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MTA Library Users Now Have World Catalog at Their Fingertips

By MATT BARRETT

(March 18, 2004) Employees seeking transportation information now can simultaneously search 17 libraries and the world catalog, thanks to the recent addition of "TransCat/First Search," a new service offered by MTA's Dorothy Payton Gray Transportation Library.



Link to the MTA Library at
<http://intranet1/dept/mtalibrary>
The TransCat/First Search link
is located under "Resources."

Although MTA librarians have had access to the world catalog since 1979, only now is it being offered directly to library users via the Internet. MTA also can borrow items from other libraries through the interlibrary loan program.

The MTA Library also lends items to other research institutions and government agencies interested in its collection of rare transportation artifacts and documents.

Joining together the catalogs of the nation's best transportation libraries allows transportation libraries to leverage their resources better, and bring direct research access to library users.

Maximizing timely access

"We're delighted that the National Transportation Library selected the MTA as a participating library," says Joanne Kawai, deputy executive officer, Policy Research. "Our goal continues to be maximizing timely access to transportation research."

The U.S. Department of Transportation is picking up the full cost of MTA's participation for the first year.

Nelda Bravo, the national transportation librarian, says the response has been tremendous. Other transportation libraries, including some large European transportation libraries, are expressing interest in joining the catalog.

To join the system, a library's records must be included in the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) cataloging system, something the MTA Library has been doing consistently since 1976.

52 million library records

More than 45,000 public, academic, government and research libraries in 85 countries are part of the OCLC network, providing access to more than 52 million library records.

A recent survey of transportation libraries found that MTA's library is the fourth largest in collection size, after U.C. Berkeley, Northwestern University, and the U.S. Department of Transportation, and fifth largest in circulation.

It is also the only transportation library in all of Southern California, while Northern California benefits from seven transportation libraries.

The MTA Library stays in close contact with its counterparts at the CalTrans library in Sacramento, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission Library in Oakland and the librarians at U.C. Berkeley.

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