

SELECTING FROM THE ALPHABET SOUP OF INFORMATION CERTIFICATIONS

Earning professional certifications can help an information professional establish credibility, but choosing the most relevant ones from among the many available can be a challenge.

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As the value of information governance (IG) is becoming more apparent worldwide, information professionals have an opportunity to play a more strategic role within their organizations. But, those who will be “invited to the table” are only those who have visibility and credibility in the areas that are critical to IG, such as information technology (IT), security, and privacy.

An obvious way to gain such visibility and credibility is by earning professional certifications. There are many to consider, and determining which ones are right for you can be difficult. Several successful information professionals recently spoke about the certifications they have attained – or plan to attain – and why others might consider doing the same.

IGP Spans Information Professions

Coming in late spring, the Information Governance Professional (IGP) certification is designed for certified records managers (CRMs) and other professionals who drive the governance of all information, not just the official records. Those who attain the credential are expected to be able to implement the Generally Accepted Recordkeeping Principles® in an organization and to work closely with the C-level officers.

The development process has been rigorous, in accordance with American National Standards Institute (ANSI) accreditation standards. It began last spring, when 11 information management professionals performed a job analysis and developed an exam blueprint, which was later validated by nearly 350 respondents from 111 countries.

Two versions of the exam have been developed, each with 125 questions. The exams will be pilot-tested before the certification is made available to everyone.

While information managers have several certifications they can pursue, Brian Tretick, CIPP, believes the IGP certification is necessary and unique because of its strategic nature. Tretick, managing director of Athena Consulting, sees the fields of records management, privacy, and information security becoming progressively intertwined.

“As this combined discipline matures – as it obviously will – the certification will become part of the fabric of that profession,” he says. “Anyone who seeks to be in such an important and strategic role would benefit.”

Raymond Cunningham, CRM, CA, CDIA+, CIPP/US, CIPP/IT, director of records services at the University of Illinois Foundation, suggests the IGP certification is needed, in part, because the chief information officer (CIO) often takes on too large of a role in managing information.

“The CIO role emerged as information technology became pre-eminent in the workplace, but the role of the information to be governed took a back seat as CIOs came

from the technology side,” he says. “Organizations soon discovered that the skill sets for managing IT are entirely different from those required for managing information.”

Cunningham, who helped develop the exam with Tretick and others, believes professionals with broad experience in the legal, records management, risk management, or privacy fields are ideally suited for the new certification.

The IGP certification exam will cover these competency domains:

- Managing information risk and compliance
- Developing the IG strategic plan
- Developing the IG framework
- Establishing the IG program
- Establishing IG business integration and oversight
- Aligning technology with the IG framework

ARMA International will seek formal ANSI accreditation after a specified number of professionals have attained the certification.

IGP Complements the CRM

The IGP certification is designed to complement the CRM, which is conferred by the Institute of Certified Records Managers. In fact, many IGP certification candidates are expected to hold the CRM.

Cunningham agrees with ARMA International’s position that the IGP certification is not designed to compete with the CRM. Instead, he says, it “complements many of the areas by taking a more C-level approach to information in the enterprise.”

While the IGP certification is expected to become the highest industry credential for IG, the CRM has long been considered the standard bearer for records and information management (RIM).

According to Julie Gable, CRM, CDIA, FAI, founder and president of Gable Consulting LLC and a Fellow of ARMA International, the CRM establishes instant credibility with fellow records managers and is useful when bidding for consulting jobs.

Cunningham echoes that viewpoint: “Contracts and job offerings now routinely require the CRM, and I believe that today this is the single most important certification to have in records management.”

CIP Designed to Help Bridge IT and Business

The Certified Information Professional (CIP) is an option for those in RIM who seek a credential that focuses more on information management.

According to the website for AIIM, which offers the certification, earning the CIP will “demonstrate your ability to bridge IT and business, keep your IM skills current and competitive, lead your organization into the world of social and mobile content, and more.”

For More Information on Certifications

See the following websites to learn more about the certifications that are discussed in the article.

Certification	Location
IGP: Certified Information Governance Professional	www.arma.org/igp
CRM: Certified Records Manager	www.icrm.org
CIP: Certified Information Professional	www.aiim.org
CIPP: Certified Information Privacy Professional	www.privacyassociation.org/certification/cipp_it/
PMP: Project Management Professional	www.pmi.org
CDIA+: Certified Document Imaging Architect	http://certification.comptia.org/getCertified/certifications/cdia.aspx

The exam covers the following domains: access/use, capture/manage, collaborate/deliver, secure/preserve, architecture/systems, and plan/implement.

On the records management listserv in December 2011, Jesse Wilkins, CRM, CDIA+, CIP, director of research and development for AIIM, described the CIP as “a broad certification that attests to a candidate’s understanding of a broad range of topics and that is complementary to, rather than competitive with, narrow, deep certifications.”

Wilkins also said the CIP would be especially important for records managers “who are often heard discussing the challenges associated with getting a seat at the board, getting senior management support, etc.”

Patrick Cunningham, CRM, CIP, FAI, senior director of IG for Motorola Solutions Inc., believes the CRM appeals to the records management community and is more relevant for those consultants, whereas the CIP should appeal to IT-centric candidates and those with more of an interest in electronic records systems and IG.

CIPP Spiking in Popularity and Importance

The Certified Information Privacy Professional (CIPP) is viewed by many as the standard in privacy credentialing. Conferred by the International Association of Privacy Professionals, the designation is earned by first passing the foundation exam – which covers common principles and practices, information security, and online privacy – and then by passing regional or sectorial certifications, such as the CIPP/US, which covers the U.S. corporate privacy landscape, or the CIPP/E, which focuses on Europe.

