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Cultural exchange

SOA reports, gains information at international congress

by Anna M. Rappaport
1997-98 SOA President

Every time I attend a meeting like the recent International Congress of Actuaries (ICA), it reinforces for me the value of exchanging ideas with actuaries from a variety of cultures. This ICA, held June 7-11 in Birmingham, England, emphasized that actuaries in many countries face similar challenges in dealing with their customers and the users of their services and in seeking to maintain the profession in their own countries.

This was an extremely important meeting, held as the actuarial profession moves to a more globalized world.

During the meeting, the International Actuarial Association (IAA) was restructured as an organization of actuarial organizations (rather than individual actuaries). This will allow the IAA to better serve the needs of a global profession. (See "Going global," *The Actuary*, June 1998). This change becomes more important as trade agreements blur national trade boundaries and as the regulation of accounting is increasingly a matter for the International Accounting Standards Committee, a global standards-setting body.

The SOA shines and learns
The congress was mind-expanding and fun as well, with many high points of interest to SOA members. Our organization offered much information and many views to other countries, and I believe SOA members at the ICA learned a great deal as well.

I presented the results of the SOA's study of social security mortality projection methods at the general session on Monday afternoon. (See "A gathering of scientists," *The Actuary*, March 1998, and "Social security 'summit'," January 1998.)

Actuarial science may be first profession to truly globalize

by William F. Bluhm
Vice President, International Affairs

The International Actuarial Association (IAA), representing the actuarial profession worldwide, announced in June that it has taken the first steps toward setting up uniform standards of education and professionalism. This creation of a single international organization to represent actuaries in every major nation where actuaries are organized may make the actuarial profession the first "fully global profession."

IAA members voted to convert the IAA into an association of associations during the IAA's 26th International Congress of Actuaries, June 7-12, in Birmingham, England (see "Going global," *The Actuary*, June 1998). To obtain full-member status, which allows an association to vote on IAA measures, the association must have in place a code of professional conduct and a disciplinary process complying with an international standard. As of press time, 39 organizations, including the

SOA, were full members of the IAA. (Other categories include associate, actuarial organizations pledging to meet full-member requirements within three years; observer, actuarial associations which do not meet the criteria for full or associate members; and institutional, international nonactuarial organizations.)

The current IAA president is Jean Berthon, 1996-97 president of the French Institute of Actuaries. He will serve until the end of 1999. The president-elect is Catherine Prime, 1991 president of the Institute of Actuaries of Australia.

All SOA Fellows will automatically become members of the IAA. Associates can continue their IAA membership subject to payment of dues. More information on Associate membership is expected by the end of the year.

The IAA currently has 11 committees dealing with a variety of topics. Nine committees have a total of 109 members, and two are just beginning

to recruit. Seven SOA members currently serve on six committees:

- Robert L. Collett, SOA IAA delegate and vice chair of the Advice and Assistance Committee
- Cecil Bykerk, vice chair, Education Committee
- Sam Gutterman, chair, and Richard S. Robertson, IASC Insurance Accounting Standards Committee
- Robert Wilcox, Insurance Regulation Committee
- Walter S. Rugland, chair, Nominations Committee
- Michael Sze, Social Security Committee

The SOA Board of Governors is considering SOA representation for the five remaining committees (addressing issues related to accreditation, audits, the IASC employee benefits accounting standard, member services, and public statements).

Information and updates on IAA activities are available on the organization's Web site (www.actuaries.org).

Throughout the week, many told me they found the study interesting.

A session on actuarial education around the world offered insights into key problems in other countries. I was pleased to be able to discuss how the SOA is addressing the changing world in our new syllabus and educational programs. The Institute of Actuaries is restructuring its examinations at the same time we are and addressing many of the same issues.

Actuaries in many countries are concerned about the frail elderly. Public and private programs in different countries are addressing these issues in a variety of ways. In Israel, some disability products include long-term care coverage. In the United Kingdom, as in the United States, continuing care retirement communities are available.

Parallel sessions provided actuaries a chance to discuss current concerns with regard to health care, pensions, life insurance, casualty insurance, finance and investments, and social security with their counterparts. Papers submitted to the congress introduced the topics, but the discussion was far-ranging, and guest lectures added different perspectives.

Several sessions explored the history of the actuarial profession in many countries. In the Netherlands and Scandinavia, the profession has existed for more than 200 years. In contrast, it is just in the last few years that the profession has been established (or re-established) in many Eastern European countries. Also, this is a time of anniversaries; the Institute of Actuaries of Japan will mark its 100th anniversary next year, and the South African society is celebrating its 50th this year. The Institute's 150th year anniversary that drew the most attention, however, was the 150th anniversary of the United Kingdom's Institute of Actuaries. While the ICA has an international orientation, the congress offered a welcome opportunity to recognize the important contributions of this domestic actuarial organization. For the anniversary, the

Institute sponsored a dramatic and inspiring exhibit, a review of their history, and a scientific program featuring more than 150 papers. In response to the question "So What Is an Actuary?" the exhibit catalog states:

There are fewer than 35,000 actuaries worldwide. Collectively they are guardians of the financial interests of many millions of people. They assess and monitor the likely financial impact of tomorrow's uncertain events so that businesses and individuals alike can safeguard their future, confidently and at a fair price, in an ever-changing and unpredictable world. Actuaries design solutions to problems that involve financial risk or future uncertainty.

Many reasons to attend We also had the opportunity to get some insight on Birmingham, a revitalized industrial center with more miles of canals than Venice. In fact, the convention center where the ICA was held was right on a canal — a great place to walk when we could find a spare minute. The conference "day out" offered us a chance to see a medieval fair on the grounds of a country estate. The jousting exhibition was a very different, fascinating demonstration.

If you missed Birmingham, you have another chance — closer to home. The next ICA will be held in Cancun, Mexico, in March 2002. Congresses are a great experience, offering a unique type of learning. U.S. actuaries constituted about 5% of the total group in Birmingham. Our colleagues from other lands offered a chance to get a better understanding and perspective about our profession and the issues we face. I believe that in our global economy, all actuaries should attend at least one congress during their careers.

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Exam prep seminar news

Course 210 sessions set for Sept., Oct. Waterloo Actuarial Seminars will sponsor SOA exam study courses in three U.S. locations this September and October.

Keith Sharp, associate professor, University of Waterloo, will offer seminars in Course 210 in Hartford, Sept. 14-21; Somerset, N.J., Sept. 27-29; and Chicago, Oct. 19-25. For details, contact Sharp at 519/743-2863, or check the seminar Web site (SharpWaterloo@compuserve.com). EA-2 workshop planned A three-and-a-half-day problem-solving workshop for the EA-2 exam will be held Oct. 29-Nov. 1 in New York City by Actuarial Study Materials (A.S.M.). Details are available in the SOA study notes package or from Harold Cherry of A.S.M. (phone: 516/868-2924).

A.S.M. also offers textbooks and study materials for SOA exams. Further information is available in the study notes package or from A.S.M. (toll-free phone: 888/275-4276; fax: 516/868-6595; Web site: www.webcentre.com/asm/). Daniel opens Web site for Course 150 exam James W. Daniel, director of actuarial studies at the University of Texas, has created a Web site for his Course 150 exam seminar. The Web address is http://lonestar.texas.net/~adaniel/sem/austin_actuarial_seminars.html. More information is available directly from Dr. Daniel (phone: 512/471-7168; fax: 512/471-9038; e-mail: jimdaniel@mail.utexas.edu).