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### **Focused on the Importance of Libraries to Citizens in Iowa**

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To deal with Iowa's lingering budget problems, the Iowa General Assembly held two special sessions in late spring. When the dust had cleared, there was good news and bad news for Iowa libraries.

Governor Tom Vilsack vetoed a legislative provision which would have removed \$600,000 from Enrich Iowa, a program which provides direct state aid for public libraries and partial reimbursement to libraries for resource sharing. Vilsack said "Quality libraries are a key component of the educational infrastructure for Iowa's children. A reduction in funding would stifle the progress this administration has made in improving educational opportunities for Iowa's children." Thanks to the governor's veto, Enrich Iowa was funded for FY03 at \$2,341,982, an increase of 4.24% over FY02.

However, the budget of the State Library sustained deep cuts. The State Library's appropriation was cut 25% for FY03. In contrast, the overall reduction in the state's general fund appropriations from FY02 to FY03 was 3.17%. A major consequence of these cuts is that state money is no longer available to purchase databases; the State Library ended its contract with Electric Library on June 30. In addition, two public service positions at the State Library (10% of the state-funded staff) were eliminated. The State Library's materials budget for FY03 is less than one third of what it was in FY01.

The Governor also vetoed a legislative attempt to close the State Medical Library (a subdivision of the State Library) and further reduce the State Library budget. The future of the State Medical Library remains a political issue, and its appropriate role will continue to be discussed in the coming months.

Despite the budget challenges, the State Library staff remains focused on the importance of Iowa's libraries to the citizens of Iowa. A major new initiative has been launched in which Ebscohost databases are being made available to every Iowan through their local (school, public or academic) library. This project is made possible by a State Library partnership with Iowa's Area Education Agencies. Local public and academic libraries are paying a small part of the costs, and federal Library Services and Technology Act dollars provide the rest of the funding.

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