Successful corporations of the 1980's have seen the need for integration of their information support systems. Academic health sciences centers need to give the same attention to information systems if they are to be competitive and satisfy the information demands of the faculty, staff, and students. Existing technology allows the library to automate internal procedures and provide in-library and remote access to its resources. Coordination with other campus systems can be provided at relatively little cost. Users can have direct access to campus resources and be linked to networks for additional resources.

Traditionally, the health science library has served as the procurer, disseminator, and preserver of bio-medical information. This has been primarily in the form of the printed word. Elaborate and successful networks exist across the country whose sole purpose is to deliver, at the greatest possible speed, a document wanted by a user. These networks have been assisted in this task by the many bibliographic databases for identifying citations (e.g., MEDLINE), and location by computer of the library in the country having that document available.

In addition to using technology to provide integrated systems within the library, there is an increasing information base that is outside the library. Online vendors of knowledge databases are increasing, as is the use of personal microcomputers in the health care setting. If the library is to continue to be able to carry out its mission within an institution, these developments must become part of the library's concern.

The National Library of Medicine recently began to solicit proposals for the planning of integrated academic information centers. Extensive background regarding the need and possible courses of action are outlined in the October 1982 Supplement to the Journal of Medical Education, a report prepared by Nina Matheson, then a staff member at the AAMC. Both the grants and the report address the disarray and inadequacies of the information support systems of most health science centers.

The world of electronics does not promise to be any more comfortable than the paper mill. William Garvey stated the problem concisely: "the problem for contemporary scientists is that even if they had perfect retrieval systems they would be presented with so many items that they could not assimilate and process them."1

Attempts of libraries and others developing retrieval systems should aim at aiding the user to more easily synthesize the information available. Planning for integration of existing and planned information support systems should support this objective.