

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1. IM as a discipline

5.1.1. Indicators of an IM discipline

Although there are indicators of an IM discipline, such as the availability of specialist journals (Becher & Trowler, 2001), and University courses within the subject (Stankosky, 2005), only one of the University Departments coded included IM within their title; a further criteria of a discipline as outlined by Becher & Trowler (2001). The majority of Department titles included 'Information/ Information Studies' or 'Information Science and Computer Science/ Computing;' supporting the views of Taylor & Farrell (1992) and Rowley & Slack (2000) that influences on the IM discipline include information science, and information studies and computer science, respectively. The findings also provide evidence to support the views of Ingwersen (1996) that IM may in fact be a sub-discipline, rather than a discipline within its own right; an argument found throughout the literature reviewed. Ingwersen (1996) believed the parent discipline of IM was Information Science. Yet, with the presence of 'Information Studies' Departments, and with CILIP as the overarching professional body for all information professionals, including Information Scientists; perhaps both disciplines are branches of a newly emerging, umbrella 'Information' discipline.

5.1.2. Representation of the IM discipline by the CILIP BPK

Perhaps further evidence to support the idea of an umbrella discipline is through the representation of topics and subjects within the universal CILIP BPK. Although further categories were formed after the pilot analysis, it was still possible to organize all identified categories within the three areas of the BPK for the purposes of results presentation. It could therefore be fair to say that although the BPK does not seek to define the boundaries of any one discipline in particular, its content does represent the

knowledge delivered through IM courses. The IM discipline identified in this study is part of the 'information' discipline represented by the CILIP BPK.

5.1.3. Content of an IM discipline

Three topics and subjects were found to be covered within all of the courses sampled: 'Knowledge and use of ICTs;' 'Project Management;' and 'Research design and methods.' Coverage of these topics was independent to the courses' academic level or their CILIP accreditation status and therefore, these topics could be said to represent the discipline of IM. However, as these topics are considered as Generic and transferable skills, by their definition, they could not be said to be truly specific to any discipline.

Within the course grouping by academic level, a number of topics and subjects were shown to be covered consistently within all of the Undergraduate courses, showing perhaps more a disciplinary identity for IM at this course level than at Postgraduate level. The coverage of a greater number of topics may also be in order to prepare students for the labour market, in line with the aims of the Bologna Declaration (1999). However, if sample size is taken into account only 4 courses considered were of Undergraduate level, and within the larger group of Postgraduate courses, such consistency within topic coverage was not present. The same is true with the course grouping by CILIP accreditation status. A greater proportion of topics were covered within all of the non-CILIP accredited courses, over the CILIP accredited ones. Yet only 3 courses included were not CILIP accredited, and with the larger group of CILIP accredited courses such consistency was not present.

Topic coverage at course level when compared to coverage at University level was in the majority of cases similar. The largest discrepancies in the percentage of topic coverage

were found with those topics that could be grouped within the Generic and transferable skills area of the CILIP BPK, and as such only aid to enhance the courses rather than being core to the course curriculum. If discrepancies were present with the coverage of topics within the other groupings, on the whole the topic was covered to a greater extent at University rather than course level. From these findings it may be acceptable for CILIP to accredit institutions rather than the courses they offer as per the recent consultants' recommendations (CILIP, 2008).

If topic coverage within the majority of cases is considered, i.e. all but one course/University covers a topic; a small number of other categories appears. Within all the comparisons and course groupings considered, 3 topics and subjects from within the Core Schema grouping are covered in the majority of cases: 'Information Retrieval;' 'Use of Information Systems;' and 'User Information needs & behaviours.' A further two topics appear within the Applications environment, within all comparisons: 'Acts, Laws and standards;' and 'Knowledge & understanding of organisations.' Although complete consistency is not present, these topics could be considered to further characterize the IM discipline. These findings reflect the context of the IM discipline as identified by Rowley (1998); and to a certain extent, the findings of the IM curriculum course studies by Ellis et al (1997), Hawkins (2000) and Widén-Wulff et al. (2005). The difference in core competencies found in this study over Widén-Wulff et al. (2005) may reflect two possibilities: one, the IM discipline delivered within the UK differs slightly to that delivered across Europe; or two, topic emphasis in the discipline has altered within the last two years. Either would suggest establishing a fixed, pan-European discipline of IM for the purposes of the Bologna process will still be difficult to achieve.

5.1.4. Coverage of KM and RM

KM and RM were covered as separate topics to IM within the Universities and courses considered. Coverage of both topics varied, with KM being covered in more cases on the whole, than RM. However, neither topic was covered within all, nor all but one, of the courses analysed. This suggests that KM and RM are not regarded as core elements of the IM discipline but relevant allied subjects worthy of consideration.

5.1.5. Affect of course structure

The lack of consistency within topic coverage could be attributable to the modular structure, and weighting within, the courses considered. Undergraduate and Postgraduate courses were of a different credit weighting, meaning a greater number of modules and therefore, range of topics could be studied within the lower level course. Between all courses, the number of core and optional modules differed; meaning a greater variation of topic coverage was present within those courses with a more flexible structure. Also, credit weighting of modules differed between courses, leading again to a difference in course module numbers. An aspect of the Bologna Declaration (1999) was an agreement between countries to adopt a system of credits so as to aid the easy comparison of courses across Europe and allow mobility of students. This Declaration stipulates the credit level of the three different course cycles. However, neither this Declaration, nor CILIP accreditation dictates course structure, nor modular credit weighting and therefore, it is fair to assume that these inconsistencies will remain. Although, as reflected by Hornby & Andretta (2001), the modularization of IM courses affords students flexibility for what they study, it does lead to an absence of consensus of the core concepts of an IM discipline.

