# Subsidized
# Database Searching
# at
# Indiana State University

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Indiana State University, located in Terre Haute, Indiana offers course-work leading to bachelor, master, and doctoral degrees. It also offers adult education, and its 650 faculty conduct research and serve as consultants in business, education, science, and medicine. The nearly 12,000 students come from 47 states, the Pacific Protectorate, the Virgin Islands, and 74 foreign countries.

Database searching began at Indiana State University in October 1980. Free searches and demonstrations were initially offered using money provided by the Dean of Library Services, Ronald G. Leach. These exercises allowed the Coordinator of Database Searching and the Head of the Science Library to practice searching techniques and to familiarize themselves with various databases. (Both searchers had been trained at INCOLSA and one had just completed a course in database searching in the Department of Library Science at the university.) These searches also proved to be an effective way to discover patron interests and potential demand for the service.

In January 1981, charging for searches began. The program was advertised, primarily to doctoral students and faculty. Government subsidized databases (MEDLINE, NTIS, ERIC, etc.) could be searched for eight dollars apiece; up to 25 citations would be provided. The commercial databases could be similarly searched for eighteen dollars. In either case, if additional citations were requested,

there was a charge of ten cents for simple bibliographic formats and fifteen cents for bibliographic formats which included abstracts. This fee structure applied only to members of the university community; patrons not affiliated with the university were charged the full cost of the search plus a 50 percent surcharge. By June 30, searches had been done for seventeen faculty, fifteen graduate students, eight undergraduates and two nonaffiliated patrons.

In 1981/82, a 300 percent increase in demand for searches required the training of two more reference librarians. The following year the demand for searches continued to increase and three more reference librarians were added to the searching team. In 1983/84, demand continued to rise. A primary reason for the increasing demand for searching was a program of subsidized searching for faculty. This program began in May 1981. The program provided faculty members with a $36 credit toward searching and printing charges on a first-come, first-served basis until the initial $2,500 was spent. This credit allowed a search of up to two commercial databases and the only charge would be for printing. The first 25 citations were not included for free under this program; however, academic departments would pay for reasonable expenses over $36 so there was usually no cost to the faculty member. Those searching the cheaper government databases had even more flexibility.

The money for the subsidy was originally provided by the University Research Committee which provides "seed" money to selected faculty for research projects. Dean Leach sent a proposal to the committee, and subsequently spoke with the committee, addressing the needs of the faculty which databases searching could meet: information for research activities, preliminary information for grant applications, and information to allow individuals to keep current in their fields. At the end of each year Dean Leach submitted a request for renewal of the grant based upon a summary report of the numbers of persons and departments using the previous year's money. (See Figure 1.) The second year $3,000 was granted and the third year this was increased to $4,300. After three years it was decided that the program had proven itself and was no longer experimental in nature, so the funding source was moved to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

When the grant was first made available, it was announced in the faculty newsletter and promoted through personal contact with the faculty in new faculty orientations, searching demonstrations for faculty, and referrals during reference work. The grant is now announced each year in the faculty newsletter and in the special "Fall Greetings" publication for faculty. After several years, of course, word-of-mouth brings in many faculty members too.

In addition, new faculty receive a welcoming letter and a packet of materials outlining all library services including database searching. They also receive a follow-up phone call from an appropriate subject specialist who offers them a guided tour of the library during which database searching is again explained.

Figure 1.  Numbers of users and departments reached with faculty grants

|  | 1981/82 | 1982/83 | 1983/84 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Users (out of 650 faculty) | 100 | 109 | 148 |
| Departments which had at least one faculty member use the grant (out of 50) | 29 | 35 | 37 |
| Repeat Users | - | 34 | 72 |
| New Users | 100 | 75 | 76 |

When the present Coordinator for Database Searching arrived in January 1984, she began a special promotion for the spring semester. The grant was again announced in the faculty newsletter. The coordinator, in an effort to "market" the grant most effectively, analyzed the information available on users of the grant from the year before. She drew up a list of faculty members who had used the grant in the current year but had not used up their $36 allotment, and those who were in departments that covered subjects that were suitable for database searching but that had made very little use of the grant. This last category included faculty in the departments of Accounting, Communications, Communication Disorders, Economics, Educational Foundations and Media Technology, Elementary Education, Health and Safety, Home Economics, Management/Finance, Manufacturing and Construction Technology, Physical Education, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology and Social Work, and Special Education. Letters of reminder about the grant went to each of these faculty members and copies also were sent to all department chairpersons. The original $3,500 was spent by May 14. Dean Leach obtained the first $500, then $300 more for faculty searching that year.

At the end of 1983/84, the Coordinator analyzed the year's information on grant users in preparation for promotion in 1984/85. The resulting list of low-use departments was used in early 1985,

because the faculty grant again was not highly used in the fall of 1984. ($1287.37 was spent.) The list includes Business and Distributive Office Administration, Communication Disorders, Economics, Electronics and Computer Technology, Elementary Education, Health and Safety, Home Economics, Industrial Technology Education, Management/Finance, Mathematics and Computer Science, Physical Education, Political Science, the Science Teaching Center, and the Social Science Education Center. Faculty members seem more inclined to use the service in the spring. They may be busier in the fall semester; they may also, quite logically, wait to have a search until nearer a time when they can make use of the information obtained, that is, until it is closer to summer.

