Adding Value: The Business of Independent Information Professionals, Part III
Making It Work as an IIP
by Crystal Sharp, Guest Editor

ABSTRACT
Independent information professionals not only provide critical information services to clients but, as entrepreneurs, must be attuned to promoting their business. Through a collection of articles, contributors explore how they have expanded their core skills to continually add value for their clients while working to strengthen their own businesses. Members of the Association of Independent Information Professionals (AIIP) describe adding valuable research support through collaboration and teaching, as well as reinforcing customer loyalty and creatively using communications channels to serve clients and expand business.

KEYWORDS
independent information professionals
value added
information services
entrepreneurs
business
information associations

This special issue of the Bulletin offers a glimpse into the business of independent information professionals (IIPs). The overall theme is “adding value” because it most aptly describes how IIPs benefit the work of their clients and because, in many ways, it is what IIPs must strive for within their own businesses to ensure relevance and viability in the rapidly changing technological, competitive and information landscape. IIPs possess high-level skills in finding, managing, applying and communicating information, which they leverage in a variety of ways: consulting, writing, research and information management services to clients in a number of fields.

Adding value encompasses more than a focus on the bottom line, as you will see in the articles within this issue. The authors comprise a small sample of AIIP’s (Association of Independent Information Professionals) membership, but as a collection the 21 articles written by 28 authors broadly present through description, experience, case studies and narration the work IIPs do and how they do it. Because of the number of contributions, the section was divided between two issues. The first two of three parts, “Research: Much More Than Search and Retrieval” and “Services: Marketing, New Media, Writing, Consulting and Information Management,” appeared in the October/November 2010 issue of the Bulletin (www.asis.org/Bulletin/Oct-10/index.html). “Making It Work as an IIP” appears in this issue.

Making It Work as an IIP
Like my AIIP colleagues, I am an IIP because I have marketable skills (grant consulting and writing), and I enjoy working with different clients and
having some control over my time. However, we all face challenges in sometimes having to provide a wider range of research support than we can offer on our own – in marketing our businesses and in maintaining our relevance and competitive edge. The articles in this portion of the special section present some ways in which IIPs negotiate these challenges.

Udo Hohlfield and Marcy Phelps describe their international collaboration on a project with a tight deadline, offering lessons learned about the essentials of collaborating across borders. Risa Sacks discusses why, even with ever-increasing information available online, there are reasons to add primary research to one’s research mix. Valerie Matarase’s article provides a glimpse into how portfolios of European IIP clients and services are adapted to (or dictated by) the multicultural work environment of Europe, based on one aspect of the responses to her recent survey of European colleagues in continental (non-Anglophone) Europe. Amelia Kassel presents practical suggestions on incorporating teaching and training into a marketing strategy to add value, not only in monetary terms, but also as a method for building the reputation of the business. Mary Ellen Bates focuses on the need to think strategically in building customer loyalty and in adding value to services a business offers, rather than having the market or circumstances determine the need for change. Finally, Andrea Carrero offers advice on using marketing and website communications as strategic tools in bringing awareness and attracting customers.