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**COLUMN**

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It’s Just a Garden  
by Thom Haller
Monitoring Bulletin online usage statistics is one of my intermittent activities as editor of the Bulletin. Over the years, I have noted the continuing popularity of the February 1996 issue on information brokers (http://www.asis.org/Bulletin-Feb-95/index.html). So with the assistance of executive director Richard Hill we were able to get a new and updated special section on this topic, which is to say, on independent information professionals (IIPs), as our self-employed colleagues now prefer to be known. Many IIPs belong to the Association of Independent Information Professionals, whose members have supplied the articles in this issue and some that will appear in February/March 2011. Crystal Sharp, our AIIP guest editor, has done an outstanding job planning and producing the section.

The articles fall into three parts, two of which appear here. As Crystal explains in more detail in her introduction, they cover the type and value of research that IIPs perform for clients and the other services, such as consulting, that many IIPs offer. The final part, to be published in February/March 2011, discusses “Making It Work as an IIP.” However, all the articles are strongly focused on how IIPs add value for clients and run their businesses, and much of their advice is applicable to anyone freelancing in the information business, whether we come from a background of reference librarianship, as many IIPs do, or are information architects, business consultants or knowledge management specialists or engaged in other aspects of the information professions. I hope many readers will find these shared experiences timely and helpful.

In other things of note in the issue Thom Haller, our associate editor for information architecture, uses his column to discuss the difference between wanting or needing an architecture and wanting or needing a product. Outgoing president Gary Marchionini, in his last President’s Page for the Bulletin, reviews the accomplishments of the Society this year and the areas that are still challenging. Also, we carry news on ASIS&T participation in Europe. Emil Levine and Tefko Saracevic provide an overview in text and photos of the LIDA (Libraries in the Digital Age) conferences, which have been held yearly in Croatia since 2000, have close ties to ASIS&T and have honored many ASIS&T members. If you participate in other ASIS&T activities outside the United States, we welcome your reports.
2010 is drawing to a close and as I reflect on what has transpired, I am gratified by what ASIS&T has accomplished and also pensive about what we have not been able to do. On the positive side:

- We had successful Information Architecture and Research Data and Preservation Summits.
- We had another great year of publications in JASIST and the Bulletin and another superb issue of ARIST.
- We established the ASIS&T Annual Lecture Series.
- We welcomed a new student chapter at McGill University.
- We created new participation scholarships that allow new members to be mentored for chapter and national leadership.
- We made substantial efforts to expand interactive communication to include social media elements for ASIS&T members and held two teleconference conversations with ASIS&T leadership.
- There was tremendous energy put into the 2010 Annual Meeting, which attracted a record number of submissions.
- We increased ASIS&T international activities, including support for a doctoral consortium to be held in Ireland in the spring of 2011.
- We appointed a task force to be chaired by Toni Carbo to plan for the ASIS&T 75th anniversary in 2012.
- Our society is in strong financial shape thanks to the skill of our treasurer and the budget committees over the past several years and especially as a result of the reputation of JASIST and the ASIS&T members who worked with Wiley-Blackwell to negotiate our revenue sharing package.

- We saved a bit of money and reduced our carbon footprint by having a teleconference Spring Board Meeting rather than a face-to-face meeting.

On the negative side, even though we welcomed some new members, who I hope will bring energy and vision to ASIS&T, our efforts to grow membership have been challenged by the difficult economy, and our membership has declined by almost 200 over the past year. Membership is the key to a strong society and I urge every member to redouble your efforts to recruit new members. For those who say that ASIS&T is too narrow, too broad, too this or not enough that, challenge them to get involved and help shape the society. Members do make a difference and our future depends on new people and ideas to thrive and serve the research and development needs of information professionals everywhere.

I look forward to seeing you at the Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh. We will have full papers, short papers and posters, as well as stimulating special panels and activities that should engage researchers and practitioners alike. A great series of continuing education seminars is available to help members advance their careers, and a range of focused workshops will address key information R&D challenges. Considerable effort will be given to recruitment and placement for faculty and information professionals. As always, there will be many opportunities for networking and meeting colleagues. This year, several important meetings will be co-located with ASIS&T, including the Dublin Core International Conference and the International Conference on Knowledge Management. It should be a rewarding experience for all of us.
Lucy Suchman, professor of anthropology of science and technology and co-director of the Center for Science Studies at Lancaster University, United Kingdom, will headline the 2010 ASIS&T Annual Meeting with a talk on Restoring Information’s Body, building on her research into ethnographic studies and interdisciplinary and participatory interventions in information technology design. The presentation will set the stage for dozens of panels, papers and posters to be offered on the meeting theme of Navigating Streams in an Information Ecosystem.

Meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, October 22-27, ASIS&T Annual Meeting participants will be a part of a re-engineered meeting format focusing on more interaction, more discussion and more acknowledgement of the spectrum of information science, practice and technology in the second decade of the 21st century.

Technical sessions are grouped within six broad tracks, each guided by a committee of topic experts. The tracks are Information Behavior, Knowledge Organization, Interactive Information and Design, Information and Knowledge Management, Information Use and Information in Context: Economic, Social and Policy Perspectives.

Several new features have been added to the Annual Meeting format this year. Themed workshops, many sponsored by ASIS&T Special Interest Groups (SIGs), will be held on Wednesday, October 27. These sessions, which require separate registration, will permit more focused and in-depth looks at topics touched upon during the meeting’s technical sessions. Also new this year is a Student Design Competition. Students attending the conference will be grouped into cross-institution design teams who will work together for a couple of days to come up with solutions to an assigned design problem. The work will be judged by industry and academic experts who will announce the winners at a special session on Tuesday, October 26.

For full information on the ASIS&T 2010 Annual Meeting, including registration materials and other new meeting features, check your mail for the printed version of the ASIS&T Annual Meeting preliminary program or visit the ASIS&T website.
Pakistan, for their paper *The Role of Educational Information Systems for Survival in Information Society and the Case of Pakistan*.

The paper review committee, chaired by Michael Zimmer, also included Johannes Britz and Maria Haigh, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; Catherine Johnson, University of Western Ontario; Anindita Paul and Borchuluun Yadamsuren, University of Missouri; and Hong Xu, University of Pittsburgh.

**News about ASIS&T Members**

Don A. Wicks is the interim director of Kent State University’s School of Library and Information Science. He succeeds Richard Rubin, who is now associate provost for extended education at Kent State.

Louise Spiteri is the new director of the School of Information Management (SIM) at Dalhousie University. She has been a SIM faculty member since 1998 and served as academic director of the MLIS program at SIM for the last year.

**News from ASIS&T Institutional Members**

Kent State University’s School of Library and Information Science (SLIS) has added five new full-time faculty members to its lineup. Michael Bice, most recently teaching graduate level courses in the University of Florida’s College of Public Health and Health Professions, joins Kent State as a professor charged with further development of a concentration in health information management. Rosemary DuMont will return to SLIS in the spring as a professor, following recent stints in a variety of Kent State administrative posts. She first joined Kent State in 1986.

Kiersten F. Latham, with more than 20 years of experience working in museums, in addition to teaching experience in several universities, joins Kent State as assistant professor. Nancy Lensenmayer has joined SLIS as a full-time faculty member at the Columbus site where she will teach core curriculum courses. Catherine L. Smith, most recently a post-doctoral research associate at Rutgers University, joins Kent State as assistant professor. Among her academic interests are the design of adaptive search systems and search expertise.

**ASIS&T Member Receives Two Google Grants**

Miles Efron, assistant professor in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, received two major Google research grants over the summer. With the latest grant, Efron will address current problems in microblog search. This grant follows on the heels of a Digital Humanities Research Award for his project, “Meeting the Challenge of Language Change in Text Retrieval with Machine Translation Techniques,” which will enable him to develop software that will let people enter a query in contemporary English and search over English texts throughout history—from Medieval times to the present day.

In the first project, Efron says he is “looking at language change as a translation problem.” In order for older texts to be searchable, contemporary English needs to be translated into language from various historical timeframes. “For this problem we can think of English at different slices of time as different languages,” said Efron. “The project will mostly involve training statistical models that assign probabilities of the translation to a word or phrase in a target English language.”

In the microblog search project, Efron will look at information management and organization problems that people will face as microblogging services such as Twitter take on a larger role in their day-to-day activities. “Search engines are very good at what they do. But it’s not clear that the standard search model works well for microblog data. . . . An individual tweet may or may not be of interest. But by intelligently connecting these short texts we can deliver information such as consensus, debate, open questions, recommendations — all in the scope of a particular information need,” said Efron.

Efron notes that “the unifying thread between the two projects is the relationship between search problems and information that has an inherently temporal nature.”
The Libraries in the Digital Age (LIDA) conference, held annually in Croatia, represents not only a core European meeting for library and information science, but also specifically a focal point for participation by ASIS&T members in Europe.

The first LIDA Conference (2000) was organized jointly by Tefko Saracevic, School of Communication, Information and Library Studies, Rutgers University, and Tatjana Aparac-Jelusic, Department of Library and Information Science, University of Zadar, Croatia. The conference, which has been co-chaired by them since that time, has included ASIS&T members as part of the program committee, featured and keynote speakers and guests of honor.

Tefko, who left Croatia in 1957, was honored at LIDA in 2006 with a book entitled Contributions to the Creation of a Theory of Information Science, which contained Croatian translations of nine of his highly cited articles.

ASIS&T President Gary Marchionini, the keynote speaker at the 2010 conference held in Zadar, Croatia, May 24-28, expressed surprise at the involvement of ASIS&T membership in the meeting, which prompted me to ensure wider knowledge about LIDA among ASIS&T members worldwide.

Typical Conference Themes

According to Saracevic, “Since its inception in 2000, LIDA has emphasized the examination of contemporary problems, intriguing advances, innovative approaches and solutions related to digital libraries. Each year a different and hot theme was addressed, divided in two parts, the first part covering research and development and the second part addressing advances in applications and practice.”

Further, Saracevic explained, “Rather than analyze each of the 20 themes covered over 10 years, six overarching and recurring subjects are chosen for discussion of changes and trends:

1. **Networked environment**: digital libraries and the web – positions, retrieval, diversity
2. **Development**: building digital libraries
3. **Services**: variety of services provided
4. **Users & use**: using digital libraries; human information behavior & information seeking in digital libraries
5. **Professional**: education for digital librarians, competencies needed; ethical concerns
6. **Social**: digital libraries and social, cultural, and institutional effects.”

ASIS&T Participation

ASIS&T notables who have attended LIDA conferences as keynote speakers and guests of honor include past presidents Eugene Garfield, Don King, Gary Marchionini, Tefko Saracevic, Nick Belkin and Robert Taylor. ASIS&T award winners participating have included Christine L. Borgman, Paul Kantor, Michael Buckland, Peter Ingwersen, Ching-chih Chen, Marcia Bates, Carol Kuhlthau and Barbara Wildemuth.

The ASIS&T European Chapter provides support for LIDA in the form of social events (wine and cheese parties), which are used to explain ASIS&T and recruit membership. (Tatjana Aparac-Jelusic served until recently as chairperson of the chapter, succeeding Emil Levine, who revived the chapter in the late 1990s. The chapter was originally organized by Michel Menou.)

