

April 23, 2013 --- Portland Actuarial Club Luncheon

Title:

"Mathematics Orality and Literacy"

Speaker

Beverly J. Orth, JD, FSA

Principal in Mercer's Portland office

When: Tuesday April 23, 2013 from 12:00 noon to 1:30 pm

Where: Heathman Hotel – Broadway Room, 1001 SW Broadway Portland, OR 97205

RSVP: Please RSVP by **April 19th at 10:00 am** using our website:

www.PortlandActuarialClub.org/contact/rsvp

RSVP's received later than the deadline will incur an additional \$5 fee.

Description

"Mathematics Orality and Literacy" – To become a mathematician, a student must learn how to "do" mathematics and also how to communicate with other mathematicians. Through a special language, both oral and written, mathematicians share a discourse community. This community extends not only across the boundaries of natural language, but also across centuries. My paper explores the following question: How does a person enter the discourse community of mathematicians?

My research shows that learning mathematics parallels the learning of natural language reading and writing. Much like learning a foreign language, learning mathematics has been based mostly on oral tradition. The orality of mathematics learning is confirmed by my interviews with three college math instructors. A key difference is that orality alone is not sufficient to "do" mathematics. Literacy in the language of mathematics is necessary both to "do" mathematics and to tell mathematical "stories." Orality is, however, crucial to the student's learning process.

Beverly J. Orth, JD, FSA

Beverly Orth is a Principal in Mercer's Portland office. She joined Mercer in May 1984, after practicing law in the tax and ERISA areas since 1978.

Beverly's areas of responsibility include the design and drafting of qualified plans, tax deferred annuities, and deferred compensation plans; advice on compliance with federal and state laws affecting pension and welfare benefits; and analysis of potential tax and legal liability. She also assists clients with nondiscrimination testing, controlled group analyses, and compliance reviews.

She is a member of Mercer's Not-for-Profit and Public Sector Defined Contribution Consulting Group, specializing in consulting to not-for-profit and public sector employers. In that capacity, she focuses on assisting sponsors of 403(b) and governmental 457 plans with plan design, plan governance, compliance, vendor searches, and vendor management.

Beverly has written a number of articles on employee benefits, recently focusing on the issue of mitigating longevity risk in the defined contribution plan environment. She is a contributing author of the 403(b) Answer Book, published by Aspen Publishers.

Beverly received her BS degree in Mathematics from Harvey Mudd College and her JD from Harvard Law School. She is a member of the Oregon State Bar, the State Bar of California, and the American Bar Association. Beverly is also a Fellow of the Society of Actuaries.