CIPP-holder Tretick considers it an entry-level designation and an excellent measure of knowledge.

“The certification has become an integral requirement, along with experience and education,” he says. “This has

happened across industries – including in the federal government – in the United States and is growing significantly in Europe. As a consultant, one couldn’t win a privacy engagement without the certification.”

ARMA International Board of Directors member Ilona Koti, CRM, PMP, CDIA+, expects to add the CIPP/US and CIPP/E to her list of credentials. Koti, who directs due diligence for the United Nations World Food Program in Rome, says chief privacy officers are in high demand, and few records professionals with strong information governance skills have entered the privacy arena.

She believes senior managers in Europe will take violations more seriously as the continent revises its privacy guidelines. For example, proposed amendments to the EU’s Data Protection Act would add fines of up to 2% of an organization’s global revenue for mishandling personal data.

Raymond Cunningham, the holder of three additional professional certifications, sees the CIPP designations more as “legal certifications” and observes that many who take the exams are attorneys. He has attained the CIPP/US and the CIPP/IT designations and sees value in them.

“Privacy certification has also moved my career forward as more within our university begin to work with issues of privacy and security,” he says. “I have been asked more for my opinions on matters of privacy than ever before.”

CDIA Designed for Document Imaging Professionals

The Certified Document Imaging Architect (CDIA+) credential from CompTIA is often recommended for those who work in document imaging and management. The exam measures skills and knowledge that should represent a document imaging professional with 12 to 18 months of experience, according to the CompTIA website.

Gable, who holds the CDIA, says the credential is “use-

ful in establishing instant credibility with those in the IT field, particularly those faced with scanning and indexing decisions."

Koti says the knowledge acquired through the CDIA+ certification helps her manage imaging products and software and communicate more effectively with IT on the imaging requirements for electronic document management system integrations.

Raymond Cunningham pursued the CDIA+ because he wanted a technical certification to complement his skills in records management and because document imaging began to play a larger role in his position.

PMP Can Boost Marketability

Information managers are usually project managers as well, and many in the field have attained the Project Management Professional (PMP) designation.

The PMP exam covers these performance domains:

- Initiating the project
- Planning the project
- Executing the project
- Monitoring and controlling the project
- Closing the project

Koti says the designation has taught her how to plan a project, keep templates on hand, negotiate terms, and deploy deliverables in phases.

According to the Project Management Institute, which confers the PMP, the certification improves marketability and leads to higher salaries, based on the findings in its Project Management Salary Survey.

Comparing Certifications to Certificates

In addition to certifications, information management professionals can choose to pursue certificates that are associated with RIM and other aspects of professional development. Sometimes the terms "certification" and "certificate" are used interchangeably, but they mean different things.

A certification program assesses current knowledge and skills, and it usually has eligibility standards and ongoing requirements. When candidates pass the exam, they are awarded a designation, such as "CRM."

A certificate program consists of a learning event or a series of events – such as seminars or online courses – designed with specific learning outcomes for a topic or a focused group of topics within a discipline. A certificate is similar to a diploma in that its conferral indicates completion or finality. Certificates typically do not have maintenance requirements.

ARMA International's "Essentials of RIM Certificate" is an example of a certificate program. Upon completing the online courses and passing the exams, candidates are conferred the designation of "Certificate Holder – Essentials of RIM" and are accorded an actual certificate.

What's the True Value of Certifications?

In his blog, titled "Above the RIM," Patrick Cunningham has suggested that some professionals over-value certifications and certificates.

He believes records managers are perhaps too eager to pursue such credentials because they've often "bootstrapped" their way into their positions without having a degree that has led them there.

While he found the CRM to be helpful when he was starting out, he believes his career has since benefited more from his master's degree and from experience, enhancing his ability to think critically and find solutions in the workplace.

Patrick Cunningham does not dismiss certifications, however: "A certification is one element of the total picture of a person's competency. It is indicative that the person has made an extra effort to test his or her knowledge."

Tretick, too, sees the need for caution in seeking those cherished letters and commas. He plans to pursue the IGP certificate but currently holds only the CIPP because it shows his commitment to a specific topic. He warns that too many certifications in diverse areas can mark you as a "jack of all trades, master of none."

What Is a Certified IGP?

ARMA International will soon make available the Information Governance Professional (IGP) certification. ARMA provides the following job description for a certified IGP:

A certified IGP creates and oversees programs to govern the information assets of the enterprise. The certified IGP partners with the business to facilitate innovation and competitive advantage, while ensuring strategic and operational alignment of business, legal, compliance, and technology goals and objectives. The certified IGP oversees a program that supports organizational profitability, productivity, efficiency, and protection.

But Tretick does believe some organizations value such versatility, and Koti has found this to be true to her experience: "I am brought in on difficult projects because of my diverse background and certifications because my clients know that I can advise on areas where sometimes two or three other consultants or staff members may be required," she says.

Koti, who holds two master's degrees and four professional certifications, also stresses the need to pursue credentials wisely. She says that education and evidence of

hands-on experience on a resume may help you get an interview, but that a great personality and a solid work ethic will help you get – and keep – your next position.

"Doing a certification just to do a certification is silly," she says. "You should never obtain a certification just for prestige or having extra commas after your name."

Gable, too, states that certifications are not substitutes for hands-on experience. "If you're applying for an infor-

mation management job, the CRM designation will likely give you an edge. You may be more likely to get an interview, but you still have to convince others that you know what you're talking about once you're in the interview," she says. **END**

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