

## **APPLICATION FOR STATE RECORDS BOARD GRANT TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION**

- 1. Name of agency applying for grant:**  
Nebraska Library Commission
- 2. Title or brief description of project:**  
Value-Added Book Reviews: Any Time, Any Place
- 3. Grant request amount:**  
\$11,096
- 4. Will there be a fee for accessing records associated with this project?**  
No
- 5. If yes, provide any statutory reference or authorization for the fee**  
Not applicable
- 6. Please describe the project in detail**  
Since 1993 the Nebraska Library Commission has provided book reviews of selected books appropriate for children and young adult readers via a number of videoconference hookup sites, and afterward via videotapes of these presentations. Each presentation (and video) shows a reviewer presenting their reviews of a number of titles that they have chosen within broad subject categories. Both the face of the reviewer and, alternately, a video shot of the front cover of the book and several pages and/or illustrations from the book are displayed while the reviewer delivers the oral review. After the videoconferenced reviews are presented, multiple copies of the videotaped sessions are provided to all six library Systems in the state as well as several copies added to the Commission's circulating collection.

As more and more public and school libraries gain access to higher speed Internet access, we have noted and verified an increased interest in access to these reviews by "user friendlier" means. We have heard, for example, from library staff that indicate that having to sit through approximately six hours of videotapes which offer no indexing system to allow moving to specific titles, authors or categories (except by guess work) is too time consuming. With the steady increase in the number of computer stations (and the higher speed access mentioned above), many users are ready to move to something more convenient and efficient for them. The preferred mode is via the Commission web site, an approach that will allow access any time, any place. It also allows direct access by specific book title, by author, by genre, and by reader age, among others.

During the last year we have worked closely with Nebraska Educational Telecommunications where the book reviews are currently videotaped every six months to seek a solution to provide this enhanced service. In essence we have

developed a solutions that will allow improved, timesaving access any time and any place in Nebraska. Library staff will now be able to view the book reviews at work, at home or any place else that has Internet access. The value-added reviews (because the titles are selected according to quality criteria before reviewing) will allow school media staff and public library staff to offer quality titles they have seen and heard reviewed in an unbiased manner. This makes this service superior to services such as Amazon.com, for example, since such sources tend to offer only positive reviews for any titles they carry since their primary objective is to sell the books. The importance of this issue cannot be stressed enough especially since many of Nebraska's libraries have staff untrained in materials selection generally, and in selection of children's and young adults' materials specifically.

**Goals:**

- Access any time, any place to quality-selected book reviews of young adult and children's titles by Nebraska librarians
- Updated methodology for providing these reviews statewide via a variety of access points
- Use of up-to-date technology by the Nebraska Library Commission and by local libraries to provide enhanced services to library staff with responsibility for these library materials

**Objectives:**

- To provide on-line access via the Commission's web site to book reviews
- To develop methods that will be easy and intuitive for library users in order to facilitate access to this information
- To work with Nebraska Educational Telecommunications staff to initiate this improved method of delivery and to investigate the possibility of making this service available to other interested states on a pay-as-you-go basis
- To encourage the use of time-efficient methods for local libraries in accessing this information
- To ensure the continued provision of quality books titles for Nebraska's public and school libraries in their services to children and young adults
- To test the usefulness and employment of this new method for providing this service through the gathering of use data during the first year of operation; to follow up with a survey to determine interest in continuing

**7. Please describe who the beneficiary or recipient of this service will be and projected activity for access or use of the proposed service**

**Beneficiaries:** Library staff with responsibility for selecting book titles for the library's children and young adult customers who are the ultimate beneficiaries because they will have access to high quality materials.

We expect the following benefits to accrue:

- Savings in terms of time commitment by library customers who can now access the reviews at times and places convenient to them, rather than

having to travel to videoconference sites or wait for later check out of a finite number of videotape sets

- Faster access to the reviews of the titles, thus speeding the ordering process for local libraries and helping to ensure the acquisition of quality books for children and young adult library customers
- Increased use of new technology in libraries with the resulting improvement in skill level of local library staff; potential access of these reviews by other library customers such as day care personnel, parents, students, etc.
- Contribution toward the attainment of one of the goals of the Nebraska Library Commission to improve library services statewide by helping to provide quality library services to all citizens

**Projected Activity:** We expect that those library staff who are comfortable with using current library technology will use this newer method of providing access to these reviews immediately. This has been verified in a computer lab setting during which we demonstrated a demo version, and numerous comments from those who have heard about this approach indicate a very positive reception. Since this will be accessible through our web site, we expect the high hit rate will both ensure good use of these reviews and increase the use of our web site.

