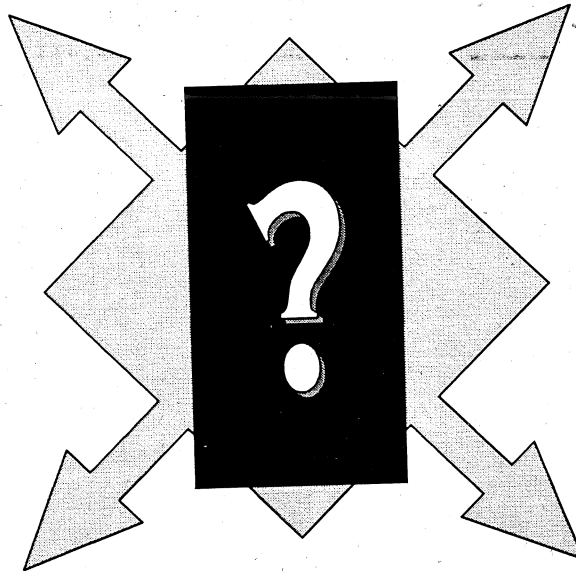


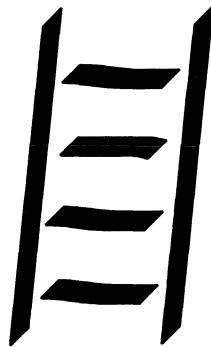
**1998 ANNUAL REPORT
MINNESOTA STATE LAW LIBRARY**



**- 1998 -
A YEAR OF DECISIONS**

Minnesota State Law Library 1998 Annual Report

-1998- A YEAR OF DECISIONS



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Minnesota State Law Library
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THE MnLINK MANDATE

MnLINK - What Is It?

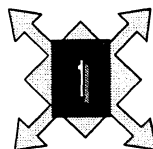
In 1996 the Minnesota Legislature passed a law mandating Minnesota State Law Library (MSLL) participation in MnLINK, a novel effort to develop a statewide on-line information system for libraries. The system is intended to link the book and electronic collections of libraries (public, academic, school and government) throughout Minnesota into a universal, one-stop system that will appear to the user as a single entity.

One way to understand MnLINK is to compare it to an ATM machine. At one time you had to use a machine that was compatible with your particular cash card, but now most machines dispense your money irrespective of the type of card or where the card is used. The visionaries behind MnLINK intend that one day a user can get onto the Internet and use the computer catalog to find books and articles that can be retrieved just like cash, irrespective of where the material is located. Using MnLINK, the patron has immediate access to the wealth of information contained in libraries throughout the state.

The Library's MnLINK Strategy

MnLINK is a marvelous concept, but it challenges many long-held notions about traditional library operations. By early 1997 it had become clear that MnLINK would present many serious technological, organizational and information problems. However, unlike some librarians who wait to see how a project goes, and then sign on once the system has been proven, our staff here at MSLL knew from our long history of professional activism that the best approach was to become leaders in the process. By leading, the experience and skills of MSLL staff can be best leveraged so that we can acquire the deeper understanding of MnLINK that will be so critical to implementing it in the Library.

Our strategic plan was based on three ideas: First, whenever possible, our staff members would volunteer to serve on the committees with the key assignments and tasks associated with MnLINK's implementation. Second, we would prepare our physical collection for the transition to MnLINK. Third, we would become involved in the search for grant funds to finance acquisition of four public computer terminals and the labelling of our collection.



Committee Involvement

MSLL staff joined various committees, including the Vendor Evaluation Team(VET). The VET recommended the companies that will provide the technical system for MnLINK. These companies will eventually enter into contracts totalling nearly twelve million dollars. Our staff also remained active and visible in local library associations. Representatives from these associations were able to convey common concerns and bring issues to the attention of all MnLINK players. During this intense time of upfront planning, MSLL staff spent hundreds of hours preparing for MnLINK.

Physical Preparation

In order to participate in this statewide, standardized system, we had to apply electronic labels (barcodes) to more than 200,000 items in our collection. Fortunately, the Library had consistent and accurate recordkeeping in the past to form a strong foundation for this mammoth task. All members of the staff participated in a thorough evaluation of the collection, using the Library's *Collection Development Plan* as a guideline. By weeding out-dated books and placing each retained book in its proper place on the shelf, the Library staff laid the groundwork for efficient barcoding of the collection.

Grantwriting

Staff involvement in local associations resulted in the Library becoming the beneficiary of a grant to be used for MnLINK preparations. The many hours invested by our staff in MnLINK committees yielded a larger portion of in-kind contributions for the Library. In December a team of trained barcoders, paid from grant money, began the task of affixing barcodes. This project will continue well into 1999.

Optimizing the Decision

MSLL staff seized the opportunity to become active leaders in MnLINK. All members of our staff have been involved to varying degrees, and patrons are benefiting from the streamlined collection. Senior staff invested large blocks of time to the project, with the objective of developing the best system for our users. By this type of proactive commitment, smaller state agency libraries gain a voice in a system that has the potential to make our Library (and all libraries) more responsive to our patrons.

At this time, many aspects of MnLINK remain undetermined, including which features the new system will incorporate and when the system will be fully operational. What *is* clear, however, is that the involvement of our staff will enable us to be fully prepared for MnLINK, in whatever form it eventually takes.



THE BUDGET QUAGMIRE

The Quagmire - What Is It?

Over the past ten years the legal publishing industry has been in a constant state of upheaval, resulting in industry-wide consolidation. Within the past three years mega-mergers have caused prices to escalate as legal publishers try to recoup the cost of these corporate acquisitions. A few of the methods being used follow: recodifying and republishing fundamental treatises and basic legal research tools in CD-ROM formats; issuing updates without substantive changes; and publishing materials on the Internet and charging an access fee. With annual cost increases for basic subscriptions sometimes exceeding fifty percent in 1998, it is easy to understand why this enormous drain on the Library's budget has forced our staff to reevaluate the collection - as well as to implement a variety of cost saving measures.

