The American College of Physicians has compiled its ninth library of reference materials designed to help internists and community libraries acquire and apply current knowledge in internal medicine. The Library for Internists began as a compilation of printed materials, but now that powerful computers and computer networks have become ubiquitous, its character is changing to include electronic information resources that will eventually compose a virtual medical library.

The subcommittee charged with the task of approving this version of the Library faced the same two-pronged dilemma experienced by all students of medicine. First, substantive medical knowledge continues to grow at an increasing pace; remaining current in even a portion of a medical discipline today requires far more knowledge than was needed decades ago. Second, the mechanisms by which medical knowledge is created and disseminated are growing at an equally rapid rate. By the time the “A Library for Internists IX” is disseminated, new Internet-based medical libraries and clinical information will have been introduced by publishers, professional societies, and information systems vendors. In the near future, a new class of intelligent agents, information filters, collaboration tools, and clinical information not even blueprinted will be in use.