



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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One for the record: the *Record* goes online

by Gary Lange

Click! Click! Click! That's all you have to do to retrieve a transcript from a session presented at the Society of Actuaries 1996 spring or annual meetings. Last February, the SOA began posting meeting session transcripts on the Society's Web site. This approach replaces the printed version of the *Record*. The last printed volume, which covers the sessions from the 1995 annual meeting in Boston, was mailed to all members in September.

As of this writing, the *Record* on the Web site (www.soa.org) offered 37 sessions from the Marco Island meeting (held in May 1996), 34 sessions from the Colorado Springs meeting (June 1996), and 14 sessions from the 1996 annual meeting in Orlando. The first sessions from the Palm Dessert meeting (held in May 1997) and the Montreal meeting (June 1997) are expected to be posted by the end of the year.

Sessions are located in the *Record* portion of the site's Libraries section. There, visitors can select the meeting they're interested in — Marco Island, Colorado Springs, or Orlando — then scroll down and click on "search." This brings up a page listing the sessions for which transcripts are available. Clicking on a particular session's name calls it up for viewing or downloading. (A list of all sessions scheduled for posting is available under "table of contents.") Because the *Record* sessions are in pdf (portable document format) files, viewers need the Adobe Acrobat Reader to view or download these files. The Acrobat Reader is available free of charge on the SOA Web site's Publications section under "Record."

Meetings also can be searched by:

- Track — e.g., general, pension, health, financial reporting, investment, computer science, and reinsurance

- Keyword — e.g., contracts, disability, interest, mortality, reserves, taxation, and wellness
- Author — which includes speakers, moderators, and instructors — by name

Online distribution provides access to meeting sessions in a shorter time. With the printed *Record*, readers had to wait until all the sessions from a particular meeting had been edited and then compiled into a book. Now, once a session has been edited and approved, it is posted to the online *Record* on the SOA Web site.

For those who do not have access to the Internet, paper copies are available (free of charge to members, \$5 each for nonmembers) from the SOA Books and Publications Department (phone: 847/706-3526; fax: 847/706-3599; e-mail: bhaynes@soa.org). Audio tapes of transcribed sessions are available from Teach 'Em Tapes (800/225-3775; in Illinois, 312/467-0424); fees range from \$11 to \$22.

Although the medium of the *Record* is different (online versus printed), the editorial production process remains the same. The process ensures that the session transcripts posted online are accurate and of the same high quality as those in the printed *Record*. Transcripts are reviewed and edited by the moderators and speakers, by staff editors, by practice area experts, and finally by the SOA publications manager and the editor of the *Record*. At each step, edits, corrections, and revisions are checked and proofread. As a result, the version that appears online is just as usable and readable as the book version.

The production process has become slightly more complex, because all elements — including text, tables, charts, and equations — must be captured electronically. For the printed version, some elements, such as tables

and charts, could simply be copied and pasted in; now, these same elements must be created or copied electronically. Moreover, reprint permission (for tables and graphs copyrighted by another company or publisher) often cannot be obtained for electronic formats.

When the SOA Board of Governors decided in June 1996 to discontinue the printed version of the *Record* in favor of electronic distribution, it was trying to hasten the availability of session transcripts to the members, reduce publication costs, and take advantage of technological advances. With the first sessions from the Marco Island spring meeting posted in February and the first sessions from the 1996 annual meeting posted in August, these goals are being met. As more experience is gained in electronic production, we hope to streamline the editorial and production processes further to bring you *Record* sessions in record time — just a few months after their presentation.

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