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Letter From the Editor

By Ravi Bhagat

I am honored to introduce the first edition of *CompAct* in 2018! You will start to see a natural evolution in our content that mirrors the objectives of the Technology Section, and as my first action as editor, I'd like to reflect on the overall goals of the newsletter. The newsletter's goal is to provide a basis for developing technology proficiency through educating our readers, and to promote technology discovery through the exploration of innovative and disruptive topics. Of course, both of these objectives are also served by casual introductions and guiding our readers to other outlets by which they can further explore the topics. To this end, our newsletter includes articles and content written by a wide range of individuals with diverse backgrounds. To broaden the perspective provided by the diverse group of authors, we did not limit ourselves to traditional actuarial topics (if such a thing exists). Ultimately, this enriches the value of the newsletter and increases its relevance. We leave it to the reader to draw upon the content, connect it to their personal and professional endeavors, and leverage it to carry them (and the industries they serve) into the future.

On a personal note, I would strongly encourage readers to submit topics of interest for future publication, articles for consideration and/or general feedback related to the newsletter. The quality, breadth and relevance of the content is largely dependent on our members and we can collectively redefine this newsletter to be an outlet where one can immerse themselves in technology related subject matter. For thoughts, questions and feedback, I can be reached at *ravibhagat@kpmg.com*.

In this issue of *CompAct*, we have six articles. One is a continuation of a recurring series, and we have five new contributions.

THE HOW OF DATA VISUALIZATION

In the fifth and final installment of a continuing series on data visualization, Mary Pat Campbell explores several interesting aspects within Microsoft Excel. The main vehicle in this instance to support the visualization techniques is Microsoft Excel, but as the author notes, there is analogous functionality within other platforms.

ACORD

To provide greater awareness and spark reader curiosity, we included an introductory article on ACORD, a global standards-setting body for the insurance industry. The cost-effective and high-quality flow of data and information across the insurance value chain is paramount in today's insurance industry. ACORD is one such non-profit, industry-owned organization that is encouraging and facilitating new standards.

SMALL COMPANY, MODERN DATA STRATEGY

Wholesale transformation initiatives are considered the norm for Fortune 500 and global insurers, but small- and medium-sized insurers are defining highly targeted initiatives. Ying Zhao and Win Georg contributed a practical article that outlines considerations for small- to medium-sized companies as they look to capitalize on technology innovation.

INTRODUCTION TO DISTRIBUTED COMPUTING

Introducing the theme of Big Data and related computational challenges, Jason Alteri delves into the topic of distributed computing. As demands on computational analysis and the need for faster turnaround times continue to increase, this article provides a great introduction into distributed computing technologies.

CLOUD COMPUTING

Continuing on the theme of computational challenges, Joe Long and Dan McCurley provide an insightful piece that details a three month machine learning exploration project and the considerations of cloud computing enablement. With increasing demands for high-quality data, the author notes that the cloud is an ecosystem of resources that can be leveraged to explore ideas and complete tasks that were once limited due to computational constraints.

VA VALUATION USING GPU

Lastly, as part of the Technology Section's recent essay writing contest, Huina Chen and Henry Bequet penned an exploratory article on GPU and Deep Learning advancements within the variable annuity valuation space. Using variable annuity valuation provides a great use-case that can be relatable to other functional areas that have demands for robust and timely financial analytics. ■

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