



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

For Immediate Release:
April 27, 2006

For Further Information:
Pat McGuckin
Or Beth Kaufman

WHITE ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF ASK?AWAY ILLINOIS VIRTUAL REFERENCE PROGRAM

SPRINGFIELD—Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White today announced the official launch of Ask?Away Illinois, an innovative new virtual reference program, administered in part by the Illinois State Library, that will allow Internet users to chat live with or e-mail questions to librarians anytime.

The Illinois State Library marked the launch of Ask?Away Illinois by e-mailing the first question to a librarian at Lincoln Public Library in Springfield. Patrons may access Ask?Away Illinois by logging on to <http://www.askawayillinois.info/>.

“Internet users will be able to ask questions of participating librarians for free, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year,” said White. “Ask?Away Illinois will greatly complement the outstanding reference service patrons already receive when they visit their local libraries in person.”

Many Internet users wonder about the accuracy and reliability of information they find on the Internet. Ask?Away Illinois ensures that answers are being provided by highly trained professional librarians, including public, school, medical, college and university librarians. Internet users want all kinds of information. The various libraries represented in this initiative will offer the most comprehensive Internet reference service available.

Librarians from more than 100 Illinois academic, public, school and special libraries and regional library systems are participating in Ask?Away Illinois by serving as librarians who will answer questions posed online. Ask?Away Illinois is funded with a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services and is administered by the Illinois State Library and Wisconsin Library Services. Ask?Away Illinois also utilizes the services of the 24/7 Reference Consortium, a group of hundreds of librarians across the country and world who work together to provide reference services.

“This is an exciting new opportunity for citizens to use the expertise and resources available at their local library from their home or work computers,” said White.

Ask?Away uses QuestionPoint, which was developed by the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), the Library of Congress and the 24/7 Reference Consortium. This global network of librarians enables questions to be referred to local, national and international experts for further follow-up when appropriate.

###

