Mrs. Florence Hammond of International House handles more than 1,000 inquiries on world trade yearly.

Mrs. Florence Hammond does all her work at one small desk, but the effects of what she does extend all over the world. She’s a member of the International House staff, and every year more than a thousand inquiries concerning world trade come to her desk.

A random look at her filing basket shows an agent in Nigeria who wants contact with manufacturers of agricultural machinery; a Panamanian who wants to set up a business in “snacks”; a firm in Guyana that needs everything from plastic sheeting to furniture hardware; and a city in Iran that’s planning to install new sewage and water plants.

Mrs. Hammond plays a matchmaker’s role: If a foreign firm wants to buy a certain commodity, Mrs. Hammond finds someone in Louisiana who sells it, and puts the two companies in touch. It also works in reverse, of course: She “introduces” foreign firms which have goods to sell and local companies interested in buying.

She may list the foreign company’s query in the International House bulletin, Trading Post: “Italian firm seeks a container company wishing to expand its trade with Italy” ... “Bridal crowns and veils offered by West German company.”

She may send the Louisiana Foreign Trade Directory, which she helps compile and revise, to firms seeking more general information.

For every letter she receives, Mrs. Hammond makes an address card, a country card and a commodity card for her file; that way, she can quickly answer requests for information about foreign opportunities. She often sends questionnaires to companies both here and abroad, asking for further information about the firm’s import or export business.

Most of her correspondence is in English, but she does get many letters written in Spanish. They pose no problem, however—she’s a native of Honduras.

Mrs. Hammond came to the United States to attend college. She studied business administration at Pikeville College in Kentucky, and then spent four years working in exports here in New Orleans before joining the International House staff.

She enjoys her work tremendously, she says, because “this is one way to help people.”

“I help other people make money,” she says with a laugh, but adds that she likes to think she is promoting not only business transactions, but also international understanding.