

# New Name, New Opportunities

Save to myBoK

Setting the pace for health information management for the next century, the House of Delegates (HOD) of the American Health Information Management Association chose the 1991 Annual Meeting as the forum to adopt two dramatic changes in the organization's bylaws. The changes reflect AHIMA's dynamic profession, both externally--with respect to the Association's name--and internally, regarding eligibility for its presidency.

## New Name for New Professional Focus

Because the proposal for a name change for the Association was not presented to the delegates in advance as part of the official agenda, a 90 percent vote of the HOD was required in order to consider the question when it was raised from the floor. The delegates approved the motion by the required margin, and two proposals for new names were considered in a parliamentary straw poll: the American Health Information Management Association, and the American Healthcare Information Association.

AHIMA, the American Health Information Management Association, prevailed as the choice for continued consideration. Again, because the question was spontaneous from the floor, a 90 percent margin was required for passage. When the vote was taken, the new name triumphed by an overwhelming margin and was greeted with cheers and applause from delegates and visitors alike.

## Expanded Presidential Eligibility

Another major change in bylaws was the HOD's vote to extend eligibility for presidency of the Association to ARTs as well as RRAs. While other contingent issues may need to be addressed in light of this change--eligibility for council chairs, CE requirements, dues structures, etc.--the notion was embraced positively and enthusiastically by the HOD, as the voice of the Association's membership.

## Members First Priority

Within minutes of the historic votes in the HOD, AHIMA's publications staff began to get out the news. Notification of all Association members of the changes was urgent, and was accomplished by a direct mail piece prepared on the spot at the convention headquarters. At the same time, press releases were issued by fax to major media.

## Telling Our Story

Association members can expect to be asked a variety of questions about the new name, the change in which our external audiences will be interested. All of us need to be prepared to tell our story accurately and consistently. Consequently, the following are some thoughtfully prepared answers to questions you may be asked about the American Health Information Management Association:

1. *How do we pronounce our new name?*

AHIMA--each letter separately, no "nickname" or combined acronym. Emphasis on the first "A."

2. *Why did we change our name?*

To reflect the profession's recognition of the fundamental evolution in its role as the focal point of responsibility for the most vital documentation in the healthcare system--the patient's medical information.

3. *Why did we make the change so quickly?*

While it is true the step is dramatic, this change is the outcome of momentum which has been building for five years. Formal studies resulted in the Health Information Management initiative which has been the Association's critical effort for the last 24 months.

4. *How does this name change affect our relationships with alliances and other related organizations?*

The desired outcome will be to develop and strengthen these relationships as we fill our professional roles as collaborators. These roles are unique and are based on the specific body of knowledge--clinical, administrative, and fiscal information technology--which we bring to the forefront of healthcare delivery.

5. *Does this mean that component state associations (CSAs) have to change their names?*

This decision is the prerogative of each state. The AHIMA office will be pleased to assist any CSA which needs help in working through the bylaws process.

## A Record of Progress

The Association has undergone three name changes since its founding in 1928, demonstrating the growing importance and professionalism of its members. First known as the Association of Record Librarians of North American, in 1942 it became The American Association of Medical Record Librarians. In 1969 the name changed again to the American Medical Record Association.

"Out change to the American Health Information Management Association says that our profession is shaping its own future," said Jennifer Cofer, RRA, immediate past-president of the Association. "The medical record is still our fundamental reason for being, but the demand for professional management of the information it contains grows greater at every turn.

"From confidentiality and quality assurance to data collection and cost control, the medical record is the key. More than ever, all members of the healthcare team--physicians, nurses, and administrators--are aware of the important role we play in patient care. Our new name officially recognizes the full scope of our professional responsibilities."

---

**Article citation:**

"New Name, New Opportunities" *Journal of AHIMA* 62, no.11 (November 1991): 25.

---

Driving the Power of Knowledge

Copyright 2022 by The American Health Information Management Association. All Rights Reserved.