

# HIM Enters an Era of “Powerful Possibilities”

Save to myBoK

By Linda L. Kloss, RHIA, FAHIMA, chief executive officer

I recently had the pleasure of meeting Jonathan Eastabrooks, a graduate of both the HIT program at Tacoma Community College and the HIA program at the University of Washington, Seattle.

Discussing his enthusiasm for the HIM field, he said, “I am fortunate to be coming into the field at this time... I missed all the boring stuff and am getting in it when things are really happening.” I laughed and assured him that those of us who have been around for a while have never been bored, but I also told him that I understood his excitement about starting his HIM career now.

His enthusiasm is shared by many of the students and young professionals that I meet. Borrowing a phrase from one of my favorite writers and thinkers about leadership, Margaret Wheatley, HIM is truly entering an era of “powerful possibilities.”

This is a time charged with possibility, but also uncertainty. In many ways, a new field of health information management is being developed. It must be grounded in the values and best practices of records and information management honed over the past eight decades.

However, technology offers powerful possibilities for managing and using information that have heretofore been impossible to exploit.

## The Experience Conundrum

Employers place high value on experience, and too few are investing in helping new graduates gain that experience. This creates a real challenge for young professionals and a real problem for a field that needs a larger workforce. “Professional Practice Experience” describes the value of internships for senior students in HIM baccalaureate programs.

All of us need to find ways to help the talented students and young professionals get well launched, because they are the ones who will truly exploit the powerful possibilities of the next era.

Burgeoning health IT will require that even established professionals gain new experience. AHIMA research released just this month finds that the qualifications that employers are seeking from HIM professionals cluster into three key areas: strong knowledge of the healthcare industry and how information is used; skills required to perform the specific HIM domain role (managerial, technical, data analytics, etc.); and attributes for success in moving change, such as critical thinking, problem solving, flexibility, and communication. Read more on this research on the *Journal* Web site at <http://journal.ahima.org>.

## Greater Workforce Diversity

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) recognizes the need to expand the HIM and informatics workforce to advance adoption of health IT. After years of studying and advocating for HIM workforce development, the promise of funding to help students, academic programs, and faculty is very welcome. Some of these provisions are described in “ARRA and the HIM Workforce.” AHIMA and its Foundation are working on impactful plans to address the ARRA provisions.

Rachelle Stewart and Jennifer Hornung Garvin discuss the tangible benefits of workforce diversity in “Reducing Healthcare Disparities.” The authors present updated information on the diversity of the AHIMA membership and offer suggestions on how HIM professionals can help promote a diverse workforce.

Powerful possibilities, complex challenges—I wish that I was just beginning my career!

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