Embracing a New Information Generation

This year the IRMS celebrates its 40th anniversary, but instead of looking back, the Society is looking to the future and how we as an industry are embracing a new information generation and how we can help the organisations we serve to harness the opportunities.

In this new paper, the IRMS has invited experts from across the industry to share their insights regarding what will define and drive change in the coming years, the skills that will be essential to succeed, and the new and emerging technologies on the horizon.

A View from the IRMS Chair

This excellent paper provides thought provoking and insightful views. I have plucked quotes from each piece: "The coming years are already coming very quickly" from Eilidh, "the opportunity for information professionals is to become indispensable" from David, "AI will have a massive impact on the Information Management industry" from Kerry, "room for allyship" from Paulina, "a combination of technical and soft skills" from Anne, "embracing change brings progress" from Wendy, "digital continuity is a foreign land for many school staff" from Claire, " actively engaging stakeholders beyond traditional functions" from Hana and Sue, "We'll need to identify where stakeholder interests align" from David, and "the Information Professional of the future is going to need a far wider breadth of skills than ever before" from Scott.

I choose these because they resonate with my personal mission to evangelise that we are one of the most important professions in the world. We are the curators of truth and protectors of trust. Yet our goals can only be achieved, as wisely explored in this paper, by ensuring that our profession has the full range of skills sets in an evolving technical and governance infrastructure, and by working with every stakeholder involved in the management and use of information.

Something else that resonates strongly is that the core fundamentals of the profession are evolving. Increasing it is about "data", rather than just "documents". Those now joining the profession are likely to be data scientists as well as records managers and archivists. To successfully curate truth and protect trust they must also be the experts in the algorithms.

**Reynold Leming AMIRMS,
Fellow IRMS,
Chair of the IRMS**

IRMS
Conference

14–16 May 2023
Kimpton Clocktower Hotel,
Manchester

www.irmsconference.org.uk

Embracing a
New Information
Generation

The Future is Exciting

Will robots be commonplace, will we fly cars, will we have a better understanding of data sharing? The coming years are already coming very quickly, and the information age is becoming ever more complex.

From grappling with issues such as ChatGPT to community standards around data use in multi-faceted social media giants, there is much to excite us all in terms of information and its power, but also much to protect. The word "protect" is used advisedly. Traditionally, information assurance has considered risk as a primary driver. While risk is important, the information age seems to have swept away many places where mitigations could be put in place. Maybe it is time for a refocus?

Information assurance should be defined by the needs of service users. And this should be considered through an ethical lens. This is tricky as we carry with us our own subconscious bias that can be hard to discover or unmask. I think we need to be seen as the measured voice of reason in relation to use to data.

Yes, we do need to keep our organisations compliant, but we need to do so with a range of tricks up our sleeves. Having a grounding in project management techniques (particularly agile), understanding service design concepts and their impact, and adding rounded equalities and ethics lenses to our advice will be of benefit. I have to add that I know many professionals in this field who already operate in that manner, and I respect them for it immensely.

This will be change for some though. A move away from data protection as a tag on to being embedded in project teams from the start: a new "discovery" of the benefits of information assurance. Bring it on!

**Eilidh McLaughlin,
Head of Digital Citizen Unit,
Scottish Government**

Future Needs Leaders Not Followers

In the 1978 movie, Superman, Christopher Reeve places a shard of quartz into a console in his secret ice cave to access the entire memory of his home planet, Krypton, long since destroyed. In doing so he learns who he is and understands what his mission is on Earth. Superman, the archivist who guards his cultural memory for the benefit of human society.

When this film was made, the idea that huge volumes of data could be stored in such compact storage media was pure science fiction, along with handheld computers and video conferencing. Much of the fiction has since become fact, but what was true then has remained true today: the relentless growth in data volumes will continue to drive a hunger for more storage, more compact storage, and these technologies will in turn feed an exponential growth in data volumes.

2.5 quintillion bytes of data are added to the internet every day: photographs, messages, blog posts, and the data centres used to store it eat up 20% of the energy required by our tech. While a continued proliferation of cloud-based apps and communications technologies have developed to deliver social benefits, for information professionals they present continuous legal, ethical and organisational challenges, as our ability to understand our data is surpassed by the speed of its growth and complexity.

