ISSUE 39 | APRIL 2011

SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES Technology Section

CompAct

ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER

CONTENTS

QUICK LINKS

SPEAKING "DATA" PROPERLY

by Dan Rachlis

This article is the first in a four-part series about eliminating the confusion with using data terminology.

Data Mining, Data Analysis, Data Warehouse, Data Mart, Data Modeling, Data Requirements, Data Integration, Data Visualization, Data Cleansing, Data Transformation, Relational Database, Business Intelligence, Data Management, Data Architecture, Data Privacy, Data Security, Data Access, Data Integrity, Metadata, Data Backup, Disaster Recovery, Business Continuity Planning, Data Governance, Data Asset Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Software, Records Management, Data Structure, Data Movement.

Have you ever used any of the above terms? Chances are that you have and that you may be using them incorrectly. In an era where technology is continually advancing, electronic data can be found everywhere. In the healthcare actuarial industry especially, data and understanding how to manage the constant flow of information is vital to an organization's operational and financial viability. Actuaries need to be sure the analysis and opinions they provide are accurate; asking for the wrong data or not understanding what data to ask for can have a significant impact. This article defines and explains commonly-used data terms and aims to assist you with understanding and using them correctly in the future.

Let's start with the basics: What are data? **Data** refers to information about an event or transaction that has been translated and usually put into some tabular format. It can represent the qualitative or quantitative attributes of a variable from which it represents. Data

Council

Links of Interest

Fiction Contest

Howard Callif, Editor

SOA Staff
Meg Weber, Staff Partner

Sue Martz,
Section Specialist

Sam Phillips, Staff Editor

(plural of datum, which is seldom used, at least by me) can also be used as the basis of graphs or analysis and is usually viewed as the lowest level from which information and knowledge are derived. Data by itself does not mean anything. For instance "99281"; what does that mean? Is it a zip code, a CPT code, my laptop combination lock code? Combining data together with a description about each variable creates the meaningful explanation of an event or transaction.

Now that we understand what data refers to, let's move on to managing it. Generally data can be categorized into the following data management groups.

Data Governance

An asset can be defined as something that has a useful or valuable quality. Therefore, a **data asset** is a collection of data that can be said to provide useful information. **Data governance** refers to the overall formal management of data assets with respect to availability, usability, integrity, and security throughout the enterprise. Data governance ensures that data can be trusted and that people can be made accountable for any adverse event that happens because of low data quality. It assigns responsibilities to fix and prevent issues with data so that an enterprise can become more efficient. Data governance is an emerging discipline with an evolving definition. The discipline embodies a convergence of data quality, data management, data policies, business process management, and risk management surrounding the handling of data in an organization. Through data governance, organizations look to control the processes and methods used by their data stewards and data custodians. **Data Stewards** are commonly responsible for managing data as an enterprise asset. They have responsibility for data content, context and associated business rules. **Data Custodians** are primarily responsible for the underlying infrastructure and activities required to keep data intact as well as the safe custody, transport and storage of data. Simply put, data stewards are responsible for what is stored in a data field, while data custodians are responsible for the technical environment and database structure.

Future articles in this series will focus on data analysis and database management, data warehousing and business intelligence, and document and records management.

Dan Rachlis, ASA, is a specialist master in the Chicago office of Deloitte Consulting LLP. He has more than 20 years experience in

business, consulting and data management. He earned undergraduate degrees in Mathematics and Business Administration from Southern Illinois University and a master's degree from Loyola University in MSISM–Masters of Information Systems Management, a Certificate in Data Warehousing and Business Intelligence from Loyola University. He can be reached at drachlis@deloitte.com or at 312.486.5631.

Actuaries
Risk is Opportunity.®

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

ISSUE 39 | APRIL 2011

SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES Technology Section

CompAct

ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER

CONTENTS

QUICK LINKS

APPS FOR ACTUARIES UPDATE

by Meg Weber

It seems like everyone is entering the world of apps. The term apps may not be so new for members of the Technology Section, but the proliferation of them is and so are the providers. You can even get apps from the U.S. Government: http://apps.usa.gov/.

Apps (for you more casual members of the Technology Section) are not just for Apple devices such as iPhones, iPods and iPads. There are apps available for all handheld devices, mobile phones of all types, and personal computers.

SOA Staff and members of the Technology Section converged on the idea that there were opportunities for the SOA to create or obtain apps for our members and candidates. Also, the section can provide real value to its members by identifying apps especially useful to actuaries. There have already been discussion threads on the Technology Section's LinkedIn site (join the group, if you haven't already: Society of Actuaries Technology Section on LinkedIn). Technology Section Council members Tim Deitz and Eddie Smith are serving in an important advisory capacity for the SOA in app development.

Here are some of the apps the SOA will pilot or launch in 2011:

- At the Health Meeting in June: a Meeting App available to attendees that will provide information on sessions, speakers and handouts via various mobile devices.
- Currently under development: SOA e-learning available for iPads.