

Journal of the Operations Research Society of America

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
<http://pubsonline.informs.org>

The Analysts' Bookshelf

To cite this article:

(1953) The Analysts' Bookshelf. Journal of the Operations Research Society of America 1(3):158-158. <https://doi.org/10.1287/opre.1.3.158>

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THE ANALYSTS' BOOKSHELF

(From time to time, in these columns, we will review articles published elsewhere which will not ordinarily be available to readers of the *Journal*. Suggestions and contributions will be gratefully accepted.—Ed.)

NAVY MESSING

In "Food and the Theory of Probability" (*U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, 60, 75, 1934), Dr. E. U. Condon made an early contribution to operations research by providing a theoretical basis for an old rule-of-thumb. He had found that the *Navy Cookbook* recommended reductions in the amount of food prepared per man as the number of men served increased from 100 to 500 to over 1000. He inferred that this was a result of statistical fluctuations and tested three possible hypotheses as to the type of fluctuations concerned. The first of these was that the probability of one man wanting an amount of food x can be represented by a normal probability curve described by the mean amount consumed and a suitable dispersion. His second hypothesis was that service in a Navy mess restricted each individual to consuming (or wasting) an integral number of "portions" or "servings," and that the probability that any man will take n servings is given by the Poisson Law. Neither of these could fit the rule-of-thumb as well as his third hypothesis: that each man has the choice only of accepting or passing up a "serving" in each course and that there was a probability, p , that a man will accept a given serving. The rule-of-thumb determined p as 0.71.

The author's humor is meticulously dead pan, and he properly refrains from punning on the old Navy term "mess."

TLP

BOOKS RECEIVED

(Some of these will be reviewed in later issues.—Ed.)

- ✓ PHILIP M. MORSE AND GEORGE E. KIMBALL, *Methods of Operations Research*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1951.
- ✓ P. F. STRAWSON, *Introduction to Logical Theory*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1952.
- ✓ J. L. DOOB, *Stochastic Processes*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1953.
- ✓ NORBERT WIENER, *Cybernetics*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1949.
- ✓ W. W. COOPER AND A. HENDERSON, A. CHARNES, *An Introduction to Linear Programming*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1953.
- ✓ RAYMOND L. WILDER, *Introduction to the Foundations of Mathematics*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1952.
- ✓ THOMSON M. WHITIN, *The Theory of Inventory Management*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N. J., 1953.
- ✓ RONALD W. SHEPHARD, *Cost and Production Functions*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N. J., 1953.

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