We are already required to be expert users of tech, but increasingly need to become digital service providers, and leaders of digital transformation, to create structure within and understand complexity, and bring control to what would otherwise be chaotic systems through our expert analysis, creative problem solving and methodological innovation. Embracing advances in technology, including A.I. will be part of this, but a constant challenge will also be to think about how law and practice applies to emergent and disruptive tech, to adapt quickly, and remain flexible, while retaining professional integrity and upholding the law. The opportunity for information professionals is to become indispensable in this future due to our unique insight, knowledge and expertise.

This future requires us to be leaders, not followers. It has never been more important for archivists and records managers to adapt to the digital paradigm, and to protect objectivity as the guardians of our social and corporate memory.

**David Canning AMIRMS, CIPP/E,
Head of Digital Knowledge &
Information Management,
The Cabinet Office**

Technology is Changing and So Are We

Or is it the other way around? In the world of compliance, we know that technology plays an important role and as such legislation runs behind and tries to catch up, at which point new ways of processing data are already here. But I think there is hope, a steep learning curve, and room for allyship ahead of us.

- Hope – because we are getting more aware of what is happening around us and with that comes an understanding of how companies collect, process, store and share data about us. And therefore there are growing expectations from service providers to politicians to keep the transparency going.

- It is up to us to ensure our respective businesses do things in line with the law. And here comes the steep learning curve. We need to ensure that our understanding of how things work (like ChatGPT and other machine learning/AI technologies) translates to strategies, policies and processes we implement and enforce. So that best practices can drive wider policies. All generations need to work together.

And this is where the allyship comes in. We shouldn't discriminate against old or young but work in collaboration and share skills, knowledge and understanding of what was done and what needs to be done.

Our profession will change, I do not doubt it. It will have to adapt to new tech and with that new ways of collecting and processing information. But the more data you end up with the more information risk your organisation has to consider. A closer relationship will grow between IT, Legal, InfoSec, Finance and Science. I am pretty sure that more organisations will have a science department especially with quantum computing being more and more popular. It won't happen next year but will take place soon enough.

**Paulina Jedwabska,
Senior Information
Governance Manager,
Wellcome Trust**

Embracing the Future of AI

Recent leaps forward in Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology have taken the world by storm, with disciplines as diverse as administration, freight, law, and even art and design standing to be affected by AI systems in the near future.

Looking forward into the not-too-distant future, I believe AI will have a massive impact on the Information Management industry, especially related to record management.

At OASIS we have utilised AI technology for some time, using it to extract and validate information from records. This helps our clients to access the information they need quickly and intuitively.

However, in years to come this stands to develop rapidly. I think we can expect to quickly move beyond simply using this technology to recognise words, phrases and patterns in records, to a point where we can utilise AI to gain greater context and understanding of industry trends and human behaviours.

Embedding new AI capabilities into our clients' workflows are also likely to be a key trend. In time, clients will no longer need to come and check what's in their records via a traditional search.

Instead they will be able to rely on AI capability to review legacy records for them, with the software having learned behaviour based upon the tasks the client is completing, using the tools they are familiar with. AI will evaluate if there is something beneficial in completing a task, suggest it to the client, and make the resultant document – or even just the relevant parts - instantly available to them.

It'll be a brave new world, and one to embrace for the benefit of our clients, and our business.

**Kerry Blinston,
Managing Director UK
and Ireland
OASIS Group**

The Future Information Practitioner

The rapid pace of change in the information management industry requires us to constantly expand our skill sets in order to remain sustainable both as individuals and as an industry. With the increasing adoption of digital technologies and the growing volume of data being generated, there will be a greater need for skilled professionals in this industry who can manage and organise this information effectively.

One of the key skills that will be needed is the ability to understand and work with emerging technologies, such as AI and blockchain, which are likely to play an increasingly important role in the management of information.

Professionals in this industry will also need to possess strong analytical and problem-solving skills, as they will be responsible for identifying and mitigating potential risks associated with the storage and management of sensitive information.

The changing work environment, including the growing trend towards remote work, is likely to require professionals in this industry to be highly adaptable and possess strong communication skills. The ability to collaborate effectively with remote team members and to work independently will be essential in ensuring that information is managed effectively and efficiently.

The driver of these changes in the industry is likely to be the increasing volume of information and data being generated, as well as the growing demand for data-driven insights to inform business decisions. As a result, companies that fail to adapt to these changes may struggle to manage their information effectively and to remain competitive in the marketplace.

