



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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Actuaries Online: What can it do for you?

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A few years ago, if an actuary could price a product within a month, that was considered good turnaround. Today, with the development of sophisticated software, two or three days are the norm. Not long ago, if a document needed to be delivered within 24 hours, it was express mailed or faxed. Today, using on-line services, e-mail delivers it within minutes. What's made the

difference? Technology—a tool to be more productive, to get tasks done easier, faster, more efficiently.

How are a thousand individuals using technology to stay up-to-date in the actuarial field? They're on Actuaries Online, the Society of Actuaries electronic bulletin board service on CompuServe. Who's out there? The Society's Board of Governors, colleagues and competitors, academics and students, international members, regulators, and those in related fields are on-line.

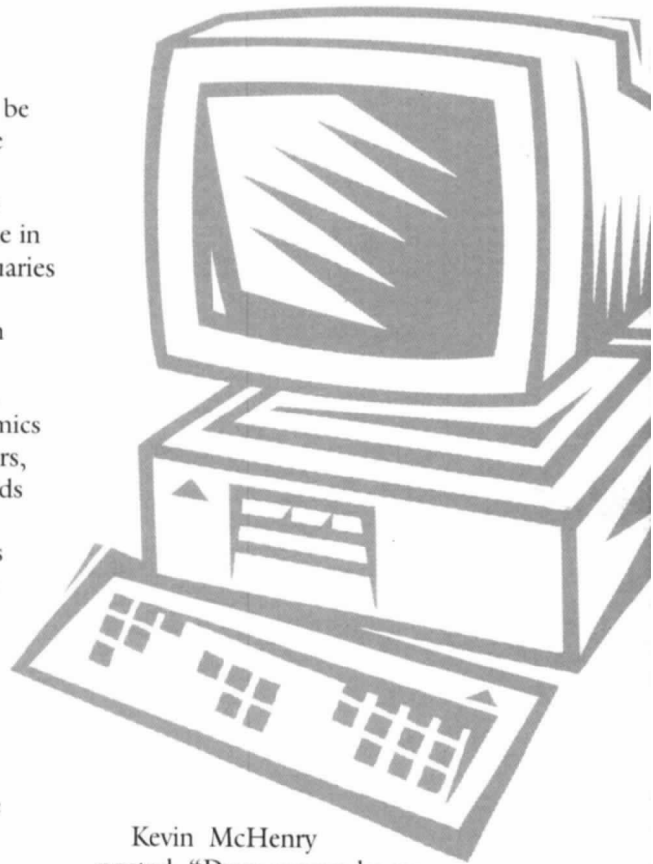
"Ah," you're thinking, "if this is going to make my life better, what can it do for me?" Here's some ways others are putting Actuaries Online to good use in each of its three components: messaging, libraries, and conferencing.

Messaging gets results

More than two dozen messages are posted daily to Actuaries Online in several topic areas, such as Life & Annuities, Health, Pension, and Finance & Investments.

At first, reading messages seems like eavesdropping on a party line or reading other people's mail.

Posting your first message can be intimidating, but the benefits are great. Jeffrey M. Robinson said, "The first message I put out was on funeral insurance policies. I got a very nice reply from Jeff Johnson, but it took me six months to put out that first message."



Kevin McHenry posted, "Does anyone know of any studies or articles relating to injuries from bungee jumping?" Warren Gratton, a subscriber in Australia, responded, "I am aware of one or two deaths, and there is some suggestion about damage to the retina. I have not come across a specific article or reliable report on the retina problem, so I can't say if it is other than a remote possibility. The deaths were not with

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the major operators. I'll see if we have anything in the office in the next couple of days." McHenry had his answer.

"Where might I find historical investment data tables such as S&P 500 or government bond index levels for the last 50 years?" asked David M. Walczak. Debbie Jay, systems operator for *Actuaries Online*, responded the same day, "In May '95 a message thread was started on Historical Data discussing source data for S&P and government bond information." She uploaded the information that day. Wade Luther, who also saw the message, contributed a worksheet containing S&P 500 month-end values. Walczak's response? "Thanks very much for the guidance; you folks are awesome!"

