Making the Leap to an Information Governance Role

Vicki Wiler

Though the term "information governance" (IG) has been in use for at least a decade and has been widely used in records and information management (RIM) circles since 2009, many RIM professionals are still struggling to understand what it is and why it should matter to them.

If you are among that group, it should matter to you because it represents a tremendous opportunity for you to catapult yourself into a strategic leadership role that will be even more valuable to your organization – and your career.

What Is Information Governance?

ARMA International defines *information governance* as "A strategic framework composed of standards, processes, roles, and metrics that hold organizations and individuals accountable to create, organize, secure, maintain, use, and dispose of information in ways that align with and contribute to the organization's goals."

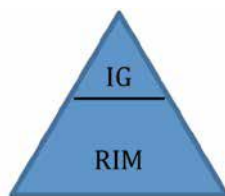Because RIM – with its focus on developing and implementing policies, systems, and procedures to manage information throughout its life cycle – is the foundation that supports IG (as illustrated in Figure 1) moving from that role into an IG role is the natural next step.

Figure 1:
RIM: Foundation for IG

How IG and RIM Are Different

An IG professional's roles are to maintain a strategic focus and work with upper-level executives to ensure cohesive information governance across the enterprise. For example, IG professionals work to understand the business structure and processes, determine what industry regulations and legal requirements are relevant to the business operations, identify what policies and procedures are needed to address the requirements, and initiate the change management processes needed to ensure enterprise-wide changes are made.

Although some RIM professionals are also involved in higher-level strategic discussions and are an essential part of the information governance team, they are usually more focused on the tactical aspects of managing information. For example, they are responsible for writing the policies and procedures IG has identified as being needed, working with business units to implement them, and monitoring compliance with them.

"There is not a wide demarcation between the two roles," said Diane Carlisle, IGP, CRM, the executive director of content for ARMA International. "They are a team; each has a different area of focus, both of which are critically important."

Both, for example, must have an enterprise-wide perspective. Although RIM works with business units across the enterprise, Carlisle said that often not all units in an organization will take RIM seriously. An effective IG program supports RIM by developing strategies that help ensure that business units across the enterprise comply with RIM mandates.

Carlisle gave some examples of how the IG and RIM perspectives and some of their responsibilities would differ in the three scenarios below.

Acquiring Technology

IG professionals are responsible for identifying emerging technology trends, facilitating a relationship with IT to understand IT's strategies for those technologies, and raising infor-

mation governance issues to ensure they are addressed before technologies are purchased or implemented.

For example, IG professionals in an organization considering the use of cloud-based services would need to understand cloud technologies and how they might be used in business operations; identify any operational changes that would need to be addressed if moving information to the cloud; determine whether policies and procedures would need to be created or revised; and identify requirements to be negotiated with the provider.

In this scenario, RIM would draft or revise the policies and procedures that have been identified, which would include identifying retention and disposition requirements for any information being moved to the cloud; work with business units to implement the policies and procedures, which would include providing any needed training; and monitor business units for compliance.

Implementing Legal Holds

Implementing legal holds is problematic for many organizations; IG and RIM professionals both have important roles to play in ensuring that legal holds are properly implemented in anticipation of or in response to triggering events, such as receiving a subpoena or the threat of a lawsuit.

Instituting an effective legal hold process requires IG professionals to work with the legal department to ensure it understands the role of IG in legal holds; be the bridge between legal and business units to help legal understand the business processes and where information is found; help build the framework by which legal holds are to be implemented; and play a continuing role on the litigation support team to address specific litigation.

RIM professionals are responsible for applying hold notices to information under their control and to work with business units to protect the units' information that is being held.

Developing a Retention and Disposition Program

IG professionals work with upper-level management to: give them a strategic view of retention – why it is important, why a retention and disposition schedule needs to be followed, and what the risks are if it is not followed; secure adequate resources to develop the retention program; and facilitate the relationship with the legal department.

RIM professionals work with business units across the organization to identify business requirements for
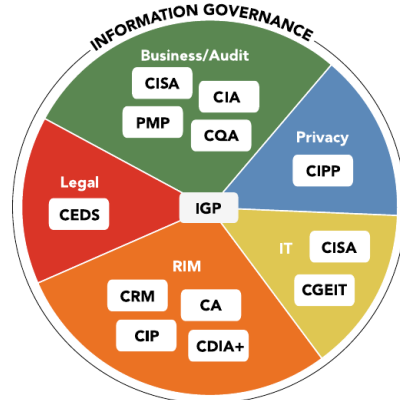

Figure 2: Information Governance Disciplines

retention; build the retention and disposition schedule; create procedures by which disposition will be carried out; and monitor business units to ensure these procedures are followed.

Making the Jump to IG

Those who are desiring to expand their skills, seeking opportunities to play a more strategic role, and willing to take a risk by stepping outside of their comfort zone are good candidates for transitioning to an IG role, Carlisle said.

The three scenarios above make it clear that the ability to collaborate with key IG stakeholders – RIM, IT, legal, and business unit leaders – is imperative. For that collaboration to occur, stakeholders must understand

the others' responsibilities. It follows, then, that Carlisle recommends "internal fact-finding" as one of the first few steps for those who want to move into an IG role.

