

Date: 9 February 2006
Site: Tennessee DOT Library
Staff: Ruth Letson, Library Director

Site Visit Summary

History & Overview

The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) Library was established in 1973. Ruth Letson came onboard in 1978, and she is only the second librarian in the department's history. Historically, the perception was that the library was only for the planning division because they were physically separate from other TDOT offices. In 1981 the library was moved to headquarters where they are more visible to other units. Ruth feels that the library might have still more internal visibility if it were directly under the commissioner, like other department-wide services like human resources or information technology, for example. However, the library has always been under research which remains part of the planning division. Planning was just recently split into two sections: long range planning, and project planning. The library is now part of long range planning. Until the most recent reorganization (about a year and a half ago), all research was managed by one person at TDOT and was contracted out to the University of Tennessee. Now it is coordinated in-house, and the library has assumed some of the administrative functions, primarily dissemination of research:

*"In the past year, the TDOT Library, a section of the Research Office, assumed responsibility for entering Tennessee research projects into RIP... and duplicating and distributing both hard and electronic copies of final research reports to individuals and organizations that have expressed interest in them. In addition to TRIS, TDOT's final research reports are available on our website..."*¹

Map sales and Photolog² have been incorporated into the library's services which has increased the workload, but also raised both public and internal awareness of the library. Another service the library offers to reach out to their internal customers is the Federal Register alerts. Librarian Rebecca Rhodes scans the Federal Register online each day for items of interest to TDOT employees and emails PDFs to a growing number of internal clients. The service has been very well-received. The Graduate Technology Assistant (GTA) program is also beneficial for internal awareness of the library. GTA recruits from Tennessee schools of engineering spend their first year rotating through several departments before settling into a permanent position. Part of the program is library orientation, and working in different departments, including research, provides opportunities for interaction with the librarians. Ruth believes it is beneficial for the future professionals and decision-makers to regard the library as institutionally necessary.

The library has upgraded their Sydney Plus system to the newest version which runs on Oracle. They are continuing with the testing phase and hope to have the catalog available on the intranet very soon. The previous version is still available on TransPORTAL, the department's intranet information portal. A barcoding project is underway, starting with newly cataloged items and items as they circulate. Ruth would like to hire a student to assist with barcoding the collection over the summer.

¹ TDOT Research on the Move newsletter, Summer 2005, volume 1, issue 1.

² Photolog is a collection of 35mm films (now digital) that began in the early 1970s and concluded in 1996. Every interstate and state route in Tennessee was driven and filmed in its entirety about every four years.

Staff

Ruth Letson, Director
Rebecca Rhodes, Librarian
Sue Knuckles, Map Sales Technician

Ruth has been a solo librarian for most of her 28 years at TDOT. She began her library career in higher education and has her MLS from Peabody College.

Rebecca has been with the TDOT library for approximately 2 ½ years. She was a school librarian before coming to work at TDOT. She has her MLS from Peabody College of Vanderbilt University. She receives orders, posting their receipt and recording the invoices in Sydney Plus. She does most of the cataloging and assists with reference service. She handles Interlibrary Loan requests. She helps supervise the Map Sales Office and assists as needed.

Sue is in charge of map sales activities. She has a bachelor of arts degree in English and American Language and Literature from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She fills approximately 1000 requests per month for the Tennessee Official Transportation Map from the on-line request form. She vows we've sent one to every resident of Lithuania. In addition, she fills approximately 100 requests for sales of city and county maps and maintains an inventory of maps for use of TDOT personnel. She has recently begun coding invoices for payment for submittal to the Finance Office. She also assists in checking in periodical issues and routing them.

Physical Space

The library has approximately 2500 square feet. Space was sacrificed when legal offices were expanded, amounting to about 3 ranges of stacks. They are in their third location since Ruth has managed the library. Maps cases for the map sales operation take up large area in front and there is an open reference desk in the center of the library, with the reference area directly across from it and flanked by stacks on either side.

