

# MINITEX

## Reference NOTES

A Program of the Minnesota Office of Higher Education and the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

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ELM and  
MORE  
training  
for you and  
your library  
staff!*

### Stand Up State Fair Crew and Take a Bow!

Carla Steinberg Pfahl & Kristen Meyer

This year's State Fair exhibit, "Try Cool Tools @ Your Library," was a huge success. Volunteers from MINITEX, MnLINK Gateway libraries, the University of Minnesota Libraries, and the Minnesota Digital Library Coalition (MDLC) again partnered to promote the *Cool Tools*, which included:

- ELM, the Electronic Library for Minnesota,
- MnLINK Gateway,
- University Libraries' Assignment Calculator and QuickStudy,
- Minnesota Reflections (the first project of the MDLC).



Seventy-four volunteers staffed the exhibit twelve hours a day for the entire twelve days of the Fair and connected upwards of 800,000 Minnesotans to the fabulous *Cool Tools*.

Thousands of visitors to the Education Building (our new home this year) inquired about our products and picked up *Cool Tools* giveaways (countless paper bookmarks, hotter-than-a-fried-potato MnLINK flying rings, the perennially popular plastic ELM @ bookmark, ELM coasters, MDL pens that constantly evoked the question, "do they glow in the dark?", MnLink pads of paper – the perfect counterpart to the pens, charts describing the content/audience of the 15 ELM resources, and Try cool tools @ home cards). Many tried some searches or engaged the *Cool Tool* "experts" in conversations about the resources, libraries in general, the specific libraries they use, and other topics ranging far and near. Tired legs and feet took a rest in our "funky" orange and purple chairs and commented on the "clever" computer monitor displays.

Our volunteers deserve an extra round of applause this year for dealing with unforeseen challenges. When a lack of storage space became evident, Mary Parker made daily trips to the Fair to divvy out the popular products only to find out we were also running out of the educational materials as well (and restock them). Quick thinking is always needed as the first day volunteers learned; they had to wrap the computers in trash bags as numerous leaks in the roof "visited" our exhibit during a torrential downpour. MINITEX IT staff resolved numerous building Internet and DLS modem issues to keep our computers up and running. Thank you everyone – including those working behind the scenes and those who kept on top of the regular daily workloads while colleagues staffed the exhibit — for your time, effort and energy this year!

As with many situations, the *Try Cool Tools @ Your Library* promotion had a "good news/bad news" quality to it. Unfortunately, for many people, this seemed like their first introduction to such resources being available through their library – "How long has this been available? Why didn't I know about this before?" The redeeming factor was their enthusiasm for and genuine interest in using these resources.

Here are a few State Fair stories from some of the volunteers:

A younger couple in their 30s was very interested in all the resources. They went to the computers and tried out ELM and other tools. The guy turns to me and says, "Ya know, I would pay more for taxes if I thought the money would go for libraries." – Kathy Drozd



Visiting with an artist at the MNartist.org table, the lady perked up when I told her which booth I was working for. "MnLINK is amazing," she said. She creatively used it, like many people do, to get CD versions of her old albums and then download the music to her MP3 player. Over 80% of her music collection was in MnLINK, and she said it saved her hundreds of hours of time. – Kristen Meyer

One man remarked, "I relied on MnLINK when I went back to get my graduate degree. It saved me."

When shown Assignment Calculator, the Fairgoers/librarians said, "This is so cool!" They're going to tell all the middle and high school media specialists about it.

A family stopped to check out Assignment Calculator and commented that they should pay attention to "this library stuff" because their daughter had won their Fair tickets at the library.

"ELM is [a] great expenditure of taxpayers money...it's in valuable."

