

Building Mass and Flexing HIM's Muscle

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A body of knowledge is the sum total of all knowledge in an area of expertise or profession. It is comprised of knowledge areas or domains. HIM's domains include health data content and structure, medical terminologies and classification systems, and health information systems and technologies.

Bulking Up

The HIM body of knowledge has easily doubled in breadth and complexity over the past two decades, driven by expanding medical knowledge, technology, law, and regulation. As such it requires a greater level of mastery for certain roles. Accredited HIM baccalaureate and associate degree program curricula are more extensive, and outdated content is being jettisoned in favor of concepts that will prepare graduates for future success.

In "Mastering HIM" Gina Rollins explains that the breadth and depth of HIM's body of knowledge has fueled the development of master's HIM education. Today there are 12 master's degree programs in health information management, up from three just five years ago. In 2009 the Commission on Accreditation of Health Informatics and Information Management Education will begin accrediting master's level education, an important milestone for the field.

Along with an expanded knowledge base, entry-level HIM practitioners require more highly developed skills in using health information technology. Enter the Virtual Lab, a one-of-a-kind Web platform that supports student learning on advanced information management solutions. "Into the Laboratory" reports on the development and use of the Virtual Lab.

The lab today is available in more than 125 HIM programs and is used by nearly 2,000 students. These students will jumpstart their careers with resumes showing hands-on experience on a range of essential technologies for HIM practice. The lab has also been used to support AHIMA-sponsored continuing education, and more integration is being planned.

The Wisdom of Peers

Gaining knowledge and skill is essential in preparing for the profession and in career-long professional development. However, being a well-rounded professional is not just about learning hard facts. It's also about learning how to get things done in organizations and developing one's professional identity and confidence.

Mentoring is an age-old technique for counseling and guidance throughout one's career. In "The Value of Mentoring," mentors share the impact that mentoring has had for them, both in giving and receiving guidance and inspiration.

This is a time of great innovation in HIM higher education and lifelong professional development. Enrollment is up and new programs are coming online. Many professionals are continuing their education by earning bachelor's, graduate, and postgraduate degrees. The demand for qualified HIM professionals has never been stronger, but many challenges remain in HIM education.

The number of graduates is not keeping pace with the capacity of academic programs at the demand forecasted for HIM professionals. Program expansion depends on adequate numbers of qualified faculty. Cost-effective and accelerated opportunities for career progression are needed to help HIM professionals seeking career progression and to bring qualified second-career professionals into the HIM field.

HIM has a proud legacy of academic rigor and lifelong learning, which are only becoming more critical as the HIM body of professional knowledge expands.

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Driving the Power of Knowledge

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