In conclusion, the information management industry is likely to be impacted by the same trends that are affecting other industries, including the adoption of emerging technologies and the changing work environment. To succeed in this industry, professionals will need to possess a combination of technical and soft skills, including adaptability, communication, and problem-solving. The driver of these changes is likely to be the growing demand for data-driven insights to inform business decisions, as well as the increasing volume of data being generated.

**Anne Cornish MRIM,
Chief Executive Officer,
Records and Information
Management Professionals
Alliance (RIMPA)**

Change Can be Difficult, but it Brings Opportunity and Progress

By the end of 2023, over a third of global knowledge workers will work in a hybrid environment, according to Gartner. This shift comes with new data needs which must be managed through robust information governance programs. Records in the "traditional" sense will be replaced by data stored and assembled on the fly to meet business needs. Organizations will extract insights from data while automating actions on data, both resting and in flight.

As records transform, RIM/IG professionals must continue to evolve as well. Associations such as ARMA, IRMS, RIMPA and others are a key resource for professionals to learn and practice new skills. Becoming familiar with cloud computing, cybersecurity, blockchain and artificial intelligence will help us explore how to leverage these advances to further creativity and productivity within our industry. For example, predictive coding used in e-discovery leverages AI to provide insights that enable humans to make informed decisions. As the workplace transitions to a digital landscape, technologies like cloud computing and AI-driven software (ChatGPT, Open.ai) will usher in an entirely new era of automation.

These technology advancements will require practitioners to hone their soft skills as well. Critical thinking, active learning, digital literacy and ethics, along with strong interpersonal skills such as communication, relationship building, and teamwork continue to be keys to a successful career. To keep up with our ever-evolving industry, cross-country collaboration will be essential. Working together we can define and achieve compliance with global governance standards. Change can be difficult, but it also brings opportunity – and embracing change brings progress!

**Wendy McLain,
President,
ARMA International**

Education in the New Information Age

For many years, progress on records management in schools lagged behind other sectors. School business professionals as late as 2019 were still asking each other if running a school without heavy reliance on papers in filing cabinets was possible or even permissible. The last three years have pressed fast-forward for all sectors, but the education sector has been catapulted into a new information age.

Where pupil information, such as safeguarding data, was once stored in filing cabinets accessible by only a few, now it is stored on SaaS vendor clouds, with the keys to those virtual cabinets accessible by many. Paper folders for pupils were once handed over as children moved schools, now each pupil has their own electronic story, full of information spread over multiple digital formats, managed (or not) by numerous staff across the school. This information may or may not be passed on to the next setting or even properly deleted, instead lurking in servers or on edtech platforms.

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse has recommended that organisations holding records relating to sexual abuse of children retain those records for 75 years. School staff may have been able to separate these records and then manage their retention in paper format, but retention of digital files requires a whole new skill set. Digital continuity is a foreign land for many school staff.

The New Information Generation needs to respond to the needs of schools who sorely need experts to help guide them to create, maintain, transfer and archive digital records. Sadly, each school or academy can't afford to employ a records manager devoted to this work. Ways of working have changed in schools, so we need to train and support schools to adapt their practices accordingly.

**Claire Archibald,
Service Lead and Data
Protection Officer,
Education Data Hub,
Derbyshire County Council**

A New World, a New Way of Thinking

The world has drastically changed in the last three years leading to hybrid work models, an accelerated use of technology, and changing customer expectations - all of which require new ways of thinking. The RIM professional of the future (and today) must help guide their organisations to quickly shift operations while remaining compliant with policies.

The key is to adopt an updated approach to how records, information and data are managed collectively rather than in silos. This is done by actively engaging stakeholders beyond traditional functions such as IT and Legal to include Data Analytics and Ethics, ESG/sustainability, AI/ML teams, and Resilience. RIM pros must update their skills, knowledge and mindset to keep up and be valuable contributors to change - and enterprise-wide Information Governance senior leaders and partners will drive this collaboration to enable change.

Every day we hear of new technologies: think metaverse and ChatGPT. As technology always outpaces regulations, expert advice from RIM and IG is critical to avoid any potential regulatory and reputational risks. In addition, there is increasing pressure to achieve sustainability goals, which means a closer involvement in data and records collection for report generation, as well as selecting vendors to help achieve net-zero carbon goals. As always, these will drive change and calls to action that have a commercial advantage in an ever-challenging commercial and economic world.

