



Electronic Information for Libraries (eIFL.net)

PRESS RELEASE
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GOOD NEWS FOR PUBLIC LIBRARY PATRONS AROUND THE WORLD! eIFL.net receives grant to spark innovation in public library services in developing countries

eIFL.net is pleased to announce that it has been awarded a three-year \$1.4 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to spark the development of innovative public library services using technology in transitioning and developing countries.

The Public Library Innovation Program (<http://plip.eifl.net>) will encourage public libraries to reach out to their communities, partnering with local government, business and other organizations to assess local needs and develop new services. Technology has transformed public libraries throughout the world, providing access to critical education materials and communication services. Yet in many developing countries where the need is great, public libraries are under resourced.

Calls for proposals will be held in two rounds. The first call is designed to gather great ideas that introduce technology to meet user needs and help members of the community improve their lives. Ten of the best proposals will be awarded up to \$30,000 USD each for a one-year project.

The second Call will test the replicability of the top ten ideas from the first Call. Participating project teams in both rounds will come together for training and to share their experience. In addition, public libraries in any developing and transitioning country will be invited to take part in a special Innovation Award that recognises outstanding achievements. All the outcomes will be widely disseminated in key publications and conferences throughout the world.

Welcoming the launch of the new program, Deborah Jacobs, director of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Global Libraries initiative said, "We expect the new services that public libraries develop with support from eIFL.net will make a real difference in people's lives. It's exciting to imagine the social and economic benefits these new services can trigger – a farmer in a remote rural community linking up to the latest information on crop management, or a woman from a small village promoting her small business through the Internet."

Rima Kupryte, Managing Director of eIFL.net is enthusiastic. "Using technology to provide new services, or to provide them in new ways, will connect libraries to the communities they serve, will spark the creativity of librarians and users alike to harness what technology can do for them. The citizens of poor countries, remote communities, or societies in transition will reap the benefits in all areas of their everyday lives – to learn, to enjoy, to communicate, and to improve their living conditions. On behalf of public library patrons all over the world eIFL.net is grateful to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for this great opportunity to speed the modernization of one of the great places in the community, the public library."

The first round of grants will be open to applicants from the following countries where either eIFL.net has a presence or the foundation's Global Libraries initiative supports projects: Albania, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina,

Botswana, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chile, People's Republic of China, Colombia, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, Georgia, Ghana, Jordan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Latvia, Lesotho, Lithuania, Macedonia, Malawi, Mali, Mexico, Moldova, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Palestine (West Bank and Gaza), Poland, Guatemala, Romania, Russia, Senegal, Serbia, Slovenia, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Syria, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The call for proposals begins on November 16, 2009.

The second call for proposals and the Innovation Awards will be open to all developing and transitioning countries in spring of 2011.

This grant to eIFL.net is part of the foundation's Global Libraries initiative, which is working to open the world of knowledge, information and opportunity to many more people. Part of the Global Development Program, Global Libraries works with select countries that demonstrate a need and a readiness to help public libraries provide free access to computers and the Internet, and training on how to make full use of these tools.

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Notes for Editors

eIFL.net (Electronic Information for Libraries - www.eifl.net), an independent non-profit organization with a global network spanning 46 countries and thousands of libraries. eIFL.net brings access to knowledge to library users in developing and transition countries by building capacity, supporting advocacy and helping to introduce new services for the user, as well as affordable access to e-resources. Until now, it has been mostly academic, research and national library services that have benefited from being part of eIFL.net. The Public Library Innovation Program will enable eIFL.net to offer opportunities to public libraries to develop new and innovative services with and for their communities.