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## SOME COMMENTS

Faculty comments on the free database search service have been uniformly favorable. Some sample comments include:

"Excellent service, and deeply appreciated."
[Search] "saved time and effort."
"A great service - I'm very thankful it's available."
"This output saved hundreds of man hours."
"I appreciate the service and the funding."
"It . . . improve(s) research and teaching."
"I really appreciate this service. I hope financial support can be increased."
"This is a very useful service and has aided my research immeasurably."
"I appreciate the tremendous amount (of) help the search provided. It is a *real asset to ISU.*"
"Now that I have used it, I would certainly pay to continue using it."

(For additional information on use of the faculty grant see Figures 2 and 3.)

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Figure 2. Departments which made the most use of the faculty grant

| 1981/82 | | 1982/83 | | 1983/84 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Departments | Uses | Departments | Uses | Departments | Uses |
| Geog/Geology | 11 | Life Sciences | 9 | Library | 14 |
| Nursing | 9 | Geog/Geology | 8 | Nursing | 14 |
| Library | 8 | Counseling | 6 | Communications | 9 |
| Sociology/ | | English | 6 | Life Sciences | 9 |
| Social Work | 7 | Library | 6 | Geog/Geology | 7 |
| Life Sciences | 6 | Nursing | 6 | Psychology | 7 |
| | | | | Sociology/ | |
| | | | | Social Work | 7 |

(Library searches were those done by individual librarians for research purposes.)

Figure 3. Purposes for using the faculty grant (Since users could check more than one purpose, these will add up to more than the total number of users.)

| | 1981/82 | 1982/83 | 1983/84 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1) Making a decision to apply for a grant | 24 | 19 | 31 |
| 2) Writing an article or book | 51 | 55 | 73 |
| 3) Providing an update in my field | 41 | 39 | 55 |
| 4) Other | 25 | 34 | 52 |

The need to involve more graduate students was recognized from the beginning and the success of the faculty program encouraged Dean Leach to set aside money for a trial program of subsidized searches for graduate students. The Dean secured $3,500 from the ISU Foundation to begin a program of subsidized searches in August 1984.

The grant for graduate student searches was advertised in several ways. The grant was announced in library instruction classes, which brought in some patrons, and was the subject of articles in the

School of Graduate Studies newsletters and in the student news-paper. The Head of the Science Library wrote each graduate science student explaining the program. Since graduate students had been major attendees at earlier database searching demonstrations, no additional explanatory materials were distributed. The grant was announced in the university newsletter, and the School of Graduate Studies spread the word to its faculty members. The faculty members in turn told their graduate students. This word-of-mouth promotion was the most effective method of spreading the news of the free searches. Free searches for graduate students were very popular; so much so that most of the $3,500 grant was used during the first two months of the program. In all, 135 graduate students, from 24 departments requested searches. (See Figure 4 for addi-tional information on the graduate student grant.)

Figure 4. The graduate student grant, 1984/85

| Departments which made use of the graduate grant. | | Purposes for using the grad-ate grant. (Since users could check more than one purpose these will add up to more than the total number of users.) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Department | Number of searches | | |
| Physical Education | 24 | Thesis research | 23 |
| Business | 14 | Dissertation research | 25 |
| Geography/Geology | 14 | Class research, paper or project | 86 |
| Psychology | 12 | | |
| Life Sciences | 10 | Other | 6 |

The procedures for the use of both grants are roughly the same. The patron makes an interview appointment with a searcher. In addition to our usual request form, the patron fills out a second form stating his or her name, department or major, and purpose of the search. This form is used to keep track of how much of their $36 users have spent. A log is also kept with the amount of the grant which has been spent recorded in the last column.

The faculty grant seems very likely to continue, if not in its current form, then as an addition to the library's budget. The faculty have found it so useful that they would not easily let it go. The amount will probably not increase greatly, but the current amount seems adequate for the size of the faculty.

The graduate grant is less certain since it is a very new program. The first grant has been phenomenally successful and there is no doubt that graduate students will make use of the grant if it is renewed for 1985/86. If there is a grant next year, it will be announced more systematically so that students in some departments wnere the word did not spread fast enough in 1984 will have a chance. More money is needed for this grant since a simple renewal would provide enough funds for just one semester.

Eventually, funding for undergraduate searching may be sought, but the research done by undergraduates at Indiana State University usually can be done through printed indexes, and faculty who teach undergraduates often want their students to do the research themselves as a learning experience. In addition, the library has recently acquired SEARCH HELPER which allows low-cost, easy access to a general periodical article database that undergraduates are most likely to use. This may meet the needs of most undergraduates.

These grants have been very popular, so popular in fact, that they pay for the majority of the searches done at Indiana State Unversity Library. The grants have enabled the library to offer some "free" searches without leaving the library to open to ever-mounting costs that occur if all searching is provided free. Common sense indicates that many of the grant users might never have had computer searches done if they had had to pay for them. One might say that there is something wrong if they don't want searches enough to pay for them. We consider, however, that we are fortunate in being able to offer the service for free, to some extent, since our ideal is free service. Limited grants to support searching, or some other limited funding mechanism, ensure that some free searching can be offered, but the problems of totally free searching — endlessly mounting costs, "frivolous" searches, growing demand for searches — can be avoided.