Assess Your Skills

Initially, Carlisle says, you should familiarize yourself with the information governance DACUM Chart available at *www.arma.org/r2/igp-certification*. It lists the duties and tasks IG professionals must be able to do; the knowledge, skills, ability, and attributes they need to do them; and the tools, equipment, and resources they use to do them.

Assess your knowledge, skills, and abilities for the six major duties and tasks listed on the DACUM chart:
1. Managing Information Risk and Compliance
2. Developing an IG Strategic Plan
3. Developing an IG Framework
4. Establishing an IG Program
5. Establishing IG Business Integration and Oversight
6. Aligning Technology with the IG Framework

You will see in the DACUM that most of these IG responsibilities require analytical, strategic thinking, negotiation, and financial skills, as well as specific knowledge related to IT, legal, and audit processes, that may not be required for a RIM position. Carlisle recommended going on a fact-finding mission to begin building that knowledge.

Take a Fact-Finding Mission

To broaden your understanding of the business and the industry in which it operates, expand your network of professional contacts, Carlisle said, especially with those in the other IG disciplines identified in Figure 2: "Information Governance": privacy, IT, legal, and audit.

Set up meetings or find opportunities to chat with leaders in these areas and ask them what they do, what they worry about, what tools

and techniques they use, what they do with their information, and how they *know* what they are supposed to do with it.

If your organization has an internal audit department, ask what kinds of things it audits, whether it audits for IG compliance, and what problems it is finding. These discussions also will give you an opportunity to share your RIM perspective with these leaders.

You should also broaden your understanding of your industry, particularly the relevant laws and regulations and its codes of conduct.

Do Your Homework

Josh Hargrafen, IGP, CIP, manager of corporate records with ACT Inc., said he felt fairly confident about having most of the skills and knowledge shown in the DACUM chart. So, when studying for the Information Governance Professional (IGP) exam last fall, he spent a lot of time reviewing the Generally Accepted Recordkeeping Principles®. "I printed out a copy of them from the ARMA website and used that as an ad hoc study guide," Hargrafen said.

Take advantage of the myriad educational resources available on the ARMA International website and from other organizations in the IG disciplines. The responsibility to manage information risk, for example, could lead you to Vicki Lemieux's outstanding book *Managing Risks for Records and Information Programs*, the ARMA International guideline *Evaluating and Mitigating Records and Information Risks*, and the online course "Assessing and Mitigating Risks," all available at *www.arma.org*.

Check out the *2014 Professional Resource Guide* that was packaged with this issue of the print magazine or browse the online bookstore to see the recommended publications for each of the six major areas of responsibility listed in the DACUM chart.

ARMA International encourages professionals to demonstrate their knowledge and skills by earning any of these recognized certifications.

Consider Certification

Earning a professional certification can raise your profile, bring recognition from your employer and professional network, and be the determining factor in salary increases and promotions.

As noted in Figure 2 on page 39, "Information Governance Landscape," there are a number of certifications available in the IG disciplines of RIM, legal, business/audit, privacy, and IT. Check out the March/April 2013 *Information Management* article by Jeff Whited, "Selecting from the Alphabet Soup of Certifications," for information about many of these major IG certifications.

ARMA International encourages professionals to demonstrate their knowledge and skills by earning any of these recognized certifications. To facilitate this, ARMA International is working to partner with other organizations to make their certification preparation resources available to ARMA members at discounted prices. For example, you will find discounted resources from ISACA to help you prepare for the Certified Information Systems Auditor and the Certification in the Governance of Enterprise IT certifications.

Of course, ARMA International encourages RIM professionals to consider the IGP certification, in particular, which is the only certification that demonstrates a person has the strategic perspective and the requisite knowledge to help an organization leverage information for maximum value while reducing the costs and mitigating the risks associated with using and governing information assets. According to Carlisle, it represents a more comprehensive grasp of IG expertise than those certifications that are focused on one specific area of IG.

Hargrafen counts earning the IGP in the inaugural class last fall as his greatest professional success. "I believe it went a long way to demonstrating to my new employer that I was able to step up to the challenge before me," he said.

Jason Stearns, IGP, director of information management and discovery services for UBS – who helped New York Life win the Cobalt Award for excellence in RIM in 2008 and was also in the inaugural class of IGPs – also promotes its value for RIM professionals.

"The skills and experience needed to be successful in the field of records and information management have been changing rapidly as we mature and grow into information governance," Stearns said. "The IGP represents this maturation and next phase for our field by identifying the skills and information that professionals need. By earning this credential, I can demonstrate that I have the foundational base necessary to be successful."

Take Action

Whatever the first step, those that want to become an IG professionals must take action to heighten their profile and make themselves more valuable to their organizations. "It's a proactive role," Carlisle said. "You don't wait to be invited to the table; you set the table yourself or put yourself forward to be included in those conversations to bring forward the IG considerations." **END**

Vicki Wiler can be contacted at vicki.wiler@aramintl.org. S*ee her bio on page 47.*