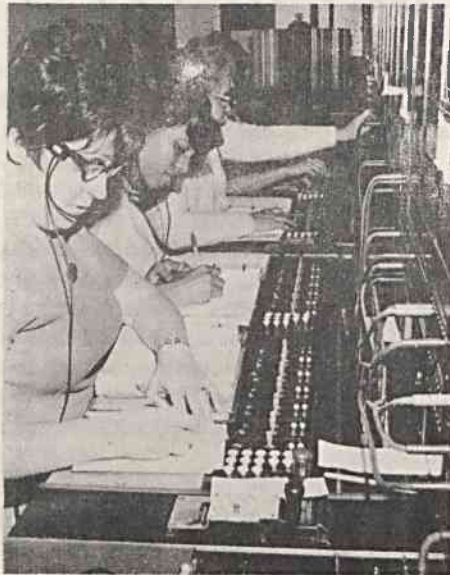


# Duke Operators — Vital 'Line' of Work



**GOOD MORNING, DUKE.**—Telephone operators in the main Duke office process thousands of calls a week. From left are Kay Eubanks, Emma Carrington, and Anna Rigsbee. (photo by Dave Hooks)



**PAGING DR. JONES**—Dorothy Powers and Barbara Cunningham staff the paging office in the basement near Medical P.D. C. The pagers often take as many as 130 calls in a busy hour. (photo by Dave Hooks)

Code 5! Halsted ward! the loudspeaker system announces.

A team of medical specialists trained in handling emergencies sprints through the hallways to save a patient in cardiac or respiratory arrest.

The responsibility for getting a Code 5 message to the right people belongs to a group of hard-working Duke employes—the telephone operators.

Making sure each member of the emergency squad gets word of a Code 5 immediately while the patient's life hangs in the balance is just one of the vital functions of Duke's telephone operators.

They are also responsible for notification of the fire department and appropriate Duke officials in case of fire anywhere in the hospital to make sure no time is lost in getting it out.

In addition to their emergency duties, the University's 26 operators routinely handle more than 16,700 incoming and outgoing calls a week and provide a paging service for the hospital staff.

With a cheerful "Good morning, Duke", they answer each of the 12,200 calls which come in on the University's main number, 684-8111, weekly. That's about one of every six calls made to the University.

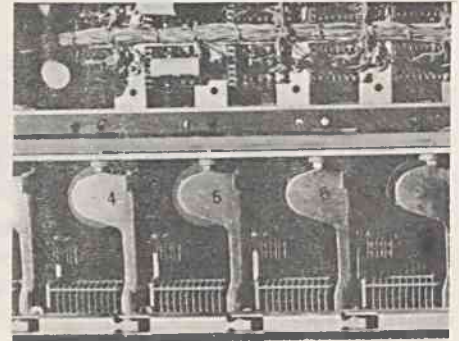
The operators also process outgoing long-distance calls made by Duke employes and charged to Duke budget codes to make sure they are billed correctly. Such calls total more than 4,500 a week, one of every three long-distance calls made from Duke telephones.

"Some calls we answer are requests for information but a majority of callers want to speak with a doctor or a department," Mrs. Anna Rigsbee, telephone office supervisor, said.

She laughingly added that some callers are a bit unusual. "One man asked to speak with the doctor who wore size 13 shoes. He was really upset when we told him we couldn't be of much help with just that information.

"Another lady wanted to get in touch with the clinic that was 'down the stairs and around the corner to the left'. She had no idea of the name of the clinic or who her doctor was. We finally located it for her, though," Mrs. Rigsbee added.

The hospital paging service, a part of the telephone system, is located in the



**MILES AND MILES OF WIRES**—This is some of the enormous amount of electronic equipment which keeps the telephone system going at Duke. All calls in and out of the University total about 25 million a year. (photo by Dave Hooks)

hospital basement directly below the central switchboards which are adjacent to the main lobby.

Two special operators who do only paging staff the office from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. At other times, the main switchboard handles paging.

During a busy hour, the operators may get as many as 130 calls requesting someone on the hospital staff be paged. In a majority of cases the operators can reach the doctor through his radio pager, a portable instrument often called a "beeper." If the doctor does not have a beeper, the operators must page him on the hospital loudspeaker system.

Each of Duke's telephone operators gets a six to eight-week on-the-job training course when she begins work. "It takes a while to get used to the switchboards here," Mrs. Rigsbee said, "especially if the girl has not been a telephone operator before."

Duke University has about 5,800 telephones, many of which have six or more lines attached to them. Total weekly calls reach 500,000 though most are taken care of automatically by several rooms of complicated switching equipment set up in the hospital basement. Most of the automatic calls are between Duke extensions, a process which seldom involves the operators.

"It's really satisfying work," Mrs. Rigsbee says of her job. "You feel like you've accomplished something when you help someone. I wouldn't want any other job."