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A GUIDE TO SURFING THE NEW PENSION SECTION WEB PAGES

By Josh Bank

As you may know by now, the SOA embarked last year and early this year on a comprehensive redesign of its Professional Interest Sections' Web pages, resulting in a more consistent, single brand look across different Section pages as well as user friendly access to the wealth of knowledge and resources that are available to members and other interested parties through the Web pages.

This 2008/2009 initiative was led by Meg Weber and Gina Rutgens of the SOA, along with an advisory group of volunteers composed of Grady Catterall (Health), Kerry Kranz (Financial Reporting), Ruth Ann Woolsey (Entrepreneurial Actuaries), and our own Faisal Siddiqi, representing the 4,000–member Pension Section.

The New Look for Section Web Pages

The resulting "landing pages" for each section's Web area were restructured from a wide variety of layouts that had developed too independently over several years, to a standardized look that provides access to the vast majority of each section's resources via the following main ports:

- Latest News

- Upcoming Events

- Publications

- Additional Information

- Resources, and

- Research

LINKS

SOA Pension
Section Web Page

20 / 20 Web site

Contact the Editor

Calendar of Events

With lingering memories (neutral at best and frustrating at worst) of the legacy Pension Section Web pages, I embarked upon a full surfing session of the new structure. What I found was a very logically laid out hierarchy, and the ability to very quickly converge on the material that I needed to investigate, without hitting the famed one way streets and dead ends that too often characterized my earlier, ad hoc sessions on the section Web pages.

Still, the enormous amount of material found under the above six standardized categories led me to attempt to build a sort of "site map" for the Pension Section Web pages, an effort that was not feasible for SOA's staff due to the multiplicity of Section Web pages (nineteen of them at latest count) as well as the technical challenge involved in standardizing the entire infrastructure of every section's intellectual capital repositories. Furthermore, most of the material on the Web pages is updated quite frequently, so a static site map would become outdated quickly.

A Quasi Site Map
What I came up with didn't end up looking like the usual site map that you can generate by clicking the appropriate link at the bottom of many other Web sites. What came out of this exercise was instead a three dimensional table that takes the reader down three levels below each of the above "ports." A discussion of the format that I used to try to represent the first three layers of the section's Web pages follows. It would be useful for you to read the remainder of this introductory piece from a printed out copy, and to bring up on your computer the **Section's home page** and the **pdf table** associated with this article.

The table (and the home page) contains six main sections, corresponding to the six "ports" mentioned above. These six sections are identified by a graphical icon and a name (for example: **Latest News**), and are placed in the leftmost column of the table. **Primary links** that emanate from these ports are placed also in the left column. Second level links appear to the right of the respective primary link, and third level links appear below the respective second level link, in rows identified by "**Third-Level Links** ."

Example:
Suppose you want to find an article that someone mentioned to you from the January 2005 issue of The Pension Forum. You would go to the "Publications" section on the second page of the table, then look straight down to the primary link "Past Issues," move to the right to the secondary link "Past Issues of The Pension Forum" (this is not a link per se, but it does serve to get you to the right place), and underneath that heading you click on December 2004.

I am not suggesting that you use the table as an ongoing tool to get you to the information you may be seeking on the Web site, but rather as a "flattened out" and fairly comprehensive mapping of the vast majority of the material and resources that reside on our section Web pages. If you spend 30 minutes browsing the table and click on a half dozen of the over 200 links I've imbedded in this quasi site map, you should quickly get a sense of (a) the enormous amount of valuable information and resources to which you have access, and (b) the relative ease with which you are able to quickly home in on what you are seeking.

Of course, if you have the time and inclination, I do encourage you to click your way through the table, and if you feel really ambitious (or bored some evening), you may choose to go beyond just locating individual items, and actually do a random read of some of the fascinating intellectual capital that makes its home in this electronic treasure trove and at other locations linked to from within this site!

<u>The Pension Section Web Pages are here for YOU!!!</u>
Have fun, and if you don't have a chance to spend much time surfing our improved section Web pages during the next few weeks, at least make a New Year's resolution that you will give yourself some time early next year to get reacquainted with this wonderful resource!

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