

Press Release

For immediate release

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Freedom of Information Award Recipients Announced

Marilyn Cathcart, former director of the state Legislative Reference Library and Bridges, Minnesota's Gateway to Environmental Information, an initiative of the multi-agency Foundations Project are this year's recipients of the John R. Finnegan Freedom of Information Award. The individual and organizational awards for separate achievements will be presented at a ceremony at 12:00 Noon in Room G-40 of the Minnesota Judicial Center on Thursday, March 16, 2000, Freedom of Information Day. The Minnesota Judicial Center is located at 25 Constitution Avenue, St. Paul, MN.

Marilyn Cathcart is recognized as a vocal advocate for the distribution of essential government information to Minnesota citizens. During her 13-year tenure as Director of the Legislative Reference Library, she was responsible for the continued acquisition and cataloging of Minnesota state documents. Her work ensured that this information is available throughout the state at depository libraries today, and will be preserved for future generations.

Marilyn Cathcart is also honored for her noteworthy Internet activities. As this new electronic form of delivering information became available in the early 1990's, Marilyn recognized the opportunity for delivering Minnesota state legislative information to people outside the walls of the Capitol. Under her direction, library staff were instrumental in developing the structure of the original Legislative Gopher, and the Library has continued to play a strong role in the development and improvement of the Legislative website ever since.

This year's organization award goes to Bridges, Minnesota's Gateway to Environmental Information, an initiative of the multi-agency Foundations Project. Bridges is developed with the collaboration of Minnesota state government environmental agencies to facilitate access to the rich and diverse environmental information in electronic format in Minnesota.

The Bridges project uses a controlled vocabulary and metadata to provide easier citizen access to Minnesota's rich environmental

information resources. The project lays the foundation for methods and strategies which will facilitate systematic and accurate discovery and use of electronic resources from state government. The application of consistent technology standards, guidelines and best practices developed by the project allows citizens and researchers to obtain better search results.

State government information is valuable to citizens only when they are able to locate it efficiently. The Bridges project accomplishes that for state environmental information and sets the groundwork for even more accessible state government information on the web in the coming years. Try the Bridges Gateway to Environmental Information at <http://bridges.state.mn.us/>

Freedom of Information Day is celebrated each year on the anniversary of the birth of James Madison, fourth president of the United States and the principal author of the Bill of Rights. 2000 is the 12th year the Coalition on Government Information has presented the award.

The Minnesota Coalition of Government Information is modeled on a national coalition initiated in 1986 by the American Library Association. Members of the Minnesota Coalition include librarians, media and computer professionals, lawyers, community activists, educators and others.

The award is named for John R. Finnegan, retired senior vice-president of the St. Paul Pioneer Press and chair of the Minnesota Joint Media Committee, for his dedication to openness in government and his work on behalf of the people's right to know. Mr. Finnegan will speak at the award presentation ceremony.