

### Article from:

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# he Actuar

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#### EDITORIAL

#### BOOKISHNESS

"The Society of Actuaries library . . . is currently in a transitional stage and is expected to be operational on a limited basis within a year."

77 E suppose that the Society has always had a library. It is a fair guess that its first acquisition was "No. 1, Papers and Transactions, Actuarial Society of America," which came off the press in May 1889. For as long as we had a headquarters it must have been shelved there—that it, until 1961 when it was decided (TSA XIII, 276) to start paying a modest fee so that it might enjoy professional care in the Library of the Insurance Society of New York. One collateral benefit of this arrangement was that our members were privileged also to borrow books from the Insurance Society's own large collection.

In 1978, by which time we owned nearly 3,000 volumes, the Board of Governors approved a recommendation by the then Executive Director, Peter W. Plumley, that the arrangement with the Insurance Society be ended and our books make the journey back to Chicago, to be looked after by our own staff. This was not just an economy move, though some may have decided that it was wasteful to pay a fee for the small usage of library facilities by our members. A dominant point seems to have been that we had acquired a Director of Education and a Communications Manager, both of whom could put our books to good use in their work.

It was understood that no librarian was to be hired. Hence somebody would have to be on the alert to prevent the collection from becoming an orphan, and gradually being scattered to the winds. The risk of that is small as long as enough of us firmly believe that the old Transactions, Year Books, and the like form a precious link betwen us and our professional forebears.

The word "archives" rather than "library" has become the correct label for what those books now comprise. The lending library function is to be played down, though we are assured that a member who has special need for a particular volume can and will be accommodated.

Happily, Executive Director O'Connor is asking our incoming Director of Education, Linden Cole, to see that books are not lost, and that the sets of our own publications are kept complete by faithfully adding newly emerging issues. Mr. Cole being the book-lover that he is, all of us can be content that this is in excellent hands; maybe he will go so far as to seek replacements for copies that have disappeared or suffered major damage through the years.

A few of us will mourn the passing of the old order, not without justification. But what is important is that the new minor role of this collection not gradually become no role at all. It must not suffer the "out of sight, out of mind" fate.

Another step we should take, on behalf particularly of members who don't have easy access to our books of the distant past, is to discover and announce the locations of good collections of actuarial books around this continent, whose curators are willing to have them consulted by actuaries and others who want to trace a subject back to its early days or just to find out what happened in, say 1911. If interest in the past ceases to be lively, the Society will have taken a step greatly to be regretted.

#### DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH

The Board of Governors has authorized a new full-time position in our headquarters staff. The Director of Research will assist in managing the Society's current and future research projects. A search for suitable candidates is under way. Information may be obtained from John E. O'Connor, Jr., Executive Direc-

#### CONSEQUENCES OF LONGER LIVES

by LaVerne W. Cain

Almost 300 of us turned up for the symposium, "The Future of Life Expectancy," in Chicago on March 10-11. Its purpose was to enlighten people whose work is affected by what a growing ex does to the population mix. Although under three-way sponsorship-the Association of Life Insurance Medical Directors, the Home Office Life Underwriters Association, and the Society of Actuaries-there were far more actuaries there than physicians or underwriters.

The challenge of keeping the subje from being dull and deadly was well met by Robert D. Shapiro's program committee, who managed to assemble an excellent faculty of speakers from life insurance, government, business, academia, and private practice. The presentations ranged far beyond the advertised subject, examining past, present, and probable future mortality patterns and implications for the elderly, society, and industry.

To set the stage, Theodore J. Gordon, a renowned futurist, put the effects of expected lengthening of life into focus by introducing us to such technologies as "curve squaring" and "life span extending." He and other speakers weren't agreed on what all this will do to us, but I, for one, came away cheerful about the prospect. On an individual level, we heard from Dr. Donald B. Ardell about highlevel "wellness" (!), and how to absorb this concept into our lives.

As a bonus we were given a great deal of useful mortality and demographic data. I obtained more good figures in two days than I have collected in th past 20 years. Proceedings will be available free to those who were there, and at a modest charge to other members of the three sponsoring bodies. If this subject interests you, these texts will be well worth your reading.

E.J.M.