IACA Newsletter No. 3

CHRISTMAS 2021
Greetings
to all members

I hope that you and all your loved ones are safe and well and getting back to a ‘new normality’. In the UK we have had relative freedom for some months, but Covid numbers are rising again fast – although the severity of the illness seems reduced, probably as a result of widespread vaccination.

As you know, IACA has completed a very successful online colloquium with three other Sections of IAA in November. I hope that you were able to participate in and enjoy at least some of the sessions.

Rather than have a keynote speaker we held a panel discussion which seems to have been widely appreciated, as was the diversity panel on the last day of the colloquium which formed part of the IACA track. To all participants in these, to the individual presenters of the diverse technical presentations, to Doug Carey our colloquium supremo and to our colleagues in the other Sections as well as to the Secretariat of IAA, I send my grateful thanks. I also send congratulations to winners of the Certificates of Merit for papers presented: Roberto Carcache, Abraham Hernández and Octavio Rojas.

The online colloquium was intended as a gap-fill in circumstances where international colloquia could not be held this year. We hope that 2022 will be better for us all. Where international, national or regional meetings are able to take place, IACA will be there. Hopefully, normal service will resume as 2022 progresses. In the meantime, we carry on with our webinar series and this newsletter.

In addition, at the request of members participating in the colloquium, we held two networking events on 4th November. The diverse participants were based in Africa, Asia, North and South America and Europe, with a wide spread of ages and experience and work involvement across the actuarial spectrum. The two sessions provided opportunities for old friends to catch up - as well as the chance to meet new friends. Topics discussed included "What do I want to be when I grow up?", Participants’ genealogical research, Whistleblowing and differences between the professional and other requirements of actuarial bodies and jurisdictions. The feedback was that the sessions were enjoyable and should be repeated, so I hope that these sessions will become a regular IACA offering, continuing after the Pandemic. If any member would like us to arrange a session covering a specific topic, please let me know.

Finally, the Festive Season has commenced with the recent Diwali celebrations so I take the opportunity of wishing you all "Happy Holidays" and a healthy, enjoyable, exciting and successful New Year.

Kindest regards.

Nigel Sloam
IACA Chair
IACA Chairman’s Christmas & New Year Quiz 2021/2

For IACA Members only and new IACA Members after application as member.

ROUND 1 - Christmas around the world

There are 5 rounds and there are prizes of CAD $300, $200 and $100 as gift vouchers for top 3 responses or gifts to your nominated charity. In case of a tie there will be random draw by the editorial team. Good luck!

1. In which country was Christmas banned from 1969 – 1998?

2. Which country is visited by thirteen “Yule Lads” instead of Santa?

3. In which country was the Christmas Carol “Silent Night” composed in 1818?

4. In which country’s capital city is there a tradition of roller skating to church for services in the week to December 24th?

5. In which country is Kentucky Fried Chicken the popular choice for a Christmas Eve meal?

6. In which country is December 25th a holiday in memory of the country’s founder?

7. In which country is Eel a traditional course in a sea food dominated Christmas Eve dinner?

8. In which country are Christmas trees often decorated with spiders’ webs?

9. In which country is “Yalda Night” or “Chelleh Night celebrated on the darkest day of the year?

10. In which country is it a tradition that “Kallikantazari” or hobgoblins wreak havoc during the 12 days of Christmas?

Out of the Crisis
by Octavio Rojas

For a Network to comply with a DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) mindset, it needs participants to learn constantly.

The reason for the above is to be in a position to (as stated in my presentation titled "Building Consulting Resilience in Challenging Times by Effective Networking"):
• Learn Who’s who: lines of business, reputation, area of scope, where it’s based, etc.
• Is any member currently facing an extreme shock event? Should this be the case we must learn: What describes the event, the region where the operation works, how - and how long it has been dealt with locally, has it made formal changes in its procedures to cope with the event. If so, how successful have those procedures been in tackling the problems? Has it reached a transitional point (that is, a point where it can say it shall soon arrive at a new normality?)

If one does not assess the above information properly, how can one define who will form part of our transitional network?

When I saw the presentation given by Kenichi Kimura, titled “Building Resilience - Lessons from Covid-19”, a question came to my mind:

If a participant does not know much about the Japanese culture, how much can they appreciate what is said?

Throughout the presentation, I could appreciate that it was a clear result of applying W. E. Demming’s work, embedded in the Japanese Corporate Culture. That is the reason why I decided to name this article after a book written by Demming.

