



Washington
Secretary of State
SAM REED

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 29, 2009

Contact:
Brian Zylstra
Deputy Communications Director
(360) 902-4173

State Library receives Gates Foundation grant to help public libraries enhance services during tough times

OLYMPIA...The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has provided the Washington State Library with a \$515,000 grant to help Washington public libraries enhance services to their residents during the economic downturn. The grant amount is for subgrants, training and communications costs.

The Renew Washington grant program will help 17 public libraries meet needs in their local communities by helping Washington residents learn basic computer skills, find and use job and career resources, locate job opportunities, complete online applications for jobs, retool for new careers by gaining new skills and locating educational opportunities, file for unemployment benefits, improve interviewing skills, prepare resumes and cover letters, and start or grow small businesses.

The Washington State Library will combine the Gates Foundation grant with \$400,000 in federal Library Services and Technology Act funds.

“Thanks to the Gates Foundation grant, the Washington State Library will be able to help libraries across the state provide local residents with the critical services they need to rebound from the economic downturn,” said State Librarian Jan Walsh. “The funding will help thousands of Washingtonians get back on their feet during one of the toughest times our state has faced in decades.”

In a recent study of Washington public libraries, it showed there has been a 7.5 percent increase in attendance in libraries over a six-month period in 2008, an 11 percent hike in circulation of library materials, an almost 14 percent rise in use of library computers, and a 20 percent

increase in visits to libraries via the Internet. The study can be viewed at: http://www.secstate.wa.gov/_assets/library/usage/pdf .

Walsh said people are inundating public libraries to use computers to apply for jobs, file for unemployment, and take advantage of other resources. In this time of intensive usage, Walsh and Secretary of State Sam Reed noted that libraries' budgets are shrinking and, as a result, staff and hours are being cut.

“The Gates Foundation’s generous support is wonderful news for libraries throughout Washington and the people who use them, especially as more and more people rely on their library for services during the recession,” Reed said.

Libraries participating in the Renew Washington grant program include the Camas Public Library, Columbia County Rural Library District, Everett Public Library, Fort Vancouver Regional Library District, King County Library System, Liberty Lake Municipal Library, Mount Vernon Public Library, Pierce County Library, Port Townsend Public Library, Puyallup Public Library, Seattle Public Library System, Sno-Isle Libraries, Spokane Public Library, Tacoma Public Library, Timberland Regional Library, Whatcom County Library and Whitman County Library.

The grant to the Washington State Library is one of 12 other grants just announced by the Gates Foundation to support various community organizations throughout Washington in their efforts to address the economic downturn.

“We are pleased to support the Washington State Library in its work to increase and enhance its invaluable work during these challenging times,” said Jill Nishi, deputy director of the Gates Foundation’s U.S. Libraries initiative. “Local public libraries are an important resource to thousands of individuals and families across the state seeking critical resources and services.”

For more information about the Gates Foundation grant, call Walsh at (360) 704-5253.

###

Washington State Library

The Washington State Library’s vision is to ensure that Washingtonians have access to the information they need today and to the history of Washington for tomorrow. The State Library’s mission and purpose are to:

- Collect, preserve, and make accessible to Washingtonians materials on the government, history, culture, and natural resources of the state.

- Provide leadership and coordination of services to all libraries in the state of Washington.
- Support the information needs of residents in state institutions and of the visually impaired.
- Serve as the primary source in the region for published information from the federal government.

To learn more about the Washington State Library and its programs and services, go to <http://www.secstate.wa.gov/library/>.

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people – especially those with the fewest resources – have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett. Learn more at www.gatesfoundation.org.