After being told about Minnesota Reflections, Fairgoers said, "We love our library! We'll give it a try." – Carol Nelson

Another man stopped by, listened to me tell him about ALL of the cool tools. He thanked me, then appeared 5 minutes later with his wife and daughter and said to me, "Tell my daughter what you just told me." She was just starting 7th grade, so I showed her the resources in ELM she could use for school projects. She pulled up a map of Illinois and said, "I could have used this before when I had to do a report on Illinois!" - Sara Ring

I can pass on one story from my shift. A sixth grader and his mother visited, and I showed him both Kids InfoBits and Junior Reference from ELM. His mother was just stunned at how easy it was to find all the information he could have used for a report he'd recently done. "Look, Mom! It's all here!" he said, as he pulled up data, maps and flags for the state of Kansas. His mom turned to me and said, "We spent 2 hours Googling, and didn't come up with anything like this. I will definitely be bookmarking this at home!" – Michael Johnson

A girl and her mother stopped at the Kids InfoBits table. Right away the girl said, "Oh, I use this at my school all the time." The mom didn't know this and was happy to hear that, through ELM, her daughter could access InfoBits from home. - Sara Ring

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Although this is a re-run (mostly) from an article in last September's *Reference Notes* by Heidi Armstrong Temple, these observations from our days in the land of casseroles on a stick still hold true and are good reminders for us all:

- People are excited about online resources – especially those who aren't currently users of the physical library.
- Even some regular, devoted, savvy library users don't know what electronic resources their libraries offer.
- Even some regular, devoted, savvy library users don't realize that the online resources from the library are not the same as doing a search on Google.
- Tangible examples of what a database offers – articles from today's *New York Times*, popular magazines like *Consumer Reports*, articles from medical journals, resources for kids doing homework and school projects – really grab some one's attention.

So, what can you gain from living vicariously through our fair experience:

- Go out to meet your users – and *potential* users – where they are and in the context of their interests: community meetings, organizations, events, fairs, etc.
- Don't assume that your users and your community already know what is available at the library – you must tell them, again and again.

- Reach your community through media: community news papers, organizational newsletters, radio or television, etc.
- Your enthusiasm will be contagious – if you convey that the library's resources are exciting and have something to offer, your audience will be swept up in your excitement.
- Know what you're talking about – once you spark their interests, people will ask good questions about the resources.

## It's Here! WebJunction Minnesota!

Jennifer Hootman



Where minds meet.

*WebJunction Minnesota*, an online service for the Minnesota library community, launched September 10, 2006. It is a collaborative effort of Minnesota State Library Services, a division of the Minnesota Department of Education; MINITEX Library Information Network; Metronet, a Minnesota Multitype Library Cooperation System; and WebJunction.

WebJunction is an online community and portal that supports library staff with technology and library development materials; provides courses for online learning and professional development; and brings the library community together in online discussions and programs.

*WebJunction Minnesota* offers an online community space where Minnesota libraries and staff can share best practices, policies and procedures, learning opportunities, and expertise to promote high quality library services. Minnesota library staff will have access to all the resources of the global WebJunction site plus local content of interest to the Minnesota library community, free online courses, and local discussion forums. Content will grow and change according to Minnesota library community needs.

*WebJunction Minnesota* will be promoted in various venues this fall, including the annual conferences of the Minnesota Library Association and the Minnesota Educational Media Organization. Alert your colleagues in the library community to sign up now for a free user account at [mnwebjunction.org](http://mnwebjunction.org). Stay tuned for more details!

*WebJunction Minnesota* is funded in part with federal IMLS Library Services and Technology Act funds, administered by State Library Services in cooperation with MINITEX Library Information Network and Metronet. Minnesota joins nine other states – Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Iowa, Kansas, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Vermont, and Washington – in the WebJunction Community Partner program. Questions, comments, or suggestions for content? Contact Mary Ann Van Cura, State Library Services and WebJunction Team Lead, at [maryann.vancura@state.mn.us](mailto:maryann.vancura@state.mn.us), Jennifer Hootman, MINITEX Library Information Network, at [hootm001@umn.edu](mailto:hootm001@umn.edu), or Deanna Sylte, Metronet, at [deanna@metrolibraries.net](mailto:deanna@metrolibraries.net).