Given increasing demands for efficiency, faster decisions and improved customer experience, there is a strong trend for RIM managers to move their physical legacy records efficiently to digital, while automating the classification of digital information to identify what needs to be retained and destroyed over time.

Lastly, all this means there is a real desire for a culture change which creates a need for more Information Governance and Data Governance roles to drive information and data management strategy in organisations. Organisations and RIM pros should act now; embrace change by being resilient and agile as the landscape continues to constantly evolve.

**Hana Laws, Principal,
Information Governance
& Digital Solutions
Professional Service,
Iron Mountain**

**Sue Trombley,
Managing Director,
Thought Leadership and
Customer Success,
Iron Mountain**

Capitalise, Connect, and (Sometimes) Compromise

The changes brought by the Covid-19 pandemic have meant we now work in organisations that have had to adjust to working with ever growing information which can be stored anywhere, everywhere, digitally. Change is going to continue, and we'll need to constantly digest and respond to changes in our legislative, regulatory, and operational environment.

To succeed we need to capitalise on these changes and make the case for records management adding value. We can help our organisations bring some order to the chaos of uncontrolled information silos (those ever-growing MS Teams spaces); we can support the shift to digital by advocating for compliant digitisation; we can enable staff to organise and retrieve information efficiently; and we can bring accountability by ensuring key decisions are created and captured.

Regardless of the changes we're experiencing, to thrive we'll need to keep building our connections with our stakeholders and organisations. So, as important as our core professional skills are, we'll need to continue to develop our softer people skills to ensure we continue to be effective in our organisations. We'll need to identify where stakeholder interests align and where we can work collaboratively and in a streamlined way. To do that we'll need to speak in terms our organisations understand and we'll need to make sure we are connected and aligned to our organisational priorities.

Finally, in order to succeed, we'll sometimes need to be willing to make compromises. We'll need to pick our battles and identify where compromises can be made without betraying our professional principles. That might be in the form of shifting our opinions on retention periods or by adopting a more risk-management approach to the challenges we face.

Changes will keep on coming, information will keep on growing, and (hopefully) records management will keep evolving.

**David Jenkins,
Records Manager,
Division of Planning,
Legal & Governance Services,
University of Leicester**

Information Professionals will Need a Far Wider Breadth of Skills

We are seeing a whole new generation of information professionals coming through and they, just as many generations before us did, will face interesting challenges as our 'information world' evolves ever more.

The profession as a whole is facing a time of uncertainty and change. Not only because of the rise of more 'structured data' technologies (like AI and data analytics) but also because of changes in law, standards, ways of working and culture. It is clear we are seeing the effects of things like Covid lockdowns, ChatGPT (and others), Brexit etc on how records, data and information is all being used, managed and stored. Some of that good, some of that not so good. All of it change and a challenge none the less.

The Information Professional of the future is going to need a far wider breadth of skills than ever before. They will need to know about the traditional challenges, because paper is still not going anywhere (been saying that for years). They will also need to know about new challenges and how to tackle them. About structured data and how to manage it. Something which, until recently, has not had as much of a focus (some, but not much).

This is where, in my opinion, the Society can play a key role in supporting the profession. It can bring people and knowledge together to give people insights into emerging technologies and approaches to managing them. It can help with access to training and coaching to develop formal and informal skills. It can even work with others in the information profession to help set standards and advocate the practice in new Government initiatives.

The future is bright (the future is orange – remember that??), but there is more work to do. While I still believe, as I did when I first got involved with the IRMS, that our profession is an amazing one, it still needs to evolve and grow. We need to support more people into the profession through things like apprenticeships, degrees, bursaries and other educational routes. Once here we need to support their development through things like career paths and/or learning paths with then access to opportunities to learn.

Most of all we need to improve access to our profession for all, regardless of background, so that it grows ever bigger as a vibrant community of information professionals. We know, post-Covid, that the future is more data-driven and we know that the world is going to be more diverse. Lockdowns showed us just how interconnected we all are and how diverse we all are and this will only continue to grow and evolve. Therefore a Society of the future needs to support that connection and that diversity in backgrounds, skills and approaches.

I look forward to seeing where the profession, and the Society, goes!

**Scott Sammons,
Data Protection Officer
Lighthouse IG**