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SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

ILLINOIS SECRETARY OF STATE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

- **July 19, 2001**
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White Welcomes Gates Foundation Grant To Place Computers In Libraries In Low-Income Communities

SPRINGFIELD — Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White announced today that the state of Illinois has been selected to receive a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation State Partnership Program to place computers, Internet access and other digital information in public libraries throughout Illinois.

White said funding is specifically targeted to libraries serving low-income communities where the need for access to computers and technology is greatest.

"As chairman of the world's predominant computer software company, Bill Gates understands better than anyone that computers and technology can enrich the lives of all of our citizens," White said. "Bill and Melinda Gates are to be commended for their enormous generosity in bringing computers, the Internet and other important digital information to citizens who might otherwise not have access to such important tools.

"Through the various causes supported by their foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Gates are making a huge difference in the lives of citizens throughout the world. Librarians in Illinois are extremely grateful to have been chosen to receive this gift to bring the magic and wonder of the computer age to more of our citizens."

"It is a pleasure to bring the U.S. Library Program to the state of Illinois," said Richard Akeroyd, Executive Director of Libraries and Public Access to Information for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. "We have been very impressed by

the excitement and enthusiasm shown for our program during our discussions with Illinois State Library staff. Secretary White and his staff are committed to our mission, which is to partner with public libraries to bring public access computing, the Internet, and digital information to people in low-income communities, and those caught in the 'Digital Divide'."

Akeroyd said the Gates Foundation State Partnership Program is guided by four principles:

- Funding will be targeted to those libraries serving low-income communities where the need is greatest.
- Funding should help build partnerships between the Program and grant recipients, between grant recipients and their communities, and within the library community.
- Funding should serve as a catalyst for others to support the public library as an institution and to make a priority of providing broad public access to information technologies.
- All of the Program's activities will encourage long-term, local technological and financial sustainability.

White said some public libraries will receive cash awards from the Gates Foundation, while others will be eligible to purchase equipment with free software and support. He said the Gates Foundation is expected to mail applications to eligible libraries at the end of August.

"It is extremely important for eligible libraries to fill out and send in their applications by the due date identified in the applications," White said. "Illinois State Library personnel are prepared to assist eligible libraries in preparing their applications. I am committed to ensuring that each and every one of our eligible libraries applies for this computer equipment, so that all of our citizens have access to this invaluable technology.

"A century ago, another well-known philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie, generously provided millions of dollars to allow libraries to be constructed throughout America. Today, Bill and Melinda Gates are ensuring that our libraries can act as vessels to bridge the Digital Divide, by allowing our neediest citizens to access the wealth of information that can be harvested through computers and other technology. Their humanitarianism will allow more of our citizens to pursue their dreams, to be educated and entertained, and hopefully to realize their complete potential."

A list of the Illinois libraries eligible for Gates grants is below.

[Eligible Library Buildings \(Cash Awards\) - PDF](#)

[Partial Library Building Grants \(Discounted Computers, Free Software and Tech Support\) - PDF](#)