Nursing, one of the most numerous of the professional groups in the health care industry, is awakening to the fact that computers have an impact on the profession itself, on patients, and on health care facilities.

The computer has been in existence for over thirty years; yet not until now, not until the 1980's has it become the concern of the nursing rank and file. In the 1960's and early 1970's hospitals took advantage of computer technology when they employed Hospital/Medical Information Systems (HIS/MIS); and Community/Public Health Agencies saw the value of initiating Management Information Systems (MIS). In both hospitals and the field of community health the systems that were introduced offered only certain business and administrative applications.

Due to such changes in computer technology, the emerging information systems have the ability to integrate all types of patient care services and nursing activities in all of the various health care settings. Nurses are in direct and repeated confrontation with the computer. They have no choice but to acquire sufficient and timely knowledge about computers and their applications to nursing. And, it is thus deeply appropriate that the nursing sessions and activities are an integral part of this Seventh Annual Symposium on Computer Applications in Medical Care (SCAMC-7).

The areas where nursing has distinct viability in these sessions are many. To begin with there are two tutorials on computer literacy for nurses. These tutorials provide a basic introduction to computing concepts, including the fundamentals of computer configuration. They also present an overview of the current major applications in the four areas of nursing administration, practice, education and research.

For the two roundtable programs, two separate groups will lead informal discussions on the design of a nursing information system for a hospital or a community health agency. The members of these groups will speak of their own experiences in systems development. They will reveal the process of thinking and acting to design or produce systems of certain value.

During this symposium we can also expect to witness a unique demonstration, we will be able to observe how a microcomputer can serve to test the extent and depth of nursing knowledge. This particular application provides for a basic review of nursing practice via an integrated review of clinical cases and questions.

A panel of nursing experts will highlight future directions for computerized nursing information systems. A workshop to examine the major steps in developing computer-assisted instruction (CAI) programs will be of particular interest to our nurse educators. I think we will also find enlightening the many computer exhibits that focus on the impact of computers on nursing practice. We have even more to look forward to: A panel of nursing experts will highlight future directions for computerized nursing information systems. A workshop to examine the major steps in developing computer-assisted instruction (CAI) programs will be of particular interest to our nurse educators.

The several clinical sessions will center on all types of computer applications in nursing including applications that utilize mainframe, mini- and micro-computers. And at these sessions...
there will also be papers that deal with the major nursing areas of administration, practice, and education; with nursing attitude studies and with ambulatory care.

The very first session will highlight general information about nursing applications in computer technology. The opening paper will encompass a state-of-the-art summary of computer applications appropriate to nursing care. It will furnish the background for the succeeding papers; and additionally provide a framework for all other nursing sessions. A paper on system life cycle illustrates how a nursing information system offers a framework for managing change in nursing; and how its implementation demands commitment on the part of the nursing administrator.

Still another conference paper presents a model of an integrated nursing information system designed as part of a total HIS for military hospitals. We will hear in detail about the methodology and the process for defining the nursing functional requirements. The final conference paper presents the role of nursing in the selection of computer vendors. It addresses the "why" and "how" of nursing involvement relative to the selection process.

We will, from all these presentations, see that the role of nursing in the planning, analysis, development, implementation, and management of a computerized information system for a health care facility is continually expanding. Nurses are meeting the challenge. They need to be and indeed they are becoming indispensable to the creation and design of the life cycle of computerized nursing information systems.