Competence in the Information Professions: A Comparative Analysis & Environmental Scan

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Goals of Paper

The idea of the information professions
Environmental factors
- Accreditation
- Employment
- Education
- Public perception

• Current trends
  ▫ What’s next?
3 Health Information Professions

- **Medical Librarians**
  - Promote access to the world’s health sciences information
  - Practice librarianship in the field of health and medicine
  - Disciplinary origin in library and information sciences

- **Medical Informaticians**
  - Use technology to enhance the use of information and knowledge to improve health outcomes
  - Practice information science in medicine and health care
  - Disciplinary origin in information science and medicine

- **Medical Information Managers**
  - Organize and manage data and information created during patient care
  - Practice records management in health care
  - Disciplinary origin in library science and records management
Key questions

• What do these professions have in common?
• Are they one profession?
• How should they relate to one another?
• How does the public perceive and understand their commonalities and differences?
• Why should we care?
A Profession? A Discipline?

- If professional identity is privileged, loyalty to professional values and practice venue matter.

- If disciplinary identity is privileged, clarity of purpose, societal contribution and individual expertise matter more than “being a profession”.

- Individual competence of the information professional facilitates growth and mobility.
What Is a Profession?

Organized by an association that functions to advance its interests:

- Requires specific educational preparation (often accredits educational programs)
- Specifies a body of knowledge over which it exerts control
- Code of ethics
- Determines criteria for entry into practice
  - Licensure, certification
- Work benefits a client (social good)
# The Same Body of Knowledge?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MLA</th>
<th>AMIA</th>
<th>AHIMA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information systems &amp; technology</td>
<td>Health information systems; workflow analysis, process re-design, quality improvement</td>
<td>Structure, design &amp; use of health information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health sciences environment &amp; information policies</td>
<td>Clinical informatics, the health system</td>
<td>Identify, evaluate, select &amp; appropriately use computer systems for documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of information services</td>
<td>Leading &amp; managing change</td>
<td>Teach others concepts, laws, policies as appropriate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Commonalities Among the 3

- All deal with the creation, management and use of health information with an increasing emphasis on the integration of information technology to facilitate this process.
- They differ in their cultural identities.
- They are controlled by different professional bodies (Table 4).
## Credentialing Activities in Health Information Professions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Association</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Individual-level credentialing (licensure, certification, recognition)</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Program level credentialing (accreditation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Librarianship</td>
<td>MLA (1989)</td>
<td>4,000*</td>
<td>AHIP</td>
<td>Master’s + 2 years</td>
<td>Yes, **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Management</td>
<td>AHIMA (1928)</td>
<td>53,000</td>
<td>Through examination</td>
<td>Associate, Baccalaureate Master’s (proposed)</td>
<td>Yes, CAHIM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informatics</td>
<td>AMIA</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td>Post-graduate</td>
<td>ABMS*** Proposed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Is Professionalism Still Relevant?

- Deference to hierarchical authority in decline
- Heightened levels of mistrust and skepticism
- Increased focus on self-worth, personal gratification and personal choice
- Massively distributed collaboration
- Decreased emphasis on “expert knowledge”
The Competent Individual

- Competence reflects characteristics of individual performance (Roggema van-Heusden)
  - Places responsibility for knowledge acquisition on individuals
    - Competence is a characteristic of individual performance rather than a body of knowledge
  - 4 core tasks of information professionals: anticipation, production, learning, creation
  - → individual behaviors: initiating, structuring realization, evaluation
The Role of Context

- Health Sciences librarians have traditionally been most closely aligned with the institution of the library, esp. its values and ideals
- Should we regard ourselves as information professionals, working with health information in various contexts?
- Are we librarians—or information professionals?
Importance of Context

• LIS conferences focusing on Information seeking and use in context
• Journal: http://informationr.net/ir/index.html
• Conference: http://informationr.net/isic/aims.html
• Informatics increasingly calls for emphasis on people, information and technology, data, information and knowledge
A Librarian or an Information Professional?

• AHIMA clearly identifies with health records management and therefore has aligned itself with AMIA

• AMIA has aligned itself, initially at least, with medicine, seeking subspecialty status within Internal Medicine

• Important to the issue of Positioning the Profession

• Diverse approaches throughout the world
Recent activities in US & Abroad

- The ischool caucus [http://www.ischools.org](http://www.ischools.org)
- 24 schools from 6 countries: Canada, China, Denmark, Germany, Singapore, and the U.S.
- People, information, and technology
- Include programs accredited by multiple professional groups such as ALA and ABET—or no accreditation
American Society for Information Science

- Presidential Taskforce on the Information Professional
- White papers, environmental scan
- Meeting reports
Some Basic Questions

• Are health information fields changing and coming together?
• Are they growing in importance and impact?
• How can potential workers learn about health information careers?
• How can employers more effectively find workers?
• How can academic training programs grow in quality and thrive as they meet needs of students and society?
Health Librarians in the Library World*

Figure 1. Library & Information Related Associations * (primarily U.S.)
Information Professionals in the Health World

All Medical/Health Professions

Health Informaticians

Health Information Management Professionals

Medical librarians/Information Professionals
A Future Vision

- Health information professionals are boundary spanners, helping the health care community recognize data, information and knowledge as essential to any health information system or service.
- The time has come to consider our future position not just as information professionals or as health professionals, but as individuals who possess competence in the creation, organization, preservation, management and use of health information, wherever that may lead us.
Conclusion

• Health Sciences librarians share a concern with health as a domain and information as a field.
• Information science provides foundational research for all 3 fields
• The effect of context on information provision and management plays an increasingly large role in our practice
• Recognizing a common disciplinary base may be more important in the future than participating in professional jurisdiction
Thank you!

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Additional Information


- For reference: