

Information Management: mission critical

Key Messages from CILIP Research Report

Today CILIP has published “**Information Management: mission critical: An analysis of CILIP’s Resources List**”ⁱ. This CILIP commissioned research undertaken by Linda Berube reviews the CILIP list of Key Published Information Management Resources (2014)ⁱⁱ, assessing the trends revealed in corporate interest and understanding of the importance of strategic information management (IM) to organisations. It is one of the outputs of CILIP’s Information Management Project and will be used to inform future advocacy activities of CILIP in promoting the value of IM to organisations of all types and the importance of professional information managers.

There are a number of key points made in the report that CILIP wish to highlight:

There has been little Improvement in the understanding of Information as a strategic resource - The literature suggests that there has been little advancement in appreciation of the need to treat information as a strategic asset since the important Hawley report in 1995ⁱⁱⁱ. The researcher comments: “Over the course of the more than 20 years of IM literature listed in the CILIP Resources, there is not a single issue that was not considered by the Hawley Committee in 1995” [p12]^{iv}. Although disappointing it also sets out the challenge for the IM profession to make the case effectively for the benefits of good IM and the potential opportunities that exist for creative and adventurous IM professionals.

Information power will continue to transform this century in ways we cannot foresee – At the moment major IM discussion topics include big data and the internet of things. These are indicative of an information resource that is growing exponentially, and also becoming more complex. So one report predicts a digital universe that is growing 40% each year^v. This growth exacerbates the shortcomings already noted in understanding the strategic importance of information to organisations, The challenge for professional information managers is not the same as in Hawley’s time, it is getting bigger – but so are the needs and opportunities.

The business of all organisations is information – There was a time when certain sectors were regarded as being in the information business such as finance, banking, marketing, science and communication technology. Now every organisation is an information organisation. The researcher notes that contributors to the “21 Tips for Turning [Information] Chaos into Opportunity”^{vi} came from “...multinational companies, technology companies, US school districts, financial protection insurers, buildings and landmark management companies, UK local government, among others” [p17]. The problems of managing information penetrates every sector and level of work and embraces activities outside the workplace as well.

Managing information for opportunity – The literature suggests that many organisations do not invest in effective IM and so are not well-placed to deal with the “...whirlpools of “information chaos”” identified in a recent Association for Information and Image Management report^{vii}. Where information management strategies have been produced they are often as a result of actual or perceived information risks. Therefore the focus is on limiting risk and not on harnessing information resources to help meet the objectives of the organisation. The researcher comments: “However IM should be proactive: organisations should value the information they create and collect and see its support of business priorities as an opportunity for more efficiency and productivity” [p15]. And, “A well-developed and well-executed IM strategy comes from an “information opportunity” culture and not an “information risk” culture” [p39].

Successful Information Management Strategies are linked to business outcomes – The researcher concludes that “...information and knowledge both arise from the business priorities of an organisation as well as inform and support those priorities. What connects the information and knowledge explicitly to the business priorities is an IM strategy and skilled information professionals” [p38]. Good IM practice is seen as important to effective decision-making, risk avoidance, innovation and competitive success. The report stresses that more IT is not an IM strategy and that IT should be seen as a supporting tool within an IM strategy. The close link to business priorities and outcomes means that the active championing of IM by senior management is essential to the successful implementation of an IM strategy.

Investing in an Information Management Profession – The researcher notes that “knowledge and information professional skills are the key to making the connections between information and knowledge, and knowledge and strategy” [p7]. New roles will need new mixes of skills if librarians and information professionals are to fill such roles as “chief knowledge officer; content manager; contract/supply manager; Electronic Records and Document Management (EDRM) manager; information architect; internal communications officer; and portal manager”^{viii}. The literature also predicts a large shortfall in those with the necessary analytical and information skills to deal with challenges such as Big Data but the role of IM professionals specifically was generally “overlooked” in the IM resources reviewed. The researcher concludes that “raising the profile of these professionals within organisations is not only timely but also critical to the successful implementation of organisational IM strategies” [p8].

The challenges as revealed in the IM resources are immense. But so are the prizes. The researcher notes that “**In realising the potential of IM, organisations see the direct impact on innovation, meeting customer needs, and reducing costs and overheads**” [p7]. CILIP, alongside other like-minded organisations, will be championing the value of good IM to organisations and society more generally. We will also advocate the critical role of IM professionals in optimising the returns on the information assets of organisations. There are great opportunities in IM for adventurous professionals helping organisations in every sector achieve success.

Please note

- Within the text page numbers in square brackets refer to page numbers in the full report
- The Executive Summary of the Research Report can be accessed at:
<http://www.cilip.org.uk/im-mission-critical>
- The full report is available to CILIP members on the CILIP VLE – you will need to log in to the VLE on the CILIP website and go to the Knowledge and Information Management area of Resources to Support the PKSB

For further information contact the Policy Department - Policy@cilip.org.uk

References

- ⁱ CILIP members can access the full report on the CILIP VLE – you will need to log in to the VLE on the CILIP website and go to the Knowledge and Information Management area of Resources to Support the PKSB
The Executive Summary is freely available at: <http://www.cilip.org.uk/im-mission-critical>
- ⁱⁱ CILIP (2014). *Information Management Resources List*. [website] Available at:
<http://www.cilip.org.uk/cilip/advocacy-campaigns-awards/advocacy-campaigns/information-management/information-management-1>. Accessed: 16 February 2015.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Hawley Committee (1995). *Information as an Asset: the Board Agenda*. KPMG IMPACT.
Note: Source no longer available on line. However, CILIP Resources also lists the following resources by Charles Oppenheim which review Hawley findings:
<http://www.libqual.org/documents/admin/stenson.pdf> and
<https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/dspacejsui/bitstream/2134/294/1/Studies%20on%20information%20as%20an%20asset%20II%20Repertory%20Grid.pdf>.
- ^{iv} Page references in square brackets are to page numbers in the full research report
- ^v *The Digital Universe of Opportunities: Rich data and the increasing value of the Internet of Things*. EMC/IDC, 2014. Available at: <http://www.emc.com/leadership/digital-universe/2014iview/index.htm>. Accessed: 18 February 2015.
- ^{vi} *The Year AIIM Took on Information Chaos: 21 Tips for Turning Chaos into Opportunity*. [ebook] AIIM, 2014. Available at: <http://info.aiim.org/21-tips-for-turning-chaos-into-opportunity?&hssc=10372202.1.1415016820069&hstc=10372202.62ae408e8531177fb9d9486a32705a3a.1404135554324.1411379777452.1415016820069.5&hsCtaTracking=128abe99-32d5-4815-972e-211b674d6b20|b677c61c-b9f1-4133-a153-375e12c23ef5>. Accessed: 18 February 2015.
- ^{vii} *Information Chaos v. Information Opportunity: The Information challenge for the next decade*. AIIM, 2014. Available at: <http://info.aiim.org/information-chaos-versus-information-opportunity>. Accessed: 20 January 2015
- ^{viii} Abell, Angela and Lucy Winger. "The Commercial Connection: Realizing the potential of information skills." *Business Information Review*, 22(3) 2005, pp172-181. (only available via subscription).