COMPUTER LITERATURE SEARCHING

THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA LIBRARY

CAN A COMPUTER LITERATURE SEARCH HELP YOU?

The University of Virginia Library's online bibliographic search service provides computer-produced bibliographies customized to individual research needs on a fee-for-service basis. Searches are done through the Science and Engineering Library in Clark Hall and the Reference Department in Alderman Library.

When can a computer search be helpful?

A computer can help with most current research topics, especially when there is a need to:

- compile or extend a subject or author bibliography
- stay abreast of current research
- learn who is funding what research
- prepare grant, research or dissertation proposals
- find patents
- obtain market information on specific industries

Why use a computer search?

Consider the time it takes to search manually through many issues of printed indexes. The computer searches these indexes in seconds; the search is faster, more comprehensive, and often more precise, as there are more subject access points and greater flexibility in combining terms in a computer search.

How does it work?

The computer looks for subject concepts, keywords, authors, etc., and combines them according to a Boolean strategy devised by the searcher in consultation with the requestor. Because the online search enables the user to interact directly with the computer, modifications can be made during the search to improve results. The computer search generates a list of bibliograhic citations (often available with abstracts) which can ordinarily be printed out immediately.

What subject fields are covered?

Computerized indexes are available in most areas of science, technology, business and the social sciences, and in some areas of the humanities. Many databases correspond to printed indexes (e.g., ERIC, *Chemical Abstracts, Psychological Abstracts);* others deal with a particular type of material (e.g., dissertations, technical reports, economic forecasts). Interdisciplinary research may require using several different databases. Lists of currently available databases may be obtained in the Alderman Library Reference Department and at the Science and Engineering Library.

How much does a search cost?

Search costs vary according to the database used and are based on computer connect-time and on the number and format of citations printed. Current database rates are available on request. The Library pays one-half of the costs of each search, and requestors are billed by mail for the remaining half. Payment may be made with cash, personal check, departmental account funds, or grant funds.

More questions?

To be sure of having a staff searcher available, requestors should schedule appointments in advance whenever possible. Hours are normally 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday; appointments at other times may be arranged by special request. For further information, contact the Alderman Reference Department (924-3021) or the Science and Engineering Library (924-6730).