SYMPOSIUM

Building the national health information infrastructure: the role of high-performance computing and communications
Edited by Donald A. B. Lindberg

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INTRODUCTION

On May 19, 1994, MLA's Medical Informatics Section and the National Coordination Office of the High Performance Computing and Communications (HPCC) Program, Office of Science and Technology Policy, Office of the President, cosponsored a successful one-day conference on "Building the National Health Information Infrastructure: The Role of High Performance Computing and Communications" in San Antonio, Texas, following the Ninety-Fourth Annual Meeting of the Medical Library Association. Nancy Roderer conceived the idea for the conference and chaired its Program Committee. Betsy Humphreys served as the liaison between the committee and the HPCC National Coordination Office to structure the program and to select the speakers.

The goal of the conference was to provide a current overview of the federal HPCC Program and the closely related effort to develop a National Information Infrastructure (NII) and to describe a range of projects to test the application of HPCC technologies to health care. Increased use of information technology in the delivery of health care provides new opportunities for librarians to make scientific, "evidence-based" information available when and where health care decisions are made. It also opens up new ways for librarians to use their expertise in direct support of health care, education, and research. Many MLA members are already taking advantage of these opportunities. Increased familiarity with current research and development in health care applications of HPCC technologies may help others to follow suit.

Several papers based on presentations at the May 19 program have been collected for publication as a symposium in this issue of the Bulletin of the Medical Library Association. The initial paper provides an overview of the HPCC Program, a description of its relationship to health care applications of the NII, and also a brief introduction to the subsequent papers.

Donald A. B. Lindberg, M.D.
Director, HPCC National Coordination Office,
Office of Science and Technology Policy,
Office of the President
Director, National Library of Medicine
8600 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, Maryland 20894