

Pooled Fund Study TPF-5(442)

TRANSPORTATION LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION CENTERS: CURRENT PRACTICES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS



WHY THIS SYNTHESIS OF PRACTICE WAS NEEDED

Transportation libraries and librarians across the country are facing similar challenges:

- Customers' belief that they can find everything they need on their own through the internet
- A lack of awareness of the depth and breadth of services that librarians can offer
- A lack of value placed on good information to improve and maximize the operation of transportation agency programs

WHAT THE POOLED FUND SOUGHT TO LEARN

Current practices in state department of transportation (DOT) libraries and information centers and how those practices are expected to change over the next several years. Specifically:

- How DOTs provide services with and without a library
- Best practices for engaging agency leadership and partners
- How to prepare for the future

WHAT IS A TRANSPORTATION LIBRARY? OR WHAT MIGHT SERVE THAT PURPOSE?

Many possible answers...

- In-house libraries with physical library space
- In-house collections with no physical library space
- Collaboration with other libraries or organizations
- Limited print or virtual collections
- Completely virtual collections

KEY TERMS

LIBRARY: A collection of physical or digital resources organized and maintained for intended users.

INFORMATION CENTER: A unit or department that may have a collection of physical or digital resources from which information services are provided by a professionally trained librarian, paraprofessional or information services provider.

LIBRARIAN: A person with a library science degree (master of library science (MLS) or master of library and information science (MLIS) responsible for the care of a library or collection of physical or digital resources.

PARAPROFESSIONAL: A member of the library staff, usually someone who holds at least a bachelor's degree, who performs high-level technical support duties.

INFORMATION SERVICES PROVIDER OR INFORMATION SERVICES STAFF:
A staff person without a library science degree (MLS or MLIS) engaged in some aspect of the care of a library or collection of physical or digital resources, or who otherwise works to organize and provide access to information. When used generally, the term may include librarians.

PROJECT BY THE NUMBERS

3

URVEYS

Participants included the AASHTO Research Advisory Committee, typically made up of states' research program managers.

63 SURVEY RESPONDENTS

These included:

- 29 library and information services
- 27 state transportation agencies
- 7 state DOT leaders

14

IN-HOUSE PRINT COLLECTIONS

Of the responding state transportation agencies, almost half maintain inhouse print collections in a dedicated library space.