A 2003 panel entitled the “The Role of Professional Organizations in Career Development” consisted of ASIS&T members giving examples of how participation in ASIS&T impacted and influenced their profession. Panelists included Levine, Kantor, Sandra Erdelez, University of Missouri-Columbia, Aparac-Jelusic and Saracevic.
**ASIS&T European Student Chapter and LIDA**

The relatively new ASIS&T-EC student chapter is strongly represented at LIDA, holding their annual meeting during the conference. The European Chapter awards several ASIS&T student memberships each year to student winners of the LIDA Poster Session.

In 2005 Gary Marchionini, Christine Borgman, Emil Levine, Tatjana Aparac and her husband Srecko Jelusic donated five free ASIS&T student memberships, whose recipients were selected by lottery. The award of the Thomson Reuters Outstanding Information Science Teacher Award to Tatjana Aparac-Jelusic in 2008 and the selection of the ASIS&T European student chapter as one of the two Student Chapters of the Year in 2008 also recognized the ASIS&T/LIDA connection.

**The Future of LIDA**

Conference statistics for 2010 are typical of other meetings. One hundred twenty four participants from 16 countries included 52 undergraduate and PhD students. Both the United States and British embassies in Croatia have provided financial support for speakers from their countries in the past.

Future meetings will be held on a biannual basis. The next LIDA will be held June 4-8, 2012, in Zadar, Croatia, with the theme *Quality and Evaluation of Digital Libraries and Preservation of Digital Resources and Records*. All LIDA presentations are available in proceedings of the conference at web.ffos.hr/lida.

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*Above, l-r:* Christine Borgman, guest of honor at LIDA 2007, is shown with Kora Golub in 2002. Golub has translated several information and library science books into Croatian. Golub was ASIS&T European Chapter Student of the Year in 2002. | ASIS&T President Gary Marchionini delivers the keynote addresses at LIDA 2010. | Co-chair Tatjana Aparac-Jelusic with Igor Ignjacic, student winner of the LIDA Poster Session 2010. He and colleagues from the University of Osijek, Croatia, were presented free ASIS&T student memberships by the ASIS&T European Chapter. | Former ASIS&T President Nick Belkin served as program chair at LIDA 2003.

*Above, l-r:* ASIS&T members, from left, Paul Kantor, Sanda Erdelez, Tatjana Aparac-Jelusic and Tefko Saracevic, present panel on “The Role of Professional Organizations in Career Development” at LIDA 2003. Emil Levine also participated. | Former ASIS&T President Robert Hayes has participated in most of the LIDA conferences. In 2005, he was guest of honor. | At LIDA 2006, co-chair Tatjana Aparac-Jelusic presents co-chair Tefko Saracevic with *Contributions to the Creation of a Theory of Information Science*, a book containing Croatian translations of nine of his highly cited articles. | Former ASIS&T President Eugene Garfield gives his presentation as guest of honor at LIDA 2004.
The Libraries in Digital Age (LIDA) conference, held annually in Dubrovnik, Croatia, starting in 2000 and moving to Zadar, Croatia in 2009, had two significant precursors. The earlier one was a series of conferences organized at the Interuniversity Center in Dubrovnik by Prof. Bozo Tezak (1907-1980). These conferences, held in 1977, 1979 and 1980, had a general title “Universities in World Network of Information and Communication” and attracted an international audience. Among the issues raised in presentation and lively discussions were effects of technology on libraries and universities. Digital libraries were not around then, but the subject of libraries, technologies and networks was very much present.

The later precursor was the Third International Conference on Conceptions of Library and Information Science (COLIS 3) held in May 1999, also in Dubrovnik, Croatia. Conference chairs were Peter Ingwersen, Denmark, and Tatjana Aparac-Jelusic, Croatia, and Pertti Vakkari, Finland; program chair was Tefko Saracevic of the United States. The theme of the conference was digital libraries; papers and discussions covered a wide range of related issues and topics.

Out of this experience came the idea to hold conferences specifically oriented toward a variety of contemporary topics related to libraries in the digital age – not only digital libraries. Consequently, the first LIDA conference was organized in 2000 drawing heavily from the legacy of these prior efforts. The purpose formulated then still holds today: “[T]o address the changing and challenging environment for libraries and information systems and services in the digital world.” While the purpose is constant, topics have changed every year. Directors for all the LIDA conferences have been Tatjana Aparac-Jelusic and Tefko Saracevic, while program chairs have changed every year depending on the topic chosen.

Tefko Saracevic is professor II emeritus at the School of Communication & Information, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, and a past president of ASIS&T. He can be reached at tefkos<at>rutgers.edu.
Adding Value: The Business of Independent Information Professionals
by Crystal Sharp, Guest Editor

This special issue of the Bulletin of the American Society for Information Science and Technology 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 these 21 articles written by 28 authors broadly present through description, experience, case studies and narration the work IIPs do and how they do it. In her introductory essay, “Looking Back, Looking Forward,” Susanne Bjørner, one of the authors included in the 1995 Bulletin issue on information brokering (www.asis.org/Bulletin/Feb-95/index.html), offers insights into the dynamics of the IIP field over the past 35 years.

Because of the number of contributions, the section will be 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” are included here. The third part, “Making It Work as an IIP” will be published in February 2011.

A Word about AIIP
AIIP (www.aiip.org) upholds a code of ethics and offers a strong community of peer support for IIPs, special relationships with data aggregators and vendors, continuing education through regularly hosted webinars, a quarterly newsletter, Connections, and an annual conference, all of which are made possible by significant involvement of AIIP member volunteers. The members-only discussion list, AIIP-L, is probably AIIP’s most valued asset, where experience is shared generously.

Many articles in this collection mention AIIP. Please note that my comments about AIIP, as well as those of others, reflect our own experiences and impressions and are not necessarily the views of AIIP.

In Conclusion...
We hope you find this issue useful and interesting. I end with a quote that captures the essence of what being an IIP means to me:

“It’s about how you can create a great opportunity for yourself and hold on to that or keep creating new opportunities where you can thrive. I think today the rule is about efficiency, it’s about collaboration and it’s about competitiveness and it’s about being a player. It is about staying sharp and being in the game…."

Rajesh Rao as quoted in The World is Flat by Thomas L. Friedman, p. 1
Looking Back, Looking Forward
by Susanne Bjørner

Adding Value: Independent Information Professionals

This special issue of the ASIS&T Bulletin is not the first to be written by members of the Association of Independent Information Professionals (AIIP). Fifteen years ago, a cover story on “Information Brokering” featured eight articles by AIIP members. This time around, we are glad to be called independent information professionals, and we are pleased to provide even more articles showing the diversity of our businesses, both in the clients we serve and in the services we provide.

The cover story for the February/March 1995 Bulletin (www.asis.org/Bulletin/Feb-95/index.html) was not the first to bring information brokering to ASIS&T members. Alice Sizer Warner, writing “Looking Back, Looking Ahead” in the 1995 issue, looked further back to February 1976. Then Bulletin editor Lois Lunin presented a 10-page article, “Information Brokers: Who, What, Why, How,” and added an editorial affirming that “Yes, information brokers can succeed.” In that 1976 publication, an information broker was defined as “an individual or organization who – on demand – seeks to answer questions using all sources available and who is in business for a profit.” Warner went on to say that early brokers disliked the “on demand” part of that definition, since “no one ‘demanded’ that we do anything – we had to beat the bushes for customers.”

Some things don’t change. Customers still don’t fall from trees, but we have become much better at marketing and the business side of business. Another thing that has changed is that the information broker term has receded in usage, and independent information professional has risen.

(The former gets barely half the hits versus the latter in a Google search.) Information broker lost favor at least partly because of its connotation of selling information, although brokers endlessly stressed that they were selling convenient access to information, not information itself, and that information professionals adhered strictly to ethical requirements of copyright and licensing.

The Association of Independent Information Professionals (AIIP) can certainly take some credit for the increased use of the IIP term. It has now been almost 25 years since AIIP founder Marilyn Levine invited participants to what she called the first international meeting of information brokers. Twenty-six individuals converged in Milwaukee in 1987, agreed that they had enough in common to meet again, formed an organization and chose independent information professional as a more encompassing term to describe themselves and their businesses. Even those at that first meeting offered far more services than online or manual research alone: document delivery, indexing, library set-up and support services, legal filing, consulting and technology training. We have only to look at the papers in this issue to see how businesses have diversified even more and kept up with changing market needs, challenges and opportunities brought on by the Internet, social networking and mobile access.

The Lives of Independent Information Professionals

What do we know about independent information professionals over the last 35 years and how information entrepreneurship has fit into their careers? Not all IIPs are or have been members of AIIP, but I will use that gathering point as the basis for my observations. I have been a member of AIIP since its beginning; I worked in libraries for nearly 20 years before then.

Susanne Bjørner provides editorial services to publishers, librarians, authors and researchers from her base in Spain. Contact her at bjørner<at>earthlink.net or www.bjørner.info.
Experience and education. Most individuals who start an information business do so with some years of prior working experience in other organizations. Many have worked in library or information-related enterprises; about an equal number have been employed in organizations whose primary missions were not information-related, though they often worked in information-intense positions in those organizations. They tend to have between five and 20 years of prior employee experience. A high percentage have master’s degrees; only about half of these are master’s degrees in library/information science.

Full-time vs. part-time. A recent AIIP member survey reported that 80% of IIPs devote full time to their information businesses – or have done so in the past. But over half said that they work only part-time in their businesses – or have done so in the past. In other words, many people work part-time and full-time at various points in their independent careers. It’s not uncommon for new information entrepreneurs to start their businesses while they are employed part-time elsewhere. It’s not unheard of to be employed full-time, though it’s tough to start or run a business if you are working full-time for someone else.

Part-time work has been a solution for many business owners when they have family responsibilities or other personal situations that put demands on their time and energy. More than one business has survived due to close networking and subcontracting to other IIPs when the principal chose to care for ill parents.

Age. The AIIP membership is growing somewhat older. The increased number of members over 60 is due to two factors. First, members who joined when in their 40s or 50s are remaining members even as they add birthdays. (Many continue in the full member category, which supports current business owners, but AIIP has also added retired and emeritus member categories). Second, some new members are joining at an older age. This trend reflects current employment realities of business closings, layoffs, buyouts, employee burnout and gradual retirement – all phenomena that can encourage individuals to test the idea of professional independence.

Moving On

Any look back reveals the absence of previous members, whether through death, full retirement or leaving the entrepreneurial effort to return to employment status. A significant number of members do eventually accept employment – often from a client – after several years as independents (and later some come back again to independent status). Charter members Roberta Brody, Rose Falanga, Sue Feldman and Barbara Rehkop have each gone on to share talents honed with their entrepreneurial experience at City University of New York, the Exploratorium, IDC and Washington University.

Still, many IIPs have remained independent for decades, inventing and reinventing their businesses through changing times. Law Library Management, for example, continues providing “the services of a full time law library staff on a part time basis,” as principal Ray Jassin explained at the first AIIP meeting, though the techniques used are different from those in 1987.

Only a few IIPs have been forward-thinking enough at the start to develop their businesses so that there was something to sell when they left. The usual model in earlier times was that when the principal moved on, the business closed. That is no longer the case. Several businesses now have acquired tangible and intangible assets in the form of patents, proprietary technology, business techniques, products and clients: their owners have succeeded in finding buyers for all or part of their firm when they retire or move on.

It’s not easy starting and growing a business, but it can be rewarding professionally, financially and personally. Information professionals now planning to work independently should look forward to hard work and constant change, but they can also look toward hundreds of models of success.
PART I
Research: Much More than Search and Retrieval
by Crystal Sharp, Guest Editor

The development of enabling technologies for data collection has led to an exponential growth in the availability of information, presenting challenges in finding relevant information, organizing it and using it to advantage. But it also offers opportunities to independent information professionals who can leverage their knowledge of the information landscape, of ever changing information search techniques, of information use patterns and of information management technologies to provide services of value to their clients.

