Three Decades of Social Security Research Publishing:
The Bulletin Turns Thirty

- to record developments in the fields for which the Social Security Board carries responsibility . . .
- to summarize data essential to the measurement of social security programs . . .
- to present the results of research . . .
- to promote a general understanding of the contribution of the social services to the programs of the United States . . .

THIRTY YEARS AGO this month, Arthur J. Altmeyer, chairman of what was then the Social Security Board, set forth the purposes, summarized above, of a new monthly publication—the Social Security Bulletin.

The 94-page first issue (Volume 1, Numbers 1–3) bulged with tables, charts, and analyses of the Nation’s still infant social security program. Besides Mr. Altmeyer, who authored the lead article, six other bylines were carried in the issue. The contents was grouped in four major sections: unemployment compensation, public assistance, old-age insurance, and financial data and economic factors. The price for a single copy was 20 cents.

The new magazine, as its editors in the Board’s Bureau of Research and Statistics explained, was an effort to bring together in one publication several series of data, some of which formerly were issued only to members of the Board’s staff and collaborating agencies. For the most part the earlier publications had been of the desk bulletin variety—compilations of statistics on social insurance, public assistance, and general relief. But in Mr. Altmeyer’s words, the new magazine was to become “a link between members of the Board’s Nation-wide organization and between the Board and the large number of Federal and State agencies directly concerned” with administering the programs inaugurated by the Social Security Act of 1935.

In Section 702 of that Act, Congress had set forth the duties of the Social Security Board, spelling out the need for basic research. The law referred to the duty of studying and making recommendations as to the most effective methods of providing economic security through social insurance, and as to legislation and matters of administrative policy concerning old-age pensions, unemployment compensation, accident compensation, and related subjects.

From this provision the Social Security Administration’s Office of Research and Statistics has derived its authority and direction. Over the years its research mandate has been discharged within a variety of organizational structures and changes in institutional emphasis. But the basic research task—and the implied mandate to publish the results—has remained unchanged. A primary vehicle of the publication effort, the Bulletin has continued to be much in the mold of its original issue. Even its price has increased only to 25 cents.

Each of the 359 issues that have followed the first number has been built around two or three special articles, with the remainder devoted to a review of recent changes in program operations, brief analytic notes, a listing of new publications in the field, and current statistics relating to old-age, survivors, disability, and health insurance, unemployment insurance, public assistance, financial data, and economic factors.

Some indication of the extent to which the Bulletin has become the “link” Mr. Altmeyer envisioned for it is reflected in its current distribution. Some 13 percent of the readers are in Federal agencies, and 23 percent are with State or local governmental units. Thirteen percent of the distribution goes to public libraries and college faculty members, 16 percent to business, union, hospital, and private association officials, 4 percent to physicians, attorneys, clergymen, and certified public accountants, 5 percent to foreign countries, and 26 percent to individuals who indicate no affiliation on their subscription orders.
As a companion to the Bulletin (carrying calendar-year and cumulative data on the social security programs), the Annual Statistical Supplement has been issued each year since 1955 as a separate publication. (The Supplement was included in the September issue of the Bulletin from 1949 to 1955.) The Statistical Supplement is the successor to the Social Security Yearbook, published annually from 1939 to 1948.

SELECTED BULLETIN ARTICLES

Space does not permit a full listing of Bulletin articles published over the past 30 years. An updated, cumulative Bulletin index will be published this year. But the following summary listing of major articles over the past five years reflects the scope of three decades of research and publication effort through the medium of the monthly magazine.

Social Indicator Series*


Poverty and Low-Income Index Series

"The Poor in City and Suburb," December 1966.

*Represented by most recent annual Bulletin article.

"Children of the Poor," July 1963.

Health Insurance

"Medical Care Price Changes in Medicare's First Year," January 1968.
"Health Insurance for the Aged: Claims Reimbursed for Hospital and Medical Services," May 1967.

Early Retirement


Disability

"Disability Insurance and Aid to the Blind," August 1967.
International Area

International Aspects of Social Security, Special Issue, September 1964.