10 ABORAT

COLLABORATIVE SYSTEMS

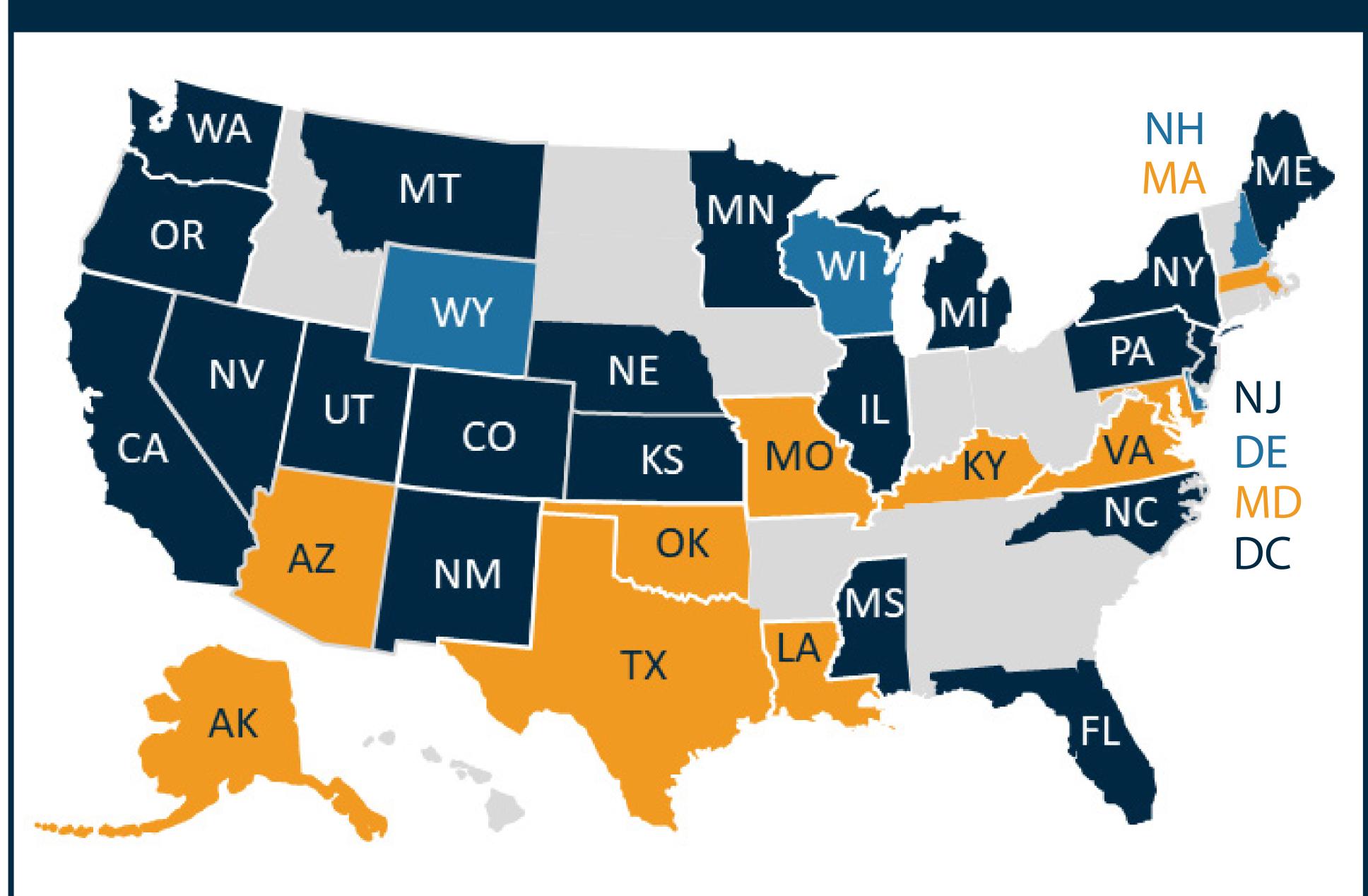
Ten agencies reported partnering with state libraries or universities.

THE PROCESS

Researchers conducted a literature search and distributed surveys to three key constituencies:

- State DOT research program managers and librarians
- Transportation agency library and information services users
- Transportation agency leadership

WHAT THE SYNTHESIS REVEALED



State DOTs with in-house library space (based on surveys and internet search)

State DOTs with no in-house library space

State DOTs that collaborate with state libraries or universities to house collections

Details about the states' collaborations, as well as case studies on selected states' practices, are available in the synthesis report.

Against a backdrop of downsizing and limited resources, the demand for transportation information has only increased. This synthesis project succeeds in explaining the complex and sometimes 'invisible' work of transportation librarianship."

— John Cherney, Head Librarian, Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Common Library Services	Number of State DOTs Offering Service
Literature searches	24
Cataloging of new library materials	17
Cataloging of existing library materials	17
Electronic resource management	17
In-person reference services	16
Online reference services	16
Digital collection development	15
Interlibrary loan	15
Document delivery	14
Print collection development	14
Digitization of print materials	13
Document archiving	13
Knowledge management	12
Collection development plan	12
Guidance on scholarly communication, copyright, fair use and open access	11
News alerts	10
Hosting or facilitation of internal collaborative events or trainings	8
Magazine routing (electronic or print)	8
Hosting or facilitation of external collaborative events or trainings	7

PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR THE FUTURE

Transportation libraries are evolving, often in response to new user or agency needs. Taking on new roles, enhancing current practices or shifting gears to respond to agency offer challenges and opportunities:

- Information services programs should be **intentional in design, proactive in implementation and aligned with agency priorities and culture**. A strategic planning exercise may assist in ensuring effective program development and management.
- Whether because of space constraints or other resource issues, **changing scales of availability** or user preferences, physical books and print information sources are ceding ground to digital collections and access.
- While digital collection development and management can be complex and challenging for many agencies,
 collaborations with a variety of external partners may have significant payoffs and greatly increase access.
- Education, outreach and demonstrating value are critical to a thriving information services program.
- Transportation libraries and information services programs are well suited to spearhead or participate in an agencywide knowledge management program.
- **Proactively demonstrating alignment** with agency strategy and the overall value of the information services program can encourage ongoing support.

