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Ask a Librarian Service Awarded Continued Funding; Key Component of Florida Electronic Library

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The statewide Ask a Librarian service (www.askalibrarian.org) has been awarded a \$270,692 Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant to continue providing free online library reference service to all Floridians. Ask a Librarian allows Florida residents to receive convenient, real-time access to librarians who can answer reference questions and assist in locating Internet information.

“Continued grant funding confirms the fact that Ask a Librarian is an invaluable service that assists thousands of Floridians with their information needs each year,” said Vince Mariner, statewide coordinator of the service. “Anyone with an Internet connection can use the service to ask questions of knowledgeable library staff members.”

As a result of last year’s grant, Ask a Librarian was able to provide 20,576 virtual reference sessions. Since its inception in 2003, Ask a Librarian has provided more than 35,907 sessions. From the first year of service to the second year of service, the number of sessions increased by approximately 78%. The 2004-2005 grant also allowed for the addition of 12 new libraries to the service, bringing the total number of participating libraries to 87.

Ask a Librarian is a collaborative service jointly administered by the College Center for Library Automation (CCLA) and the Tampa Bay Library Consortium (TBLC), and is a key component of the Florida Electronic Library (www.flelibrary.org).

About CCLA and TBLC

CCLA operates the statewide Library Information Network for Community Colleges (LINCC) and the associated Web-based information portal, LINCCWeb, from its headquarters in Tallahassee, Florida. As an administered program of the Florida Department of Education’s Division of Community Colleges, CCLA serves 28 community colleges and 73 campus libraries in 60 cities throughout Florida. On the Web at: www.cclaflorida.org and www.linccweb.org.

TBLC is a nonprofit multi-type library cooperative comprising 97 member libraries serving 12 west central Florida counties. TBLC member libraries include 6 community colleges, 5 State University System libraries, 27 private academic colleges and universities, 4 public school systems, 41 public and 13 special libraries. TBLC's Anywhere-Anytime virtual library includes Alleycat, a virtual union catalog with interlibrary loan management capabilities serving 44 libraries through 103 outlets in southwest, west and central Florida. On the Web at:
<http://www.anywhereanytimelibrary.org/>.