## Libraries and Social Networking: Finding MySpace

Carla Steinberg Pfahl

When considering the need for libraries to increase their presence in the community and create an identity, is creating a virtual presence something our libraries and we as librarians should pursue? While researching this topic, I went into the blogs-

phere to see what others were saying about this issue. There were a surprisingly mixed bag of ideas being talked about. Basically, the arguments stated that, if you're going to do it, do it right. With that in mind it would be a good idea to see what others have done and take the good from those examples and incorporate them into your model.

Two examples of social networking library sites on the cutting edge I found were Hennepin County Library's MySpace site, <http://www.myspace.com/hennepincountylibrary>, and Ann Arbor (MI) District Library's website, <http://www.aadl.org/>, which is set up like a blog. These are two very different types of social networking websites that work, each in their own way. MySpace and Facebook sites are one-way communication sites where the authors specify what they want to say to their public and how they want to be portrayed. Hennepin County does an excellent job of portraying itself as young and hip (even though its profile lists itself as 86 years old). Blogs like Ann Arbor's, on the other hand, allow for interaction between the author and the site's visitors. Most library blogs either omit comments, or they write posts that don't really initiate comments (they don't inspire people to offer feedback).

In my search for library sites that stood out on websites such as MySpace, Facebook, and in blogs, I found some common themes that highlighted and separated the good from the bad. If you are going to create a site and profile for your library on MySpace and/or Facebook, then you need to consider what your goal is. Are you creating a profile to look cool or to make your patrons more aware of your library? Do you have an agenda to push? Posting a picture and a few flashy slogans about your library is not going to grab your patron's attention. It is more important for your site to actually be useful to your patrons. Instead of having a static page that tells your patrons we don't have our hair in a bun, we're cool, it is better to offer a place where patrons can give feedback about your library, services, the site, tools, etc. Also, use MySpace, Facebook, or other social networking software being used by your patrons to create a library portal. It is another point of access.

For blogs, as I mentioned above, most libraries don't write posts that create an atmosphere of discussion or elicit feedback. Ann Arbor, however, does a good job of creating news items that encourage feedback. For instance, to advertise an upcoming September 11th exhibit at the library, they posted a story asking what patrons were doing on that day. This is a great way to begin an online dialog, and blogs are a wonderful medium to generate these types of discussion and forums of communication. Having a place for interaction gives patrons a voice. It also creates a safe environment where patrons feel like they can express themselves. Libraries can benefit from this by making their online environment feel like a community with contributions from patrons, employees, directors, and board members. They can also receive valuable feedback they might not otherwise obtain through traditional means and without too much effort.

If you find yourself meandering onto the social networking scene, it will be helpful to keep these tips in mind to make your library's site successful and useful to your patrons and your library.

## No more dragging our feet: Jump into blogging with MINITEX Reference Services

*Kristen Meyer*

Over the past several months, MINITEX Reference Services has been abuzz with whispers of blogging. On August 14th, our site went live for the rest of the Web to see what current activities are going on with the Reference Services department

and discuss current tools, practices and issues in the MINITEX network regarding reference. The blog goes beyond the pushing out method of our publication *Reference Notes*, and is meant to be a dynamic gathering of information in which all may participate to expand on articles and discuss topics in a more immediate manner. Reference Services blog is made up of multiple categories of interest:

**Conferences:** Check out the conferences MINITEX Reference staff are attending and some summaries of their exhibit/presentations.

**Digital Collections:** Find information regarding digital collections of interest in the MINITEX region and beyond.

**Intriguing Websites:** Selected sites that might be useful or interesting for you to take a look at.

**On the Road With MINITEX:** See pictures of your colleagues! Here MINITEX will post a brief summary from site visits, ELM and MORE training, and offer PODCASTING in the future.

**Reference Notes:** Have *Reference Notes* delivered right to your computer through RSS of this site. Also, will expand on articles from *Reference Notes* and share commentary on recent articles.

