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Chairperson's Corner

By Eileen Burns

As the incoming chair of our section, I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome our new council members, Xiaojie (Jane) Wang, Michael Niemerg and Garfield Francis! We're looking forward to leveraging your interest and enthusiasm in predictive analytics and futurism to advance knowledge among actuaries in this area. I'd also like to offer my thoughts on two main areas in which I hope our section will continue to raise the bar in predictive analytics and futurism in the coming year.

First, I hope and expect the Predictive Analytics and Futurism (PAF) Section to continue to deliver on our educational promises. Our section's purpose, stated front and center on its section site on SOA.org, is "to examine the advanced methods and tools used in predictive analytics and futurism through professional development, meetings, special seminars, research studies and the creation and dissemination of literature."

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Anders did a wonderful job recapping the many activities we've completed under this umbrella in the past year—sponsoring sessions at five SOA meetings, sponsoring the Practical Predictive Analytics Seminar, a transition from two to three newsletters, establishing our own podcast feed, helping produce a predictive analytics-focused issue of *The Actuary*, and starting two research endeavors—and foreshadowing two more activities under development: A Jupyter Notebook contest (first) and a Hack-a-thon (to follow).

I could almost say, based on our past record, that we're done—we've met our purpose! But the fact is that predictive analytics is an emerging area of expertise, with many important questions left to be answered, and best practices to be agreed.

There are two specific areas where we as a section can continue to add value:

1. Providing education on existing and emerging methods for performing predictive analytics and futurism.
2. Providing education related to understanding, validating and communicating predictive analytics to stakeholders.

There will continue to be new methods for predictive analytics until all questions have been answered about the future, so I expect for years to come we'll continue to be able to offer podcasts on new data-cleaning methods, new modeling methods, new tools for visualization and validation, and the like.

In particular, as I wrote in our last newsletter, we still have a way to go in ensuring stakeholders understand and trust predictive models. While the next year or two is likely to see a lot of movement in this area, as long as modeling methods are evolving so too will methods for model validation. I expect education in methodology and validation to be ongoing endeavors as long as we are a section.

Second, I hope that we will build on our collaborative efforts with other sections and with the SOA. There are often times when our interests are aligned with other sections, such as Technology (how do you use the cloud?), Actuary of the Future (e.g., what jobs should I or my team prepare for?), or Entrepreneurship and Innovation (e.g., how can I use these mathematical models to provide a new actuarial service?). I hope to build on the relationships among our sections to ensure that the full breadth of relevant topics can be represented in sessions at the major SOA meetings, in newsletters, and in webcasts.

In the broader educational sense, the SOA is working to provide educational offerings that will keep actuaries relevant for employment openings in the area of predictive analytics. As practitioners in this area, members of our section have unique insights into what is required now, and what will be required in the future. I hope that we will find opportunities to work with the SOA to define and create content related to this important topic.

Sometimes, a Delphi study (this is from our futurism side if you weren't aware) can point you to the right question to ask. Clearly Anders's thought experiment led him to the right question for his Magic 8-Ball, "What can you tell us about the PAF Section?"

"Outlook good." ■



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