Article from

Predictive Analytics and Futurism

July 2016
Issue 13

Chairperson's Corner

By Brian Holland

Did you know our section membership increased by about 65 percent in the last year? The council debated whether to change the section name (and what would be more indicative of our section), and it seems that now more interested parties are finding us. Some actuaries are likely still renewing their SOA membership and the tally might grow further still.

It just goes to show you that these times are exciting indeed for actuaries with an interest in predictive analytics. This issue I would like to welcome our many new members and review section activities.

THIS NEWSLETTER

We consider the newsletter our crown jewel. It appears semiannually. Please explore past issues (*https://www.soa.org/news-and-publications/newsletters/predictive-analytics-and-futurism/default.aspx*). As you do, you will notice we were interested in predictive analytics long before the change of the section's name.

WEBCASTS

Our webcasts are often cosponsored with other sections to gain a wider audience, as only sponsoring section members are informed about the webcasts.

PRACTICAL PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS SEMINAR

A major new step for us is a one-day seminar after the Life & Annuity Symposium in Nashville in May. By print time, it will be done. We have aimed for a larger group—up to 50—and our goal is to apply predictive analytics in the life and annuity space. Learning techniques online is fine, but actuaries as a community must adopt practices and see the meat of what they are in an actuarial context, hence this seminar. In line with my last chairperson's corner, we reached out and brought in a data scientist to speak for part of the day.

SOA SESSIONS

This year we are sponsoring even more SOA sessions, including two at the Valuation Actuary Symposium, to be held in Hollywood, Fla., in August. ValAct seems to me to be a major application for predictive analytics, or setting assumptions, in other words. I expect there will be even more sessions at future ValActs.

PODCASTS

As of this writing, we have two podcasts on the SOA website (*https://www.soa.org/Professional-Development/Event-Calendar/Podcasts/Predictive-Analytics-and-Futurism.aspx*): one on machine learning and one on the bias-variance trade off. I won't summarize them. Just listen to them. They're about 20 minutes each. Thanks go to your section council members Shea Parkes and Anders Larson for their recordings.

LINKEDIN GROUP

On LinkedIn, we have a forum (*https://www.linkedin.com/groups/5118314*) for online discussion, sharing links and the like. Few people have signed up as yet. Fix that, please.

Fortunately for us, several friends of the council continue to perform substantial work to get content out in front of you. Dave Snell remains on as our newsletter editor and is now assisted by Kevin Jones, another friend of the council. Also, Richard Xu and Dorothy Andrews are leading our sessions at the Annual Meeting & Exhibit in Las Vegas in October and ValAct respectively. ■

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