5.1.6. Affect of module information

The apparent coverage of topics within courses was also dependent on the depth of information within, and the availability of, course module descriptions. It was not possible to obtain details for all of the available modules within courses, even if further information was requested from institutions. This therefore caused an unbalanced representation of some courses over others. Where details of all the modules were available, descriptions could vary from a sentence, to a paragraph, to over a page. Therefore, this difference in detail effected what information could be coded and may have led to a misrepresentation of the full topic coverage of a module, and as would follow, a course.

5.2. IM as a profession

5.2.1. Indicators of an IM profession

Requests for applicants to possess a specific qualification only appeared within under half of the advertisements sampled. Of these advertisements, only one requested a qualification specifically related to IM, the others requesting mainly qualifications within 'Information Studies' or 'Information Science.' This suggests that IM is not considered as a specific profession by the majority of employers, as a qualification within a specific discipline is not required. When a qualification is requested, it is a qualification within the suggested parent discipline of IM- Information Science, or a qualification in the previously discussed umbrella discipline of 'Information,' that is deemed necessary for the post. This perhaps further indicates the view of IM's non-status as a discipline and a profession by employers.

Membership to a professional body was only requested for one of the advertised posts, and membership was desirable rather than compulsory. Again, this suggests that IM is not considered a profession by the vast majority of employers. The requested affiliation was

for Chartered membership to CILIP but as previously discussed, this professional body represents 'Information' professionals as a collective rather than representing any specific discipline within that group, IM included.

5.2.2. IM employment markets

As with the findings of Quarmby et al. (1999), identified employment sectors for the majority of posts were mainly within the emergent market for information professionals. Only two posts were advertised within the traditional market; from within the education sector. This suggests that on the whole, IM is still associated with posts within the emergent information employment market although, some re-branding may be occurring for posts within the traditional market. This conclusion is supported by the evidence that the majority of the advertisements sampled were from sources which are considered to advertise posts outside of the traditional library and information work market; with a small proportion of advertisements from the CILIP Gazette.

5.2.3. Nature of IM practice

None of the identified duties or skills within the analysis could be seen to represent the occupation of IM. There were no categories requested within all, or even within the majority of advertisements, and therefore no identified core for an IM occupation was found within the study. This therefore, does not make it possible to compare the findings of this study with those studies considering the practice of IM discussed within the literature review (Stibic, 1986; Roets & Boon, 1997; Chapman & Pinder, 2007).

The only common request found within all of the advertisements was for the applicant to have had prior experience of some kind. The majority of advertisements asked for 'Professional or related experience' in some form; in some cases this being requested

along with other forms of experience. This may suggest that the titles considered, including 'manager' and 'management' along with 'information,' denote more the seniority of a post rather than an affiliation to an IM discipline.

5.2.4. Affect of sample

It was only possible to identify 18 job advertisements for the sample with titles which included 'information manager' or 'IM.' This is a very small sample when compared to the size of those used for other advertisement content analysis studies such as Cutting (2002) and Orme (2008); and makes it very difficult to draw any real conclusions from this part of the study. The low prevalence of such titles may be an indicator of the lack of recognition for an IM discipline, and again be an indicator of the non-status of IM as a profession. To increase the size of the sample, it may have been apposite to include posts whose titles included the term 'information officer,' as the literature had shown that this was a common title for posts with information manager/ management responsibilities (Stibic, 1986; Roets & Boon, 1997; Chapman & Pinder, 2007).

As with the module information used for this study, inconsistencies were present with the depth of information provided within the advertisements and further particulars for the posts. This difference in detail again affected the information available for coding, and may have led to a misrepresentation of the necessary skills, experience and knowledge for, and duties within, the posts.

5.3. Correspondence of IM teaching with IM practice

As no categories could be identified as core to the practice of IM, and there was limited consistency of topic and subject coverage within IM teaching, it was almost redundant to compare the findings of the study. From this investigation it may be seen that there is

some evidence of IM's status as a discipline, albeit a sub-discipline, rather than a discipline in its own right. However, no evidence was found that IM could be considered a profession. There was no consistency in either what is required of applicants for IM posts, or what is practiced within IM posts; and as would follow, there is no possibility of identifying any discipline practiced within them, whether this was IM or not.

5.4. Recommendations for further study

This study considered what was recognised as the contemporary discipline of IM through the analysis of what components are taught within HE IM degree curricula. Certain elements were identified as representing the discipline of IM. However, it was beyond the scope of this study to identify whether these elements were unique to IM, or whether they were simply common elements between cognate fields also represented by CILIP. To this end, it may be of interest for further study to repeat the method analysing the content of IM courses as well as courses within allied subjects and disciplines such as KM, RM and Information Science.

If the study was to be repeated, it may be worth increasing the frequency of the advertisement sample time frame to once every other fortnight to expand the size of the advertisement sample further. The larger sample size may influence a greater similarity in what is requested of applicants, and what is practiced, within posts. If titles including 'information officer' were also included, it may be interesting to see whether a similarity of requirements and duties was present within these posts, and whether those requests and duties would correspond with those within the IM posts. This would investigate the assumption that 'information officer' was a common title for posts with information manager/ management responsibilities.