POOLED FUND COMMUNICATIONS AND RESOURCES

The synthesis report summarizes how transportation libraries and information centers are currently serving their users and how those who manage transportation information can more effectively navigate the future.

A companion **ONE-PAGE FACT SHEET** offers a sampling of synthesis findings and challenges associated with current and emerging trends in transportation libraries.

Available in print and online as a collection of Quick Guides, the **TRANSPORTATION LIBRARY TOOLKIT** is aimed at helping new and seasoned information professionals meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities in a time of evolving information needs, capabilities and contexts.

Joni DeMille

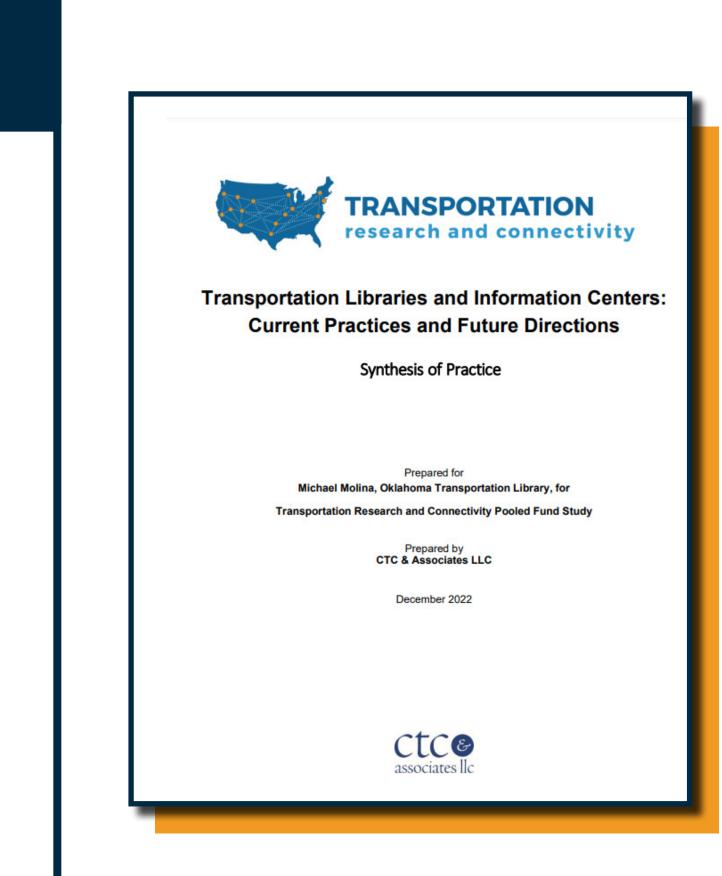
jdemille@utah.gov

dkresich@azdot.gov

Dianne Kresich

Arizona DOT

Utah DOT



ABOUT THIS PROJECT

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

Michael Molina
Oklahoma Transportation Library
mmolina@ou.edu

John Cherney
Wisconsin DOT
john.cherney@dot.wi.gov

INVESTIGATORS

Susan Johnson, Chris Kline and Carol Rolland
CTC & Associates LLC

ABOUT THE POOLED FUND

The Transportation Research and Connectivity pooled fund study, TPF-5(442), is a consortium of DOTs and other partners that supports the coordinated development of transportation libraries as well as research organizations without dedicated libraries. Study focus areas include communication and networking, digitization, research report accessibility, and developing online resource guides and a toolkit for nonlibrarians.