In this group of articles Cindy Shamel and Liga Greenfield, who work with clients in the biomedical industry, discuss the value and process of helping clients articulate their information needs to locating relevant resources efficiently and the value of analyzing organizational information flows in defining information management solutions. Tom Wolff and Stephen Adams, specialists in patent information, discuss the many ways IIP patent consultants provide business intelligence, support legal opinions and business decisions and provide strategic guidance using patent analytics and services like intellectual property management and database development and training. Jane John, Jocelyn Sheppard and Jan Knight use a question-and-answer format to present their views on getting started in business, reaching and meeting target clients, the challenges of marketing and the unique opportunities and benefits of working with early stage sci-tech companies and entrepreneurs. Peggy Garvin’s article discusses the value IIPs provide to professionals working in policy, politics and journalism in navigating the information-rich and constantly evolving space of government information on the Internet. Phyllis Smith describes the value of her business to a Canadian federal government department. Arthur Weiss and Ellen Naylor offer insights into the use of secondary and primary research for competitive intelligence. Eiko Shaul discusses how an IIP fluent in the language and culture of a country (Japan, as an example) would be an asset to cross-country research. Finally, Missy Corley uses the business approaches and products of three IIPs, as well as projects her own business has undertaken, to show how IIPs in genealogical research, a specialized niche, provide value-added services.
PART I
The Unexpected Value of Research in Biomedical Business
by Liga Greenfield and Cindy Shamel

The biomedical industry relies heavily on information. Pharmaceutical, diagnostics and medical device companies thrive when the information they use is accurate, timely and targeted. A skilled information professional can help clients in the biomedical industry better understand their information needs and refine research requests to ensure useful results. Using techniques to evaluate and analyze how employees obtain, use and share information, information professionals can also help organizations avoid costly mistakes. Consider how the information professionals described here add value in unexpected ways to the projects and enterprises with which they work. In this article Liga Greenfield first considers the power that a fresh perspective can bring to a search for information, while Cindy Shamel considers the way in which IIPs can add value when they undertake a specific assignment by identifying larger information issues that may be revealed in the process.

The Power of a Fresh Perspective

With the advent of the Internet, information identification and retrieval changed dramatically, placing vast quantities of information readily at the fingertips of anyone who had the time, energy and skill to ferret it out. Somewhat unrealistically, the perception has therefore developed that anyone can find information they need anytime. The often-unrecognized danger is that the information retrieved in simple web searches is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of what is available. Information professionals daily use an arsenal of authoritative information resources beyond those readily available to the ordinary web searcher.

As an example, most of us are capable of cleaning, disinfecting and bandaging a simple wound, but we would call on a physician for a severe injury and might well find that physician reaching out to even more specialized professionals to provide state-of-the-art treatment when appropriate. So, too, do information professionals provide the next layers of expertise in searching for information upon which their clients base research and business decisions. If Dr. Smith, CEO of a small biotech startup, is traveling to a meeting, there is no reason he should not perform a simple web search to obtain some simple background information about the other participants. But if he is preparing a presentation for a meeting of investors and wants to be certain that he has not overlooked vital information in the published literature that contradicts his research, he should escalate the research job to a professional. If that same Dr. Smith’s company is about to apply for a patent for its discovery, it becomes even more critical to consult someone with expertise in searching technical and patent databases to provide the due diligence research necessary to protect the work.

Few would argue against the idea that someone who performs information research for a living is going to be more efficient and knowledgeable about that process than will someone who only occasionally performs such searches. Often however, we overlook the single most critical unexpected value of the information professional to a client: assistance with articulation of need.
In order to find the correct answer one must first ask a question that phrases the need in a clear and concise way. A person or group needing information often finds it difficult to express that need correctly and clearly. This difficulty is compounded when working with a group, each of whom sees the situation through a different personal filter of experiences, expectation and vision. An improperly voiced question gives rise to an incorrect or irrelevant answer.

An information professional skilled in the art of the reference interview can help the client to see the problem needing a solution more clearly and to articulate it in such a way that the client (individual or group) and the information professional perceive the same need and have a common understanding of the desired deliverable. Through a combination of active listening skills, background knowledge of the field of research and experience with the most directly applicable information resources, the information professional is able to guide the client to a more clearly defined information goal.

A few examples from my own experience with biomedical and pharmaceutical clients can illustrate this point:

**Specificity.**

**Client:** Can you provide us with all the information available on drug X, and can we get copies of all the articles? How much will it all cost?

**Information professional (IP):** Why do you need this information? What will you be doing with it?

**Client:** What difference does that make?

**IP:** It will help us determine the best strategy to retrieve the most useful information in the most cost-effective way possible. For example, do you need only clinical information or do you want pre-clinical publications included as well? Do you want only the brand-specific publications or anything that includes the generic or brand names for product X? Since this product is older, there is apt to be a lot of literature. Do you want to see only review articles or only articles in English, or can you suggest other ways in which we can filter the search results to provide you with a tightly focused and on-target deliverable?

**Concept Relationships.**

**Client:** Can you do a quick search for me? I’ve already prepared a list of the words you should use.

**IP:** Can you tell me more about your project and what you hope or expect to find?

**Client:** Don’t worry about that – just plug in these terms; I just don’t have access to the databases you have or I’d do it myself.

**IP:** I’m concerned that if I don’t understand the appropriate relationships among the terms you have provided and search for those specific relationships, the search results will be unnecessarily lengthy and expensive, as well as disappointing for you.

**Scope of Project.**

**Client:** Can you provide us with information about the companies working in XX therapeutic category for $2000 or less?

**IP:** That will depend on what it is you’re looking for and how you want that information presented. Are you interested in a simple listing of companies involved in research and marketed products in this therapeutic category or a SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis? Do you want financials, management information, partnership information, published research, news? Are you trying to build a competitive intelligence dossier on each company? Are you looking for just public companies or also private ones? US or worldwide? Let’s talk about these things and create a checklist of your specific needs in a deliverable, and then I can prepare a meaningful proposal and estimate for you.

Often, clients reaching out for help from information professionals are unaware of the scale of their projects until they hear some of the questions that information professionals ask them. As they respond to the probing, the clients begin to visualize their needs in a different light; they become more aware of various search options, information resources and the costs to perform those services. Potential clients who want the world on a shoestring budget quickly realize the limitations of their financial capabilities, so they structure the research request in a way to provide the most bang for the buck.
Others who have searched the web and found little become aware of how much relevant information is readily available from fee-based secondary resources of which they were not aware. They contract to have that search done, recognizing the cost savings of this approach over having to initiate and complete primary research to determine results that are already available.

A knowledgeable and experienced information professional provides clients not only information but also a clearer insight into what their information needs are, as well as an increased awareness of the resources available to meet those information needs. This value holds true for information across a broad range of specialties, not the least of which are the biomedical and pharmaceutical clients I have mentioned in this article. The advantage a biomedical/pharmaceutical information specialist often enjoys in working with her clients is that the clients are already research oriented, so they are often quick to grasp the value that information professional can bring to their projects.

Needs Assessments Lead to Unexpected Outcomes

Analyzing the flow of information into and within a company can lead to valuable recommendations for new services, resources and staffing. Here follows a brief overview of two projects completed by an independent information professional, including a look at the value delivered and the implications for each company. In each case the company had identified an information management problem. They developed a solution and called on an independent information professional (IIP) to help implement the proposal. In each case, after careful research and with the help of the client, the IIP redefined the information need and developed alternative solutions. Although each company was surprised by the findings, they acknowledged the validity of the recommendations and promptly implemented them.

**Information Audit.** Executive managers at Mednostics (not the real name), a diagnostics company with over 750 employees, identified the need to improve competitor intelligence. The corporate business development unit, which was tasked with resolving this situation, determined that the solution lay in organizing existing information, rather than gathering new information. The situation as they saw it involved development of a database for archiving existing available reports and data points. They called in an IIP to develop the system.

The IIP very quickly realized that Mednostics was unusual in the biomedical industry for its lack of an internal library or librarian function. A biomedical company’s most valuable asset is the information that surrounds and supports the use of a substance for a particular purpose. To protect that asset, most biomedical companies – and pharmaceutical companies in particular – employ librarians. In the absence of a centralized information management function Mednostics experienced inefficiencies in information acquisition, barriers to internal information sharing and risks related to copyright compliance.

Phase I of this project involved researching and writing a white paper for the executive team to document the value of a centralized information function and the risks associated with inefficient and ineffective information management practices. The information management needs went well beyond competitor intelligence. Initial findings indicated that the lack of professional library services could be costing Mednostics several million dollars a year. The executive committee attended to this finding and commissioned an information audit under the guidance of the chief financial officer to determine the company’s overall need for information management and to further define the function of an information professional.

Using an online survey tool to poll all employees and primary research to interview 30 employees in 25 departments, the IIP gathered data on information collecting, developing, sharing and storing practices. Additional research addressed spending and gaps in information availability. Findings from this audit revealed duplication in journal subscriptions and acquisition of market research reports. In an effort to organize their information, several departments had developed multiple homegrown databases for archiving and storing information. Where databases or resources were not available, employees improvised. In the absence of corporate journal subscriptions, employees shared personal subscriptions, putting the company at risk for copyright violations. In one case an employee would occasionally call a friend at a former employer, now a competitor, and ask for research assistance.

Thus, careful research and examination of existing information management practices led to the conclusion that the gaps were larger than a
lack of competitor intelligence, but involved systemic inefficiencies in the acquisition and sharing of information in general. An initial request from the company to create a database of reports and data ultimately led to a series of recommendations for better information management along with the suggestion to create a corporate library function to implement these recommendations. The company responded quickly and hired an experienced biomedical librarian to oversee information management. In the end, among other things, the librarian did create a portal for storing, surfacing and sharing the company’s information assets. Centralized information management put Mednostics in a much better position to systematically share information throughout the enterprise, and better monitoring of the competition is an important outcome of that process.

**Resource Evaluation.** In this case a pharmaceutical company of approximately 500 employees engaged an IIP to discover what sort of information employees on the commercial side needed. The information professional in this company was satisfied that the scientists and researchers had the information and services they needed but suspected there may be gaps in other departments such as human resources, business development and new ventures. The objective was to obtain feedback on the interest in a subscription to a key business magazine and a subscription to a large market research provider.

For this project the IIP conducted 13 interviews with directors and managers to inquire about what kind of information they needed to do their jobs, where they currently got information and what they needed but could not find. The IIP also asked the all-important question: “Is there anything else we need to know?”

The findings were surprising and very clear. These employees were not experiencing a lack of relevant information but rather an overload. They are inundated with data points throughout the day, which provide constant distraction. Along with that problem was the general fear that “maybe I’m missing something.” Findings revealed a strong culture of information sharing, which pleased the executive management very much. In general employees felt they had the resources needed to do their jobs. They obtained information either from the corporate library, through acquisitions using departmental funds or by sharing resources with other departments. Two thirds of those interviewed either received some kind of environmental scan/newsletter or wish they did. Only one department, human resources, expressed the need for access to more information. They asked for a database of scholarly literature that supports their function.

