

The changing face of information management education

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The management of information (in terms of creating libraries and storing records in hard copy) extends back as far as 3000 BC in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Storage media evolved, but information activities remained relatively unchanged until the European invention of the printing press by Gutenberg in the mid 15th century. Ready availability of books meant that information could be accessed by (almost) anyone.

In the early 1990s, computers entered libraries and businesses, and 'public' access to the internet marked a significant shift in information provision and access. The World Wide Web interface is regarded by many as the start of the information revolution. Having changed little over nearly 5000 years, the creation, access, use, sharing, management, storage and disposal of information would never be the same!

This revolution has naturally had an impact on all the information professions. Librarians, records managers, archivists, conservators and information systems managers are realising that their fields are no longer distinct but slowly converging into an as-yet unclear discipline of Information Manage-

ment. Even the term is unclear: in Australia it tends to mean library studies, whereas in Europe it generally refers to the 'softer' end of Information Systems, but no other term so accurately describes work with information in all its varying forms. Whether 'born digital', 'made digital', or still unashamedly hard copy, information unites this disparate group of professionals.

Universities and colleges, as always, strive to keep ahead of business practice. 'Library studies' degrees have given way to 'information studies' and 'information management' – and many degrees now include subjects in records management or archival management. More institutions are likely to expand their information management subjects. Both Curtin and RMIT University, for example, have wide-ranging degrees covering librarianship and records management; and Monash combines librarianship with ICT studies.

The majority of these degrees start from a librarianship perspective and add material drawn from related fields. A different initiative has begun in South Australia, driven by a combination of market forces and the

University of South Australia's internal development processes. The Graduate Certificate in Business Information Management (see <http://www.bim.unisa.edu.au>) has been funded for three years by State Records of South Australia, Fuji Xerox and the State Library of South Australia. The course aims to provide an alternative approach to information management education, offering seven 'streams': library management and records management are two of them, but enterprise-wide services and business change are less usual approaches. This degree is the first component of what will become a Master of Business Information Management.

Convergence has been a driving force in the computing industry for some 15 years now, as computers, telecommunications, music and television become ever more tightly integrated. Education is about to take up the challenge of convergence in the field of Information Management – new degrees in this area must deal with the challenge of preparing students for workplaces in which the 'traditional' careers of programmer, librarian and records manager are giving way to new and still-evolving roles. *

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