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NEWS

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White Announces Launch of New Search Engine

SPRINGFIELD — Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White launched a new, improved search engine on his web site today, saying it should be one of the first stops for people searching for any type of Illinois government information on the Internet.

The search engine is located on the Secretary's home page at <http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com>, and in the Illinois State Library's information portal, Find-It! Illinois, at <http://finditillinois.org>.

"We are committed to making our web site one of the best government sites in the nation, and the development of this search engine helps us break down the walls of bureaucracy to offer better service to citizens," said White. "One of the many benefits is that citizens no longer need to know the name of a particular agency in order to find the information they are seeking."

The search engine works by "spidering" through all state government web sites to search for key words and phrases. State agencies, for example, will be searchable through the Secretary's search engine, and the new search engine is even being used on the State of Illinois home page.

The search engine has state-of-the-art subject, keyword and date searching capabilities that make it user-friendly. It is set up similarly to other large search engines, such as Yahoo!, where users can drill down to different categories. According to State Library staff, the search engine will be constantly maintained to include more and more web documents and sites, including local governments.

"We are required by law to provide web-based access to state documents," White said. "But, beyond that requirement, it is a real freedom to all Internet users, and a service that patrons are rapidly coming to expect."

Secretary White also announced the addition of a new icon at the Find-It! Illinois portal that offers links and information about online educational opportunities. "Online Learning" joins a group of services for locating Illinois images, articles and library materials.

"This link to online learning resources connects users to high school, college and occupational courses, plus online library resources," White said. "Other resources available through Online Learning provide free, online classes taught by librarians for libraries and their patrons."

Unveiled in October 1999, White said the Find-It! Illinois portal has been extremely popular with Internet users. According to White, Find-It! Illinois has recorded the following use through June of 2001:

- 2,669,496 total hits and
- 245,067 unique visitors.

The Illinois State Library and Blue Angel Technologies of Valley Forge, Pennsylvania developed the new search engine. White said Blue Angel Technologies is currently redeveloping the Virtual Illinois Catalog section of the Find-It! Illinois site, which provides Internet users with access to the holdings of 600 Illinois libraries.