**MEDLARS CENTER**

Computerized medical bibliographies are now available to any qualified Ohio physician, research investigator, or health scientist through Ohio State University's Health Center Library in Columbus, Ohio.

This service has been made available as the result of a contract from the National Institutes of Health to establish in Ohio State's College of Medicine a MEDLARS (Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System) Center for the state of Ohio.

Supervisor of the programme is Dr. John A. Prior, associate dean of the College of Medicine. He is assisted in the MEDLARS Center by Laura K. Osborn, assistant director of the Health Center Library, and J. Carroll Notestine, programmer at the Ohio State Computer Center.

Several months before receiving the contract from NIH, Dr. Richard L. Meiling, dean of the College of Medicine, and Dr. Prior decided to invest some of the college's uncommitted funds to start a computerized medical literature searching programme.

'We believed there had to be a new and better way of handling information than just the traditional library,' said Dr. Prior.

'Medical and scientific literature has mushroomed to the point where investigators are swamped with information; the new electronic way of searching the literature (MEDLARS) seemed to be the answer,' he continued.

Since 1964 the National Library of Medicine has put on computer tapes almost all the medical literature of the world, about 600,000 references to articles in 40 languages. From 12,000 to 15,000 references are added to the MEDLARS programme each month.

The Ohio MEDLARS personnel have received 22 reels of computer tapes which contain these references. Mr. Notestine has been working for the past year to adapt the National Library of Medicine programme to the Ohio State computers.

Here is the typical routine of the Ohio MEDLARS programme:

- Search formulation. When a physician or other investigator needs a literature search, he can go to Miss Osborn who was trained in the MEDLARS programme for six months at the National Library of Medicine. The investigator and Miss Osborn make up a list of terms that are pertinent and she arranges them into a logical statement for the computer.

- Search by computer of a group of questions. A batch of 20 to 25 searches can be run at one time on the computer.

- Computer printout. The computer makes a printout which contains in alphabetical order all of the articles in the areas being searched.

- Review and evaluation of computer printout by Miss Osborn to ensure accuracy. Hereafter the printout of literature references is sent to the requester.

'We owe a real tribute to Mr. Notestine and Miss Osborn, whose efforts have made Ohio State University the second operating MEDLARS programme in the country,' declared Dr. Prior.

'I see our MEDLARS programme as the first step in the basic change of the University Library from a passive receptacle of books and periodicals to a new kind of library which is active, which develops, processes, stores, and disseminates all kinds of information,' Dr. Prior stated.

'The response from researchers at Ohio State has been tremendous,' said Miss Osborn.

'We are finding it difficult to keep up with the demand for searches,' she continued. Requests are coming from the medical field, biological sciences, and even electrical engineering. Requests are made directly to the Health Center Library or from a referral to the National Library of Medicine.