Demming gave speeches to the Japanese on what he called Statistical Product Quality Administration. Something one step ahead of his usual topic in talks: Statistical process control (SPC).

The above helped Japan to achieve what was known as the Japanese post-war economic miracle of 1950 to 1960. Before 1950, Japanese products were of poor quality. After 1960, Japan became the second-largest economy in the world. Demming’s philosophy centered around productivity, and with it quality.

The first thing he was against was: For companies to measure quality at the end of the product line. Instead, by teaching workers and managerial staff SPC, these would be capable to analyze each phase of the product line, minimizing the need to discard products due to poor quality at the end of the line.

Continued...
The above gave place to the so-called quality control circles. There workers and managers talked and agreed on how to optimize procedures, based on ideas that were brought up by workers. Thus, when a change in a particular process took place, everyone was clear on how to proceed.

Something that is very important to mention is that the worker whose idea was taken into consideration was given a bonus. This process alone increased productivity (with quality) and served as a basis for the company to assure loyalty amongst its workers.

The above is just a very quick overview. I invite readers to study more about this topic and go once more over the presentation.

Those who carry out what has been said above will see things differently and understand why learning about other cultures is ultimately important and can allow to see things from a DEI perspective with Justice.

IACA Chairman’s Christmas & New Year Quiz 2021/2

ROUND 2 - Christmas Miscellany

1. How many of Rudolph’s fellow reindeer’s names start with “D”?  
2. Which US State was the first to declare Christmas Day as an official holiday?  
3. In which country did eggnog originate?  
4. In which year did Mariah Carey’s “All I want for Christmas is You” first appear?  
5. What gift did Harry Potter receive in his first year at Hogwarts?  
6. What colour suit did Santa wear until Coca Cola rebranded him in red?  
7. If you are born on Christmas Day what is your star sign?  
8. How many gifts in total are given in the song “The twelve days of Christmas”?  
9. In Home Alone 2, who does Kevin run into in the hotel lobby?  
10. What type of tree is commonly used for Christmas trees?

IACA Marketing Strategy
By Asim Gani

IACA has added to its recent involvement in the IAA Colloquium and regular webinars by recently entering the realm of social media by launching its LinkedIn profile. IACA is engaging in a number of new initiatives exclusively for IACA members. Currently the Tender Warehouse is available to assist IACA members with discounted access to global business leads and opportunities, as well as the opportunity to filter for customised opportunities.

Looking forward, IACA is in the process of introducing the following exclusively only for members:

• Dedicated Networking sessions  
• Masterclasses on topical matters, with engagement opportunities  
• A practice management program so as to address risk management for actuarial practices.

In order to assist members with any IACA members, as well as to promote the organisation, IACA is in the process of rolling out an Ambassador program. Through the IACA Ambassador program, members may become Ambassadors and serve to assist fellow members and potential members in growing the organisation so as to better serve current and future members.
IACA Chairman's Christmas and New Year Quiz 2021/2

Round 3. SPORT

1. Who did Djokovic defeat to win his 9th Australian Open tennis championship in 2021?
2. Which international footballer has the world record for the highest goal score for a Single club?
3. Koneru Humpy excels in which game?
4. Waca cricket ground is located in which city?
5. What is the record number of stage wins that Mark Cavendish and Eddy Merckx's share in The Tour de France?
6. Which motorsport star retired in 2021?
7. The All Black secured a record of how many tries in 2021?
8. Which major championship did Spanish golfer Jon Rahm win in 2021?
9. Including qualifiers, how many matches did Emma Raducanu win at the US Open?
10. What are cannellini, aduki and borlotti?

Santa and his actuary are walking over the snowed mountains on the North Pole when they reach a valley, full with Santa's reindeers. After a few seconds the actuary says “Santa, you have 936 nice reindeers here.” Santa replies “Amazing, that number is absolutely correct. How did you count them so quickly?”. The actuary answers “Easy, I counted the number of legs and divided by four!”.

IACA Chairman's Christmas and New Year Quiz 2021/2

Round 4. AROUND FOOD

1. What type of wheat is used to make pasta?
2. What is the most consumed manufactured drink in the world?
3. From which flower does a vanilla pod come?
4. What spirit is mixed with ginger beer in a "Moscow Mule"?
5. Grenadine comes from which fruit?
6. Which fast food franchise has the largest number of restaurants in the world?
7. From which French city does bouillabaisse originate?
8. If you are diagnosed with coeliac disease which protein are you unable to eat?
9. What is the most expensive spice in the world by weight?
10. What are cannellini, aduki and borlotti?

