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### Washington State Library Merges with Secretary of State's Office

an interview with Sam Reed  
Washington Secretary of State

The Washington State Library, once threatened with shut-down in the midst of budget constraints, officially transferred to the Secretary of State's Office on July 1, 2002. "The State Library is a natural fit for our office and a responsibility we take seriously," said Secretary of State Sam Reed. "We are dedicated to helping our new partner preserve the State's heritage and become a leader in technology for the nation."

Previously, the State Library was an independent agency under the Governor's Office, with the State Librarian being appointed by the State Library Commission. During the last legislative session, the Governor proposed redistributing the collections, services, and staff of the State Library. Librarians around the state contacted their legislators opposing the changes; Secretary of State Reed also spoke out against the virtual elimination of the State Library. Eventually, the legislators reassigned the State Library to the Secretary of State's office. "The choice was motivated by two factors," noted Secretary Reed. "The political motivation for choosing my office was to have an elected official with a statewide base and a connection with the legislature. The move also made sense because it consolidated space, money, information technology, and administrative functions; we already manage the State Archives."

Secretary Reed noted that Washington, like most other states, is experiencing a drop in revenues, exacerbated by Boeing reducing its workforce and moving its corporate offices to Chicago and by the dot.com "flame-out." He is currently working on making budget cuts of 20 percent, which includes eliminating 18 of the State Library's 130 positions.

While the move has been "difficult and traumatic" for the Washington library community, Secretary Reed was quick to note that they are viewing it as a chance to reinvent the State Library in the face of Internet access and falling revenues. In mid-July, library school, regional library, and other representatives, attended a "summit" hosted by Secretary Reed, who was pleased by the creative energy unleashed by the brainstorming. "I'm looking forward to a revitalized, relevant State Library," he said. "We've got some exciting possibilities."

Meanwhile, former State Librarian Nancy Zussy has left the library; Jan Walsh is Acting State Librarian. Plans are for her to remain in that position until the direction of the State Library is clear and funding is stabilized.

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