



News Release

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MeL Celebrates Its 20th Anniversary

*Michigan's pioneering online library marks two decades
of no-cost information service to all Michigan residents*

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LANSING -- October marks 20 years of no-cost access for Michigan residents to the rich online resources found at the Michigan eLibrary, nicknamed: MeL (www.mel.org).

Businesses, schools, and individuals have spent two decades relying on MeL to connect them with premium databases – millions of full-text articles, digital images, business and job and information, K-12 curricular resources, homework helpers and much more – saving them thousands of dollars in subscription fees for these specialty information sources.

To celebrate, the Library of Michigan is hosting a gala from 5-7 p.m. October 4, in its stately building in Lansing. The public is welcome to this event, which is being funded through private donations.

“Providing expansive online materials to Michigan residents at no cost to them is a gateway to lifelong learning,” said state Superintendent of Public Instruction Mike Flanagan. “MeL provides unparalleled value to Michiganders of all ages, backgrounds, and cultures. It is worth celebrating.”

MeL has been a national pioneer in statewide online information service and its 20th anniversary is attracting library heavy-hitters such as presidential appointee Susan Hildreth, Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Hildreth will be a featured speaker along with State Librarian Nancy Robertson, and former State Librarians George Needham and Christie Brandau.

MeL’s success and availability recently have been reflected in Governor Rick Snyder’s support. The state’s Fiscal Year 2012-13 budget provides the Michigan Department of Education with a \$1.75 million appropriation for the Library of Michigan’s budget for MeL, including an \$800,000 increase earmarked for additional business, entrepreneurial and career resources.

“Libraries have long served the role of community center in neighborhoods and colleges,” Snyder said. “They have filled the resource gap by providing career and business development information as well as contributing to the educational success of those they serve. MeL

resources continue to level the playing field and make these valuable resources available to every resident including business owners and entrepreneurs across the state.”

The Michigan eLibrary is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and is used and promoted by all Michigan libraries. Via the Internet, state residents can access full-text articles and digitized archival records; borrow books; find jobs; help with starting or growing a business; take ACT practice exams; locate lesson plans for the classroom and much more.

“It’s hard to believe the Michigan eLibrary got its start a full two decades ago,” Robertson said. “Even more amazing is how it has evolved and grown over that time to become the premier online information resource for Michigan’s libraries and residents from all walks of life. We are so pleased to be able to celebrate this milestone with Susan Hildreth from the Institute of Museum and Library Services in attendance. Without IMLS federal funding and the recently appropriated state funding for MeL, we and the state’s libraries of all types would not have this exciting occasion for celebration.”

Hildreth said she is so proud that the state of Michigan has strategically used federal funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to invest in MeL.

“MeL saves millions in taxpayer dollars every year by negotiating statewide licenses to content that Michiganders want and use. The resources provided by MeL help people pursue education, support small business, find jobs and more. We are delighted that federal support has helped make this possible,” said Susan Hildreth, Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

In 1997 AccessMichigan first provided licensed commercial databases through Michigan libraries. In 1999, the Action Team for Advancement of Libraries Statewide (ATLAS) began developing a statewide patron initiated interloan system that eventually became MeLCat in 2005.

In 2003-2004, the debut of Making of Modern Michigan, a statewide digitization effort to preserve Michigan history involving 41 libraries from across the state formed the basis for what became MeL Michigan. Since then, this digital Michigan history portal in MeL links to even more digital collections around the state.

Michigan Online Resources for Educators (M.O.R.E.) was added in 2008. M.O.R.E. provides curricular based resources that are aligned with the Common Core State Standards and the Michigan Content Expectations.

Generous support for the MeL 20th Anniversary Celebration honoring Susan Hildreth is provided by its sponsors and partners, the Library of Michigan Foundation, the Midwest Collaborative for Library Services (MCLS), Innovative Interfaces, Inc. (III), ProQuest, GaleCengage, LearningExpress and the Michigan State University Libraries.

The Michigan eLibrary is made possible by grant funds from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) administered by the State of Michigan through the Library of Michigan with additional funding provided by the State of Michigan.

For more information on the Michigan eLibrary or the 20th Anniversary celebration, contact Carolyn Sparks, Executive Director of the Library of Michigan Foundation at Sparksc2@michigan.gov, phone at 517-373-129, or event web page, <http://www.michigan.gov/melanniversary>

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The Library of Michigan – Michigan’s official state library agency for more than 175 years – is part of the Michigan Department of Education. To learn more, visit www.michigan.gov/libraryofmichigan