

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Information Management (IM):

'broadly... covers all aspects of the production, co-ordination, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information- regardless of format or source- and suggests an organizational aspect that will impart some degree of added value to the information,' (Prytherch, 2005, p. 351).

### **1.1. The origins of the concept**

Although some commentators may argue that IM can be traced back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and before (Horton Jr., 1986, cited in Chen, 1998; Black & Brunt, 1999), a number of authors agree that it was the work of the National Commission on Federal Paperwork in the USA, which gave the concept of IM high visibility in the mid-1970s (Cronin, 1984; Ellis, Grindley & Reeves, 1997; Wilson, 2002a). The passing of the Paperwork Reduction Act in 1980, designed to reduce the amount of information the US Government needed, marked the coming of age of IM; and also led to the idea that information had value and should be managed and organised like other resources (Cronin, 1984; Ellis et al., 1997).

Within the 1980s, as organisations began to acknowledge the organisational advantages that IM could provide, the job title of Information Manager started to appear (Cronin, 1984; Vickers, 1984). As a consequence of this, University Departments began to offer new courses in IM to train this new breed of professional (Anderton, 1986; Kirkham, 1991) and international journals to support this new discipline were founded (Wilson & Roberts, 1986). Within the last ten years however, a number of these courses have been discontinued, and are no longer being available on the University listings (UCAS, 2007; Prospects, 2007). Similarly, the number of journals available internationally with a pure IM

focus has fallen to seven, with the other titles either having ceased publication or changed their names. This 'new field [of IM]... likely to grow rapidly,' (Wilson & Roberts, 1986, p. 3), seemingly losing favour in the contemporary arena.

## **1.2. IM and the 'Information' profession**

Vickers (1984) observed that the concept of IM unfortunately gained currency before acquiring much substance, and several different kinds of IM arrived at the same time, as various professional groups tried to attract favour for their own particular brand.

The emphasis on 'information,' in IM, attracted the attention of those in the information science and librarianship fields to the concept. Information Manager became a new title for those working in library and information services, with individuals recognising their role as part of the new IM profession (St. Clair, 1997).

However, the adoption of the title within the traditional areas of public and academic libraries was interpreted by some as an attempt at re-branding (Wilson, 1988), to align the roles to those appearing within the 'emerging market' (Brittain, 1996). Still a bit lengthy and clumsy – have another go at editing this??

Recognition of IM as a new discipline or profession was therefore not entirely forthcoming. For some, IM was just a 'ritzier' label for librarianship, whereas for others it simply represented 'value-added' librarianship but not really anything different (Cronin, 1985, p. viii). A year earlier however, Cronin (1984) had recognised that the 'apparently tired word of librarianship' was frequently being replaced by the term IM. Almost twenty years later, a '*Handbook of Information Management*,' focusing on special libraries and information services, dropped the 'notorious 'L' word' from its title 'to emphasise the diverse nature of information work, in all its myriad forms,'

(Scammell, 2001, p. xvii). Prytherch (2005) later observed that the phrase IM was increasingly being **used as** a parallel with that of librarianship, and **its use as** such had meant IM was being accepted in wider contexts than its **original use** within the corporate sector. Further **use of IM- too many 'uses'!** as a generic label for all information related disciplines is apparent in the literature of librarianship and information science (Hornby & Andretta, 2001; Chapman & Pinder, 2007), with disciplines represented by IM including librarianship, information science, archives administration and records management (RM) (QAA, 2000; RAE 2008, 2007). This lack of continuity in the definition and use of IM continues to create difficulties in identifying it as a stand- alone discipline and profession.

### **1.3. IM vs. KM**

Adding to the confusion of identifying what is IM is the existence of similar terms, which appear as replacement synonyms for IM in some literature, such as information resources management (IRM), RM and knowledge management (KM) (Barry, 2004). Of these it seems that KM has been having the most recent impact. CILIP the self-declared leading professional body for library and information professionals in the UK, claims to **specifically** represent knowledge managers, along with librarians and information specialists (CILIP, 2007a), but fails to state its representation of Information Managers. There are those that see KM, as a separate concept to IM, or as an extension, or the next stage, of this concept (Chen, 1998; Rowley, 1999a, 2003). However, some commentators assert that KM is simply a synonym for IM, with a practice of 'search and replace' marketing occurring with the two terms (Wilson, 2002b, 2005).

KM gained ground in the late 1990s as a technique associated with consultancy companies (Wilson, 2005), and as such came in to the professional vocabulary after IM. Interestingly though, a recent report by TFPL, a specialist professional services company whose focus includes IM (TFPL, 2007), seemed to represent IM as a totally new concept, and like KM before it, organisations were either embracing the concept, or discarding it as a fad or a practice already in place. Recent research has identified IM and KM as two distinct disciplines. KM was recognised to be about the development and exchange of tacit knowledge through interaction between people; whereas, IM was about the creation, sharing, use and organisation of explicit knowledge in a multitude of formats. (Anantatmula, 2005; Bouthillier & Shearer, 2005; Chapman & Pinder, 2007). However, it is recognised that there are blurred lines between the two practices, and that their respective effectiveness is interdependent (Chapman & Pinder, 2007).

#### **1.4. Contemporary profile of IM: Purpose of the study**

Natalie Ceeney, CEO of the National Archives, prioritized 'leading and transforming IM' within the organisation's overall mission (Ceeney, 2008). In light of this, the Knowledge Council was established; the first achievement for which was the recognition of IM as a formal profession and function across government ("New Knowledge Council gears up," 2008). With this current attention to IM, despite a demonstratable lack of clarity of the use of the term within the information profession, it was thought pertinent to consider the contemporary profile of IM within the UK both as a discipline and as a profession.

Consideration of what constitutes an IM discipline, and in turn profession within the UK, is also pertinent in light of the Bologna Declaration (1999). Concerns for how a European

wide curriculum for information professionals can be achieved when a number of different approaches to education are taken, and a number of different disciplines are represented, have been expressed by a number of authors (Audunson, 2005; Kajberg & Lørring, 2005; Broady-Preston, 2007; Johnson, 2007; Tedd, 2008). To develop a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, it is first necessary to establish what can be considered as the core competencies of the discipline taught within that degree. If a degree awarded after the first cycle, of a three cycle system, is to be relevant to the labour market, it is also necessary to identify the competencies of the proposed profession.

### **1.5. Aims and Objectives**

This investigation aims to **delineate** a contemporary profile of IM within the UK through the comparison of content analyses of IM course curricula and IM job advertisements. The objectives of the investigation are therefore, to **determine:**

- what is recognised as the discipline of IM through the consideration of what components are taught within UK Higher Education (HE) IM degree curricula;
- whether a profession of IM can be identified, and defined, through the analysis of IM job advertisements from the UK.

The results of these analyses are then compared to ascertain whether core competencies exist between what is taught as IM, and what is practised as IM, which can therefore be identified as the discipline, and if identified, the profession of IM.

### **1.6. Structure of the dissertation**

The Literature Review (Chapter 2) first considers the identified characteristics of a discipline and a profession. It then goes on to consider the context and nature of the IM discipline; who are the stakeholders of the discipline within the UK; and looks at previous studies of the HE IM curriculum. The profession of IM is then considered, looking at the role of professional associations in the UK, and previous studies of professional IM practice. The chosen Methodology is explored and described in Chapter 3. The Results (Chapter 4) are arranged so the results of the course analysis are considered first; the analysis of the job advertisements considered second; and the results of two the analyses are then compared. The Conclusions for the study and Recommendations for further study are presented within the final chapter (Chapter 5).