

Chapter 3

How to Read *The Cryptogram*

The Cryptogram, like any technical journal, uses a variety of terms and expressions (jargon) that you may find a little difficult to follow at first. Apart from editorial text and articles, you will want to know how the actual cipher problems are organized.

If the front cover has a decorative pattern (an "Ornamental"), there will be a message hidden in it. Try to find repeated shapes that might represent letters of the alphabet - then solve the cipher!

The back cover carries the solutions ("Sols") for the problems given in the issue which was published four months previous.

Inside the magazine, the various classes of ciphers have a section or department. Within each department, the ciphers are printed in approximate order of increasing difficulty. Each problem is identified by a letter and number, e.g. E-6, the cipher type (e.g. "Ragbaby"), and a title which may give an idea of the subject matter. The name or "Nom" of the encipherer is given last on the title line. A clue or crib word is often given in parentheses using lowercase for a plaintext crib, and UPPERCASE for a Caesar substitution crib (each letter is moved N places in the alphabet). There may be additional information such as the number of characters, or some statistics on the cipher, to help you transcribe it correctly and/or do the mechanical analysis.

"Aristocrats" are simple substitution ciphers. Each plaintext letter is replaced by a different ciphertext letter not equal to itself. "Patristocrats" are the same except that the word spacings are removed to make them more difficult to decipher.

"Cipher Exchange" ciphers are in a variety of formats; the type is usually given, because there is generally not enough text to find the type by statistical methods. Details of the ciphers in current use in the "Cipher Exchange" are given later in this booklet.

"Xenocrypts" are foreign language ciphers. It is not usually necessary to be fluent in that language to find a solution to a Xenocrypt. It is possible to recover the keyword which may be in English.

"Cryptarithms" are arithmetical problems in which numbers are replaced by letters. The "number of words" given with each puzzle refers to the keyword or keywords used to develop the original number/letter equivalence. A statement such as "0-9" gives the order in which to specify the answer, e.g. in this case, the regular decimal set 0, 1, 2 . . . 9.

The "Analyst Corner" contains more difficult ciphers. Sometimes the type is not given, there is no crib, the ciphertext is in an unusual format, or some other ACA rule is broken. Because statistical analysis is often required to solve these ciphers, they may be longer than those in the rest of the magazine.

For many members, the hunt is more fun than the kill, but for those who would like to compare their ability with others, a "Solvers List" is published in each issue. (See Chapter 6 for instructions on how to submit solutions to this column.)