

Meeting: 1003, Atlanta, Georgia, SS 3A, AMS-MAA Special Session on History of Mathematics, I

1003-01-300 **David Alan Grier*** (grier@gwu.edu), Center for Int. Science and Tech Policy, George Washington University, 1957 E Street NW #403o, Washington, DC 20052. *When Mathematicians were Computers.*

In the 1930s, long before the National Science Foundation and the Office for Scientific Research and Development, the US Government sponsored mathematical research through the WPA, a New Deal work relief agency. The largest WPA scientific office, the Mathematical Tables Project, encouraged the careers of dozens of mathematicians by giving them jobs as human computers. The enduring legacy of this group is the Handbook of Mathematical Functions, which is arguably the largest selling scientific book of all time. (Received September 08, 2004)