



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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# Surfing and searching on the Internet

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**F**eel like doing a little surfing? You don't need an ocean. Today's big kahunas are surfing the Internet for information and just for fun. So grab some snacks, a cup of java, or maybe a drink with an umbrella in it to hold you over as we visit some actuarial sites around the world.

## On the Web with the SOA

Our first stop is the SOA site (<http://www.soa.org>). Our most popular pages have been the lists of passing candidate numbers, which registered some 2,600 user sessions. For optimal viewing of our Web site, we recommend using Netscape Navigator 2.0. CompuServe users can GO NETSCAPE to download a customized WINCIM rsion.

In July, the first month the SOA Web site was live, the home page was accessed 7,477 times. The total number of hits or downloads for the entire site was nearly 95,000. The site registered nearly 7,050 user sessions, with 68% from the United States, 15% international, and another 17% unidentified. Based on the number of hits, the top five countries for users were the United States, Canada, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Switzerland. The average hits per day were 3,061, with 227 average user sessions per day. The most active day was July 19 — when passing candidates numbers were posted — with 19,183 hits. In general, the most active day of the week in July was Friday, the least active, Sunday.

Have you visited the SOA Foundation's home page (<http://www.soa.org/foundation>)? Here you'll find information about the Foundation, its mission statement, and descriptions of major projects underway. At its Social Security consumer education page, you can read about possible changes to the system and fill out a survey.

## Especially for actuaries

The Canadian Institute of Actuaries'

Web site (<http://www.actuaries.ca>), written in French and English, was the first to be posted by an actuarial organization, debuting in June last year. The CIA page has hotlinks to many actuarial resource sites, clearly listed under topics such as economics and statistics, academic actuarial departments, and finance.

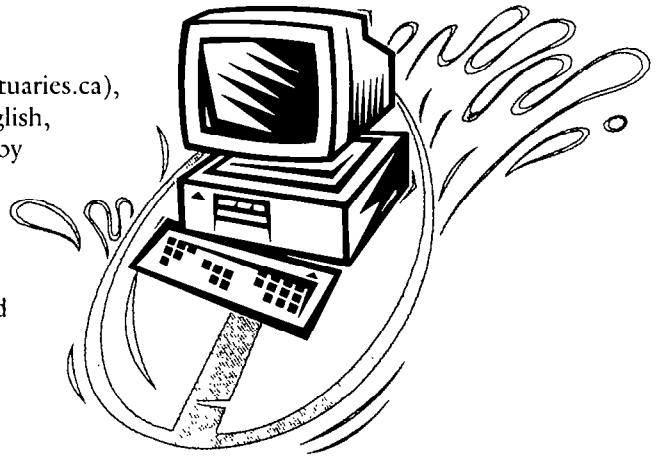
The site sponsored by the Institute of Actuaries/Faculty of Actuaries (England) (<http://actuaries.org.uk>) is a recent addition to the Web. It hosts a special section for those new to the actuarial profession. The site posts information on the group's upcoming conferences and events and also contains the *British Actuarial Journal's* table of contents, although the articles themselves are not available online.

One of the most colorful sites is the South African Actuarial Internet Site (<http://southernlife.co.za/actuary/uawwwhp.htm>). Its vivid visuals can enliven your Internet trip. The site divides its hotlinks into three categories, stated specifically as: "actuaries who are only actuaries, actuaries who are not only actuaries, and actuaries who are net surfers."

Our last stop will be the Taipei Life Insurance Association (<http://www.tlia.com.tw>), which is written in Chinese and English. Under "Publications and Information," you can find the group's newsletter and membership news.

## Searching with the big engines

Besides the obvious sites for actuaries, where else might you find helpful information? You might want to try using one of the search engines on the Internet. Among the 1,500 Internet search engines and catalogs are meta-search engines, such as the



MetaCrawler Parallel Web Service (<http://metacrawler.cs.washington.edu:8080/index.html>), which actually searches the search engines. Usenet search engines search Usenet news archives and e-mail listings of Usenet news groups. Webcrawler (<http://webcrawler.com>) searches Internet indexes built by its own spiders or robots.

- Each search engine has a specialty:
- Alta Vista (<http://altavista.digital.com>) has an 8-billion word index, which would fill 30 million Web pages, and provides a full-text index of more than 13,000 news groups. To get the most out of a search engine, watch for tips such as this from Alta Vista: "When in doubt, use lower case."
  - Excite's index (<http://www.excite.com>) is updated weekly and has full text of over 11.5 million pages.
  - Use Infoseek Guide or its newest offspring, Infoseek Ultra (<http://guide.infoseek.com>), to get timely news and views from popular magazines and TV networks, e-mail addresses, stock quotes, company profiles, and more.
  - Lycos (<http://www.lycos.com>) has a comprehensive catalog and includes text, graphics, sound, and video.
  - Updated daily, Yahoo! (<http://yahoo.com>) is recognized as one of the most user-friendly sites and allows you to browse and search subject categories.