Series: portrayed actuaries around the world

With the IACA Newsletter of June we started a series of portraits of interesting or prominent consulting actuary who want to share their vision on the actuarial world with the IACA Newsletter readers. After Margaret Tiller Sherwood’s portrait we are very proud to introduce to you Kudzai Chigiji from Zimbabwe. Although Kudzai is younger than most of the IACA members, her foot steps in the actuarial world are very diverse.

‘I am interested in using technology in problem solving, and business in general.’
by Kudzai Chigiji

For me, the actuarial qualification is a tool, not a destination. I have not arrived where I am going. This is still very much day 1.

Some Quick Housekeeping

I am a Zimbabwean Actuary. I’m a Fellow of the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries (IFoA) and the Actuarial Society of South Africa (ASSA). I got my first two degrees in actuarial and statistical sciences from the University of Cape Town (UCT). 5 days after I found out that I had passed my last actuarial exam, I submitted my application to study for a Masters in Development Finance at the Graduate School of Business at UCT. 3 months after I had that degree certificate in my hands, I was on a plane heading to the University of Oxford to get my MBA. If you know me well, you’re already well aware that I am always trying my hand at (and learning) something new, even if it’s painting or knitting.
So far, my career has mainly covered life insurance, management consulting, healthcare, banking and now, technology and investments. I have been incredibly fortunate to hold technical, operational and strategic roles in several industries. Most of my employers and clients have been within Sub-Saharan Africa, with a growing number in the UK and the USA. Aside from private sector employers and clients, I have also worked closely with large parastatals, regulators and lobby groups, exposing me to public sector stakeholders.

A lot of people I have worked closely with have described me as a lateral thinker. And I agree with them. And it is clear that my career has been moulded by the cross-pollination of ideas that I see and share between industries.

**Bankable Adventures**

When I first told my Manager at Deloitte that I was leaving management consulting to join a bank, she told me that I was making a huge career mistake and I would later regret it. Apparently, a bank was no place for an Actuary. I don't live a life of regrets. Just adventures. And I knew I was going to make it work. I was gone by the end of the month.

Banking is still considered a "non-traditional" practice area. But I maintain that I also did "non-traditional" work within banking itself. My experience in banking has included resuscitating the eBucks loyalty program offering within WesBank, the asset finance arm of FirstRand Bank, as well as expanding the market opportunities for value added products, including insurance and personal loans for WesBank and FNB (retail banking) clients. My most notable projects during my time with WesBank are the products and services that can now be found under nav>>Car, one of FNB’s digital service offerings. I was tasked with ideation, research, business cases, pitches, analytics and reporting for the projects that would later be migrated to the nav Team once they were operationalised. During my last year with the bank, I worked closely with the Executive team to develop their digital strategy.

I was the Actuary you brought in for your out-of-the-box projects, especially if they had a strong angle towards technology, required a lot of stakeholder management and lots of quick back-of-the-envelope calcs and decision making. These were not the type of people who would wait 2 weeks for your perfectly accurate results and detailed report. It was definitely a different pace and culture from insurance, and even management consulting. But I enjoyed being an operator and building. At the time, I knew it was different from "pure actuarial work" but I had no idea where it was taking me.

I think it is fair to credit my time in this intrapreneurial team as catalysing my interest in using technology in problem solving, and business in general. The part I often forget to mention is that I picked up several computer science and information systems electives (beyond course requirements) during my undergraduate studies because I had learnt from my internships that being able to code would help me significantly, not just with actuarial work, but with understanding where the world was going in terms of technological advancements. It took almost another decade for me to really understand how technology was going to redefine society and mould the future. To think that I thought I was late to the party back then!

I'm in the last couple of months of my 4-year term as Chair the Actuarial Society of South Africa's Banking Committee which offers the first Actuarial Banking qualification in the world. During my term I have led the team in developing a relationship with the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries in the United Kingdom (as a member of its Finance and Investments Board), specifically with the mission of encouraging the use of actuarial skills within banks and its formal education. This has required me to set up and run several working groups across IFoA and ASSA, in partnership with the IAA Banking Working Group (now Forum), along with several external stakeholders; and influence several Boards and both Councils to support the initiative. The fruit of these efforts is that a full Banking Fellowship qualification will be offered by the IFoA for the first time in May 2022 (with ASSA offering all of the required material and services through a turn-key arrangement). This is an incredible milestone for the actuarial profession and the banking sector given the IFoA's global reach and influence, especially in emerging economies in Africa and Asia. We developed the Fellowship Principles subject for the first time this year and significantly amended the Fellowship Applications subject which has been available for 7 years now. The two subjects are also now offered as a Certificate in Actuarial Banking Practice to ALL Associates and Fellows of IAA full member associations. The reception from our colleagues in other countries has been overwhelming and I am really pleased what the team has achieved the past few years.

