Database management as a technology has made tremendous strides in recent years. Database management systems are offered by every major hardware vendor and many software houses. Installations which operate database management systems in support of their management's objects now number in the thousands. Two database management specialized conferences are held each year with hundreds of attendees present. The first of these is held by the ACM Special Interest Group on the Management of Data (SIGMOD). The second is the Very Large Database Conference (VLDB) which has moved around the world with Germany as the host for 1978. These newer conferences have collected most of the leading edge database technology papers because it is possible to concentrate more of the research-oriented people, their papers and discussions into smaller towns and smaller hotels.

Therefore, the Database Management sessions for NCC '78 have focussed upon the problems and solutions associated with use of the currently available database management systems. Four panel discussions and four technical sessions have been planned for your attendance at NCC '78. Three of these panel sessions are focussed upon users' experiences relating to their database systems. One panel session focusses on "end user facilities," one of the leading edge areas of database management. The four technical sessions bring papers which are oriented toward improving performance of database systems, distributed database systems, conversion and language aspects of database systems.

For the many thousands who may not be familiar with the concepts of database management systems, a short primer may be appropriate so that the panel discussions and technical sessions will make some sense.

What is database management? Roughly, this means the establishment, and maintenance of computerized collections of information about an enterprise (manufacturing company, bank, hospital, school or other organizations). This infor-
information, stored in permanent files, contains historical, current and future planning
information about the enterprise. All this information is collected and preserved
at considerable expense so that it will be available when needed; to answer a
question, to assist in making a decision, or to guide someone as to the next task
to execute. This collection of information has been called the database, as it
forms the basis or foundation upon which the operations of an enterprise is built.

Database data represents one of the two kinds of data found in a computerized
information system. The other kind is message data. The easiest way to under­
stand the difference between the two kinds of data is to ask the question "what
happens after the data has been processed?" Database data is characterized as
being put away and remaining static until some process subsequently requests its
retrieval. Message data, on the other hand, is active. It is being transferred by
one process because it is relevant to the actions of another process which is
anticipating its receipt. One or both of these processes may be manual and
outside of the computer. Thus, the message data and database data complement
each other and represent the "hurry up" and "wait" of the computerized inform­
ation systems. Database Management is the title given to the art of storing and
retrieving data. Message Management and Communications Management are the
titles given to logical and physical aspects of moving data between processes.
The reader is urged to look at the sessions with titles using the term "commu­
nications" or "networks" or "distributed systems" to find additional material
on the current state of the data movement technologies.