Home & hobbying computing

OVERVIEW

Computers became consumer products around the beginning of 1975. In less than three and one half years, a considerable array of companies have come into existence to address the new marketplace of "personal computing." This portion of the Conference Program addresses the topic of home and hobby computing from several aspects.

A survey is provided of the brief "history," the current situation, and the foreseeable futures of personal computing. Following this overview, a discussion will address the variety of usual and unusual hardware, software, and systems that have appeared in the personal computing application areas. This will include comments regarding the problems and promise of home computing hardware, software, and applications.

To date, personal computing has been limited to the fifty to one hundred thousand computer enthusiasts who currently own home computers. This is not a mass consumer market, however it is evident that such a market is about to open up, in some ways comparable to the market for stereos, television, and CB radio. The final session in this Technical Area of the Conference Program will address this topic—providing computer power for the average lay person; the mass consumer who will use computers only to the extent that they may be used without expertise, and only to the extent that they can solve problems that the average person may be interested in solving.

THEMES

SESSION 1: Computers became consumer products around the beginning of 1975. Since then, a multitude of companies have been created to address the new
marketplace of "personal computing." There are 50,000-90,000 computers in people's homes, today. The speaker will briefly survey the "history" of this movement, detail the present situation, and hypothesize concerning the foreseeable future. Panelists will address various aspects of the alternative foreseeable futures.

SESSION 2: A variety of usual and unusual hardware, software, and applications are appearing in the world of computers as computers become personal devices. These new facilities provide a wide range of problems and promise. The speaker will provide an overview of the positive and negative aspects of personal computing equipment, programs, and uses. Panelists will present a variety of views regarding the hard and soft facilities that are unique to consumer computing.

SESSION 3: The microcomputer emerged from a laboratory curiosity to a hobbyist toy and from there to a usable business and industrial tool. What of its potential as a mass merchandised electronics device (like radios and televisions) which can be used by persons technically disinterested and incompetent to do other than turn a knob or two?

Representatives from companies which are near the leading edge of this market will present their views and insights in this session.