Recommendations from the IIP addressed all of the findings and have since been implemented through the library. The library has implemented a system to share existing news alerts available within the enterprise and to develop new alerts to meet identified needs. Further, they have acquired access to a literature database for human resources and subscribed to the business magazine identified at the outset. The employees interviewed did not think much of the market research company under investigation, so the library saved valuable resources by not subscribing to their publications. Through careful research this corporate library learned that its internal clients needed services more than sources. They avoided the acquisition of unneeded information, created a great deal of credibility and good will for the library function and improved information access for over one-third of the company.

In all of the examples described here the information professional listened, asked questions and applied specific industry knowledge with professional expertise to add unexpected value in resolving information needs. In each case outcomes yielded some combination of improved accuracy, timeliness, relevancy or cost savings.
PART I
Patents in the Realm of Independent Information Professionals
by Tom Wolff and Stephen Adams

To information professionals, patents may be one of many good sources of information or may be the principal basis for a successful information business. Patents cover most areas of technology, including chemistry, life sciences, electrical engineering, computing technology, mechanical engineering and, in some countries, business methodologies. We will explore the variety of ways information professionals use patent information to support their clients’ business decisions.

What Is a Patent?
A patent is a limited monopoly granted to the patent holder by separate countries through their patent authorities. The grantee has the right to restrict others from making, using or selling the invention within each granting country’s jurisdiction for a limited time of about 20 years. The invention may be a new article, composition, machine or process or a new use for any of them. In exchange for the patent, the inventor must concisely define the invention in patent claims and provide detailed support within the patent specification such that others could make, use or sell the invention once the patent is no longer in force. Patent applications are filed within each country or regional patent authority in which the applicant anticipates pursuing an examination process that could lead to a granted patent. The so-called “world patent application” (WO) under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) never results in a “world patent,” but rather is the beginning of a process leading to examination and grant in separate countries. The unexamined applications are generally published 18 months after first filing and provide a good source of notification that there is a pending patent. Published patent applications are a good resource on the technology because no new information may be added during the examination process; claims usually undergo revision but must be fully supported by the original specification. Granted patents with final claims are published when the examination process is completed, typically several years after they were first filed.

Patent documents are distinguished from most other forms of technical literature because they are distributed copyright-free within a very systematic bibliographic control system, which makes it relatively easy to identify them unambiguously and order copies. Patent databases were being used to distribute documents to the public via the Internet some years before the first electronic journals. Despite their easy availability, patents are still underutilized as sources of technical intelligence, due in part to the inherently complex legal and technical language that is used in the documents. Nonetheless, even non-specialists and small businesses are today in a position to leverage the content of the patent literature to stimulate their businesses once they have received some introductory guidance on how the system works and what it can deliver for them.

Patents for Competitive Intelligence
Many members of the Association of Independent Information Professionals (AIIP) use patents for competitive and business intelligence purposes. For example, most published patent applications or examined
patents identify inventors and companies to which inventors assign the patents rights. Information professionals can build bibliographies and patent portfolios from the bibliographic information or they may determine who is involved in targeted technologies. The latter may be determined by simple subject searching or use of patent classifications or other database indexing. This scoping work may be carried out using free patent sources such as Google Patents, FreePatentsOnline.com or online search facilities provided by patent authorities such as the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) or Esp@cenet search sites.

One may even find relevant answers by clever searching on web search engines. Alternatively, searched may use for-fee information systems such as Dialog to which they already have access and which have patent databases that may be searched just as easily as other databases on the system. Just as with other technical information sources, routine alerting searches can be easily set up to provide continual monitoring of a defined technical field or a set of known competitor companies.

**Specialized Patent Searches**

A smaller set of AIIP members conduct specialized patent searches and most are members of the Patent Information Users Group, Inc. (PIUG). These patent information specialists frequently have advanced technical degrees and have worked as searchers and as scientists or engineers in large corporations. Some are also patent agents registered to practice with national patent authorities. They may be in solo practice or own patent information services employing or subcontracting with other searchers. Their clients may be patent attorneys or inventors in small or start-up companies, large corporations or law firms. Their association with PIUG affords important networking, development and training opportunities.

The role of the patent searcher is to provide the information to support legal opinions and reasoned business decisions. One of the major challenges facing the professional searcher is the need to distinguish very small changes in technical content within very large numbers of documents; that is, they operate in a very “crowded” area of the prior art. This aspect of patent work requires patent searchers to use extremely complex search strategies combined with an intelligent selection of the appropriate information sources – skills that take some while to acquire and a lifetime to perfect. Patent searchers use their technical and patent search expertise to develop and implement search strategies and evaluate hit references, but they steer clear of all legal judgments. Legal opinions are the exclusive purview of legal professionals, usually patent attorneys, but in some cases, also patent agents.

The breadth of searches that patent information specialists conduct is as wide as the patent, legal and business decisions they support. The broadest are state-of-the-art searches that are used to guide research and development work and overall patent strategies. Patentability searches are typically somewhat narrower in scope and are requested to determine if a specific known invention, which may have already reached an advanced stage of development, satisfies the novelty requirement for obtaining a patent. The issue is whether the claimed invention has ever been disclosed in prior art, that is, in publicly available patent or non-patent literature. For the most part, patent searchers do not address the other requirements for patentability – that the invention be non-obvious, useful and of patentable subject matter – just as they do not offer legal opinions, although recent legal cases in the patents field make it more likely that these factors, particularly obviousness, will need to be considered in the future during routine patentability searches.

A freedom-to-practice search involves trying to confirm that there are no valid, enforceable patents that would bar a business from employing a technology or selling a product. The patent searcher needs to search for patents in the countries in which the client wants to do its business and for patents or pending applications from the recent past. Patents whose term of grant has passed would not be a barrier; nor would patents that had expired due to non-payment of periodic maintenance fees required by patent authorities. However, as a result of the dynamic nature of the legal status of any given patent, there is often an element of continuous monitoring involved, which may be put in place once the initial search is completed. This monitoring helps a client learn if the barrier to practicing the technology has been removed, for example, by a later failure on the part of the patent owner to pay maintenance fees.

Should any problematic patents be identified, business managers may
request an invalidity search. This type of search is similar to a patentability search but normally is even more comprehensive due to the larger financial stake involved. An invalidity search seeks prior art that would have caused the examiner to reject the patent claims had the information been identified and considered during the examination process. Such prior art would allow the client to decide to proceed with the knowledge that there was applicable prior art that could be used in litigation should the inventor charge the client with infringement. Usually, no actual reexamination is undertaken, although in some countries, third parties may contribute such prior art during an opposition that follows initial patent grant.

These critical patent searches generally require use of for-fee, value-added databases or aggregated information systems. A premier patent database is the Derwent World Patents Index (DWPI) from Thomson Reuters. The full power of DWPI is available only with an expensive subscription usually only affordable by large corporations, who may be able to provide independent information professionals with access via their corporate online accounts. Non-subscribers can access DWPI at higher rates and without the value-added indexing. Other databases with patent coverage and expert-applied indexing include the IFI Claims and Chemical Abstracts Service CPlus databases, as well as chemical structure databases such as Merged Markush Service and CA REGISTRY and MARPAT. Most of these specialized technology databases are available on search systems such as Dialog, Questel and STN International. Searchers may use any of a number of extensive and less expensive full-text patent search systems that in some cases mitigate the need for value-added indexing. Leading examples include LexisNexis TotalPatent, Minessot PatBase, Questel Orbit.com and Thomson Innovation. URLs for these databases are provided at the end of the article.

Patent Analytics

Patent searches may analyze large sets of patent information to provide critical strategic guidance to their clients. This is sometimes called patent analytics, patent data mining and visualization or patent landscape analysis and can involve software-aided analysis of thousands of full-text patent documents or value-added patent database records. Companies can use large-set patent analyses to predict competitors' plans or the future directions of technologies. Because most patent applications are published 18 months after first filing and often provide technical information not reported elsewhere, a patent analytical study may allow correlation of patent filings with future product launches. Patent analyses are most effective in technology sectors where the time from first conception of the invention to marketed product, often referred to as the strategic window, is longer than 18 months. By monitoring patent information, companies in these industries may have time to analyze the technical landscape and respond in advance of competitors’ actions. This situation is especially true in the pharmaceutical industry and other highly regulated sectors where the strategic window might be 10 years rather than 10 months.

The skills that patent searchers bring to patent analytics include a thorough understanding of patent information, competitive intelligence skills needed to understand and to make best use of the results of the analyses and expert knowledge of patent analysis tools and methods. Many patent analysis, mapping and visualization tools are available from patent information providers and independent application developers and are covered in numerous publications and patent conferences. PIUG has recently established a task force to evaluate patent analysis tools and help influence development of current and future tools. The goal of the task force is to catalog the tools that are available and to build a community of practice in this area where users can share best practices and their experiences in using these tools.

Consulting Services

Patent information specialists may offer a wide variety of consulting services to patent applicants, legal practitioners, patent database producers and patent granting authorities. This consulting may cover intellectual property management, patent database development or training. The expertise of some AIIP members also includes intellectual property matters beyond patents, such as trademark searching or consultation on copyright matters. In the area of database development, AIIP members have been involved in the creation of completely new commercial databases for very specialized subject domains such as genetic sequences that are now used worldwide.
Search specialists frequently get asked to help in the testing phase for new search interfaces or modifications to the content of existing databases created by the for-profit information sector.

Politics, economics and the law provide a rapidly-moving backdrop to patent searching. There are frequent changes in national and international intellectual property law. In recent decades these alterations have often been associated with political change such as the formation of the newly independent countries in the Balkans and former Soviet states or the reunification of Germany. An effective patent searcher needs to keep up to date with these changes. Some consulting firms and training organizations serve the specialist search community by providing relevant news and professional development services to help searchers serve their clients effectively. Professional networking is a vital part of the searcher’s work, and much information is exchanged during professional conferences and seminars all over the world. The complex and often business-critical nature of the patent information specialist’s work is leading to a realization that some form of professional certification will be of benefit in the future. Various organizations across the world are currently cooperating in seeking to develop a suitable certification scheme.

Wrap Up

AIIP members recognize the value of including patent databases in their search strategies when dealing with technical clients or subjects. The extent to which they delve into the area varies with the subject matter and their level of expertise and comfort with patents. In any case, they always have other AIIP members to call upon to satisfy any client’s information needs.
PART I
The IIP and the Small Business High Tech Client
by Jane John, Jocelyn Sheppard and Jan Knight

Adding Value: Independent Information Professionals

To succeed financially as independent information professionals (IIPs), we need clients who recognize the value of – and are willing to pay for – our services. These “good” clients understand how we extend their organizational capabilities; provide actionable information, analysis and strategy; and contribute to their bottom line and the success of their mission.

While small high tech businesses and start-up enterprises may appear to offer limited potential as clients – due to often limited operating capital – they do appreciate the value provided by IIPs. IIPs can often fill the information gap for early-stage companies that definitely need market, business and technical research, but typically have no in-house research or library staff. In fact, more than 90 percent of all businesses in the United States and Europe have fewer than 50 employees, and likely few of these small businesses have information professionals on staff. From engineering and technology scans, to business plans and grant proposals, to potential government and venture capital funding, to market and industry research to better understand their competitors, these small clients recognize they can derive real benefit from working with IIPs.

In the following question and answer section, the co-authors will describe how they have built a client base consisting largely of start-up companies, entrepreneurs, tech companies, inventors and related organizations. Jan Knight, Jane John and Jocelyn Sheppard will explain their strategies for acquiring these clients, describe some of the key rewards and challenges of working with them and offer some tips for successfully meeting the needs of clients who are in pre-launch, start-up or early growth modes.

