

# Turning Your HIM Expertise Into a Resource

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In 1941, author Edna Huffman, writing about the management and storage of medical records, introduced readers to “the newest development in storage methods and the method that will conserve the greatest amount of space, known as microphotography.” She described how medical records could be photographed on 16-mm film, adding: “Since a film is stored in a box 4x4x1 inches, the amount of space saved would be considerable.”<sup>1</sup>

Those storage dimensions seem quaint today, when we consider that digital data storage can now be described in terabytes, petabytes, exabytes, and zettabytes.<sup>2</sup> Yet the problem of how to best protect and manage medical records persists today.

More recently, privacy and security have been governed by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). But there are also stories of occasions when HIPAA has been interpreted or misinterpreted in ways that cause confusion to patients and providers.<sup>3</sup> That is where we, as HIM professionals, should be stepping in, knowing how to apply the rules and educating others about them.

Release of information is an area where questions often arise. To help solve this point of pain, AHIMA plans to work in conjunction with industry partners to develop a form that will educate patients on their rights and allow them to sign and authorize the release of information to approved parties. Look for the form later this year.

The articles in this issue touch on several privacy and security-related issues. Some privacy and security experts say the industry’s rapid changes have rendered HIPAA out of date. In “[Is HIPAA Outdated?](#)” Mary Butler discusses whether or not HIPAA is still effective in preventing privacy and security breaches and what could be done to bring it up to speed with the 21st century.

Helping an organization defend and prepare for a cyberattack should be a joint effort and definitely one that should include privacy officers, writes Marti Arvin in “[Things Privacy Officers Can Do Today to Defend Against a Cyberattack](#).” Providing education and training, advocating for needed resources, and developing incident response preparedness plans are all ways HIM professionals can make themselves resources as their organizations work to build up their defense against these threats.

Finally, smaller organizations have particular challenges in ensuring HIPAA compliance and reducing audit risks and threats of breach. In “[How Small Organizations Handle HIPAA Compliance](#),” Debi Primeau walks us through effective risk analysis processes and identifies steps that small organizations can take now to get started.

We no longer dwell in an era where microphotography is a fun novelty. As healthcare works to solve the privacy challenges of the 21st century, turn your HIM expertise into a resource.

## Notes

<sup>[1]</sup> Huffman, Edna K. *Manual for Medical Records Librarians*. Chicago: Physicians’ Record Co., 1941.

<sup>[2]</sup> Rizzatti, Lauro. “[Digital Data Storage is Undergoing Mind-Boggling Growth](#).” *EE Times*. September 14, 2016.

<sup>[3]</sup> Span, Paula. “[Hipaas Use as Code of Silence Often Misinterprets the Law](#).” *New York Times*. July 17, 2015.

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