

# 2012 AHIMA Triumph Award Winners

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*The AHIMA Triumph Awards recognize individuals who make a difference and is a long and cherished tradition of honoring the excellence, dedication, and service of those professionals whose steadfast efforts have enriched the health information management (HIM) field. The awards honor leadership in the HIM industry, reward contributions that build our knowledge base, recognize excellence in preparing future HIM professionals, and encourage fresh talent and new leadership.*

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## Distinguished Member Award

AHIMA recognizes **Merida Johns**, PhD, RHIA, with its highest honor, the 2012 Distinguished Member Award. For nearly four decades, Johns has contributed to the HIM profession as a practitioner, educator, volunteer, author, role model, and, most importantly, a leader.

In 1991, Johns had a vision for the future of HIM, and shaped and directed the first health informatics master's program for the training of healthcare CIOs.

This program built essential early bridges between HIM and informatics in the United States and other countries. Her leadership ensured that HIM was included in the education recommendations for biomedical and health informatics that were being developed by the International Medical Informatics Association.

She was a tenured faculty member at The Ohio State University and the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and served as the principal investigator on numerous grant-funded research projects-many of which have focused on the study of emerging roles and functions within the HIM professional field. Johns was the author of one of the premier textbooks used among HIM practices in the US, known affectionately by many as "the Johns Book." Her authorship of numerous textbooks and articles throughout her career, as well as her participation in significant research, reflects the magnitude of her influence as a thought leader and ambassador.

Johns's volunteer service spans a lifetime of leadership with distinction, including service on the AHIMA Board of Directors and as president of AHIMA. She served on CAHIIM, and as its chair helped switch CAHIIM to an independent body deemed necessary for CHEA recognition. She also served as the vice president of accreditation, education, and certification for AHIMA, and was able to move the profession forward with her focus on HIM professionals as key players in electronic health record (EHR) development and implementation.

## Educator Award

**Francis L. Waterstraat, Jr.**, PhD, MBA, RHIA, is a committed and passionate HIM professional and, according to current and former students, always "puts his students first" while challenging them to be independent learners and creative, critical thinkers.

Waterstraat has served as program director and faculty member for the HIM program at Illinois State University for 24 years. During this time, he has consistently implemented cutting-edge curriculum content that has given his students the knowledge and hands-on experience they need to be competitive in the workforce.

Students always identify Waterstraat as the teacher who pushed them the most to think "outside the box" and cared about them professionally and personally.

As an HIM professional, Waterstraat has continually strived to push the boundaries of our profession. He promotes HIM in the local healthcare community, as evidenced recently with his leadership in starting the Central Illinois Health Information Exchange (HIE) project in conjunction with Quality Quest for Health.

Waterstraat has authored 10 peer-reviewed journal articles and three scholarly and educational books, in addition to donating his time at the state and national levels.

## Leadership Award

Since **Mark S. Dietz**, RHIA, began his career in HIM, he has been involved within all levels of the profession. He became involved at the regional level, increased his volunteerism at the state level in Pennsylvania and Minnesota, and then rose to the national level volunteering as a member of the Board of Directors for the AHIMA Foundation, director of the AHIMA Board, and other positions on multiple national committees. In all, he has served in more than 25 state and local HIM volunteer positions and more than 16 national AHIMA positions. Also, he is a current member of four college/university HIM undergraduate and graduate program advisory committees.

Dietz currently works as an independent healthcare management consultant providing advisory consulting services to numerous healthcare institutions and companies throughout the United States, Canada, Australia, and United Arab Emirates.

Dietz is also an accomplished presenter and speaker, both nationally and internationally, writing and contributing to multiple publications. He worked as an adjunct HIM faculty member and worked with and supported HIM managers in more than 350 healthcare institutions. Dietz assisted in the development of the coding application for the Epic EHR system and has been fundamental in EHR implementations and system optimization efforts for more than 20 healthcare institutions and corporations throughout the country.

Dietz's passion for HIM comes from within. His energy, sense of humor, enthusiasm, and dedication to the HIM profession are evident to all who have the opportunity to know him.