Collection

Monographs - 15,000
Serials (active titles) - 100
Online databases - 1 (Selected ASCE journals)
CD-ROMs - 25

Ruth keeps one copy of 10+ year old Transportation Research Board materials. The collection needs extensive weeding of outdated materials. The 3 most recent years of periodicals are retained on the shelf. Older years are discarded or donated to free up valuable space, as older articles can be acquired through interlibrary loan. The original Photolog 35mm film reels were given to the Tennessee Library and Archives for preservation, as they are now completely digital. This resource fascinated me. Photolog filming began in early 1970s and the "runs" were completed and restarted about every four years. Every interstate and state route in Tennessee was driven and filmed from north to south and east to west. Now digital, you can query for mile marker, county, route number, direction, etc. You can slow down, speed up, and exclude features such as underpasses, or view only the shoulder. It even has u-turn feature. Photolog was integrated into the Tennessee Roadway Information Management System (TRIMS) when the films were digitized in starting in 1996.

The reference collection is well-developed, containing the entire Code of Federal Regulations, parts of the United States Code Annotated, and the Tennessee Code Section 10, titles 55 & 56 pertaining to roads, bridges, ferries, etc. The Federal Register is still received in paper, and there are atlases and AASHTO materials in reference as well.

TDOT Expectations for the Pooled Fund Study

Ruth's motivation for participating in the pooled fund study stems less from budgetary necessity than from a desire to help other transportation libraries succeed and participate at the forefront of the establishment of a national transportation knowledge network. Her budget is less constricted than some other members, so she can be more pragmatic about the larger issues. However, having spent most of her 28 years as a solo librarian, Ruth is acutely aware of the value of a solid network and its potential. Solo librarians often feel isolated from their peers and networks provide a conduit to communication and resources that would otherwise be out of reach. In addition, as she approaches retirement, the network will be a valuable resource for her successor.

Photos:





TransPORTAL

TDOT's intranet site for information.

transPORTAL - Microsoft Internet Explorer Provided by The State of Tennessee

Address: <http://home.tdot.state.tn.us/secure/index.asp>

transPORTAL

TDOT

Organization Index | Business Applications | Department Information | Future Plans | Useful Sites | FAQs & Forums

Welcome, Ruth Letson

Phonebook Information [Edit](#)
615.741.2330
ruth.letson@state.tn.us

[Learn Balances](#)
[Change Password](#)
[Set as Homepage](#)

February 2006

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28				

2/20/2006 - PRESIDENTS DAY

2005 TDOT Accomplishments

TDOT ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2005 are listed by division. Each even year, we list our accomplishments in our publication "Report to Tennesseans." On all odd years, like 2005, we list them on our transPORTAL. Check out all the great things TDOT employees accomplished in 2005.

Customer Service Survey

TDOT listens to communities, giving them a role in the transportation process, and being responsive to their needs. [Click here](#) to review current customer service survey results. Survey results are also located above under the Department Information, Customer Service link.

Tennessee State Legislature, 2005 Session - Summary of Transportation-related Bills

[Click here](#) to view a summary of bills passed by the State Legislature during the 2005 session that pertain specifically to transportation.

Employee Resources:

TDOT's Performance Measurements - Measuring performance and reporting the results tells the story of TDOT's progress in delivering a quality transportation system to the people of Tennessee. To learn more about TDOT's performance measurement framework, [click here](#).

TDOT PC Equipment Request - Do you need to order a PC, other equipment or software? Download the PC Equipment Request Form in PDF format by [clicking here](#) or for the MS Word format, [click here](#).

Mapping, Inventory, and TRIMS Updates - [Click here](#) to notify Mapping, Inventory and TRIMS of route openings or realignments, additions or corrections to maps, inventory or TRIMS, TRIMS training, TRIMS software/database enhancements, or other comments and suggestions.

The TDOT Primer - Written to help new employees acquaint themselves with the department, and to assist existing employees in quickly accessing key TDOT information and telephone numbers. To download the TDOT Primer, [click here](#). To download the Table of Contents, [click here](#).

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