#### **8. Estimated timeline for implementation:**

October 1, 2001 – Due date for submitting grant request to Nebraska State Records Board

Late October or early November, 2001 – State Records Board meets and decides on grant applications – If grant proposal is approved, then the following schedule, etc. would apply:

November 15, 2001 – Set up of dynamic window by NET to allow later input of raw data; testing

November 20, 2001 – Sign off by Commission on dynamic window as workable for use by Commission staff to input raw data

[October 26 and November 2, 2001 – Videotaping of reviews at NET]

[November 12, 2001 – Final corrections made on list of book reviews, code sheets, etc.]\*

November 20, 2001 – Begin input of raw data via dynamic window

\*Note: The two items in square brackets above will be completed whether or not this project is funded; the videotapes are done each six months.

#### **9. Agency contribution to project (labor, equipment, etc.):**

Agency staff members have worked with staff of the Nebraska Educational Telecommunications for over a year, meeting and planning for this project. In addition members of our computer team staff have researched various approaches and have reviewed proposals from NET as to their feasibility for local libraries to gain access and for our staff to provide support. If this project goes forward, our Computer Team staff will have responsibility for ensuring that it is available to libraries statewide via our web site. It is also likely that our staff who possess

expertise in re: children's and young adult's books will have increased responsibilities at least until any "glitches" are worked out with this new means of access.

**10a. Has this project ever been submitted as a budget request (explain)?:**

No. We have recently submitted a request for funding support to the NITC for this project.

**10b. Does the project require additional statutory authority (explain):**

No, it does not.

**10c. Why is the grant money needed for the project, and, if applicable, how will the service be sustained once the grant money is expended?:**

The agency does not have sufficient funding available for this project for the first year's greater start-up costs, although we do have sufficient funding to sustain this project in subsequent years. This project will allow us to investigate whether or not we will discontinue the current delivery method for these book reviews (six hours of videotapes every six months) or whether this new method will replace that method, or enhance it. We will also be exploring the possibility of financial support from surrounding states, some of which already ask for and use copies of the videotapes we produce of these book reviews. This may yield additional resources to help support this activity in the future.

**11. Please describe how this project will enhance the delivery of state agency services or access to those services:**

This project will enhance the delivery of and access to the Nebraska Library Commission's reviews for children's and young adult's book titles by providing the following:

- Access to these value-added reviews any time and any place that a computer terminal is available
- Quicker, and broader access to these reviews rather than having to wait for a finite number of videotapes
- Increased and improved access points through computer-assisted searching so that individual titles, authors, genres, age groupings, etc. can be found, versus attempting to locate specific portions of the non-indexed videotapes
- Reduction in travel time required for local viewing of reviews by participants who wish to have early access to this information at various videoconferencing sites
- Possible elimination of the videotape and videoconference access approaches to providing this service, should this newer approach prove superior (not, however, if that reduces access and use of these reviews)
- Improved visual access to book covers, and interior pages, versus sometimes problematic access via videotape
- Geographic equality of access, no matter the distance from Lincoln or from videoconferencing sites

- Integration into the state of Nebraska's vision of offering one-stop shopping for state services via its web site
- Ultimately, the improvement of book titles available for Nebraska's children and young adults through their public and school libraries

**12. Please describe how this project will 1) Improve the efficiency of agency operations; 2) Facilitate collaboration among state agencies. . . .**

**Improve the efficiency of agency operations:**

- It will build on our continuing efforts to facilitate the use of our web site for access to Commission services and information
- It will allow us to offer access to these book reviews on a self-serve basis, and to a greater number of people
- It may reduce the need for check out and scheduling of videotapes, both on our part and on the part of the regional library Systems who house one copy of the videotapes regionally

**Facilitate collaboration among state agencies:**

- It will allow us to expand our cooperative efforts with Nebraska Educational Telecommunications by enhancing the current videoconference/videotape services

**Facilitate collaboration between state agencies and other public institutions:**

- It will offer any time access to these book reviews for any public or school library (and other interested parties) by eliminating the need to attend videoconference sites on specified dates, or by having to wait in line to check out the videotape copies available
- It will engender further the use of the Commission's web site (and ultimately the state's web site) for access to these services
- It will encourage greater use of new library technology in our public and school libraries, resulting in improved services for local citizens and students

**13. Contact person for any questions regarding this application:**

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Signed this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Agency Director

