

DIGEST OF FORUM ON ELECTRONIC MACHINES

The Forum on Electronic Machines was conducted by the members of the Committee on New Recording Means and Computing Devices. It consisted of summary presentations of selected portions of the Committee's Report entitled *Current Status of Magnetic Tape as a Recording and Data Processing Medium*, which is to be published by the Society.

MR. M. E. DAVIS, Chairman of the Committee, opened the forum by summarizing the introduction to the Report. There followed a showing of the film "Electronics for Business and Accounting," made available to the Society through the courtesy of Arthur Anderson & Co. Mr. Davis then introduced the other members of the committee, each of whom presented one section of the report as is indicated below:

MR. J. W. RITCHIE: Current recordkeeping systems and the possibilities with magnetic tape equipment.

MR. J. J. FINELLI: Comparison of plans being developed by six companies for the use of magnetic tape files in ordinary insurance administration.

MR. H. F. ROOD: The use of electronic data processing equipment with punched cards retained as basic records.

MR. W. P. BARBER, JR.: Other file keeping devices and the problem of random access to filed information.

MR. R. E. SLATER: Accuracy control and internal controls and auditing.

In response to an inquiry as to whether there had been any experience with problems resulting from changes in departmental organization and control within a company under an electronic system, Mr. Slater stated that there had been no significant actual experience to date and pointed out that, although there would be a consolidation of records, the information on them would be usable for different purposes by different people. He indicated that auditing control would probably be maintained through the establishment of checks and controls on the programs used in operating the equipment.

In reply to the inquiry as to the pros and cons of rental versus purchase of electronic equipment, Mr. Davis stated that some manufacturers of

such equipment proposed only to sell their equipment at this time, while others make it available on either a purchase or a rental basis, and he was not going to answer the question categorically. He explained that any company contemplating the possible use of such equipment would want to make a detailed study of the savings potential afforded by the different manufacturers' equipment to its specific work, and that in the course of these studies the answer to rental versus purchase generally evolves.