper on it, and I believe he said it [the British model] wouldn’t work in the United States because we have fifty states and all the political boundaries - it just wasn’t going to work, but it might work on a regional level.

Around the same time, the Morris campus was complaining about the slowness of interlibrary loan services from the Twin Cities campus to Morris. Right after that, this pilot project came into being but I’m not sure who had what idea at that time. And that was the genesis of the pilot project that started Minitex. (3:07 - 4:27)

These excerpts are only a small sampling of how people responded to the question, “what led to the development of Minitex,” so I hope you will visit the website on your own. If there is any commonality at all to their responses, it is that there were a number of events that brought us to where library services are today (especially resource sharing), and also key visionary people like Alice Wilcox, the first Director of Minitex, 1969-1982.

I welcome your comments on the project, as well as suggestions of other library staff I should interview to continue telling the story of library collaboration in Minnesota.
Interviewees Quoted

- Jerry Baldwin, Director, Minnesota Department of Transportation Library (1972-2007)
- Suzanne Mahmoodi, Continuing Education Coordinator, Library Development and Services, Minnesota Department of Education (1978-2001)
- Bill Asp, Minnesota State Librarian (1975-1996)
- Mike Kathman, Director of Libraries, College of St. Benedict and St. John’s University (1980-2006)
- Bill DeJohn, Director of Minitex (1984-2012)

Minitex’s First 40 Years!

As we move into the final quarter of FY12, we near the end of Minitex’s 40th year as a legislatively funded program of the Minnesota Office of Higher Education and the University of Minnesota Libraries. We’d like to thank staff members of Minitex participating libraries, the Minitex office staff, and all Minitex supporters who have shared in the Anniversary celebration.

We have enjoyed our Anniversary commemorations at the annual conferences of the North Dakota Library Association, the South Dakota Library Association, and the Minnesota Library Association as well as receptions at the Library Technology Conference at Macalester College. We welcomed University Libraries staff for a reception in the Minitex office last fall in recognition of the crucial role that the Libraries have played in the success of Minitex.

Minitex’s 20th Annual ILL Conference will include anniversary commemoration activities on May 10, and Minitex will staff a table at the University Libraries’ Enhancing Quality Staff symposium on May 1.

The 40th Anniversary webpages (http://www.minitex.umn.edu/40th/) will continue to be a part of the Minitex website and we plan to add additional interviews to the Minitex Oral History Project (http://www.minitex.umn.edu/40th/OralHistory.aspx) in the future.

News for Minitex/OCLC Libraries

Carla Urban

Information about OCLC billing changes & OCLC subscription renewals:

- Everyone should already be aware that, effective July 1, 2012, billing for OCLC products and services will also move from Minitex to OCLC.

Libraries may continue to maintain a deposit account with Minitex which can be used to pay for databases, training and conferences, brokered products, lost book fees, etc. Each institution will have the opportunity to direct how any funds remaining after all OCLC charges through June 2012 have been paid should be allocated – a portion or all may be sent to OCLC, returned to the institution or left in the Minitex deposit account. Institutions with staff off duty during the summer should work with us in plenty of time to make the appropriate determinations before they leave.

Questions about the billing transition can be directed to Carla Urban of Minitex at 612-624-4002, 1-800-462-5348 or dewey002@umn.edu or Becky Hurley, of OCLC Support Services, at 1-800-848-5878, ext. 4316 or hurleyb@oclc.org.
Update on AskMN: The Librarian Is In!
Mary Parker and Carla Pfahl

Minitex Reference Outreach & Instruction (ROI) administers and manages AskMN, Minnesota's statewide virtual reference service, and helps staff the public queue of AskMN.

Since December 2011, five more libraries have joined AskMN: Bethel University; University of St. Thomas; University of Minnesota, Morris; Lake Superior College; and College of St. Scholastica. A participating library is defined as one that contributes staffing to AskMN. As a participating library, libraries receive a full QuestionPoint subscription which allows them to manage all reference service points (live chat, IM, text, email, and in-person) from one location as well as the ability to collect statistics and patron feedback on all service points. With minimal staff commitment, libraries are able to offer patrons 24/7 access to information services giving them point-of-time and point-of-need contact. Participation in AskMN also gives library staff the opportunity to hone their reference skills and be connected with a network of cooperative librarians.