The Authors and Their Companies

On Point Research (Brunswick, Maine). Jane John’s company provides research that helps early-stage and established tech firms reduce risk in their many business decisions. The firm has prepared market views for over 100 small- to medium-sized companies in New England, helping them learn about niche industries and potential competitors or partners.

Owner and principal researcher Jane John has more than 20 years of experience in conducting all types of research in published sources. She has a master’s degree in library and information science from Denver University in Denver, Colorado, and 15 years of experience working in corporate libraries. She is a past president of the Association of Independent Information Professionals. She is also a member of the Special Libraries Association and the Association for Consulting Expertise (Maine).

Bancroft Information Services (Tucson, Arizona). Jan Knight is an independent market research consultant and president of Bancroft
Information Services where she provides customized business intelligence and secondary market research to companies who wish to make informed decisions. Her work helps to shape business plans, marketing strategies and new business development for a diverse set of clients, including high start-ups, technology companies, marketing strategists and small- and medium-sized businesses in all industries. Bancroft Information Services has recently partnered with additional consultants to offer assistance in developing SBIR (Small Business Innovation Research) government grants. Her work in this area focuses primarily on commercialization strategies and market and competitive analyses.

Ms. Knight holds an MA in information resources and library science from the University of Arizona and a bachelor’s degree in Renaissance/humanities studies from the University of California, Berkeley. Originally from England, Jan moved to Tucson in 1984 and worked in the advertising/marketing and publishing industries before starting her own business in 2001.

Red House Consulting (Washington, Pennsylvania). Established in 2001, the company serves clients in the business, academic and nonprofit sectors. For research and development (R&D) firms seeking to develop and commercialize new technologies, Red House provides commercialization feasibility studies, market research and analysis, business plans and U.S. government R&D grant proposal preparation. Red House Consulting also assists academic and nonprofit clients with organizational assessment, strategic and operational planning, board development and project management.

Principal consultant Jocelyn Sheppard has extensive experience in technology transfer, strategic planning, project management and writing and editing. Prior to starting Red House Consulting she worked at the National Technology Transfer Center in Wheeling, West Virginia. She received her master’s degree in library science and Ph.D. in English from the State University of New York/Buffalo. She is a member of the Association of Independent Information Professionals, the Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations, BoardSource and the entrepreneurial organization TiE Pittsburgh.

Question & Answer Section

Q: When you started your business did you deliberately go out to market yourself to these types of clients or did something happen in your business where it became clear that these companies needed your services?

Jane John (JJ): I was deliberately targeting engineering firms based on past corporate library experience; however, I was not targeting small and medium-sized firms directly. Once I happened on a few projects for this size client, I found a network of professionals and supporting organizations that gave me referrals to more.

Jan Knight (JK): I originally assumed that larger companies would actually be able to afford research and be savvy enough to know its value, but sometimes reaching the larger companies and convincing them of this was a challenge. I found myself being contacted by small companies and start-ups, in part due to the way I was networking and the types of business people I was meeting. Early in my business I changed my focus to small businesses, consultants, start-ups and entrepreneurs.

Jocelyn Sheppard (JS): I knew that I wanted to leverage the skills I had developed while working at the National Technology Transfer Center. In fact, my first client was the NTTC, and contacts I made there led me to my next several clients. People in the high tech sector in West Virginia tend to know each other, so my strategy from the start was word-of-mouth advertising. My consulting practice has expanded into other products and services as I’ve been introduced to individuals and organizations outside the high tech community.

Q: How do you reach and/or meet your target clients – especially those applying for U.S. government grants like Small Business Innovation Research grants (SBIRs) or planning on selling their product to the government?

JJ: I found it was important to align with some of the state or local organizations that also serve this client base. I have made my market research services known to state level technology groups (e.g., the Maine Technology Institute), to regional economic development offices and to other business consultants. I offer to teach workshops about online research
to technology incubators, business acceleration forums, any place where early-stage tech firms – and, more importantly, the professionals who support them – gather.

JK: I market my services in a couple of key ways. To reach the entrepreneurs directly, I attend conferences and workshops for entrepreneurs and start-ups where they expect to meet consultants of all kinds who might offer valuable assistance. I also reach these same companies by way of volunteer mentoring and providing workshops to local business incubators, regional Small Business Administration-related agencies and groups who help businesses get established. I have also had a unique opportunity to partner with another consultant whom I met at the local business incubator. Her company focuses on government contracting help for small businesses, and as a member of her team of consultants, I have researched commercialization opportunities, competitors and market data for numerous SBIR grant applications.

JS: Regional technology-based economic development (TBED) organizations often pay for their small high tech clients to receive technical editing and writing support on SBIR and other U.S. government grant proposals. These TBED organizations will also underwrite the cost of market research, commercialization studies and business plan preparation. Sometimes I encounter small companies that I direct to their nearest TBED organization; other times the TBED organization contacts me to initiate the engagement with the small company. In Pennsylvania, Red House Consulting is a preferred provider for the Innovation Partnership consortium (http://innovationpartnership.net/), which focuses specifically on support services for companies seeking SBIR/STTR program support.

Q: How big a part of your business is taken up with working with these types of clients?

JJ: Only about half of my client base comprises small technology-based businesses. Since their information needs are not constant and their ability to pay for services is sometimes limited, I strive to be sure another portion of my business is for more established firms with recurring information needs.

JK: I would estimate that start-ups, entrepreneurs, tech companies and small businesses provide about 80 percent of my business. I have historically marketed myself most aggressively – and successfully – to these groups and I’ve achieved good name recognition in the small business community. Future plans include devising ways to similarly engage larger companies.

JS: The TBED organizations constitute approximately 60 percent of my client base. Of that 60 percent, about 90 percent of the projects are on behalf of the small high tech start-ups. My other clients are in the educational and nonprofit sectors.

Q: What are some of the challenges of marketing yourself and your business to these types of markets (entrepreneurs, start-ups, other consultants, etc.)?

JJ: The companies or entrepreneurs themselves are so busy in start-up mode – and so focused on their R&D or product – that they often don’t think about market research until a potential funder or another business consultant suggests they need it. It is often more successful to market directly to other business consultants and business support organizations. I rarely market directly to an entrepreneur or start-up firm.

JS: The TBED organizations constitute about 60 percent of my client base. Of that 60 percent, about 90 percent of the projects are on behalf of the small high tech start-ups. My other clients are in the educational and nonprofit sectors.

Q: What are some of the unique opportunities or benefits you’ve had in working with these types of clients?
JJ: Entrepreneurs inject enthusiasm and jobs into the local community. It is satisfying to see your local business news cover a company you helped with market research, especially a company that is now expanding or creating a spin-off venture.

JK: It’s wonderful to have been part of clients’ success stories. One of my earliest and repeat clients was a self-taught inventor who developed an innovative medical device. He has since received various forms of funding, and his product was recently named one of the “Top 10 Inventions of the Year” in Popular Science magazine. This benefit speaks for itself and makes work fun.

JS: Thanks to the support of the TBED organizations, I get to work with small companies that otherwise could not afford my services – at least not at the critical early stage when they really need market research and analysis. It’s also very satisfying to be able to work with brilliant engineers and scientists who’ve often worked decades in industry, and now have the creativity and vision to launch their own ventures. Each client requires a special mix of research, analysis and strategic recommendations and sometimes requires the use of external specialists (e.g., financial accounting, website and database design and primary research). I find it especially satisfying that they trust Red House to provide this integrated solution.

Q: What are some of the challenges of working with these types of markets (entrepreneurs, start-ups, other consultants, etc.)?

JJ: Early-stage companies need assistance across a variety of areas: business development, funding, management and marketing come to mind. Research is only one service they need. If you plan to work with this sector, plan on wearing many hats, or network with others who can serve these clients so you can make appropriate referrals.

JK: One obvious challenge in working with start-ups specifically is often the lack of funding to pay for consultants; thus it’s necessary to position ourselves as offering as much or more value than traditional consultants, such as intellectual property attorneys, business plan writers and marketing strategists.

JS: A major challenge is the entrepreneur’s and the start-up’s enthusiastic belief that they will be able to successfully market their new product to the military, to federal agencies and to industry for a multiplicity of uses – all within the first two years of operation! It requires persistence to get these clients to narrow their focus (or otherwise prioritize their target markets and customers) so that my market and industry research can really be useful in supporting their decision-making.

Q: What tips would you offer your fellow IIPs for working with these clients?

JJ: One of the main differences with technology companies, large or small, is that their product is often a technology advance or application that becomes part of another product, that is to say an “enabling” technology. Their ultimate market is often not the consumer, but another technology firm. So “competitor research” may become “partner research” – helping the company look for potential partners that may want to incorporate the new technology to help make their own product faster, lighter, more secure, less expensive, etc. It’s an excellent opportunity for information professionals who have a science or engineering background and are also interested in business research. Tech entrepreneurs also may need to scope a wide range of potential applications to determine if there are multiple opportunities for technology commercialization. And they invariably need a global, forward-looking perspective. Sometimes the research task is “technology in search of an application.” It can be very creative, cross-disciplinary research.

JK: For the tech company relationships, unless you possess a technical background, I would offer that an element of success is to be willing to detach yourself from the technology and not expect to fully understand it, but at the same time grasp the concept well enough to perform the necessary research. These relationships often offer the opportunity to extend oneself outside of the research box, and this can be very fulfilling.

JS: Don’t offer these clients a soup-to-nuts solution in one phase. Scientists and engineers particularly appreciate an iterative approach to market research, industry analysis and commercialization strategy development. For these clients, I typically offer a staged engagement consisting of an industry/market overview, a closer look at two or three industries and then an even closer
look at competitors, competing technologies and potential licensing and marketing strategies. This approach enables the client to analyze initial findings, ask new questions and provide the always important technical perspective. It’s worth remembering that these clients usually have an enormous amount of knowledge to share about their technology, competing technologies and how these technologies are used in specific industry sectors. It’s up to the IIP to elicit this information in a way that helps define and focus the research task, while also testing the client’s assumptions about what is or is not likely to succeed in the marketplace.

**JJ:** Anyone going into this market niche needs to feel comfortable with doing telephone research or collaborating with someone who specializes in telephone interviews. Often fledgling tech businesses are doing R&D that is not yet well covered in published market or business reports. In order to find information on potential applications for a new technology or on potential partner companies, you will need to do research at the margins of the published research, and that will likely involve telephone research.

**JK:** Make sure people really know how you can help them. I recently finished a project for a new client, a colleague I’d actually known for years. She and I were having an informal conversation where she was helping me brainstorm a specific marketing strategy for my business. The end result was that she learned something about my business she didn’t know before, realized she could hire me and did so. The result was a testimonial from her saying, “Very, very excited and SOLD on what and how you do what you do.” It made me realize that we don’t always do a good job making people aware of the full scope of our work and the benefits we can bring.

**JS:** With any type of research project, you need to budget enough money to pay for fee-based database searches, market research reports (in their entirety or “by the slice”) and other market- and industry-specific data. This is even truer of projects dealing with new technologies, since analysis of their market potential and trends is less likely to have made it to the free business literature. For one recent project, I joined a trade association in order to obtain an important industry report; bought a trade directory to quickly identify key competitors; and purchased several hundred dollars’ worth of market projections. For this project, I included a budget for the market projections and trade directory and received permission from the client to add the cost of the trade association membership to the agreed upon project cost.
PART I
Government Information: Adding Value as an Expert Guide
by Peggy Garvin

Adding Value: Independent Information Professionals

Today’s professionals need to keep up with relevant news and find reliable answers many times in the course of a workday. AIIP members can help. AIIP members are valued for their skill at finding and analyzing information but, just as important, we can find and analyze information sources. This skill has its roots in the traditional collection development role of librarians. It requires broad, current knowledge of research needs and priorities, potential resources and their alternatives and publishing trends, as well as a general awareness of a practitioner’s computing environment – all within a specific domain of expertise.

