

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE

Address:

National Library of Medicine
National Institutes of Health
Building 38, Room 2E17B
8600 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20894
Web site: www.nlm.nih.gov

Director:

Donald A. B. Lindberg, M.D.
(301) 406-6221 (phone)
(301) 496-4450 (fax)

Legislative Contact:

Jane Bortnick Griffith
(301) 496-8600 (phone)
(301) 402-2586 (fax)
E-mail: jbgriffith@nlm.nih.gov

Mission:

The world's largest biomedical library became a part of the National Institutes of Health in 1968. The early years of its 165-year history were spent as a resource for the U.S. military; it received its national mandate in 1956 when Congress passed the National Library of Medicine Act. The Library continues to serve as a vital link to the biomedical community's researchers, educators, practitioners, and, now, consumers.

The Library's collections today number more than 6 million books, journals, audiovisuals, and historical materials. From primary responsibility for a physical collection, however, the Library's mission has been expanded over the years and today encompasses:

- Two major research and development components, the Lister Hill National Center for Biomedical Communications and the National Center for Biotechnology Information;
- A program concerned with developing information resources in environmental health, toxicology, and hazardous substances;
- A program of extramural grants for library and information services and for research and training in medical informatics; and
- An extensive Web site (www.nlm.nih.gov) that is the hub of an online international biomedical information network serving scientists, health professionals, and the public.

The Library's constantly expanding collections and extensive responsibilities (and rapidly growing staff) in the area of molecular biology have combined to create great pressure on its existing physical plant. Plans have been drawn up for an expanded facility and NLM is hopeful that relief from overcrowding is in sight.

The Library's major database, MEDLINE, contains 12 million references and abstracts from the worldwide journal literature from early 1960s to the present. Available free on the Web, MEDLINE is searched using NLM's unique access system, PubMed. Searching of MEDLINE and other NLM databases is now being done at the astounding rate of almost 500 million searches a year. This is more than 70 times the rate of pre-Web access. The Library provides a variety of additional information resources through its Web site — for example, unified access to its catalog holdings, a database of historical images, and a variety of information services in such areas as toxicology, environmental health, and molecular biology.

Research and development conducted by the Library has resulted in many advances in biomedical communications — the original development of MEDLINE in the late 1960s, document preservation techniques, innovative methods of providing copies of journal articles to remote users, development of a Unified Medical Language System, sophisticated databases and algorithms for searching gene sequences, and projects related to telemedicine and to the development of an Electronic Patient Record. One project that has been much

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE

reported in the public media is the Visible Human Project — the creation of two immense datasets of computerized images, one male and one female, from actual cadavers. These data sets, licensed to more than 1,700 individuals and institutions in 43 countries, are being used in a wide range of educational, diagnostic, treatment planning, virtual reality, artistic, mathematical, and industrial applications.

In the area of molecular biology, NLM's National Center for Biotechnology Information creates and maintains systems for storing, analyzing, and retrieving information on molecular biology and genetics. The Center produces the largest database of public DNA sequence information, GenBank. This database is growing rapidly with contributions received from scientists around the world and now contains more than 32 million sequences and more than 37 billion base pairs from over 140,000 species; it is accessed on the web 200,000 times each day by some 50,000 researchers.

The present challenge to the Library is in outreach, both to the biomedical community and to the general public. Because millions of ordinary Web users were searching MEDLINE for personal health information, NLM introduced a new, more congenial service, MEDLINEplus, at the end of 1998. This service has evolved rapidly and now has extensive information on almost 700 health topics. MEDLINEplus also provides assisted access to MEDLINE and has links to self-help groups, NIH consumer health information, a medical encyclopedia, a daily news feed from the print media, medical dictionaries, lists of hospitals and physicians, prescription drug information, interactive health tutorials, and an extensive database of clinical trials. MEDLINEplus en Español was introduced in September 2002. Eventually the Library hopes that all Americans become aware of the wealth of good health information available to them that has resulted from the nation's investment in biomedical and behavioral research.

To help bring this about, NLM has funded hundreds of outreach projects with members of the National Network of Libraries of Medicine. This 4,500-member Network, made up of libraries in hospitals, schools of the health sciences, academic institutions, private companies, and other government agencies, was created by NLM in the sixties to ensure that all American health professionals had good information services available to them. Today, many network members are also serving the general public, and the NLM is supporting them as they work with their public library counterparts and with churches, municipal and state agencies, and other organizations that have frequent contacts with consumers. They will provide new electronic health information services for all citizens in a community, from middle schools serving low income and educationally underserved students to shopping malls and senior centers. There are special outreach projects to underserved groups such as Native Indians, isolated rural populations, and African-American communities.

Appropriations History

(\$ in thousands)

FY 2001	\$246,351 (+15.1%)
FY 2002	\$276,091 (+12.1%)
FY 2003	\$300,135 (+8.7%)
FY 2004	\$317,315 (+5.7%)
FY 2005	\$315,146 (-0.6%)