



Perhaps I was always a curious child, wanting to know how things work and what is what. It was certainly that led me to a degree in Applied Physics. My university flatmates, Biochemistry students, often used up to date research papers rather than text books for their studies and I became interested in how they found their research material.

My first job was as a Physicist but working as an Information Scientist to support the R&D team of Schlumberger Measurement & Control. I was an integral part of this dynamic, busy and creative team and my role was patent prior art searching, identification and provision of proactive and responsive technical news and published papers, and answering technical questions – not just supplying the book but actually answering the question. I learned fast under a woman only three years my senior and from a similar background, and in parallel with a qualified Librarian.

Within my first month I was enrolled as a student member of the Institute of Information Scientists (IIS) and went to my first conference within the year. It was wonderful to know I was part of an established institution with a professional code of conduct, academic principles but a pragmatic, business oriented outlook. IIS was relatively young and the meetings and conferences always included new and experimental techniques. My colleagues and I were searching ARPAnet, Lockheed Dialog and many other new tools, techniques and resources. It was a very exciting time of development.

My Librarian colleague taught me about the organisation of information and I learned on the job about search and retrieval. Also, about enquiry handling and how to deliver answers.

Communication has always been a significant part of work. I became a Chartered Information Scientist through accreditation with the IIS, and in the same year, became a Chartered Physicist through a similar route with the Institute of Physics. Later the IIS merged to become part of CILIP.

The first ten years of my career were exciting with positive change every year. But next came a period of temporary clerical work before one of the specialist recruitment agencies introduced me to the best job so far.

A merger of firms brought an end to that! This time I temped in information work in London with a variety of merchant banks, publishers and accountants, gaining amazingly useful experience and making some great contacts.

Networking has always been important in my career, for problem solving and learning, and it gave me great confidence when I was considering returning to information work after a ten year career break. I went to one of the Special Libraries Association (SLA) huge conference & exhibition to see if I

Information Management Project 2014

still understood the language and could recognise the vendors and resources. Over a few days I bumped into about ten old contacts and each one not only knew me but expected I was still working.

When I worked on enquiries and research my big kick was from finding the right piece of information at the right time and cost, and from delivering a good answer in the right format and context. I have gained great satisfaction from team leadership and development. A couple of times in my career, including now, I have been involved in enterprise wide projects to improve information sharing that have used fundamentals of Information Management to provide good organisation of information in order to make it easier to store then find again and re-use. These projects have raised information literacy throughout the organisations, added value to internal and externally published information used, improved information sharing and improved quality of information. This has led to increased efficiency and effectiveness (saving money) and, even more importantly, better business decision making.

A large part of information work is communication, so we should make sure we use the language of our users, customers, colleagues, employers. I do not think it matters what we call our job roles as long as people know what we contribute.

We must be adaptable. We must be flexible and change with the times, keeping up to date with management fashion, new resources, tools and techniques and, most importantly, know and strive for our organisation's strategic and business objectives.

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