

What is the leading resource for technical information?

By **Cindy Monnier**

At the Indiana Chamber's Business Research Center, we pride ourselves on handling a wide variety of requests from members, staff and other constituents. One of the most important attributes, however, of any librarian or researcher is to know that they can't provide all the answers without a little help.

Government web sites (see accompanying list) and other information resources are utilized regularly. But when the topic turns technical, the unquestioned leader is Purdue University's Technical Information Service (TIS).

TIS began as a free service in 1987, with financial support from state economic development funds. The goal was to help small and medium-sized business grow and remain in Indiana. An overwhelming request load led to implementation of a fee schedule two years later.

Costs depend on the type of service required and the turnaround time. Same-day service is available for those business professionals in urgent need of information. Indiana companies receive special pricing.

Who, what and how

The most common types of questions revolve around business management, engineering and life science topics. Legal profession inquiries lead the way, followed by researchers, manufacturers, entrepreneurs and consultants.

Lawyers often call seeking names of expert witnesses. Other not-so-typical search requests: stress corrosion of a copper-nickel

alloy, census data for 1940 to present, union activity, diameter of the abdominal aorta in a 60-pound dog, patents from 1950 to present and the electronics industry's knowledge of water pollution in the 1950s. TIS is able to find and deliver technical papers, scientific standards, U.S. and foreign patents, dissertations, government reports and conference papers.

TIS receives about 75 requests a day or 18,000 per year. More than 75% are filled from the extensive Purdue library collections. An average of 3,800 documents (electronic delivery is encouraged and available at no extra charge) have been delivered in Indiana yearly since mid-1989.

Going to great lengths

One story best exemplifies the TIS capabilities. A request was received for a copy of a conference paper with only the following information provided:

"Ball mill grinding 40 years after bond"

Sepulveda, Jaime E.

*4th Asian Symposium on Mineral Processing
Manila, 1991*

This conference paper was not owned by the Purdue libraries, any other libraries in North America or by the British library. The company that created the document could not supply a copy of the paper. It was discovered that the author had published several other papers that listed his corporate affiliation as the Chilean branch of a multinational corporation headquartered in Ohio.

TIS called the librarian at the Ohio company, who thought the library at their Missouri branch might have a copy. The Missouri librarian couldn't find the paper either, but said that he was flying to the company's Australian office the following week and would ask staff there. A few days later, TIS received a copy of the paper from Australia.

Not all requests require such an effort. But if the question is technical in nature, TIS usually finds the answer.

A quick survey of other university libraries in Indiana revealed that only Rose-Hulman typically receives many technical/management requests from business. Indiana University's InfoNet research reference service, previously part of the Industrial Research Liaison Program (IRLP), has been discontinued. A new program, focusing on the previous IRLP role of pursuing federal grant funding for small technology businesses, will be formed in February as part of the Advanced Research & Technology Institute.



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Recommended Web Sites for Technical Assistance

- National Technical Information Service: www.ntis.gov
- National Agricultural Library: www.nal.usda.gov
- Environmental Protection Agency: www.epa.gov/
- Department of Defense:
www.defenselink.mil/other_info/libraries.html
- Armed Forces Medical Library: www.tricare.osd.mil/afml/
- Joint Forces Library: Specialized military library, focusing on research in joint and combined operations, military history and naval science, operational warfare and operations other than war: www.jfsc.ndu.edu/library/default.asp
- Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center Library: <http://dlilibrary.monterey.army.mil/aisolib.htm>
- Pentagon Library: www.hqda.army.mil/library/
- National Defense University Library: www.ndu.edu/library/library.html
- National Library of Medicine:
www.nlm.nih.gov/databases/databases.html
- MedLine: <http://gateway.nlm.nih.gov/gw/Cmd>
- National Science Foundation: Programs in the hard sciences, social sciences and education: www.nsf.gov
- Grants and awards for research: www.nsf.gov/home/grants.htm
- Recent awards granted: www.nsf.gov/home/grants/grants_awards.htm
- Funding opportunities: www.nsf.gov/home/grants/grants_opps.htm

INFORMATION LINK

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Resource: TIS at (765) 494-9876 or www.ecn.purdue.edu/TIS