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Front Page

April 5, 2005

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The New Jersey State Library – a state treasure

Located in downtown Trenton is one of New Jersey's biggest treasures — the New Jersey State Library (NJSL). Yet, many people in the state have not heard about the state library and have never visited it.

Still, the New Jersey State Library has a tremendous impact on library services all over the state. So, what kind of library is the NJSL? Why is it so critical to the residents of New Jersey and to the quality of library service of New Jersey residents?

The NJSL consists of three divisions: the State Library Information Center (SLIC), the Library Development Bureau (LDB), and the New Jersey Library for the Blind and Handicapped (NJLBH). The SLIC and the LDB are located at the New Jersey State Library, 185 W. State Street. The NJLBH is located in Trenton at 2300 Stuyvesant Avenue.

The SLIC is a research library used by state legislators and staff, Thomas Edison State College students, and anyone who would like to visit for research. Special collections include New Jersey history, genealogy, and federal and state documents. The library also offers reference services to businesses.

The foundation collection is of value to nonprofit organizations and those searching for grant funds. The NJSL is well known for its law collection, which is the largest public law collection in the state, and for its high quality information databases. Any New Jersey resident can borrow materials from the NJSL.

The LDB leads in the provision and promotion of statewide services to public libraries. Many of the wonderful services which residents can use in their local libraries are provided through the leadership of the LDB. For example, books for residents can be borrowed by the local library from other libraries in the state through JerseyCat, a statewide interlibrary loan system, used by 600 libraries in the state. Statewide databases have been purchased by the NJSL with free access provided to public libraries for their customers.

The NJSL and partners have announced the funding of a \$6 million Knowledge Initiative in 2005, which will offer high-end proprietary databases to businesses, researchers, and students. These databases will be available in colleges and universities in the state, the state library, through public libraries and at business incubators and small businesses served by the Economic Development Authority as well.

Another service developed by the NJSL LDB and the four regional library cooperatives is JerseyClicks, located at www.jerseyclicks.org, which offers

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QandA NJ, a statewide computer information service, www.qandanj.org, offers help 24/7 through an online chat with a librarian. Live Homework Help, a tutoring service for students in grades 4-12, is also available from the Web site.

The NJSL partnered with the South Jersey Regional Library Cooperative to administer and fund this popular service, which has now answered more than 100,000 questions. In addition to offering services through New Jersey's public libraries, the LDB continues to meet the training needs of the state's librarians and trustees who attend conferences and workshops sponsored by the LDB.

The NJLBH offers free services such as talking books to anyone who is blind or visually impaired or who cannot hold a book. NJLBH also maintains Audiovision, a recorded information service which uses about 75 volunteers to read aloud articles from regional newspapers. Audiovision makes newspapers available for listening at any hour of the day or evening through free receivers or the Internet. NJLBH also serves the deaf and hard of hearing in the state.

In addition, regional resource centers have been established in 14 public libraries with books and videotapes on topics related to hearing loss, and many of the resource centers have assistive listening devices available for loan.

Today, 68 communities in the state have built new library buildings or have renovated and added to their public library buildings.

The NJSL administered the \$45 million New Jersey Public Library Construction Bond Fund grant program which generated over \$275 million in construction for the state's economy. This popular grant program has enabled communities to build 21st-Century libraries. The NJSL continuously advocates for construction funding for New Jersey's public libraries.

The NJSL also advocates for the best in library services for the people of New Jersey. Funded by state tax dollars, the state library also receives funding from the federal Library Services and Technology Act. Both state and federal funding are distributed in grants to libraries, or through state aid programs throughout New Jersey to improve local services and collection.

The NJSL is more than an address in Trenton. Through its outreach to local libraries, it touches residents all over the state and fosters the development of library services in New Jersey's 451 public libraries. Last year, attendance in the state's public libraries was 41,753,411 with a total circulation of materials of almost 52 million — an increase of almost 300,000 from the previous year.

Additional information on the NJSL and its services are available by contacting any local public library or Tina Keresztury, associate state librarian, at 609-292-8151, tkeresztury@njstatelib.org.