Actuaries Online

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What is Actuaries Online? It's the Society of Actuaries (SOA) electronic bulletin board sponsored on the CompuServe network, with additional sections identified for the Actuarial Standards Board, the American Academy of Actuaries, and the International Forum of Actuarial Associations.

Who might you find on Actuaries Online? We have nearly 1,400 subscribers, including fellow actuaries, researchers, academics, and a wide variety of practitioners. You'll also find the SOA Board of Governors; foreign subscribers; nonactuaries, such as CPAs and bankers; and students.

All bulletin boards on CompuServe have three key pieces: messages, libraries, and conferences. Messaging is the real powerhouse of a bulletin board service. It is here subscribers can ask questions, such as "Does anyone know where I can find mortality statistics on newborns in Texas?" Once posted, all subscribers to the bulletin board can read the question and respond to it. It's not uncommon for an individual to have a response within a few hours, and sometimes the response includes an added bonus, such as a worksheet. Message and library sections are broken down by topic to make browsing and searching easier. Sections have been identified for research, and education & examinations, the four SOA practice areas, plus more. Within a topic area, such as research, each message then has a subject, which makes scanning them very easy. Messages scroll off the board in about three weeks. However, if you want to save a message, the CompuServe software creates an electronic filing cabinet for you to store messages on your hard drive or you can print out a hard copy.

In the libraries, over 600 files are available online for subscribers to browse or download. There is even a library for advertising products and services and another library with job listings and resumes. Requests for research proposals, Statistics for Pension Actuaries, task force reports, meeting minutes, the Society education and examination catalog, list of passing candidate numbers for examinations, early release transcripts from the Record, as well as software and worksheets--some contributed by subscribers--can all be found online. Files can be searched by key word, by title, or by contributor.

The conference feature allows subscribers to have a real time chat with one another or a group of individuals. Formal conferences, which include a moderator to monitor the flow of questions and answers, have also been held. Updated news flashes which automatically pop up when you first enter the forum will contain information about upcoming conferences.

Actuaries Online has a few more resources, such as:

o   a subscriber database. This is where you can search for others by area of expertise or country of knowledge.

o   a continuing education calendar database. This can be searched by topic or sponsoring body.

o   an actuarial resources database. Although it's still in its infancy, it is here that you can key word search for "home page," for example, to find some useful Internet sites.

All-in-all, this electronic exchange of information available at your fingertips makes Actuaries Online a focal point for the actuarial profession. It is hoped that Actuaries Online will continue to increase communications between researchers and also between researchers and practitioners.