Less than nine year later, I have no regrets. I made it work. And then some.

Continued...
Healthier Adventures

After leaving full-time employment in consulting (and whilst still working full-time in banking), several companies within healthcare started approaching me to assist them in their strategy workshops and product development. This was mainly as a result of seeing me present my ideas and research at key industry conferences, and strong client referrals. After experiencing increasing demand for these services, I decided to create an independent consulting company to organise these efforts and revenue. It is called AfricansThinking. Although this is a business I do not intend on growing, it has become a useful vehicle to accept key strategic projects that interest me and may have a large impact. I also use it to provide internships and training for actuarial graduates as they apply for jobs. During the pandemic, I have worked with 2 young people who have recently secured full-time employment at large corporates in South Africa.

Interestingly, most of my healthcare consulting work is no longer with traditional healthcare funders, but with stakeholders further up the value chain, e.g. pharmaceutical companies and providers. They wanted someone who understood the current funding space to help them navigate it and build new partnerships and products. I learnt very quickly who actually controlled the cost and accessibility of healthcare. The misalignment of incentives and goals became very obvious, very quickly. And everything that I was learning from my time in banking regarding how to fund and partner effectively became very useful. And that has informed the opportunities I take on and decline at this stage of my career. I’m not particularly interested in pricing systemic and institutional market inefficiencies back into already unaffordable and inaccessible financial products, especially as far as healthcare is concerned. I want to fix the market inefficiencies at the source. And that has a peculiar investment and strategic partner-purchasing angle. So once again, I find myself doing a lot of “non-traditional” work.

The Next Big Adventure - Tech & Investments

When asked what I am building nowadays, I typically just say “stuff in tech and investments”. It’s just easier, especially since most people are often asking as part of small talk. I’m not great at small talk. But I’ll tell you a bit more now.

After finishing my MBA, I opted to follow my entrepreneurial instincts and embrace a “portfolio career”. I am an investor and currently the COO in the fastest-growing employee benefits technology platforms in Africa, Ovation Solutions. I believed in the product and the founder and knew I wanted to be part of the journey. This has been an incredibly fruitful investment and experience so far. This role encompasses the strategic, legal, operational and financial requirements of this technology start-up. The corporate intrapreneurial experience that I had building technology solutions within a large bank has come in handy in many situations. But we have a lot less resources to work with, also given that we are trying to build a sustainable business that is not driven by the hype of early stage startup valuations we find in the current environment. And we have had to learn a lot of other lessons the hard way. As I move towards more of an advisory role within the company and witness the growth in revenue (and investment interest from people across the globe), I know that we are onto a good thing.

In late 2020, I established an angel fund named Ishe Africa (Ishe means King or Leader in my native language, Shona). This was after over a year of working with angel investors assess potential portfolio companies, drawing up term sheets, building financial models and helping their portfolio companies with market entry and product-market refinement. I was quite shocked at how much I enjoyed what I was doing and how natural it felt to me. The syndicate galvanizes capital and skills from my network of peers and former colleagues. The core agenda of Ishe is to enable (mainly) Africans to invest in African start-ups in a structured manner, and to accelerate the growth of the African tech start-up ecosystem (with a particular emphasis on Sub-Saharan Africa, although the portfolio companies can be domiciled anywhere). The LPs bring with them operating experience from a wide range of industries in order to be hands-on and value-adding to the portfolio companies. Most importantly, Ishe maintains an impact focus; and a gender lens for both investors and founders.

Why a fund? Because I got tired of seeing brilliant people who look like me struggle to get the support (capital, relationships and operational) that they needed to grow their technology startups. And I believe that we are still in the very early days of technology propelling Africa forward. And I want to see more people like me support African founders and benefit from these investments.

Ishe Africa also encompasses a venture building arm that has just completed its first investment and build of a legaltech company that will be launching to the public in January 2022. I’ll be sharing more about this solution and our other work on social media in the new year.