## Literary Legacy Award

**Leah A. Grebner**, MS, RHIA, CCS, FAHIMA, is not only an accomplished author and educator, she also has a strong passion and dedication to the HIM profession that is evident in her literary work and leadership roles.

In 2008, Grebner authored *Ethics Case Studies for Health Information Management*, a resource providing real-world examples of ethical dilemmas in the HIM industry. Her textbook offers students the methodology to interpret the various ethical situations, and determine the correct course of action. Her most recent publication *Medical Coding: Understanding ICD-10-CM and ICD-10-PCS* not only provides comprehensive coverage of the ICD-10-CM and ICD-10-PCS coding systems, but also highlights the anatomy, physiology, path physiology, medical terminology, and other disciplines necessary to accurately code using the ICD-10 system. This publication is one of the few textbooks available that provides such a comprehensive approach to learning ICD-10. In addition to the textbooks, Grebner has also contributed to five HIM articles, which are a part of the AHIMA Body of Knowledge.

Grebner currently serves as a volunteer leader of the AHIMA Foundation's Council for Excellence in Education. In this role, Grebner collaborates with other HIM leaders to establish a strategy called "Vision 2016: The Roadmap to Reality" that will become the cornerstone for the future education of HIM professionals.

## Mentor Award

**Andrea Clark**, RHIA, CCS, CPC-H, an AHIMA-approved ICD-10-CM/PCS Trainer, and chairman, CEO, and founder of Health Revenue Assurance Associates, Inc. (HRAA), knows the importance of mentoring students and supporting the training process for new experts while fostering enthusiasm for the profession.

Clark has over 30 years of experience working in the health information management (HIM) profession. Prior to founding HRAA, she worked in a variety of healthcare settings and also as a consultant in the areas of hospital coding, information

systems, and operational and compliance training. She is a nationally featured speaker for AHIMA and has presented hundreds of seminars for the healthcare industry across the country.

In just the past eight months, Clark hired more than 50 coding professionals to work for her company, including most recently 14 new coders as part of her Coding Mentorship Program; or, as Clark calls it, “White Gloves and Party Manners of Coding.” In hiring these recent graduates, Clark provided in-depth education through several different means and has taught them how to code in a real-life environment, thus enabling them to utilize their skills, get credentialed, and reach their full potential.

## Pioneer Awards

**Andrea G. Koppelman**, MS, RHIA, founded Knowledge Connex, which strengthens board association leadership by making it easier for board members to serve, to increase their association’s financial viability, and to expand virtual education offerings to members for lifelong learning. Through her vision, Koppelman created an innovative company that leverages the resources that component state association (CSA) boards need to be successful.

In addition, Koppelman has taken CSA leadership and services into the 21st century by providing effective and efficient support to many CSAs and regional health information management (HIM) associations nationwide. She not only developed electronic tools to improve communication and connectivity between CSAs and their membership, but also continues to think outside the box to institute creative practices that help associations advance on what they can provide their members.

For example, she created a dashboard for CSA boards to determine and track success of key initiatives and individual meetings.

**Katherine G. Lusk**, MHSM, RHIA, has a tenacious “pioneer spirit” that was evident as she led her organization through the implementation of the electronic health record (EHR) for two acute care facilities and 50-plus ambulatory clinics. Under her leadership, the hospital where Lusk works was the first in the state of Texas to achieve a Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) Level 7 Analytics award.

Her pioneer spirit is also serving external organizations. She serves as the Campus Collaborative coordinator for three distinct organizations. The Campus Collaborative involves standardizing the medical record, ensuring the EHR has a common look-and-feel for providers, data consistency for clinical decision making, and electronic exchange of health information.

Her passion to improve patient safety through accurate data collection and analysis has led her to serve on the Texas e-Health Alliance Collaborative, North Texas Healthcare Information and Quality Committee, and Regional Enterprise Master Patient Index committees.

## Research Award

**Susan H. Fenton**, PhD, RHIA, FAHIMA, has made tremendous contributions to advancing HIM research and fostering new generations of researchers within the HIM community.

