

# Bold New World of ARRA: ARRA's Provisions Are Redefining the Healthcare System and HIM Practice

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Imagine yourself as a well-trained professional with an active role in the air travel industry in the early 1950s-the dawn of commercial jet travel. Until now, commercial air travel meant propellers and piston-powered engines. The technology that seemed so impressive just a few years before was now clearly limiting speed, range, and seating.

By the 1960s, commercial jets were travelling almost four times faster than their propellered predecessors, crossing the Atlantic in less time than it had taken to cross the US and carrying passengers by the hundreds instead of the dozens.

This was not the dawn of flight-or even commercial flight-but this was the dawn of a whole new era that would hereafter define commercial flight in every imaginable way.

## Redefining HIM

It is not often that an industry realizes such a profound advancement, even if most industries do experience a fundamental watershed at least once. Rarer still are the professionals involved in bringing about change in historic proportions.

More often a professional will, over a career, be a part of routine, incremental evolutions that mark the vast majority of industrial growth.

For health information professionals practicing across today's healthcare industry, this is a time of great fortune-a time of unprecedented opportunity made possible by the vast health system reform innovations and resources that comprise the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

Like commercial jet air travel in the '50s, ARRA is poised to fundamentally redefine how health information and informatics are practiced and applied, most likely for the rest of the 21st century.

## Increasing HIM's Influence

Among the new policies and procedures, first-time rules and regulations, and innovative agencies and alliances coming into play across the "Jet Era" of American healthcare delivery, the administrative structure for ARRA implementation and management may hold the most potential for health information professionals to realize new levels of impact and influence for our various practice communities.

Certainly one of the major reasons for ARRA's significant potential has to do with the direct parallels that connect that which we do as health information and informatics experts to the immediate and long-range needs of the entire ARRA grant recipient community.

## ARRA's Benefits

If ARRA is to define the government's future administration of healthcare delivery and be a fundamental component to the optimized future of EHRs and a national or international health information exchange, it is going to require the complete integration of the most sophisticated and multifunctional innovations that drive the contemporary collection, registration, interpretation, application, and research of electronic health information.

Properly informed, the ARRA implementation we embark upon today will be just the beginning of a bold new world wherein secure access to accurate health information will lead to a more efficient and economic healthcare delivery system, better educated healthcare professionals with advanced training, and ultimately and most important, a healthier society.

This issue's articles explore the various components that make up ARRA, their impact on HIM practice, and how HIM professionals can make the most of them.

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**Article citation:**

Dowling, Alan F.. "Bold New World of ARRA: ARRA's Provisions Are Redefining the Healthcare System and HIM Practice" *Journal of AHIMA* 81, no.8 (August 2010): 17.

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