Because of these extraordinary publisher increases, the Library is unable to purchase new titles and is forced to cancel subscriptions. Although some legal material is offered in alternative formats (e.g., CD-ROM), the Library has encountered difficulties in switching to new technology because of a lack of funds necessary to buy adequate hardware.

The Library's Budget Strategy

Several years of minimal budget increases prepared our staff to evaluate the problem and take important steps to solve it. First, we analyzed publisher price trends by using a published price index for legal publications, evaluated

our own budget history, and monitored Internet discussion groups.

Second, a mid-year request for funds was presented to the Supreme Court, along with a request for an increase in next year's budget. Third, we continued to fine-tune the *Collection Development Plan* to eliminate duplicate resources without compromising the integrity of the collection.

The rapid growth of legal resources available electronically, particularly in CD-ROM format and through the Internet, requires us to shift our focus from collection-building to access. As professional librarians, who have been schooled to think in terms of "information" rather than "books," we are well-equipped to handle the crisis.

Optimizing The Decision

As an experienced staff we will find ways to cope with the budget problem. We continue to scrutinize each purchase and to search for new methods to access information. Although it is difficult to consider years of price hikes as anything but negative, these budgetary pressures are forcing us to think more creatively than ever before. In 1999 the Library will continue to explore sources of alternative funding. Whether this will mean applying for grants, assessing court, bar registration or user fees -- or other initiatives -- remains to be seen. If Legislative appropriations continue to fall short of the Library's needs, we will actively work with the Supreme Court to develop additional funding sources.



CONCLUSION: MAINTAINING EXCELLENCE IN THE MIDST OF CHANGE

The MnLINK mandate and budget quagmire must be considered against the backdrop of the State Law Library's ongoing services. The myriad decisions our librarians make each day are based on our mission of providing the best library service possible for our patrons. In 1998 the programs and operations of the Library continued unabated. Some highlights follow:

- ♦ answered 23,000 reference questions, including E-mail questions from around the world;
- ♦ circulated more than 8,000 items;
- ♦ processed 4,700 items for the Library collection;
- ♦ received and processed 15,000 government publications;
- ♦ served 7 adult correctional facilities through Law Library Service to Prisoners program;
- ♦ advised 85 libraries through the County Law Library Program;
- ♦ collected, bound and microfilmed all appellate court briefs for published decisions (400 in 1998);
- ♦ directed third year of *Everybody Wins* lunchtime reading program, bringing together staff from several state agencies as well as Judicial Center employees, to read to elementary school children;
- ♦ processed and delivered books to 26 Courts of Appeals chambers and 16 Supreme Court chambers;
- ♦ coordinated "Spring Showcase" series featuring noon speakers on topics ranging from the effect of reading on brain formation to the benefits of Aikido;
- ♦ presented *The Judicial Career of Peter S. Popovich*, edited by Library staff members (*Minnesota Justices Series, volume 10*);
- ♦ presented *The Judicial Career of John E. Simonett*, edited by Library staff members (*Minnesota Justices Series, volume 11*);
- ♦ Library website (<http://www.courts.state.mn.us/library/>) averaged 3,500 hits per month, appellate archive opinion page averaged 10,000 hits per month;
- ♦ held high tea in honor of the Honorable Esther Tomljanovich, the Honorable Sandra Gardebring and Commissioner Cynthia Johnson on their departure from the Court;
- ♦ E-mailed Power Point presentation on the use of the Law Library to all Court of Appeals law clerks.

The Minnesota State Law Library confronted many decisions in 1998. Some were typical of the work of a full-service public law library, while others stretched the skills and experience of the staff. As the Library approaches its sesquicentennial year in 1999, it draws from its rich history and continues to position itself for growth and change in the new millennium.



Library Staff Professional Involvement-1998

Marvin Roger Anderson, State Law Librarian

Coordinator, Everybody Wins Power Lunch Reading Program

Vice-President, Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library

Co-Chair, *For the Record: 150 Years of Law and Lawyers in Minnesota* a project of the
Minnesota State Bar Association

Member/Coordinator, Minnesota Courts Sesquicentennial Planning Committee

Daniel Lunde, Head of Public Services

Chair, Minnesota Association of Law Libraries, Archives Committee

Barbara Golden, Electronic Services Librarian

Vice-President/President-Elect, MnSCU/PALS Deans/Directors/Coordinators
Executive Committee

Member, MnLINK Vendor Evaluation Team

Chair, American Association of Law Libraries, Call for Papers Committee

Chair, Minnesota Association of Law Libraries, Exchange Committee

Sara Galligan, Head of Technical Services

Vice-President/President-Elect, Minnesota Association of Law Libraries

Co-Chair, Capitol Area Libraries Consortium, Automation Committee

Karen Westwood, Head of Outreach Services

Chair, American Association of Law Libraries, Social Responsibilities Special Interest
Section

Secretary/Treasurer, Minnesota Association of Law Libraries

Administrator, Minnesota Courts Sesquicentennial Planning Committee

Dennis Skrade, Cataloger

President, Capitol Area Libraries Consortium

Laurel Stiebler, Government Documents Technician

Chair, Metronet Advisory Committee

Chair, MinntroDocs Government Documents Discussion Group

Cathy Knoke, Technical Services Clerk

Co-Chair, Minnesota Library Association, Membership Committee

The Minnesota State Law Library is a full-service legal research and legal information center.
Readers with legal reference questions and/or an interest in complete departmental statistics
are encouraged to contact the Library.

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