For better or worse, the day many people got Internet access on their desktops was the day they became – at least in their own minds or their managers’ eyes – researchers. Unfortunately, most employees were given this incredibly powerful tool for global online information access without the benefit of basic research training. It has been over 10 years since the web came into our offices, and we are beginning to accept a few inconvenient truths:

- Having access to a universe of information does not mean you will be able to find the bit you need when you need it.
- Searching for information inefficiently consumes time better spent elsewhere.
- Finding information for research papers at college with a wealth of costly campus-wide subscription databases is very different than finding information in the workplace.
- Keeping up with the changes in online content is often a job in itself.

With rapid innovation in the web world, the need for expert advice has become more urgent.

Washington, DC, is an information-intense environment. The United States government creates or collects legal information, technical information, health and medical information, regulatory filings, news, consumer guides, data of all sorts, economic analysis, scientific research results, strategy documents, international studies, histories, information about government and even information about government information. Washington also has interest groups interested in just about everything; journalists, lobbyists, lawyers, policy advocates, embassies, trade and industry associations, congressional staff, think tanks and legislative liaisons that are continually consuming and producing information. Even before the web, information traffic was heavy. With the web, the volume of information and the speed with which it is shared are on a continuous upward trajectory. What’s more, the direction, format and very nature of the traffic have changed and continue to evolve daily. In this environment, even the most tech-savvy staffer needs an expert guide to identify the fastest, most reliable routes.

The Internet-empowered policy, politics and news professionals of Washington face the same challenges in the same areas as other professionals:

- finding information and sources when Google and other favorites are inadequate (and realizing when this is the case);
Keeping up with an endless stream of new website, new product and new feature announcements;

integrating new information streams from blogs, social media sites and mobile apps into an existing workflow;

determining the authenticity and quality of information available from a site;

understanding the level of privacy or confidentiality a new website affords you and your clients; and

reducing information overload from duplicative or marginal information sources.

Some challenges are particularly relevant for the Washington researcher. The authenticity and integrity of information are important in any field, but particularly so in legal, legislative and regulatory areas. The integrity of documents is important, and so is validation of sources. As government participation on third party websites such as Facebook and Twitter grows, the potential for imposter accounts grows. Choice overload is common. Because so much U.S. government information is not protected by copyright, the content is frequently repurposed to create slightly different new products.

Discovery is difficult, too. Government information is a significant part of what is called the deep web content, which does not surface in popular search engines. Even when government webmasters have optimized their sites for indexing, the content often cannot compete with private commercial sites optimized for a high rank in search results. Another challenge is finding pre-web documents in an online market focused on what is happening this day, this minute. In a democracy that has been around for several centuries, documents from 1910 or 1810 can be as important as those from 2010. Some are online; many are not. Finally, customer support can be minimal or difficult to locate. Most federal offices cannot supply the nation with the level of customer service that premium commercial providers can deliver to their pool of customers.

The recent history of the Federal Register, a core information resource in Washington, is an excellent example of the choice overload researchers confront. The daily Federal Register gives public notice of regulations, proposed regulations and other executive branch announcements. The Register is available to search for free on the Government Printing Office (GPO) FDsys.gov service, and it is carried by at least five for-fee commercial online services. In October 2009, GPO announced that it would begin offering the full text of the Register online in XML format for free bulk download. Entrepreneurial web developers instantly began creating new products from it. We now have the free web services OpenRegs.com, FedThread.us, Justia Regulation Tracker and GovPulse.us, all bringing a different approach to Federal Register content.

As the federal government makes more information available for free bulk download, we can expect to see more energy injected into the formerly stable world of government documents. Government publishers are moving forward cautiously to take advantage of web innovations. The U.S. Government Printing Office and the National Archives and Records Administration collaborated with the independent developers of GovPulse.us to create the beta Federal Register 2.0 <www.federalregister.com> website, which launched in July 2010. The site’s accessibility and information-sharing features are likely to bring a larger and more diverse audience into the regulatory process.

Has the average Washington policy wonk or congressional staffer kept up with all of these developments? The odds are unlikely. And the average recent college graduate will be asking, “What’s the Federal Register?” Not to worry. AIP experts can step in to help managers and their staffs spend less time finding good information and more time using it.
PART I

The Independent Information Professional as Government Contractor

by Phyllis Smith

Many government agencies are heavy users of information. Some publish information for distribution, and they value information from reliable sources, including other government agencies, private industry and academia. Many departments are supported by information centers — special libraries — that focus on highly specific areas of interest. Despite having information expertise in-house, an independent information professional (IIP) can also add value.

It is not necessarily easy for an IIP to get individual projects from a government client. There can be processes to follow that make it difficult for a department to hire an IIP unless they are contracted for services over time. The IIP remains independent and may have other clients, but is also committed to the department for the duration of the contract. The IIP who wins such a contract can find it to be a rewarding experience.

One of my longest-standing and probably favorite clients is a Canadian federal government department. The department frequently acts as an advisor to the different levels of government in Canada and abroad and also to private industry. Staff members have a broad range of education, experience and expertise. Their information needs are equally wide-ranging.

I have been on contract to the department’s information center for several years. On a daily basis, the information center team responds quickly to client requests for access to specialized resources, and they gather obscure data to support department obligations. Their priorities change quickly with those of the department. To say the information center is busy is an understatement. They also train new hires, develop proprietary information resources and monitor a rapidly changing environment on behalf of their clients.

Through the information center, I get to work for many people serving a variety of roles in the department, knowing that their needs somehow revolve around information. I’m frequently asked to provide research services, but the subject matter varies greatly depending on who is doing the asking. However, research is only part of what I can do.

I have also conducted training and written user guides to help department staff make better use of key research tools developed by the information center. I’ve ventured into marketing by conducting and analyzing client surveys, looking for ways to improve services. Sometimes I create presentation and training materials for others to deliver. I have consulted on decisions to improve or change their services. I frequently support the information center team, allowing them to focus their energies on the services that can only be handled in-house.

Occasionally I am offered assignments that are labor-intensive and time-consuming. One such large project took several months to complete and offers a good example of how an IIP can provide value to a government department.

The department often partners with municipal, provincial and federal government agencies involved in the preparations for international events being hosted in Canada. To support their partners during one such international event, they decided to develop a publication that would provide background information and highlight issues that could pose problems at the event in question.

Phyllis Smith is the owner of In the Know Research and Information Consulting. In addition to working with the government client discussed in this article, Phyllis provides research and information product development services to professionals and consultants. She can be reached at psmith<at>in-the-know.com.
The project involved the collection, analysis and presentation of data to be drawn from a variety of reliable sources. It was clear that the information center needed and wanted to be involved, but they wanted to be certain that they could provide a quality product while maintaining the high level of service their clients expected and enjoyed. And that is where I stepped in.

While my colleagues continued to serve the daily needs of the department, I committed myself to this one project. I handled all of the details of identifying reliable resources, analyzing and selecting the key data based on expressed needs and organizing it all so that it could be translated and published with a minimum of fuss. The information center staff worked with me to coordinate the final steps of the project, but they experienced little of the stress that comes with juggling such a complex project with their day-to-day work.

The final product was a professional-looking publication that met all of the requirements, ready for distribution. The department impressed their partners with concise, targeted information, and the information center impressed their department clients by producing a quality publication on time with apparent ease. So impressed were they that the information center was asked to produce similar publications for a number of years.

Could the publication have been completed without an IIP involved? Certainly, but it would have been at a cost. Regular information center services would have been affected if one or more team members were responsible for developing the publication. Inevitably, more urgent priorities would have interfered with the staff meeting the publication deadlines. In this case, an IIP easily met the deadlines with minimal supervision and minimal impact on the information center team.

The value I bring to my government client in all of the work I do for them is simple: they get more done in the same amount of time because they attend to high priority requests while I meet lower priority deadlines. And I save them money since I require few of their limited resources in order to get the job done.

An IIP whose client is a government department, like all IIPs, is skilled in the identification and retrieval of accurate, timely and targeted information and needs to be particularly skilled in the subject areas of interest to that government department. My government department client trusts my knowledge and ability to help them achieve their goals.

IIPs have the flexibility to fit neatly into the government department’s style of work. They add value by filling in the gaps. Those may be gaps in knowledge or expertise, or gaps may exist because of increased demands without corresponding increases in personnel. An IIP can be a trusted partner who understands and is committed to the goals of the government department client.
PART I

Competitive Intelligence: How Independent Information Professionals Contribute to Organizational Success

by Arthur Weiss and Ellen Naylor

Adding Value: Independent Information Professionals

There are many definitions for competitive intelligence, but all share some common themes – namely that it is an ethical process for obtaining information on the competitive environment for use in organizational decision making. As a result competitive intelligence collection and analysis has both tactical and strategic importance for companies. A legitimate question is whether companies should risk outsourcing the collection of such information to non-company employees. Surely competitive intelligence is too important to be outsourced to anybody who lacks a full understanding of the company culture, markets, history and current competitive situation.

Nevertheless companies do outsource both primary and secondary competitive intelligence research for a variety of reasons. Furthermore, doing so can provide them competitive advantage compared to those organizations that believe they know best and keep such research in-house. Reasons include the obvious issues relating to the time required to gather such intelligence, and many organizations lack the skills needed. In the case of primary research, a key reason to outsource is that an independent researcher may be able to approach sources that would not be easily accessible to the company itself. The first section of this article by Arthur Weiss focuses on how independent information professionals can provide value for competitive intelligence research using secondary/published sources. The second section by Ellen Naylor will consider issues relating to primary research.

Secondary Research for Competitive Intelligence

For many, secondary research involves a simple Google search. The researcher enters keywords and hopes that the needed information will come up within the first 10 or 20 hits. When it doesn’t, the researcher tries a few more terms and then gives up – assuming that what is needed can’t be found. An independent information professional (IIP) could be invaluable in helping such researchers find the missing information – if they only realized what they were missing. An IIP should also be able to provide training, showing them how to improve their searching.

Seasoned researchers will try more sophisticated searches, having changed the preferences on Google so that 100 hits appear on each page rather than the default 10. They will also put search terms in quotation marks and search within titles or for specific file types – using Google’s fieldcodes. They may try alternative search engines, Bing for example, or specialist tools such as Google Scholar and various deep web search approaches. If they work in large organizations, they are likely to have access to pay-to-use services such as Factiva, Lexis-Nexis and Dialog, among others.

Arthur Weiss (a.weiss@marketing-intelligence.co.uk) is the managing director of AWARE, a leading UK business specializing in competitive intelligence within Europe [www.marketing-intelligence.co.uk]. Arthur is a member of AIIP and offers both primary and secondary CI research to clients. Arthur is seen as a global expert in using secondary research to find competitive intelligence.

Ellen Naylor (answers@thebisource.com) is president of U.S.-based Business Intelligence Source, a competition detective consultancy formed in 1993. Ellen offers research and instruction to clients especially around sales and marketing. Ellen is viewed as a global expert in primary intelligence gathering and analysis and writes a blog, http://cooperativeintelligenceblog.com.
An independent information professional can provide value for even the seasoned researcher by offering true objectivity on top of a familiarity with the types of sources required for competitive intelligence that goes well beyond what can quickly be found with competent searches on Google, for example.