Legislation


Organizational Summary

THE Social Security Board, which came into being August 14, 1935, staffed its research arm, the Bureau of Research and Statistics, the following year. Over the years the Bureau remained as an entity, while the parent Board was reorganized under the Federal Security Agency and later became the Social Security Administration. By the time the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare was created in 1953, the Bureau had become the Division of Research and Statistics within the Office of the Commissioner, Social Security Administration, and for a 2-year period was called the Division of Program Research. With the reorganization of the Social Security Administration in January 1963, the Office of Research and Statistics was established as a separate organizational unit, no longer a part of the Commissioner’s Office. And since 1965 the ORS Director has been an Assistant Commissioner for Research and Statistics. The directors of the research and statistics effort over these years have been: Walter Hamilton (1936-37), Ewan Clague (1937-40), Isidore S. Falk (1940-54), Wilbur J. Cohen (1954-56), and Ida C. Merriam from 1956 to the present.

1963 Survey of Aged


Miscellaneous

Thirtieth Anniversary Issue, August 1965.
“Women Household Workers Covered by Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance,” July 1965.
“Earnings Test Under Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance: Basis Background, and Experience,” May 1964.
RESEARCH REPORT SERIES

The year 1938 not only saw the birth of the Social Security Bulletin, it also marked the release of the agency's first Research Report. These monographs present the results of major research studies and material requiring more comprehensive treatment than a single Bulletin article can provide. Occasional special reports outside the numbered research report series have also been released. The Social Security Administration's Office of Research and Statistics has published the reports listed below (with the most recent first).

1968 (scheduled):


1967:


1 Most of the reports published before 1963 are now out of print, and a few of the later publications as well. Only those items marked with an asterisk are now (or soon to be) available from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.


1966:


1965:


* No. 9. The Retirement Decision: An Explora-


*No. 7. Social Security and Social Services in France, Alvin L. Schorr, 48 pages. 35 cents.

1964:

*No. 6. The Disabled Worker Under OASDI, Lawrence D. Haber, et al., 368 pages. $1.25.


1963:

No. 4. Blue Cross-Blue Shield Nongroup Coverage for Older People, Louis S. Reed, 36 pages.

No. 3. Income Security Standards in Old-Age, Lenore A. Epstein, 26 pages.


*No. 1. Slums and Social Insecurity, Alvin L. Schorr, 168 pages. 50 cents.

1962:

The Health Care of the Aged—Background facts relating to the financing problem, 159 pages.

Independent Health Insurance Plans—A List by States, Medical Economic Studies Unit, 54 pages.

1961:


1960:

The Costs of Hospital and Surgical Services 1917–59: Charges Made to an Insured Group, Agnes W. Brewster, 50 pages.

Filial Responsibility in the Modern American Family, Alvin L. Schorr, 45 pages.

1959:


1956:

No. 20. Health Costs of the Aged: A Source Book on the Use of Hospital and Medical Services and on Health Insurance and Other Methods of Financing Medical Care Among the Aged, Agnes W. Brewster and Dorothy F. McCamman, 126 pages.

1953:


1952:


1948:

1946:

1945:

1944:

1941:
No. 11. Unemployment Compensation Rights of Workers Employed in More Than One State, Ida C. Merriam and Elizabeth T. Bliss, 87 pages.

No. 10. Analyzing the Use of Staff Time in Public Assistance Agencies: A Handbook on Time-Study Methods, Joel Gordon and Byron T. Hipple, 47 pages.

1940:


No. 4. Seasonal Workers and Unemployment Insurance in Great Britain, Germany, and Austria, Franz Huber, 167 pages.

1938:
No. 3. Unemployment and Health Insurance in Great Britain 1911–37, Marianne Sakmann, 44 pages.

No. 2. A Plan for a Case Census of Recipients of Public Assistance, Margaret C. Klem, 92 pages.


BUREAU MEMORANDUMS

In addition to the monographs in the research report series, another type of publication was issued in earlier years—the technical studies published as Bureau Memorandums in a numbered series (1–73). Some of the significant items in that series include:

No. 67. A Budget for an Elderly Couple, 1948, 38 pages.


No. 51. Medical Care and Costs in Relation to Family Income: A Statistical Source Book, Helen Hollingsworth, Margaret C. Klem, and Anna Mae Baney, 1947, 349 pages. (First edition, 1943.)

No. 43. The Fiscal Capacity of the States: A Source Book, 1940. (Revision of 1937 and 1938 editions.)