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For Immediate Release

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Iowa library requests 1 millionth loan through state program

Before January 20, 1997, if a local library didn't have a book an Iowan wanted, he was out of luck. But all that changed with the introduction of the State of Iowa Libraries Online program (SILO).

On November 16, 2005, Fonda Public Library requested the book "Silver Bells," which it did not own, from the Larchwood Public Library. It was the 1 millionth SILO interlibrary loan request for Iowa library materials. Larchwood Public Library received the request and sent the book to Fonda on November 17.

The Fonda Public Library customer received her borrowed book thanks to the participating libraries and technology developed by SILO.

When the SILO interlibrary loan program was launched by the State Library of Iowa in 1997, 100 libraries immediately signed up to participate. Soon, 535 Iowa libraries wanted to borrow and loan materials from each other. Today there are 700 participating libraries that loaned 106,032 items in FY05.

"The SILO interlibrary loan system provides Iowans, no matter where they live, with equal access to the state's library resources," said State Librarian Mary Wegner. "This system shows how closely Iowa libraries work together to provide great library services to Iowans. I'm proud that the State Library developed this sharing system and that Iowa libraries participate so enthusiastically."

U.S. Senator Tom Harkin, a strong supporter of libraries, helped establish SILO in 1995 through an HEA Title II-B grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Grant guidelines specified that attention be paid to better serving Iowa's rural residents. The grant ended in July 1999. The State Library has continued SILO through a partnership with Iowa State University.

In addition to SILO interlibrary loan, SILO staff created a statewide "card catalog" known as the Locator. The Locator helps librarians and the public find which libraries own books. More than 15 million library items are listed in the Locator.

Liz Forney, a support specialist for the SILO program and a former board president of a small Iowa community, said she's thrilled that even the smallest libraries in Iowa can request book titles they cannot afford to purchase.

"I celebrated my 10th anniversary with SILO on November 9th and feel especially grateful to have played a role in providing this valuable resource to Iowa libraries," said Forney.

Both the Fonda and Larchwood public libraries received special accolades from the State Library for their roles in the 1 millionth interlibrary loan transaction.

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