Competitive intelligence secondary researchers need to be able to find the following:

- Potential interviewees for primary research with as much detail as possible about the person. Such people can include ex-competitor employees or current competitor employees plus a range of other stakeholders. Finding such people can depend on the size of your network – and typically an IIP specializing in competitor research will have developed a large network to draw on. Searches will be made on LinkedIn.com as well as searches for conference attendees, speakers, job-movers and more.

- Product details – whether from patents, trademarks, technical documentation or customer feedback. Such intelligence can give an idea on the technology used in the product as well as future plans, problems and potential for development for both the competitor and one’s own organization. Understanding competitive technologies is often outside the skill set of the average competitor analyst. Engaging an IIP with familiarity with the industry can provide insights that could otherwise be overlooked.

- Competitor capabilities – a key focus for competitor research. Questions such as whether the company has the finances to expand or the technologies or employee skills and much more need to be answered, since understanding a company’s capabilities makes it possible to draw up a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) assessment and evaluate potential strategies that the competitor may consider.

- Strategies, goals and assumptions – obtained from management interviews, blog comments, news articles and even twitter feeds. Such intelligence is crucial in building up a picture of a company, allowing a competitor to anticipate future actions.

The above list of the types of information required for competitive intelligence is partial. It doesn’t include the ad hoc query aimed at answering a time-specific management query or at long-term business environmental forecasting, for example.

The sources used to answer competitive intelligence queries are thus not simple, and many questions are unlikely to be answered from Google searching. Competent information professionals should have an awareness of the range of sources that can provide clues to the intelligence required. Unfortunately, with corporate downsizing, organizations often lack the time and sometimes the skills for such searches. Competitive intelligence managers within companies can identify the questions and evaluate the answers but may not be equipped to do the research themselves. As such, using an IIP may be the solution.

Another reason to outsource competitive intelligence research is the risk of subjectivity. It is very difficult to remove the blinkers of organizational culture and see a competitor from a truly objective perspective. Failure to do so can be very damaging. In 1991, Virgin Atlantic accused British Airways (BA) of poaching customers and gaining access to confidential Virgin files. BA denied this and accused Virgin boss Richard Branson of publicity seeking. However in the subsequent libel case, British Airways lost and ended up paying substantial damages to Virgin. Following the case, Lord King, the BA chairman said, “If Richard Branson had worn a pair of steel-rimmed glasses, a double-breasted suit and shaved off his beard, I would have taken him seriously. As it was, I couldn’t. I underestimated him.” An IIP should be able to look at the competitive marketplace without such organizational blind spots – complementing the organization’s own competitive intelligence research.

Although the issue of subjectivity is also important for primary research it can be crucial for secondary research in that IIPs are more likely to be able to think laterally and find the crucial nuggets that would remain hidden if they were constrained by their client’s organizational culture.

Ultimately, however, the key reason to use IIPs for competitive intelligence secondary research is their experience. A competent IIP will be familiar with a wide range of sources that they have used for a variety of different tasks.
This breadth can give them the edge when looking for items that competitors would prefer weren’t found – even though they are available from published materials. The skill is not just finding information but putting disparate pieces of data together to build a cohesive picture. However without the information in the first place, there will be no picture – and often in-company researchers have too little time to fully investigate what is available or lack the knowledge to search the unfamiliar. As an example, I once was asked to find some information on Japanese auto part suppliers by an automotive distributor. Within a few hours I’d given my client what they needed. Their comment was to ask me how I'd found it so quickly when they’d spent two days looking for the same information. They were skilled searchers for the automotive industry but had no idea how to search Japanese company data and so failed to find the information. Another time, I’d provided a client detailed financial data on a UK competitor. Shortly after, I received a phone call from the client’s legal counsel accusing me of espionage – pointing out that such information could not be publicly available. Within the United States it wouldn’t be. In Europe there is a legal requirement to make full finances available – even for private companies. It is in cases such as these that the IIP brings real competitive value providing data that may be missed by companies refusing to outsource competitive intelligence research.

Primary Research for Competitive Intelligence

In competitive intelligence, as in other forms of research, you can always gain more insight if you conduct primary research – that is learning about the competitive environment, not just the competitors – from talking to knowledgeable people.

Most information professionals start competitive intelligence projects using public sources that are free, pay-to-use resources that we use at discounted rates as AIIP members and social networks such as LinkedIn. Sometimes our clients are happy with the results of this research. In other cases, you may just need to make a few phone calls to make sure what you have collected using secondary research and social networks is accurate or perhaps to fill in a little hole. For example, you might call the company receptionist to find out what a person’s job title is or the marketing VP’s name.

However, for U.S.-based privately held companies, it is difficult, if not impossible, to get enough information about them without talking to industry experts, association executives, customers, suppliers, ex-employees from the competitive company and the competitor, for example. You only have one chance to get through when you call the competitor directly, since they are usually smaller companies and everyone talks to each other. They are often savvy and will look you up on the Internet and LinkedIn before returning your call. That’s why, if I have enough time, I prefer to cold call and gradually find out whom I need to talk to without leaving my contact information.

With every project, I organize a list of people I might contact from all sources. I read all the target company’s executive profiles just in case I am transferred to one of them, as I usually cold call into the competitor’s main office for my first call. This way I learn how they treat potential customers, how professional they are and how long it takes for me to get connected to the right person. One time I found good information about the company’s business by listening to its “advertorial on hold” while waiting to be transferred to the sales manager. Surprisingly, the advertorial contained information that answered a couple of my client’s questions.

Another time I was immediately transferred to the company’s executive VP of marketing. Wow, was I surprised as I had expected to talk to a sales person! I was prepared, however, because not only had I read about him, but I had seen him in a video on the company’s website. I knew what he looked like, his mannerisms, how he held himself and that he was quite egotistical.

This brings me to another point about conducting primary research, especially over the telephone: it isn’t for everyone. You need to be very observant and sensitive to the other person’s tone of voice, personality and predisposition. Put your ego on hold. Don’t take yourself too seriously and focus on listening – also on what’s not being said. Think about your favorite investigative journalist and that’s the kind of skills a competitive intelligence researcher should have.

Before I call people, even when cold calling, I apply Naylor’s First Rule of Primary Intelligence Gathering – Think about what will motivate a person to share with you.
Consider 4 Ps about each person before you call them. Even during a cold call, I think about these 4 Ps:

- **Profession**
- **Politics**
- **Predisposition**
- **Personal issues**

Understanding these 4 Ps is the first step in communicating cooperatively. Put yourself in the other person’s position. Open yourself up to who they are and forget about yourself. Who they are is influenced by what they do, their personality, personal goals, favorite charities, hobbies, marital status and how their company rewards their efforts.

I look at primary collection like peeling back the layers of an onion, where I first query sources that are further from the competitor, like industry experts, and work my way towards those who are closer, like customers and ex-employees (Figure 1). That way I will be armed with enough information about the competitor to think of better probing questions during my conversation with them and am prepared to answer those grilling questions about what I do for a living, competitive intelligence.

Before calling the competitor, be prepared to explain who you are, why you’re calling, what you’re doing and prepare yourself for the questions the competitor might ask, since you are probing into what they might consider proprietary territory. Of course, I always respect requests for confidentiality. Just before you call the competitor, prepare some pointed questions that you believe will resonate with them – ones that might make them look good, for example.

Lastly remember Naylor’s Third Law of Primary Intelligence gathering: Be respectful of the other person’s time. Some clients ask me to send out RFPs to their competition. Not only is this unethical, but it’s also disrespectful of their time. It takes many hours to prepare the response to an RFP. I have learned that you can find out what your client needs to make better decisions by supplementing your secondary research with some phone calls, by attending a trade show and/or talking to their customers. If they need detailed pricing information, that’s what their sales force should be collecting.

There are two other ways in which I find primary intelligence about the competition:

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**About Cold Calling**

Many people who do competitive intelligence are uncomfortable with cold calling. They want to know the name of someone at the target company and have a referral source, even if it’s LinkedIn. While this targeted effort is effective for conducting research, when I call competitors, I prefer to cold call so they more quickly forget who I am. We just have a phone conversation with no digital communication like email as a trailer.

Even with cold calling, you will sometimes have to leave your name and phone number with a receptionist since s/he doesn’t know who to refer you to, or perhaps does know and the person is not available. Just recently, this happened to me, and two executives called me back and grilled me on the competitive intelligence angle of what I do for a living.

This brings me to Naylor’s Second Law of Primary Intelligence gathering: Do your homework on all angles before dialing!

If I have a choice, I call competitors last when I conduct primary research. I look at primary collection like peeling back the layers of an onion, where I first query sources that are further from the competitor, like industry experts, and work my way towards those who are closer, like customers and ex-employees (Figure 1). That way I will be armed with enough information about the competitor to think of better probing questions during my conversation with them and am prepared to answer those grilling questions about what I do for a living, competitive intelligence.

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There are two other ways in which I find primary intelligence about the competition:
Both sources keep companies from being blindsided, since they provide an external perspective.

Win/loss analysis (why a customer did or did not purchase a product or service) is the least expensive form of primary intelligence gathering, and I am surprised more companies don’t do it. Many are afraid of getting their sales people angry, but good sales people embrace win/loss analysis findings, which can help them sell better against the competition. These interviews can usually be conducted over the telephone, although in some cultures they need to be conducted in person.

Trade show intelligence gathering works best in person and is a goldmine for anyone who is collecting information, since just about everyone is in the sales/marketing mode at trade shows. Apply the cold calling practices in this article, and you will learn about your competitor’s latest product development and what’s in their product pipeline. Get yourself invited to a competitor’s cocktail party and listen!

**Conclusion**

Regardless of what type of competitive intelligence collection you are doing, keep in mind that no one method will be successful for every project. Competitive intelligence collection is both an art and a science. Think about collection as a continuum: a series of steps that start with secondary collection, then social media collection and lastly primary collection (Figure 2). However, as you learn from each source, you may find yourself checking other sources up and down the collection continuum that you might not have originally considered. Remember that most people operate in WIIFM (What’s in it for me) and MMFIAM (Make me feel important about myself) modes. If you keep these facts of human nature in mind, you will engage conversation and keep it flowing.

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**Tips to Improve Your Cold Calling Success**

**A. Think and Do**

1. How do you think the source is motivated?
2. Why would they want to talk with you?
3. Can you guess what they’re like based on their occupation?
4. Read up on their profession if you don’t know it.
5. Prepare a good intro about yourself: short and crisp.
6. Be ready for their questions about you. Decide what you won’t share.
7. Prepare the list of questions you need to have answered.
8. Consider why they would want to answer these questions.
9. Consider which questions might be easier for them to answer.
10. Make sure you have some open ended questions to start.
11. Consider whether you want to mix your interview tactics between elicitation and questions, that is, whether you want the other person to reply conversationally or to give you direct answers.
12. Should you see what you can learn about the possible source on LinkedIn, Zoominfo, Jigsaw or other social media? You can warm up the call up with this information: Do you have something in common? Or is it easier just to call the person without taking the time to research who they are?

