

Helen Spence came to MSU as a student in 1936 and worked as a lab assistant in the Physics Department. After she graduated in early 1939, she taught math, physics and chemistry in a public school in Portland, Michigan. In 1942, she married Robert Spence and they moved East where her husband taught radar to Army and Navy personnel while she worked in the theoretical division of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Radiation Lab on state-of-the-art computers. Spence and her husband came to MSU in 1947 where he taught in the Physics Department and she was an instructor in the Computer Science Department, teaching Assembly languages. She helped program the first major computer on campus and eventually taught FORTRAN in the 1960s. Spence retired in 1987.