Library of Congress researchers offer services to Detrick

Story

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Researchers at Fort Detrick learned a little more May 25 about a program the Library of Congress offers exclusively to its government customers.

The library's Federal Research Program, which has been around since 1948 when the Air Force needed research assistance after World War II, offers the government and federal contractors research and analysis services on topics here and abroad.

"We don't develop studies and databases and then offer them to you," said Robert Worden, the program's director. "We custom make products so it's going to be what you want it to be."

Past subjects the research program has taken on include an annotated bibliography of global terrorism, an index of human suffering in 24 nations and a history of veterans benefits.

In 1815, Thomas Jefferson said, "There is in fact no subject to which a member of Congress may not have occasion to refer." In keeping with this sentiment, the Library of Congress has an aggressive collection policy, collecting documents on most subjects in myriad languages.

"We have the largest collection of open-source items in the world," he said. "We've got 500 miles of shelving, and 51 percent of our items are in languages other than English."

Worden said the program's experts have used these resources to produce medical capabilities studies for third world countries for a customer here: the Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Center. The program has also worked with the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency to find literature on how to destroy biological agents without destroying the

container in which the agents reside.

The program also has strong ties to the National Library of Medicine, so if researchers here contract with the Federal Research Program, their final product can include research from medical documents housed there.

"If we don't have it, we can get it," Worden said.

The team of 38 staff members can answer almost any research request a customer has, from getting a copy of an article, to creating an abstract of an article, to providing analysis of a topic, to producing a Web page.

The Federal Research Program receives no appropriations, so it charges its government customers for services. The average bill for services runs about $25,000, Worden said.

Though researchers at Detrick have access to libraries and library staff, Worden said his program can augment those resources.

"We're not here to replace anything you're doing," he said. "But we understand that researchers don't always have the time and the staff to do the kind of research we do. We can jump in and do this work for them."

"We offer basically what you would expect from a library - literature searches, interlibrary loans, translation services for open literature articles, access to databases - but the Library of Congress's program's compilation and analysis of the information would be distinctive," said Denise Lupp, director of the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases' medical library. "We don't attempt to interpret the results, where the Library of Congress has the staff on hand that they could provide an abstract or analysis of the results."

To learn more about the Library of Congress's Federal Research Program, call 202-707-3909 or click on www.loc.gov. frd.