

# Timeless Mission, Values Guide Change

Save to myBoK

by Linda Kloss, RHIA, CAE, executive vice president/CEO

How can you cope when it feels like change is coming at you from all directions? Effective management has come to mean the management of change. But effective change, particularly in the service sector of society, is change that has clear goals and is grounded in mission and values. It balances the need for change with the need to preserve what is best.

I hope you are enjoying the *Journal's* coverage of AHIMA's history in this 75th anniversary year. The vision and words of past leaders remind us that while the context and scope of the HIM professional's work has changed, its goals and values have not. This retrospective reminds us that mission, core expertise, and long-term perspective are very important to success.

Our profession is undergoing major and rapid change. We need to research and test new approaches, acquire new expertise, and let go of old practices. We need to celebrate all that has been accomplished while advancing change that will improve on the profession's ability to advance its mission and values. We need to ensure that change is grounded in core values and has the next 75 years squarely in its sights.

## Values as a Touchstone

The value of preparing a complete and accurate record for the benefit of patients, caregivers, healthcare organizations, and society has not changed. As Sharon Schott, RN, reminds us in "How Poor Documentation Does Damage in the Courtroom," there is no substitute for a properly documented record in a lawsuit and no good way to get around a poor one. This was not an easy task 75 years ago and it surely is not an easy task today. But good records are the fundamental reason that we do what we do.

Fast forward to the management of electronic records. In "Beyond HIPAA: The Complexities of Electronic Records Management," Randolph Kahn, Esq., provides a framework for considering the new reality of preparing complete and accurate electronic records from many decentralized sources and systems. According to Kahn, the output of technology is "a variety of electronic records and digital information requiring management—from not only technological or operational perspectives, but from a legal perspective as well." Kahn underscores another tried and true value of HIM: develop policy first. HIM professionals (and our record librarian predecessors) have been the keepers of institutional information policy based on laws and external and internal standards and regulations, a role that will only grow in importance in e-HIM.

Managing paper records requires well-trained staff, well-crafted procedures, and well-managed processes. The same holds true for electronic records and other HIM roles today such as those in pharmaceuticals, public health, managed care, research, and technology development. HIM professionals have always designed processes for records and information management. Process leadership methods for using industrial process improvement will become a future measure of success. In "Transcription Vendors: How to Make Them Your Closest Allies," the last installment of the *Journal's* four-part series on contemporary transcription issues, Molly Malone offers advice on successful management of transcription services.

## Advocate for Change and Values

Thriving in a time of great change is best achieved by staying committed to—in fact, deliberately building on—the values that gave rise to this profession and have sustained it over the past 75 years. These values are as important today as they were in 1928 because the system is so much more complex and information has become the newest commodity in healthcare. We have to help the industry learn to live by the standards and values that have sustained HIM. Let's commit to making the next 75 years a time of innovation and values-based change.

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