William Thomas "Bill" DeJohn  
1940-2012

On December 31, 2012, Minnesota’s libraries lost an irreplaceable leader, Bill DeJohn. Bill served as Director of Minitex at the University of Minnesota for over 27 years.

Minitex was founded to share the library resources of the University of Minnesota with the citizens of the state, working in collaboration with other libraries to deliver those resources to individuals. Following Bill’s appointment as Director of Minitex in 1984, he led it through significant growth to its current position as one of the nation’s premier interlibrary loan systems. Thanks to the services of Minitex, the University of Minnesota has consistently ranked as the #1 lending library within the 125-member Association of Research Libraries in volume of loans external to the University community. Bill’s leadership not only guided Minitex through expansive growth in the provision of physical materials; he also oversaw implementation of all the modern technologies we now take for granted in library services, including digital delivery of scanned journal articles. He was a visionary, proposing electronic licensing for all of Minnesota’s citizens at the inception of widespread Internet access in the 1990’s, helping to establish the Electronic Library for Minnesota (ELM). Because of Bill DeJohn’s work at Minitex, no other state has the capacity and success record that Minnesota has in fulfilling information needs.

Above and beyond his role at Minitex, Bill was a tireless advocate for all of Minnesota’s libraries, as well as the University of Minnesota. During the reconfiguration of Extension Services, he reached out to directors of regional public library systems to discuss how public libraries might serve as outlets for Extension information and programs in every local community. In another example, Minnesota was without a state librarian in the early 2000’s, and public libraries suffered greatly from budget cuts, library closings, and staff reductions. Because of Bill’s remarkable political skill and connections, he was able to step into that void and give voice to public library needs within the legislature and within professional organizations and committees. He was a well-known figure in the halls of the legislature, where he made connections and provided information based on his decades of experience with library collaboration.

Bill’s limitless involvement also extended to professional organizations. He was one of the founders of the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association in the 1970’s, and he served on the first ALA group to focus on library services for the deaf. He served on the board of the Association of Cooperative and Specialized Library Agencies and on the ALA Task Force on Excellence in Education, Exceptional Service Award Jury, President’s Program, and Nominating Committees. He was the recipient of the 2006 Minnesota Library Association’s Academic Librarian of the Year Award and the 2008 University of Minnesota President’s Award for Outstanding Service.

Bill DeJohn is survived by his wife, Kathi; his sons, Charles and Michael; and their families. He is also survived by his tremendous legacy in the library community, which will last for decades to come.

Submitted to the University of Minnesota Senate, August 12, 2013