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SPECIAL LIBRARIANS Putting Knowledge to Work ®

Special librarians are information resource experts dedicated to putting knowledge to work to attain the goals of their organizations. They are employed most frequently by corporations, private businesses, government agencies, museums, colleges, hospitals, associations and information management consulting firms. **Adding Value to Information:** Today's special librarians do far more than locate and collect data. Using the Internet and other current technology, they also evaluate, analyze, organize, package, and present information in a way that maximizes its usefulness. A few examples of the diverse services that special librarians may perform include:

- Preparing research reports in response to staff requests for specific information;
- Gathering competitive intelligence;
- Identifying research done at other organizations to avoid unnecessary duplication;
- Verifying facts for external and internal reports and publications;
- Creating databases for organizations to access their internal information;
- Searching patents and trademarks;
- Evaluating and comparing information software and sources of data prior to purchase; and
- Training other staff to efficiently and cost-effectively use online databases.

Facilitating Better Decision-making: The value of information provided by special libraries was demonstrated dramatically in a study conducted at five large corporations. Four out of five of the surveyed executives felt that the information provided by their special librarians helped them decide upon a course of action. And three-quarters of them felt the information helped them avoid making a poor business decision. Equally important, special libraries save money. Extensive research has shown that special libraries are likely to save several times their cost of operation by reducing the time that employees have to spend to acquire needed information. That's time that can be spent on the employees' primary duties. Research also was done regarding to what extent special libraries can save staff time. Approximately two-thirds of the executives and managers surveyed at five large corporations felt that the information supplied by special libraries helped them avoid wasting their own time and other people's time.

Excerpts from

COMPETENCIES FOR INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS OF THE 21ST CENTURY (2014 draft)

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COMPETENCIES FOR INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS OF THE 21ST CENTURY (2014)

WHAT ARE INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS?

Information Professionals are individuals who use information strategically in their work to help their organizations and/or clients meet key goals. Information professionals accomplish this through various means, including gathering, developing, deploying, and managing information resources and services. Information professionals harness a variety of existing and emerging information tools, such as collaborative technologies and social media, to accomplish goals. Information professionals include, but are not limited to, librarians, knowledge managers, chief information officers, information analysts, taxonomists, web developers, information brokers, and consultants.

WITHIN WHAT TYPES OF ENVIRONMENTS DO INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS WORK?

Information professionals work in many different types of environments. Some may be part of, and located within, an organization's centralized library or information center. Others may be part of the library's team and perform their work "embedded" in other departments as a key contributor to that department's goals and deliverables. Still others may work as embedded information professionals for organizations that have no centralized library or information center. An independent information professional may be found contributing information management skills across a very broad, diverse spectrum of clients, including special libraries.

In the information and knowledge age, information professionals play a unique role in gathering, organizing, creating, analyzing, synthesizing and coordinating access to the best available information sources for the organization as a whole. They are leaders in devising and implementing standards for the ethical and legal use of information.

They provide the competitive edge for the knowledge-based organization by responding with a sense of urgency to critical information needs. Information, both internally- and externally-produced, is the lifeblood of the knowledge-based organization and essential for innovation and continuous learning. Information sharing is also essential for any organization that is attempting to understand and manage its intellectual capital, often in a global context.

The 2014 Competencies revision provides a set of tools for professional growth, recruitment, and assessment. Specific jobs will require specific sets of competencies at various skill levels. The goal of the 2014 Competencies statement is to create a roadmap of growth and development for you, your colleagues and your organizations.

VALUES AND COMPETENCIES

Two core values anchor the information professional. As educated professionals, information professionals understand the value of developing and sharing their knowledge; this is accomplished through association networks and by conducting and sharing research at conferences, in publications and in collaborative arrangements of all kinds.

Information Professionals' Core Values

- I. Information professionals contribute to the knowledge base of the profession by sharing best practices and experiences, and continue to learn about information products, services, and management practices throughout the life of their career.
- II. Information professionals commit to professional excellence and ethics, and to the values and competencies of the profession.

