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Emory takes off editor's hat...

After serving as the editor of *The Actuary* for six years, Linda Emory has decided to pass on this duty. Mike Cowell, vice president and corporate affairs actuary at UNUM Life in Portland, Maine, has agreed to take over as editor. Following is an interview with Emory conducted by Judy Bluder, assistant staff editor.

Q: What was it like being editor for the past six years?

A: When I became editor, I knew it was a bit of a risk taking on this project. We were switching from a situation where the editor did everything to the editor becoming a manager who oversees the work. I had a great respect for the labor of love that previous editors Charles Trowbridge, Jack Moorhead, and Andy Webster had for the newsletter. I also respected the independence of the newsletter. I tried to remain reasonably true to the newsletter's original principles.

After I got over the sense of overwhelming responsibility, the staff and the associate editors and I fell into a comfortable rhythm where everything ran smoothly. I especially give credit to the associate editors for filling the issues with interesting and timely articles. At first, I had a nagging concern that we'd get to the deadline and we wouldn't have anything to publish. We never seemed to have a problem filling the pages.

The staff was very patient and supportive. They kept us on track but stayed out of the editorial decisions. During my editorship, I spent a couple years working in Europe in sometimes hard-to-reach places. Somehow the staff always managed to reach me and keep *The Actuary* running on schedule.

Being editor also allowed me to keep up with SOA issues and make a meaningful contribution to the profession. This was about the most enjoyable job I've ever had with the Society.

Q: What changes have you seen in content and readership over the years?

A: We found we needed to publish more practical, practice-related articles. We began having themes in each issue that helped maintain a continuity. We've also seen the SOA



Board use the newsletter for more effective communication with the members over the years. We've developed special sections with features like the E&E Corner and the Research Corner. Readership has continued to increase, especially recently when we added students to the jointly administered exams to our circulation. *The Actuary* helps people understand issues they're not involved in and provides a broad background on issues you don't find in the more specialized Section newsletters.

Q: The December Annual Report issues began under your direction. How important are they?

A: The SOA Board asked us to publish an annual report every year. I think any sizable organization should produce a report that historically documents events of the year. In addition, eliminating the Committee Reports and condensing the information into the annual report helped save the SOA a sizable amount of money.

Q: How important is reader input and features like letters to the editor?

A: Reader input is one of the most valuable things. We like to be "customer-focused," and our readers are very important. Readers may not realize that their letters to the editor sometimes reach the SOA Board. It's important that readers feel they can contribute and, for example, let us know what kinds of articles they'd like to see published.

and hands it to Cowell

Q: What lasting memories will you take with you from this experience?

A: First of all, Tony Spano was instrumental in developing *The Actuary's* new format when I began as editor six years ago. He's provided great counsel and support, and we've developed a lasting friendship. The staff has been a great help, and I appreciate all that they do.

Another memory is the time I spent in the Netherlands and continued as editor of *The Actuary*. Working on the newsletter and keeping ties with the staff and associate editors in the United States was a great comfort when I was far from home.

Q: Any advice for the incoming editor?



A: I hope Mike is as lucky as I was in finding such qualified and quality associate editors. I would suggest he continue to scrutinize everything we do. Test and revise to move with the

times. We have to change with our readers as our profession is changing and branching out. If we assume the status quo, we become obsolete. I wish Mike the best of luck.

Editorial

If it ain't broke, improve it

by Michael J. Cowell

From its inception in 1967, *The Actuary* has served thousands of Society members by bringing news while it is still news, especially on matters of general interest. I am a big fan of *The Actuary*, so when Linda Emory announced her retirement as editor after six years on the job, it was an honor to be considered as her successor. I thought it would be an interesting challenge to help carry on the work pioneered by Andy Webster, so ably continued by Jack Moorhead and "Trow" Trowbridge and most recently by Linda. I have a keen interest in seeing the publication's standards of actuarial journalism held to a high level.

I don't anticipate any major change in the direction of *The Actuary*. We plan to continue all the features that have become staples for this publication over the past several years. Each issue will continue to reflect the views of the associate editor responsible for that issue's contents.

The Actuary serves as an

excellent source of information on topics of current interest and as a useful forum for issues for which there are no clear answers, especially those issues which debate helps define more sharply. I would like *The Actuary* to continue to be viewed by our readers as important a font of such information as other sources.

You will notice a change in the look of *The Actuary* beginning with the October issue. Nothing radical, just a design that's in keeping with the times. Every few years, publications typically make slight design changes to take advantage of improvements in graphic capabilities and publishing techniques.

Like most readers, I find my work becoming increasingly specialized. The Society has responded well to the specialization issue by forming special interest Sections, which now number 13. During my two years as a Vice-President of the Society and chair of the Council of Section Chairpersons, I got to know the inner workings of the Sections well.

Section newsletters serve their

members by providing news on special interest items. *The Actuary* fills the gap by bringing Society members together on matters of more general interest. It provides a forum for topics on a more timely and informal basis than required for papers in the *Transactions* or discussions of Society meetings published in the *Record*. I will stay in close contact with editors of Section newsletters and other actuarial journals, both in North America and

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Watch for new look in October

As you read on this page, outgoing editor Linda Emory has challenged *The Actuary* to move with the times. After six years, the Editorial Board decided the newsletter needed an updated design and reviewed several options at a July meeting. You will see the results of their decision in the October issue.