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Thoughts From the Chair

By Cynthia Edwalds

Since this is my last column as the chair of the Taxation Section, I would like to reflect on the environment that we are in and make some conjectures about where things are headed. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a disruption unlike any other that we have previously experienced. Many of us have been longing for the day when things will “get back to normal.” But just as the earth shifts after a major earthquake, “normal” will not be the same after the imminent threat is tamed by the development of an effective vaccine and an effective treatment.

Education was abruptly shifted online, both for academic education and for continuing professional development (CPD). Webinars are not new, but the prominence of their role as the mode of delivery for CPD is. As time goes by, more people will become accustomed to getting their CPD online. In particular, the CPD content provided by the Taxation Section has already been moved away from the Society of Actuaries (SOA) virtual events (which replaced in-person meetings) to stand-alone webinars. Large in-person gatherings like the SOA Annual Meeting & Exhibit are not likely to return for quite some time, so it seems likely that tax-related content may be delivered only by webinar or *TAXING TIMES* for the foreseeable future.

This shift to online delivery of CPD leaves a large gap in the opportunities for networking. Networking is still an essential element of career and professional growth. I am not yet convinced that online networking formats are as effective as in-person networking. I do expect that online networking formats and technology will continue to evolve and that comfort levels with these formats will increase. Perhaps we will see effective online networking soon.



Finally, I would like to welcome the newly elected members of the Taxation Section Council: Przemyslaw Szumowski, Haixia Gu and Dean Slyter. I also want to thank and recognize the council members whose terms are expiring: Sivakumar Desai, who served on the council with me all three years, and Lori Weyuker, who stepped in to fill the unexpired term of Vincent Zink. It has been my honor to serve on the Taxation Section Council for the past three years and as the chair for the past year. Thank you for giving me this opportunity. ■

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