

Taking the Next Step Toward the Future

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By Wylecia Wiggs Harris, PhD, CAE, chief executive officer

In a recent article in the *New Yorker*, historian Jill Lepore puts predictions about the future of work—and how it may be changed by automation and artificial intelligence—into perspective. While stoking these fears can contribute to an environment of economic inequality and political instability, Lepore seems to suggest there's another way. Instead of helplessly watching a rising tide, she suggests the reader “mint a new coin.”

“Heat a forge,” she writes. “Smelt a blank. Engrave two dies. Put your blank in between them. Strike the whole thing with a hammer. Anyone can do it.”¹

The HIM profession has been in the business of “minting a new coin” in terms of addressing the perpetual cycle of change for decades. It all begins with education, the pipeline that is a critical part in building our future workforce. The articles in this issue of the *Journal of AHIMA* examine how HIM education is recalibrating itself.

For the past few years, the future of HIM education has been debated, discussed, and finally mapped out in the white paper “HIM Reimagined.” In our cover story, “Teaching Tune-Up,” Christi Lower, PhD, RHIA, FAHIMA, describes how the recently approved new curricula competencies, which drive HIM education across all academic levels, have been developed to support the current and future needs of employers in healthcare.

“Accepting that current behaviors, competencies, skills, and knowledge that you presently possess will not be enough for the future is daunting,” Lower writes. “Yet it is critical that those who wish to be prepared to support future needs within the profession must pursue individual opportunities to advance their knowledge, skills, and expertise to address emerging roles.”

Since 2015, the AHIMA Foundation has been leading the Managing the Talent Pipeline in Health Information Apprenticeship Program, funded by a Department of Labor grant, to help employers fill staffing gaps and “upskill” current employees. In “Investing in Apprentices Pays Dividends for Employers,” Lisa Eramo talks to employers who have met their workforce demands through apprenticeship, as well as employees who have gotten a foot in the door or transitioned into new roles thanks to the program. “It’s an astonishing program,” says one employer. Currently, employers in 38 states are participating in the apprenticeship program. Could your organization be the next one?

Finally, creating a successful student professional practice experience has long been a challenge for educational programs. Heather Mautino, MS, RHIA, of Illinois State University, addresses this topic in “Best Practices for Successful Student Professional Practice Experiences.” Mautino notes that senior students can enroll in a “Trends in Healthcare” class where they can meet and talk to speakers from a variety of HIM career settings. The students are encouraged to take initiative and reach out to potential sites that interest them as a way of finding experiences they want to be part of.

Yes, our work is changing. But as long as we take that leap of faith, reach out, and take the next step, we, as individuals and as a profession, are still moving toward the future.

Note

1. Lepore, Jill. “Are Robots Competing for Your Job?” *The New Yorker*, March 4, 2019.
www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/03/04/are-robots-competing-for-your-job.

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