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# Chairperson's Corner: Change is Constant

By Eileen S. Burns

No futurist or predictive modeler could have foreseen all of the changes I've observed between 2016—the year I joined the Predictive Analytics and Futurism (PAF) Section Council—and 2019, the year I leave, even if we narrowed the field to me, the PAF Section, the Society of Actuaries (SOA) and actuarial interests in predictive analytics and futurism.

Personally, it's been a journey! I went from knowing next to nothing about SOA sections to leading the fastest growing section, writing articles, doing research, planning meetings, presenting internationally, brainstorming the future of work with other section chairs and SOA staff, and trying to find ways to add additional value for our members. And that's just the volunteering.

Over the same three years, my job has taken two big leaps. The first was thanks to a new hire in my practice at Milliman who was very technology focused. My team had been using predictive analytics to do experience analysis: cleaning data, building models to answer questions, delivering reports in Microsoft Word. Thanks to this new hire's gentle push, we began looking into alternative ways of sharing our analyses and wound up developing a software product—using our good friends R and Shiny.

At the same time, industry regulations evolved to demand insurers begin to leverage their data better and govern their data and models more effectively. Watching that evolution made me optimistic that one day soon insurers will have all of their data in one place, relatively cleaned, and there for the taking by predictive modelers. This view ultimately led me to my second leap, joining a different team within Milliman, where I might one day help those predictive modelers to use that data where it sits. Building that first software product had given me a taste for product management, exactly what is needed to enable those predictive modelers.

Over the same horizon, the PAF Section has accomplished a lot, and set even more into motion. This year we sponsored six sessions at the SOA's Annual Meeting & Exhibit In Toronto in October, a 50 percent increase over the two prior years. We have



twice as many members. We attended the third Predictive Analytics Symposium (PAS) in September in Philadelphia. We've closed two competitions—the Jupyter Notebook competition and the hackathon at the PAS. We've finished one research project (see my article later in this issue) and are midway through a second. Our podcasts are maybe the one thing that hasn't changed: They're still the most downloaded podcasts from the SOA.

Within the SOA, we're offering a predictive analytics (PA) certificate, newsletters are digital and even the exams have changed! There's now a PA exam on the associate of the Society of Actuaries (ASA) curriculum, and more changes are in the works for the fellow of the Society of Actuaries (FSA) exams. Not to mention the focus on predictive analytics in the research agenda.

Further abroad in the insurance industry, insurers are no more sure that PA is the way of the future by my read, but they're all at least investigating it. Some think actuaries should be doing it and some don't. Actuaries are brilliantly capable but will always be a small blip on the screen in the field of predictive analytics. That's the reason behind the last two initiatives our section is starting under my watch. We are inspiring our members out into the world to learn from and share with others advancing this art.

The first initiative is to encourage actuaries interested in predictive analytics and futurism to create local networks to share ideas and push each other forward. These local networks don't need to be made up solely of actuaries; the intent is to connect people with similar interests. We've recruited a few volunteers for a pilot and hope to kick off a few events in the coming months to demonstrate the idea and encourage more.

The second initiative is crafting journey maps for actuaries interested in becoming more adept in the field of predictive analytics. We're in the process of putting out a call for volunteers to share their experiences with online or in-person learning modules. After consolidating input from these volunteers, we'll compile a list of recommended resources based on your current level of experience and desired analytical programming language.

Where will we be three years from now? I will wait to find out because I certainly can't extrapolate from here. ■



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