

ISSUE 39 | APRIL 2011

SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

Technology
Section

CompAct

ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER



CONTENTS

[Table of Contents](#)
[Letter From The Chair](#)
[Editor's Notes](#)
[Introduction To New Co-
Editor](#)
[Speaking "Data" Properly](#)
[Apps For Actuaries
Update](#)
[Online Resources For
Actuaries](#)
[R Corner: Extreme Grey
Swan Scenarios–DMFBM](#)
[Number Puzzle !\[\]\(3342c215b2a8b663596a81468d5dc314_img.jpg\)](#)
[January Number Puzzle
Solutions !\[\]\(56549452e01ca28bdf2500ced9653143_img.jpg\)](#)
[Articles Needed for
CompAct Newsletter](#)

QUICK LINKS

[Technology Section
Web site](#)


Share



Print Article

Search
Back issues

ONLINE RESOURCES FOR ACTUARIES

by Mary Pat Campbell

Warning: given the "dynamic" aspect of the Web, the links for the below may change between the time of this writing and the time you're reading it. In many cases, the resources will still exist, just at a different location. I hope I have given enough information that it will be findable via normal Internet search methods if the links have changed.

Mortality tables and studies

SOA Resources

If you visit the [SOA Tech Section webpage](#), you will see three links under the heading "Mortality and Morbidity Tables." As of my writing, **there are 944 tables on offer** in the project, and the tables can either be downloaded **directly in XTbML format** or you can use the **convenient Excel Add-In** which will retrieve the desired table directly into your spreadsheet.

In addition to getting the tables themselves, you will get a short description as well as any references in literature (e.g., which issue of the *Transactions of the SOA* the table was published in.).

In addition, one can access the SOA's experience studies via its [research page](#). There are studies in life insurance, annuities and pensions.

The Continuous Mortality Investigation

Council

[Links of Interest](#)

[Fiction Contest](#)

[Howard Callif, Editor](#)

SOA Staff

[Meg Weber, Staff Partner](#)

[Sue Martz,](#)

[Section Specialist](#)

[Sam Phillips, Staff Editor](#)

On the other side of the pond, our British brethren have their own experience studies. They have CMI reports going back to 1973, but what I've also found interesting are their working papers on mortality trend models as well as stochastic mortality modeling.

For example, their [most recent mortality projection](#) comes with a very [large Excel spreadsheet](#) with full inputs (so one could, say, change the base mortality rates and other parameters) that could be adapted for use in other countries. (U.K. experience has a very strong cohort effect in mortality improvement effects, perhaps due to the deprivations during and following World War II—U.S. experience has looked very different.) Perhaps one of the readers here would like to do this ... here is a link to [the user guide](#).

The Human Mortality Database

The data to be found at the Human Mortality Database are less detailed than you'll find in the SOA and the U.K./Irish experience studies. That said, it covers a wide number of countries, with documentation on methodologies and provenance of the data. These tables are divided by period and/or cohort, and sex.

You have to register for this site to get access to data and papers, but access is free. The database is supported by the Department of [Demography at UC-Berkeley](#) and the [Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research](#). Researchers from around the world have contributed to the project.

Web 2.0

Twitter

I understand many may be put off by the faddishness of sites such as Twitter, and may be concerned about risks they may be opening themselves up to. So here I am to present a relatively low-risk and low-involvement method to use Twitter: think of it as the world's largest searchable news feed.

You do not need an account at Twitter to look at content that comes through its system. One of the best ways to use Twitter is to look for tweets (i.e., individual messages posted to the network) with particular search terms. This link will suck up anything [mentioning actuaries](#):

I did not search on the string "actuar" alone, as many different languages are posted, and "actuar" appears in many Spanish

tweets.

You can also take a look at lists set up by specific twitter users (a.k.a. "tweeps") on actuarial subjects. Below are two actuarial- and insurance-related twitter lists.

<http://twitter.com/#!/meepbobeep/actuary-insurance-pension>

http://twitter.com/eddie_smith/actuarial

I cannot promise that everything appearing in these lists will actually be actuarial or business in nature. The first list is mine, and I've added all the tweeps I follow who have an insurance, pension, or actuarial connection. Many of us use Twitter for a variety of purposes, not just news or not just talking about one specific topic. If you check my list out, Twitter will also show you my other lists (I have 14 right now) that cover such things as tweeps local to me (the Westchester and NYC metro area) or news feeds.

That said, it can be useful to dip into the huge info stream coming from Twitter from time to time. Never be concerned that you're missing something (one's attention is always going to be limited), but take advantage of the serendipity that can result.

LinkedIn

Unfortunately, one does need a LinkedIn account (currently) to get to its best stuff right now. Supposedly it will be changed soon such that those outside the site can read items posted, but that currently is not the case. While many use the site to post their resume, more or less, and network for career purposes (or, in the case of recruiters, to post job listings), one of the more useful features is groups.

In addition to the SOA-related groups (the Tech section has its own group), there are groups such as Financial Modeling in Excel or Excel Blackbelts where one can discuss issues based on day-to-day tech issues.

Alas, I cannot link to the groups directly as of now. One must join LinkedIn (the amount of information you need to divulge about yourself to join is very low—just a name and an e-mail address—you do not need to put your employment info in if you don't want to) and then search on groups to find these groups. I hope they change over to a more user-friendly version soon with regards to groups.

For more Web 2.0 for actuaries info, check out Eddie Smith's article from the July 2010 issue of CompAct, "[Web 2.0 Offers Many Opportunities for Actuaries](#)".

Business Education

Harvard Business IdeaCast

The Harvard Business Ideacast is produced by the Harvard Business Review, often interviewing recent authors of HBR articles or books. And it's available for free on YouTube. I've been following this series for a couple years now. You can also subscribe to this via iTunes, and there's an audio-only series in addition to the video series.

I have found Ideacast to be very practical and immediately applicable to my day-to-day work. For example, a recent video is titled "Can Introverts Lead?" which relates to recently published research on comparisons of introverted-style management versus extroverted-style; another useful one recently is titled "How to Stop Good Ideas from Getting Shot Down." Unlike many other business school offerings, which are either too academic or are simply advertising for their business schools, the Ideacast keeps delivering.

Khan Academy

When you first go to this site, you may think "How does this help me? Unless I need to help my kids with their math homework." But wait, page down to the sections on the Credit Crisis or Finance (also check out Geithner Plan and Paulson Bailout) and you'll see it's much more than algebra videos.

Perhaps you've missed these subjects as assets such as CDOs may have come on the scene after you've taken exams, and Salman Khan walks you through the concepts in a relatively painless manner. Mr. Khan is Bill Gates' favorite teacher (don't worry, Sal puts out good product) and is putting out new videos all the time. Perhaps you don't need a brush-up on corporate finance or mortgage-backed securities, or someone to help with your kids' homework (not just math—also chemistry!), there's also a brain teaser section ... including a couple that some people like to use in job interviews.

For more free business education resources, see my articles in The Stepping Stone, the newsletter for the Management and Personal Development Section:

[Get Your Personal MBA](#). *The Stepping Stone*, Issue 35, July 2009, pp 19 - 21

[Stop Paying for Business Education!](#) *The Stepping Stone*, Issue 32,
October 2008, pp 1, 14 - 15.



475 North Martingale Road, Suite 600 Schaumburg, Illinois 60173
Phone: 847.706.3500 Fax: 847.706.3599 www.soa.org