**Reference Services:** Wondering who is writing reference responses and the newsletter? Nope, it's not a ghost. Check out who is who under Reference Services and how we may assist you.

**Reference Tools:** Interested in learning where we find the information to answer your reference referral questions? Take a look at some of the tools we have employed or ones that you may not know about that are useful!

**Teacher Resources:** Find resources that are directed towards teachers that media specialists can use or share with teachers.

**Webinars:** Another avenue to see a list of all the webinars that MINITEX is currently offering or information regarding how to view an archived session.

Also, check out our sister blogs regarding ELM issues and updates (<http://blogs.minitex.umn.edu/elm/>) and Digital Reference (<http://blogs.minitex.umn.edu/digref/>).

Do not forget to subscribe to our blog through RSS so you do not have to keep visiting our site for updates; instead, the new information will be sent directly to your desktop!

Visit the MINITEX Reference Services blog here:  
<http://blogs.minitex.umn.edu/reference/>

## What's New?! – MINITEX Training Sessions, Workshops, Teleconferences

*The In's and Out's of Open WorldCat & WorldCat.org –  
Carla Steinberg Pfahl*

Do you continually try to redirect patrons and students from searching for books on the internet using everyday tools such as Google, Amazon.com, abebooks, or another search engines to using your in-house online catalog? Did you know that patrons and students can easily find library books from these and other commonly used tools? Did you also know that you can promote your online catalog and library services outside of your own library website—for free? Open WorldCat and WorldCat.org now make it easier than ever for the general public to use tools and search engines most familiar to them to find library items and services. MINITEX staff will take you through the In's and Out's of using and promoting your library materials and services through Open WorldCat and WorldCat.org in this 45-minute webinar. We will discuss what Open WorldCat and WorldCat.org are and how they differ. We will also look at the

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features and tools of each as well as an online demonstration of how they work and how your patrons and students can use them to find library items.

[If sessions are full and you are interested in attending future sessions of this webinar, please sign-up on the waiting list.]

*The full schedule for this webinar can be found at:*

*<http://www.minitex.umn.edu/train-conf/webinars/upcoming.asp#125>*

## Announcements

Plan to attend the 2006 Minnesota Library Association Conference *Creativity & Collaboration - Minnesota Libraries Lead the Way* September 27-29, St. Cloud Civic Center - St. Cloud, MN

Join the MINITEX Reference & CPERS (Cooperative Purchasing and Electronic Resources Services) staff for two presentations:

### *C5. A New Way to Read: NetLibrary and eBooks (MINITEX)*

*Thursday, September 28, 2006  
8:00 to 9:15 a.m. Session C*

NetLibrary is an eBook collection available to Minnesota residents via their libraries. Initiated in 2000, the MINITEX NetLibrary eBook collection contains more than 15,000 titles in academic, popular, and professional subject areas. Learn about the shared collection, access methods, and staff tools that are available to MINITEX libraries. *Jennifer Hootman and Carla Steinberg Pfahl, MINITEX*

### *E6. MINITEX, ELM & Minnesota Digital Library: The Express Tour (MINITEX)*

*Thursday, September 28, 2006  
2:00 to 3:15 p.m. Session E*

Staff from MINITEX Reference Services and CPERS (Cooperative Purchasing and Electronic Resources Services) introduce you to and answer questions about four important statewide library services: MINITEX; ELM; MnLINK and Minnesota Digital Library  
*Jennifer Hootman and Carla Steinberg Pfahl, MINITEX*

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Reference Intake Form . . . . .	<a href="https://www.minitex.umn.edu/reference/refdb/index.asp">https://www.minitex.umn.edu/reference/refdb/index.asp</a>

*The Institute of Museum and Library Services, a Federal agency that fosters innovation, leadership, and a lifetime of learning, and State Library Services & School Technology, the Minnesota state library agency, supports MINITEX Reference Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA).*

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