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In this, the 20th year of publication for the PSN, we're taking a look back in time by reprinting selected articles from the earliest issues.

Flashback to 1989: "Batman" was a smash at the box office. Radio stations were playing hit after hit from Paula Abdul and Bobby Brown. "Roseanne" was the top-rated TV show. And, the SOA hosted its first-ever teleconference! The topic was pension-related, and the event was reported both in *The Actuary* and in the inaugural issue of the *Pension Section News*. Here's how the teleconference was described at the time:

## 1,100 View SOA's First Teleconference by Barbara Choyke

More than 1,100 persons at 25 sites across the United States participated in SOA's first teleconference January 26.

The program on "Minimum /Maximum Tax Deductible Contributions" offered participants five hours of core continuing education credits toward the required 10 hours needed to maintain their enrolled status. It was organized in cooperation with the American Academy of Actuaries, American Society of Pension Actuaries, and the Conference of Actuaries in Public Practice.

The planning and production of this educational program took a year. A crew of more than two dozen was at work when the session was broadcast before a live audience at the American Hospital Association's (AHA) headquarters in Chicago. The Society contracted with AHA to have it provide production, logistical, registration, and broadcast support.

Audience members at other sites were able to call in questions to telephone operators who passed the questions on to the moderator. Attendees responding to a questionnaire rated the program quality high.

Those wishing to view this program at home may order a VHS video tape and workbook from the Society. To earn continuing education credits, viewers may submit a test accompanying the video tape.

For more information, contact the Seminar Department.

This year, the 2008 Halmstad Prize will be awarded to the best actuarial science paper published in 2006. The selection committee makes its determination taking into account the originality and thoroughness of the ideas expressed in the paper, the readability of the paper, and the timeliness and relevance of the research.

Nominations for papers on pension-related topics are being sought. Please send a brief email that includes the name of the paper, the journal (with volume number) in which it was published, and a few sentences explaining why the paper should be considered to [kelley.mckeating@sympatico.ca](mailto:kelley.mckeating@sympatico.ca) before June 15, 2008.

Nominations for the 2009 prize (for the best paper published in 2007) are also welcome at this time.

For more information on the Halmstad Prize, click [here](#).

Congratulations to the teleconference faculty: Bamet Berin, Christopher Bone, Edward Burrows, and James Holland.

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The first (pre-Internet) teleconferences were certainly different than today's webcasts. As our reprinted article above explains, the first teleconference took place before a live audience at the American Hospital Association's headquarters in Chicago. Many more participants around the United States dialed in and crowded around speaker phones to soak up the five hours' (yikes!) worth of education on minimum/maximum tax deductible contributions. It took a large number of staff and volunteers to pull it off. The lead time in terms of planning was lengthy.

Times have changed for continuing education, thanks to the Internet. We still use our phones to hook into the audio portion of a webcast presentation, but we now have the ability to view slides in real time on our computers. Only a handful of people—not a crew of 2 dozen!—are needed to run the webcasts. And, since today's webcasts are less of a "production," they can take place more frequently. Most last about an hour to an hour and a half.

The presenters can deliver their material from their own offices or homes. Some webcasts are still designed to handle questions from participants over the phone, although this is rarely done today. Instead, technology permits participants to submit questions electronically via their computers. And of course, participants can still obtain recordings of the webcasts. However, they're now delivered on CD, rather than via clunky video tapes.

Since 1989, the SOA has broadcast hundreds of teleconferences and webcasts for its members. In fact, in the past five years alone, there have been 31 pension-related webcasts by one count. 2006 was (unofficially) the most active year on record, with 11 productions in total, thanks in large part to PPA and accounting reform in the United States. In that five-year span, the SOA has delivered over 7,200 continuing education certificates to participants. It is impossible to get a precise count of the number of people participating in any given webcast. While it's easy to add up the number of registration sites, some (perhaps most) of those registrations are for groups of people who gather in a conference room at work to participate, as opposed to individuals who dial in from their own desks.

The money raised from Pension Section webcasts supports the important projects and initiatives of our section. For that, a big "thank you" goes out to the many volunteers who have shared their time and knowledge over the years.

We hope you enjoyed the reprint from 1989! Perhaps you dialed in to the original teleconference, or better yet, were a part of the live audience. If so, we'd enjoy hearing about your memories. E-mail your reminiscences to our editor, Art Assantes, at [PSN.Editor@pensionedge.com](mailto:PSN.Editor@pensionedge.com), and we'll try to print them in a future issue of the *PSN*.

Special thanks to Sue Martz and Carol Lyle at the SOA for digging up the webcast statistics for this article.

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