

# The first group catalog for transportation professionals

*TL Cat increases access to valuable information resources*



## Situation

For years, the transportation field struggled to identify information resources held in collections scattered across the country's transportation departments and research centers. "Transportation doesn't have a single, large library of record and the catalogs of many transportation libraries aren't accessible to anyone outside the agency each library serves," says Jerry Baldwin, Library Director at the Minnesota Department of Transportation Library.

Fixing the problem of very limited access to resources wasn't easy, notes Nelda Bravo, Head of the National Transportation Library in Washington, D.C. DOT libraries generally don't have access to for-fee databases or electronic resources, and their collections are very small. Yet those small collections contain very meaningful data for transportation industry workers.

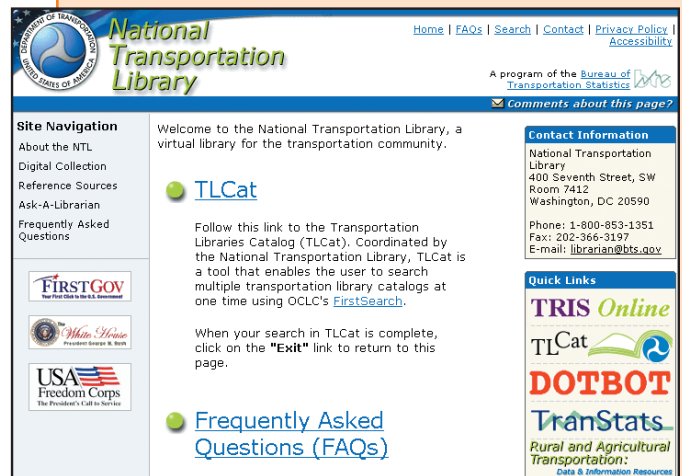
## Solution

Developed with the assistance of OCLC Group Services, the Transportation Libraries Union Catalog (TL Cat) was launched in March 2004, with the participation of 16 libraries. Since then, several other libraries have joined the group as they realized the benefits of participating.

According to Roberto Sarmiento, Head of the Transportation Library at Northwestern University, transportation library directors had discussed the idea of a union catalog for years. Baldwin contacted OCLC to investigate the idea further, which initiated a two-year working relationship with OCLC to develop the concept for a group catalog capability. Now, TL Cat is available via the Web and is searchable through the OCLC FirstSearch online reference service.

## AT A GLANCE

- TL Cat resources cover all aspects of the transportation industry—travel by various modes, safety, engineering and much more
- The catalog connects 20 participating transportation libraries widely dispersed across the U.S., including the National Transportation Library (NTL) in Washington, D.C.
- Nearly 90 percent of state DOTs have libraries, yet more than half of them have catalogs accessible only to their own users
- The NTL, established in 1998, provides leadership on standards and cooperation to state DOT libraries and related agencies



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## Results

"I'm still in disbelief that we have such a powerful tool at our disposal," says Sarmiento. "The fact that a growing

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number of institutions want to share their records and belong to the group is a huge sign of success.”

“The increased access is great,” comments Bravo. “TL Cat allows people to see who’s done what research and where they can get it, instead of searching 20 different places.”

Despite a lack of marketing budget, Bravo adds, “user stats have been very high.” Bravo estimates use of the catalog is more than 6,500 searches per month. Prominent placement of links to TL Cat on participating libraries’ Web sites is helping to drive traffic to it.

“The availability of TL Cat has shown state DOT research directors and other transportation officials that librarians in transportation agencies can provide a product that improves access to transportation information resources,” says Baldwin.

The group’s next goal: to increase participating in TL Cat among U.S. transportation libraries, and eventually expanding to include similar libraries outside the U.S. For more information about TL Cat and the National Transportation Library, visit <http://ntl.bts.gov>.