

# What's in a Name?

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It's not at all uncommon for organizations to change their names several times before landing on one that captures their presence in the past, the present, and the future—especially if they are technology-focused. Take NCR Corp., which today sells everything from technologies that check people into airports to barcode scanners. When it started in the 1880s it was known as the National Manufacturing Company, which made mechanical cash registers. Before long it changed its name to reflect its primary product: the cash register, and the National Cash Register Co. was born. Retail shoppers would recognize the company as antiquated if it went by that name now, thus it changed again to NCR Corp. AHIMA has followed a similar path.

When it was originally founded in **1928**, AHIMA was named after the common job title held by its members, which were widely known as record librarians—at a time when hospitals had libraries. The new organization, an offshoot of the American College of Surgeons, started its life as the **Association of Record Librarians of North America (ARLNA)**.

Ten years later, when the first book written for medical librarians was published (*Hospital Case Records and the Record Librarian*, by Minnie Genevieve Morse, RRL) and credentials for record librarians had been created, the organization's name changed to the **American Association of Medical Record Librarians (AAMRL)** in 1938.



Between **1938** and the next name change in **1970**—to the **American Medical Record Association (AMRA)**, the industry grew in size, stature, and prestige. More importantly, technology was becoming increasingly present, with the introduction of early computing systems, automation, and the use of clinical data in medical research. A House of Delegates vote in 1971, changing the “Registered Record Librarian” credential to “Registered Record Administrator” further separated professionals in the field from being known as librarians—and put more focus on medical records.



By **1991**, when the association went to its current name, the **American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA)**, the notion that individuals in the profession were dealing with health information—data, diagnosis related groups, and ICD-9 and CPT codes—and not just patient records had solidified. Members were also increasingly involved in billing and revenue cycle management, further prompting the name change.

While the term “health information management” continues to encompass an even broader scope of duties, the association will continue to evolve with technology and established best practices. HIM Reimagined, the initiative that proposes a curriculum and core competency update, will only help AHIMA move into the future with confidence.

**Article citation:**

AHIMA. "What's in a Name?" *Journal of AHIMA* 89, no. 10 (November-December 2018): 60.

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