In addition, information professionals embrace and model the values of:

- Accountability
- Competency
- Confidentiality
- Dependability
- Ethical behavior
- Fairness
- Honesty
- Integrity
- Perseverance
- Responsibility
- Trustworthiness

Professional Competencies relate to the practitioner's knowledge of information resources, access, technology and management, and the ability to use this knowledge as a basis for providing the highest quality information services. There are three major competencies, each augmented with specific skills:

- A. Creating and Maintaining Collaborative Relationships
- B. Managing Information Resources and Information Services
- C. Understanding and Applying Information Tools and Technologies

A Creating and Maintaining Collaborative Relationships

- A.1** Aligns information skills and resources with, and is supportive of, the strategic directions of the parent organization or of key client groups through partnerships with key stakeholders and suppliers.
- A.2** If managing a centralized information department or library, assesses and communicates the value of that organizational asset, including information services, products and policies to senior management, key stakeholders and client groups.
- A.3** Establishes effective management, operational and financial management processes and exercises sound business and financial judgments in making decisions that balance operational and strategic organizational considerations.
- A.4** Contributes effectively to senior management strategies and decisions regarding information applications, tools and technologies, and policies for the organization.
- A.5** If managing a centralized information department or library, builds and leads an effective information services team and champions the professional and personal development of team members.
- A.6** Actively seeks out opportunities to demonstrate and contribute professional expertise to advance the organization's or clients' strategic goals.
- A.7** Gathers the best available evidence to support decisions about the development of new services and products, the modification of current services, or the elimination of services to continually improve the strategic value of information services provided.
- A.8** Advises the organization and/or client on copyright and intellectual property issues and compliance.

B Managing Information Resources and Information Services

- B.1** Communicates regularly with organization's leadership and stakeholders to understand and address information needs and gaps, devices and workflow tools being used, and business priorities.
- B.2** Develops policies for externally-published and internally-created information and knowledge assets under management; advises on the implementation of these policies, including copyright compliance, privacy, and intellectual property protection.
- B.3** Actively monitors the continuously-expanding universe of information resources, including publications, databases, data sets, and social media, and tools for text-mining, data mining, or data visualization, and then matches resources to client groups within the organization.
- B.4** Prepares budget for and manages a dynamic portfolio of information resources and services aligned with the strategic goals of the organization and designed to facilitate learning, decision-making and mitigation of risks.
- B.5** Assesses how the organization creates, acquires, shares, and archives information resources. Audits and maps information and knowledge assets available within the organization in order to advise clients about resources relevant to various business activities.
- B.6** Delivers custom services, including consulting, training, curation, in-depth research, data analysis, briefings and alerts, database design, and metadata and taxonomy development.
- B.7** Researches, analyzes and synthesizes information into actionable steps or accurate answers to efficiently and effectively deliver on client assignments.
- B.8** Proactively introduces to the organization tools and technology that offer productivity gains in terms of access, sharing, and integration of information and knowledge.
- B.9** Critically evaluates and negotiates fees and licensing terms for subscription-based information products and services.
- B.10** Identifies and provides pointers to high-quality, business-relevant, open source and Internet resources.
- B.11** Designs consistent repeatable data and analytics reporting and also collects anecdotal evidence to measure the quality, impact, and value of information offerings, and to take appropriate action to ensure the relevancy of all offerings within the portfolio.

C Understanding and Applying Information Tools and Technologies

- C.1** Maintains awareness of emerging technologies and their implications for service provision; advises and champions, where necessary, introduction of such technologies in their organization.
- C.2** Keeps up to date and applies expertise in searching as well as database development, indexing, metadata, and information analysis and synthesis to improve retrieval and use of internal and external information.
- C.3** Assesses, selects and applies current and emerging information technologies and services (e.g., databases, catalogs, search engines, websites and social media) and uses these to create information access and delivery solutions.
- C.4** Protects the information privacy/data of clients as well as intellectual property rights and maintains awareness of, and responses to, new challenges to privacy/data protection or intellectual property rights.
- C.5** Teaches and advises on the use of information technologies and services throughout their organization. Provides direct, clear and actionable feedback to peers and partners.