

ACCESS TO LEARNING AWARD

2009

Honoring innovation. Opening a world of information.



BILL & MELINDA
GATES *foundation*



We invite you to apply for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's annual **Access to Learning Award**, which recognizes the innovative efforts of public libraries and similar institutions outside the United States to connect people to information and opportunities through free access to computers and the Internet. The award is given by Global Libraries, a special initiative of the foundation's Global Development Program.

Computers and the Internet are powerful tools that provide opportunities for people to improve their social and economic well being. Worldwide, just one person in six has access to the Internet. This means that five billion people miss out on chances to pursue education and employment, access government services, learn about valuable health information, conduct business online, and exchange information and ideas. The Access to Learning Award encourages new, innovative ways to provide computer and Internet services to people most in need, and promotes greater development of public access technology programs around the world.

The recipient of the Access to Learning Award will receive US \$1 million.

**THE APPLICATION DEADLINE
FOR THE 2009 AWARD IS**

31 OCTOBER 2008

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS



WHAT KINDS OF INSTITUTIONS MAY APPLY?

The foundation invites public libraries and similar institutions outside the United States to apply. Applicants must provide free public access to information through the use of computers and the Internet. We particularly encourage applications from institutions in developing countries or those working with disadvantaged communities. We will give preference to organizations that actively reach out to underserved groups, such as poor or disabled patrons or those from minority communities.

HOW IS 'FREE PUBLIC ACCESS' DEFINED?

A library or similar institution offers free public access to computers and the Internet if it allows all members of the public—from children to senior citizens—to use these tools at no cost. Organizations must show how they make technology services available to the public in a community space without charging membership or access fees, and must detail the types of technology training they offer to the public and their staff. Organizations that restrict public access to their services—for example, on the basis of age or membership status—are not eligible for the award.

WHAT IS CONSIDERED INNOVATIVE?

A program is considered to be innovative if it provides access to information through technology and services that were previously not available to the community. Programs of any size or scope are considered. We will specifically look for groundbreaking Internet connectivity, training, and sustainability models, and programs that creatively reach underserved communities.

IS THIS AWARD INTENDED TO FUND A PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY?

No. The award is a one-time prize to support the efforts of a library or similar institution currently working to provide free access to computers and the Internet. It does not provide funding for new projects.



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THE STORY
TWO



PROCESS FOR SELECTION

An international advisory committee made up of librarians, information technology experts, and foundation staff evaluates applications based on candidates' innovative efforts to:

- **make computer and Internet access free to the public;**
- **train the public in using technology and accessing information;**
- **educate staff on technology use; and**
- **reach out to underserved communities.**

The committee selects a list of final candidates for consideration by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Following an independent financial and organizational review of the finalists, the foundation selects the award recipient.

HOW TO APPLY

DEADLINE

Completed applications must be submitted by 31 October 2008.

OBTAINING APPLICATION FORMS

The Access to Learning Award application form is available for download at www.gatesfoundation.org/ATLA.

The form is only available in English and must be completed in English in order to be eligible for review by the advisory committee.

Applications may also be requested by email at ATLA@gatesfoundation.org.



PREVIOUS AWARD RECIPIENTS

2007: Australia's Northern Territory Library (NTL) provides indigenous people living in impoverished communities with technology tools and training. Through NTL's 'Our Story' program, residents build digital literacy skills while creating digital archives of their traditional stories and songs.

2006: Rural Education and Development (READ) Nepal works with local villages to build and equip self-supporting libraries—funded through income-generating community projects—that provide free access to computers and the Internet, Nepali books and other reading materials, community meeting spaces, and local news content.

2005: Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha converts indigenous boats into mobile libraries that provide free computer and Internet stations and training to rural communities throughout a northern Bangladesh watershed.



2004: Aarhus Public Libraries in Denmark has built a creative library system with a broad array of Internet and information technology services for use by a growing refugee and immigrant community.

2004: China Evergreen Rural Library Service works with public high schools in remote regions in China to develop and computerize library collections, create computer labs for the entire community, and offer training.

2003: Smart Cape Access Project installed computers and Internet access in several public libraries in primarily disadvantaged areas of Cape Town to give residents free access for the first time in South Africa.

2002: BiblioRed is a network of 19 public libraries in Bogotá, Colombia that offers free access to computers and the Internet in some of the city's poorest neighborhoods.

2001: Proyecto Bibliotecas (Probigua) supports libraries and technology centers in rural communities in Guatemala. These centers include computer training labs that teach new skills to underserved populations.

2001: Biblioteca del Congreso is one of the few libraries in Argentina that provides services to the public free of charge, including a mobile library and multimedia computer center that is open 24 hours a day.

2000: Helsinki City Library in Finland was among the first public libraries in the world to offer Internet access to the public, including poor residents and refugees. It established the Information Gas Station, a portable unit providing immediate information by phone, fax, or text messages.

ABOUT THE 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, the foundation is led by CEO Patty Stonesifer and co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

Part of the foundation's Global Development Program, Global Libraries works to open a world of knowledge, information, and communication. The initiative helps public libraries and similar institutions in select countries to provide access to computers and the Internet, and to train library users on how to take advantage of these tools. With our national and local partners, we aim to transform public libraries into vital centers that connect hundreds of thousands of people to information technology and to the economic and educational benefits of this access. For more information, please visit <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/GlobalDevelopment/GlobalLibraries>.

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