To date in FY12 (July 1, 2011 – March 31, 2012), 24,856 questions were answered. FY12YTD volume has already surpassed that of FY11. The academic library queue answered 6,379, reference questions, and the public library queue handled 18,477.

• 5,745 questions coming through the academic library queue were from Minnesota patrons; 634 were from non-Minnesota patrons. Of the 5,745 Minnesota patrons, 2,996 were answered by the patron's library, 353 were answered by another Minnesota library, and 2,396 were answered by the 24/7 Reference Cooperative.

• 16,047 questions coming through the public library queue were from Minnesota patrons; 2,430 were from non-Minnesota patrons. Of the 16,047 Minnesota patrons, 8,315 were answered by the patron’s library, 1,642 were answered by another Minnesota library, and 6,090 were answered by the 24/7 Reference Cooperative.

In July 2011 – February 2012 (FY12 YTD), AskMN received 22,148 questions, a 43% increase in traffic over the comparable period in FY11 (Jul – Feb) during which we received 15,537 questions. In part, this increase is attributable to a large increase in K12 History Day questions submitted to AskMN this year. This activity sharply tapers off after February.

As we’ve seen from the beginning of the service, the public library queue continues to receive and respond to more questions than does the academic queue.

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Contact Carla Steinberg Pfahl, pfahl001@umn.edu or 800-462-5348, to find out how systems, libraries, or schools in Minnesota can participate.
News From The Minitex Region

Changes in Directorships in Minitex Participating Libraries

Nick Dimassis, formerly Assistant Director of the East Central Regional Library, which is based in Cambridge, MN, is the new director of the Carver County Library System. Nick Dimassis succeeds Melissa Brechon who retired after 13 years as director at Carver County.

Ruth Dukelow, long-time Associate Director, Midwest Collaborative for Library Services, Lansing, MI, has succeeded Tom Nichol as Executive Director of Cooperating Libraries in Consortium (CLIC), who retired after three years with the consortium of libraries of Twin Cities private academic institutions.

Wendy Pradt Lougee Begins ARL and HathiTrust Terms

Wendy Pradt Lougee, University Librarian and McKnight Presidential Professor at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, has begun her term as vice president/president of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). She also has been named to a five-year term on the new Board of Governors for the HathiTrust.

Lougee came to the University of Minnesota in 2002 after holding several positions at the University of Michigan over a 20-year period. She has served on the Research Libraries Group Board of Directors, as President of the Digital Library Federation, and as chair of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) E-Science Task Force.

MN and SD Public Libraries Win LJ Star Status

Three Minnesota public libraries and two from South Dakota were recognized as Star Libraries by the Library Journal Index of Public Library Service, 2011.

• The Minnesota libraries included Grand Marais Public Library, which earned five-star status, and Hennepin County Library and St. Paul Public Library, both of which were recognized as three-star libraries.

• In South Dakota, Centerville Public Library was honored with five stars and the Sully Area Library in Onida received four stars.

For more info, see: http://features.libraryjournal.com/star-libraries/class-of-2011/all-the-stars-state-by-state/
Minitex Facts & Figures for FY11

See our informal report for Fiscal Year 2011 (July 1, 2010-June 30, 2011) on the website: http://www.minitex.umn.edu/About/Facts/ . Thanks to the staffs of all Minitex participating libraries for another great year!

The Minitex office will be closed:
May 28, Memorial Day
July 4, Independence Day

Minitex Facts & Figures
2010/2011

Minitex Messenger

Minitex
University of Minnesota, 15 Andersen Library
222 21st Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55455-0439

Phone ................................................................. 612-624-4002
WATS ................................................................. 800-462-5348
Director ............................................................ 612-624-2839
Fax ................................................................. 612-624-4508
Main Website ................................................... www.minitex.umn.edu
Office Hours .............................................. Monday—Friday, 8:00 am—4:30 pm

Minitex Messenger Editor: Cecelia N. Boone

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