As the director of research at the AHIMA Foundation from 2007 to 2009, Fenton brought energy and enthusiasm to the topic of HIM research. At the AHIMA Foundation, she successfully managed the doctoral dissertation assistance program, which improved the quality of HIM faculty. Fenton has been successful in bringing the AHIMA Research Boot Camp to Texas State University, where she currently serves as an assistant professor in the HIM department. She shares her expertise in grant writing and dissertation preparation by training a new generation of HIM professionals to understand the value of research and why it is important to the ongoing development of the HIM profession.

Fenton has recently been an award recipient for two major grants that directly impact the HIM profession. The first is a federal grant from the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT. This \$5.4 million grant will furnish academic program development assistance for university-based training of health information technology professionals. The second grant is a \$1.3 million Wagner-Peyser grant from the Governor of Texas’s Office to conduct a health information technology statewide workforce needs assessment.

Fenton has proven her dedication and leadership in HIM with over 25 years of volunteering within various roles on the state and national level.

## Student Awards

**Brandi Bierbrauer** has achieved significant academic success, and demonstrates leadership and commitment to the future of the health information management profession. She has been an active student member of the Minnesota Health Information Management Association (MHIMA) since September 2010, is a student member of AHIMA, and was elected president of the student HIM group on her campus.

Bierbrauer's dedication to the HIM profession has been shown in several ways: her work health Informatics and information management (HIIM) Department as an office assistant, her help with the development of an electronic educational tool funded by a 3M grant focusing on the usage of personal health records (PHRs) and patient portals, and her numerous public presentations about the project.

**Reine-Eloide Koffi's** volunteer contributions are evident at the regional, state, and national level, as she is not only a member but also an active participant. She is credited with increasing student membership from 19 to 31 percent in one year, and serving as a mentor within the Southeast Pennsylvania Health Information Management Association (SePHIMA). She serves as a component state association (CSA) board liaison to the Pennsylvania Health Information Management Association and also participated in an interview with the Student Advisory Council, which was published by AHIMA in the April 2012 *AHIMA Resources* newsletter.

Koffi has been acknowledged for her academic achievements. She was a 2012 PHIMA scholarship recipient, which assisted with her matriculation in the pursuit of a bachelor's degree in HIM at Temple University. Her fellow students also recognize her as a consistent, well-rounded leader.

**Monte W. Handley**, RHIT, demonstrates leadership skills, understands the complexities of HIM, and has the continued desire to further his HIM education. He is noted to be an outstanding student in the HIM field with the completion of his Associate in Science Degree in Health Information Technology and his Medical Coding Certificate at Santa Barbara City College (SBCC) in May 2012, and will complete the Cancer Information Management Program by 2013. In his last semester, Handley applied for AHIMA's "early testing" option and, shortly afterwards, took and passed the RHIT exam. He also completed the Office of the National Coordinator (ONC) Community College Health IT Workforce Training Program and has passed two of the HIT Pro exams, including Implementation Manager and Clinician/Practitioner Consultant. Handley will start the graduate program at The College of St. Scholastica this fall with a goal of completing his Master's in Health Information Management and Information Technology Leadership.

**Cynthia Paulson's** accomplishments in the management of health information are already significant and are making a difference even prior to her entering the field as a HIM professional. Through her affiliation with the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, she has contributed to building a "Yellow Dot" program within South Dakota. This program consists of efforts to ensure vital health information is available to first responders and Emergency Medical Services staff at the scene of motor vehicle or other catastrophic accidents.

Paulson contacted other states that participate in the Yellow Dot program, rallied support from other HIM students, and joined forces with medical students in this endeavor. Ultimately, she built a business plan and a budget for this project. Such an exemplary showing of passion for patient safety not only reveals Paulson's pursuit of excellence in all endeavors, but also gives validity to HIM as a profession through her partnership with other organizations while taking a leadership role for the Yellow Dot program.

Paulson is an avid supporter and active member of the HIM student club in her two-year HIM program as well.

## Special Thanks to the 2012 AHIMA Triumph Awards Committee

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