Global communication is essential for the future of civilization. Political détente and stability would seem to depend upon the facility for the exchange of ideas and the discussion of diverging points of view. Next to individual contact made possible by modern air travel, electronic technology forges audio-visual links, but the written word still retains a special place as a basis for understanding between man and man, nation and nation. In the context of the practice of surgery, dentistry, and anaesthesia these remarks are appropriate the world over—wherever colleges, groups, or individuals foster and support a desire for establishing and maintaining high standards in practice and training for the ultimate benefit of the patient. Especially must communications be maintained to support colleagues who work in out of the way places, often on their own.

The Annals is in its twenty-seventh year. It began in 1947 as an instrument of communication when the College was still reeling from the devastation of air raids, with its charge, the national museum of John Hunter, in ruins and its priceless contents sadly depleted. A determined Council, led by Lord Webb-Johnson and supported by friends at home and overseas in Australasia, Asia, America, and Europe, prepared the rebuilding of the great College of today. Colleagues in dental surgery and anaesthesia saw the founding of individual Faculties, now leading forces in world medicine. A joint secretariat was started to look after the interests of the specialist associations and the important role they would have to play in setting standards of training and practice. The Nuffield College was built and became the meeting place for education and the exchange of ideas between young postgraduates from all over the world, simultaneously with the development of the College’s major role in teaching and research in the basic and applied medical sciences.

The Annals under Sir Cecil Wakeley, with his boundless energy, emerged as the means of communicating the College lectures, the College news, and articles on the history of surgery to Fellows, postgraduates, and other subscribers at home and abroad. It became a platform whereby those contemporary specialists of renown who recount the clinical application of their researches (following the precedent set by John Hunter) in the form of Hunterian Lectures or in similar vein deliver lectures named, amongst others, after Moynihan, Lister, and Arris and Gale (the earliest of the eponymous lectures) could reach a wider audience. Names of contributors to the first volume include Arthur Allen, Frank Lahey, Evarts Graham, Sir James Learmonth, Sir Arthur Keith, Sir Heneage Ogilvie, Philip Mitchiner, R W Nevin (Hunterian Professor), Sir Henry Souttar, Sir Victor Negus, and Sir Cecil Wakeley.

In recent years the Annals has featured other postgraduate lectures, clinical reviews, other original scientific work, and items of a technical nature. It has also conveyed and explained the policies which the College has pursued with regard to the institution of sur-
gical tutors, advisers, and liaison officers for surgical training, the regulations for the FRCS diploma, and, with sister colleges, specialist associations, and the Association of Professors, the certification of higher specialist training—a policy now being endorsed by such bodies as the International Federation of Surgical Colleges.

Until the end of 1973 the Annals retained its original form and size, with occasional changes in the cover, layout, and type-face. It was regarded as being of a handy size to slip into the pocket of a white coat and capable of being bound into easily handled volumes. Maximum utilization of the paper was achieved by filling spaces with items of interest and notices, though this practice was criticized at times as stamping the Annals as merely a house journal.

The new Annals appears in a format now conventional amongst international journals. The cover has been redesigned and features the attractive freehand drawing of the armorial bearings of the College (Annals, 1949, vol. 4, p. 257). The bound and printed spine has returned for the convenience of easy reference to back numbers. Within the front and back covers are to be found all the details of College facilities so that the house journal side of things is permanently set aside from the scientific articles and the College news of matters of national and international moment. A small section on new books is also to be included from time to time.

For those interested in typography it may be said that the final choice of type-face lay between the elegant Plantin, descending from middle Europe, or (the one which was chosen) a product of Birmingham, England—the type of John Baskerville (1706–75). Baskerville, regarded as the father of modern printing, started as a footman and used to teach poor children to write. He became a successful japanner by trade, but returned to his earlier interest in calligraphy and type as a kind of hobby and labour of love. The 52 books he undertook to print in his readable and now well-established style included the Bible, the works of Milton, and William Hunter’s Anatomy of the Human Gravid Uterus. For those who enjoy fiction and perhaps belong to the Baker Street Irregulars it has been suggested that his production of The Virtues of Cinnabar and Musk, against the Bite of a Mad Dog by the surgeon Joseph Dalby gave Dr Conan Doyle the title of the Sherlock Holmes book The Hound of the Baskervilles.

For those who are concerned with the overall appearance being affected by the interleaving of advertisements, ostensibly a valid criticism, one has to bear in mind the great service and contribution given by the pharmaceutical and biomedical engineering companies to the practice of surgery, dental surgery, and anaesthesia. The Annals acknowledges that contribution, which is of course also a powerful factor in keeping down the cost of the journal.

The many thousands of readers throughout the world can be reassured that it will continue to be the policy of the Annals to publish scientific papers derived from the important lectures given at the College and to give more space than is now customary in other journals to surgeons who wish to have an adequate platform for what may be their life’s work. Enquiries from others desirous of publishing papers are welcome, including those who, working in isolation in out of the way places, have a special experience to communicate.

The Annals is conscious that all its efforts are ultimately directed to one end—the welfare of the patient irrespective of his means or station in life.

‘Quae Prosunt Omnibus Artes’ (the motto of the College)—‘Arts which benefit Man-kind.’

A J Harding Rains, editor