Joanne Janssen joined *Actuaries Online* to stay connected to other actuaries. "I have made several acquaintances that I've spoken to on the phone and shared information off-line. I even got a referral to a new

Mortality table database update

The Society of Actuaries Computer Science Section has developed version 1.0 of a mortality table database. The system is available in the Software & Worksheets Library of *Actuaries Online* as the file TABLEMGR.ZIP. A Windows-based program manages the database and extracts tables to ASCII and .WK1 files. The database contains 126 tables, including all versions of the 1980 CSO and CET, the new 1994 group annuity tables and projection scales, and many other tables. Also included are an APL workspace and a C++ API for accessing the database directly. By early August, the system had been downloaded over 100 times.

client when an attorney in Tulsa contacted a Society member who had exchanged messages with me on the forum. I also store messages that relate to my specialty. For example, whenever there is a discussion of health trend rates, I save it in my filing cabinet. Then when I need to do a trend study, I can review the messages and call the authors to discuss the issues."

Libraries and exam results

Another use of *Actuaries Online* is its libraries. There are more than 500 files on-line, including early release transcripts from the spring meetings. Transcripts start appearing on-line as soon as a month after the meeting.

Are you looking for a copy of the NAIC's Draft-Life Insurance Sales Illustration Model? It's on-line in the Actuarial Standards Board section. Do you need a mortality table? Download the Mortality Table Database in the Software & Worksheets library.

Craig Kalman is one of two actuaries with the Missouri Department of Insurance. "Actuaries Online has given me information that would otherwise be hard for me to get. I've used downloaded files to get information quickly and accurately into reports."

In July, more than 50 anxious students waited on-line for lists of passing candidate numbers, made available shortly after activation of the hotline. "Getting exam results quickly is a good fringe benefit," said Kalman.

Special interest groups

Another great use of *Actuaries Online* is conferencing. Special interest groups and companies have found this to be a boon to their work. Tom Corcoran, chairperson of the Disability Special Interest Group (DSIG) of the Health Section, believes, "The on-line system can greatly improve the effectiveness of the DSIG as a communication forum. Members who join *Actuaries Online* can access accurate, up-to-date information in one place rather than trying to maintain that data themselves. The DSIG is actively promoting building databases on this bulletin board."

Barbara Choyke, director of Continuing Education, moved CE into a new realm by posting her first message requesting suggestions for SOA Spring 1996 Meeting topics. She received a few responses, including one from Tom Bakos, who would like to learn "how to interpret and apply the Actuarial Standard of Practice on Illustrations." Steve Cooperstein wanted a session "on the various ramifications of financial planning."

New sections

Actuaries Online recently added two new sections: Advertise Online and Opportunities. On Advertise Online, subscribers can promote their products and services free of charge. You might find universal life program demonstrations from software firms or an interactive introduction to group reinsurance services. On Opportunities, subscribers can post job opportunities—free of charge. Listings are accepted in the following categories: positions available, situations wanted, and resumes. For further information, download the guidelines found in the Opportunities library. (Note: The confidential resume-matching service through Pat Holmberg at the Society office continues to be available to unemployed members and students with 100 or more credits.)

So, with all this power at your fingertips, why not join the electronic age? As subscriber Angelica Michail said, "There's so much out there."

A new price structure for *Actuaries Online* makes it more attractive than ever. Effective September 10, 1995, CompuServe basic services are \$9.95 a month, with five free hours of on-line access and \$2.95 an hour after that. Of course, *Actuaries Online* offers unlimited use of that forum for the \$5 a month fee, now reduced from \$8 a month.

For more information about CompuServe and Actuaries Online, contact Debbie Jay, BBS Assistant, at 74431.2444@compuserve.com or phone 708/706-3539.