Continued...
I've been volunteering since I was very young, way before I knew what an Actuary was. My family takes its role in our communities seriously and believe in shared success. I learnt this from watching my great-grandparents, grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles. Whether it is church, local chamber of commerce, neighbourhood watch, a neighbour's personal crisis, free tutoring, other professional bodies, name it, I know I'll find someone I am related to trying to help. So it was natural that I would volunteer in the actuarial profession once I started working. I had no idea what I was getting myself into but I was pretty sure I could find a way to be somewhat useful, regardless of where I came from, what I looked like or how old I was. As I walked into many rooms, I know that many people thought (and some even said it out-loud within my earshot) "What is she doing here?".

Regardless, it has been a fruitful experience. I have benefited immensely from my involvement in the actuarial profession volunteer community. I have worked with other actuaries from DAV, CAS, CAA, COS, IFOA, AIA, SAS, SoA, ASZ, NAS, ASSA... the list goes on. I doubt I would have met them otherwise. And I have made some now very good friends from this journey. We rarely even talk about the profession when we chat nowadays. And I would like to think I have made a significant mark in the different Committees and Boards I have served on. And hopefully, the wider profession.

Aside from the work I have been doing for the banking practice area, it has been particularly gratifying to meet the members of IACA who have been exceptionally open-minded, accepting and supportive. This definitely stands out as one of the highlights of my journey volunteering within the profession.

IACA offers a lot more to the profession beyond practice area domain expertise which can be found in other committees and boards. Given the fast pace of change we find in the world nowadays, very few actuaries can rely on what they learnt in the halls of their colleges or in the actuarial notes. As consultants, we are trained to constantly learn and create innovative solutions to our clients' problems (and oftentimes, point out issues that they may not even be aware of). This is now a skill every single professional needs to survive, remain relevant and to have longevity in their career, even in corporate in-house roles. And I am looking forward to seeing IACA champion the advancement of actuaries within and beyond the traditional practice areas. There are many industries that are ripe for the taking by our beloved profession. And IACA is well-placed to lead the discussions and (ad)venture forward by being the first to embrace them.

My service to the actuarial profession has also included reviewing educational material with the ASSA Healthcare Committee, assisting in reviewing Healthcare exams within the IFoA, as well as leading the research and secretarial functions within the ASSA Social Security Committee, for which I received an ICA Best Paper Award and published in journals and newsletters across the globe.

I have been particularly intentional the past few years as to what I focus on and offer my volunteer time to. As you can imagine, the past couple of years of volunteer work have been quite time consuming. And building a new business does not leave a lot of free time. My new guiding light is the following question - "Does this have a tangible impact on the issues that are important to me and will it outlive me?" Currently, I am particularly interested in pushing the needle, even if it is sometimes one life at a time. I pray that I still have a few more decades of lasting impact in me and I want to use them to do exactly that.

In this vein, I also run a post-graduate scholarship fund for young black African women who are also lateral thinkers and want to create. It is called The African Lateral Thinkers Scholarship Fund (TALTSF). Although TALTSF is still a small fund, I am hoping to grow it and use it to increasingly support and invest early in the next generation of African thinkers, founders and leaders. It also offers mentoring and access to other learning programs as part of the scholarship. I'll be spending more time on this as I wrap up my work on the ASSA Banking Committee and IFoA F&I Board.

I know that was a mouthful. But I hope you know me (or at least my work) a little better from the above. But hey, "It's still day 1."
IACA Chairman’s Christmas and New Year Quiz 2021/2

Round 5. MUSIC

1. Who wrote “The Minute Waltz”?  
2. How did Gloria Estefan break her back?  
3. Who wrote “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice”?  
4. What hit did Justin Timberlake write after breaking up with Britney Spears?  
5. Who is the best-selling female recording artist of all time?  
6. Which is the only country to have won 3 Eurovision song contests in a row?  
7. To which musical movement did Jennifer Lopez and Ruck Martin contribute?  
8. What is the minimum number of musicians needed in a “Big Band”?  
9. Which is the largest brass section instrument in an orchestra?  
10. Which band recorded the first ever jazz recording?

Please send your 50 answers to iaasections@actuaries.org

HAPPY HOLIDAYS AND BEST WISHES FOR THE READERS AND THEIR FAMILIES OF THE IACA NEWSLETTER. HOPE TO MEET AGAIN IN 2022!