**B. How You Need to Be**

1. Psych yourself up: Envision and expect them to share with you.
2. Be interesting on your end, even if you’re horrified!
3. Smile as you talk: your optimism travels through your tone of voice.
4. Think confidence: This comes through.
5. Psych yourself up: What’s the worst thing that will happen? (They’ll hang up or ask you too many questions and you’ll hang up.)
6. Learn what works with every phone call and tweak accordingly.
7. Listen closely to each person. You’ll be amazed at additional questions that you’ll think of that will delight your clients.
8. Listen to what they don’t say, and decide if it’s worth going into.
9. Leave them feeling good about themselves; you may want to call them back.
10. If you’re having a bad day, don’t make phone calls: tomorrow is another day!
PART I
Business Research Beyond Borders
by Eiko Shaül

Regardless of where a business is located geographically, there comes a time when it may need to learn about its industry or market outside its own country or about companies located elsewhere, whether for strategic planning for growth or simply to assess its competitiveness.

In order to get the knowledge a company seeks it will have to gather, filter/evaluate, analyze and synthesize whatever relevant information it can find. When this process involves getting information from other countries, the researcher can face challenges such as knowing the proper sources, ascertaining how up-to-date information is and assessing the authenticity of sources and information.

Language can be added to the list of challenges when countries involved are not English-speaking countries. Granted that there are many sources such as databases and the web that provides coverage of news, reports, documents and other information for other countries in English, but it is also a fact that even those sources do not nearly cover everything available in the original languages.

Under these circumstances enlisting help from an information professional who either lives in the country of interest or is capable of speaking, reading and writing in a foreign language can be helpful. Some AIIP members take advantage of the availability of other members who live outside of their home countries or who have knowledge of the language and culture of other countries for their projects involving foreign countries.

Even if nearby countries share a language, getting local help can be very important for knowledge of and access to local sources.

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Business Research Using Japan as an Example

To illustrate conducting business research for non-English speaking countries, I will use Japan as an example since I have worked on many projects focusing on Japan.

As noted earlier in the article, one can conduct research using databases and web-based sources in English to a large extent. Nevertheless, there is much information missing in English language sources.

For instance, I was surprised to learn that Teikoku database (company information) offered by Dialog contained only part of the original database in Japanese. When I could not figure out why I was not getting results for a company, I contacted Teikoku and learned that they simply could not translate every entry. The Teikoku database contains more than 1,250,000 Japanese companies, but financial information, including balance sheets and income statements, is available for only 290,000 companies in English (as of December, 2009). There are also databases similar to Teikoku that are available only in Japanese. As we know, translating from one language to another language requires time and cost.

Even contents of company websites in English do not exactly mirror those in Japanese in many cases – sections for company news, PR pieces, product catalogue and detailed information related to products may not be included in English websites. Moreover, many companies have websites only in Japanese. Furthermore, web searches in Japanese bring up totally different results compared to searches in English. These examples show that by depending only on databases in English, one could miss substantial amounts of information.

Not all newspaper and magazine articles related to companies and industries are available in English either. I remember finding interview articles with executives of a company in a Japanese magazine that provided valuable information related to the direction the company was taking. These
pieces would not have been found in English, and yet they were relevant in the context of the project.

Knowledge of and the ability to contact government agencies, companies, associations and so on can also be a challenge for someone who doesn’t speak Japanese, as not many workers in Japan speak or write English. Yet, contacting these sources can lead to very valuable information.

When I encountered a problem not being able to find a product defined by a 10-digit number (6-digit Harmonized System number plus additional digits for a detailed level) in the United States, I spoke with a person at the trades statistics office in Japan and learned that Japan defined the product by a 9-digit instead of a 10-digit code. Such a difference in the number of digits in product codes applies to other countries as well, and it is important to be aware of this possibility.

Culture, another element, can play a role in what one can obtain as business information. What you can ask in your own country as a normal question or request related to business information may turn out to be not acceptable in another. For example, I was pleasantly surprised that a trade association in Japan offered to send me a hard copy of its membership directory when I knew I could not access the membership list of most such associations in North America unless I was a member.

I also learned while I was helping a Japanese company with a Canadian product that the Japanese company preferred that a person in Canada go to sources personally, interview people and check things, although this process involved flying to another city – and therefore extra cost. This preference made sense because relying on a person living in the country who speaks the language, knows the business culture and has knowledge of and easier access to sources is a faster, less expensive and more reliable way to get information.

Another interesting point a colleague noted is that when dealing with foreign news sources, one has to keep in mind that newspapers can have political, even religious, slants. Political slant is true of most newspapers, be it in Canada, where I live, or in Japan. It is, therefore, important to be aware of this when reading news articles and making reports based on them. This problem is also why it is important to cover as wide a range of sources as possible.

**Conclusion**

As discussed above, when we are researching business topics related to other countries, there are many elements to be taken into consideration in order to get as accurate information as we can. There are many benefits to working with someone fluent in the language of the country and knowledgeable about the local culture in cross-country research. Sources and items can be consulted that could be missed otherwise; the process of making contact with local sources can be better facilitated; work can move faster and more efficiently; and deliverables can have added value as a result of more thorough research.

Below are some questions to ask in conjunction with a project that involves countries beyond your borders:

1. Will using databases, websites and web sources in English be sufficient for the project?
2. Will you need someone who reads and writes the language:  
   a. to search sources in the language?  
   b. to read and understand the content of documents?  
   c. to translate documents into English?
3. Will you need someone who speaks the language to contact sources such as government agencies, associations and companies to facilitate research process?
4. Will you need someone who has knowledge of the culture who can assist in avoiding missteps and help move things smoothly?
5. Will you need someone who lives in the country, has knowledge of sources and can visit them if necessary?

**Potential Sources for Information and Leads When Doing Business Research Beyond Borders (in the Language of the Country)**

1. The web  
2. Databases  
3. Websites related to companies, industries, markets, associations, publications, etc.  
4. Government agencies – different levels
5. Trade and professional associations  
6. Experts in industries – analysts, columnists, bloggers, editors, etc.  
7. Companies within an industry
PART I

Today’s Genealogist: Providing Value-Added History

by Missy Corley

The idea of genealogy and historical research may conjure images of dusty tomes and sepia photographs, but genealogy these days also includes digitization of records and blogging. Deteriorating family bibles and fading photos are joined by flashy presentations disseminated using social media.

The field is seeing an explosion of new interest. The debut this year of two national TV shows in the United States – *Faces of America* and *Who Do You Think You Are?* – has driven thousands of people to start investigating their family histories. It is being called the biggest resurgence of personal genealogy interest since Alex Haley’s *Roots* was made into a TV miniseries in the 1970s.

What some may see as a profession literally stuck in the past is experiencing a revolution of new technologies and trends. It’s the perfect opportunity for an independent information professional.

In fact, most genealogists and many historians are IIPs, they just don’t realize it. They meet all of the characteristics though: they often work for themselves, they serve a varied client base and they provide a wide range of information services – document retrieval, research, writing and editing, just to name a few.

Having a background in the information field can help one break down those brick walls that genealogists – amateur and professional alike – come upon once all of those nicely indexed online repositories have been searched without revealing the name of a great-great-great-grandmother. In another vein, a tech-savvy professional will understand the best way to organize all the evidence gathered and how to preserve the original documents and photos.

Genealogy and the Independent Information Professional

This is the point at which the IIP steps in. Value-added deliverables are just as lucrative in genealogy as they are in the other theaters in which IIPs operate.

Leave behind whatever stereotypes you may have about historians and genealogists as I introduce you to Thomas MacEntee. Thomas wears many hats in the genealogical realm. He runs High-Definition Genealogy (http://hidefgen.com/), a company that provides market research, consulting, education and other services to those in the genealogy and family history community. He has helped genealogists learn to use web-conferencing technologies and services such as Skype to further their research and educate others. Thomas also is the force behind GeneaBloggers (www.geneabloggers.com/), an online community boasting no less than 1100 active blogs by genealogists of every skill level, ilk, heritage and location. He keeps everyone motivated to write and research by using daily blogging prompts as inspiration, maintains a calendar of genealogy events around the country, searches out new genealogy blogs to highlight and basically provides the glue for the entire community. Thomas maintains multiple blogs including but not limited to the blog of the Illinois State Genealogical Society (http://ilgensoc.blogspot.com/) and one on his own family history (http://destinationaustinfamily.blogspot.com/).
Amy Coffin is another example of a genealogist and independent information professional (like me, she too is a member of the Association for Independent Information Professionals). Amy provides many traditional genealogy services, including family histories, grant-writing, consulting for genealogical and historical societies and copywriting. She also has been hired by Family History Expos (FHE xpos), a producer of regional events where genealogists gather to learn about the latest and greatest in genealogy technology. Amy is their new social media coordinator. In addition to her other activities, Amy now is tasked with using Facebook, LinkedIn and other social media services to help spread the word about FHE xpos and their upcoming events.

Amy’s WeTree blog (http://wetree.blogspot.com) was named one of Family Tree Magazine’s 40 best genealogy blogs last year. She has created a social media-ready series titled “52 Weeks to Better Genealogy,” which introduces followers to a new topic, service or skill to explore each week (examples have included the various library classification systems, military records and state archives). This series follows on the heels of 2009’s “Jump Start Your Genealogy Blog: 52 Ideas. 52 Weeks.”

Examples of IIPs Adding Value

How can a genealogist IIP add value to traditional genealogy research projects? I can provide some examples from my most recent client work.

The new operators of a bed and breakfast in my town recently hired me to research the property. They purchased the inn on foreclosure and knew very little about it other than the year it was built (1790) and the names of its original owners. Once I completed the full history of the property, however, I didn’t stop there. I wrote a narrative about the building and its past inhabitants. The innkeeper now uses the property’s story in the tours she gives to guests, and she included it in a pamphlet for a self-guided walking tour of historical buildings in the town. I also searched for and purchased photos of the property from the local historical society and included them in posters I designed and printed. They now hang where all of the B&B’s guests can see them. In short, I provided my clients with more than a list of facts and sources – I crafted pieces that were immediately useful to them in their marketing efforts.

A prospective client recently asked me if I could scan and digitize her old family photos to preserve them for the future. I said I’d be happy to do it, but I wanted her to consider how she can get the most value out of those photos once they were digitized. I asked her how she would like them organized (such as chronologically, by occasion, by family group). I told her to think about the storage options for both the digitized images (DVDs, online or digital albums that can be shared) and the original prints (acid-free storage boxes, scrapbooks or traditional albums). Once I know how much information comes with the photos (such as the names of those pictured, the circumstances) I can propose still more ways to capture this valuable information with the images.

Further Opportunities to Add Value

The above are just a few examples of how traditional and non-traditional genealogists and other IIPs in related fields can add value for their clients. Other possibilities:

- There are hundreds of genealogy products out there, and more are introduced every month. The need for thorough review of and training about these products is key, especially with so many fledgling genealogists experimenting with them these days.
- Copyright is a huge concern in the genealogy field – specializing in the rights and pitfalls of digital content is especially topical right now. Is it okay to snatch that photo of your great-great-great-grandfather off your distant cousin’s online family tree? They’re family, right, so how could they mind? Does that relative have the right to post the photo to begin with? What are your options if someone steals your content off the Internet?
- For those genealogists trying to set up a business, tasks like accounting and marketing can be daunting if not completely foreign concepts. Consultants familiar with the unique needs of a genealogist are needed to provide training and functionality in the basics of running a business.
PART II
Services: Marketing, New Media, Writing, Consulting and Information Management
by Crystal Sharp, Guest Editor

Adding Value: Independent Information Professionals

“"It is a very sad thing that nowadays there is so little useless information," quipped Oscar Wilde in 1894. He did not know the half of it.

— The Economist, All Too Much, Feb 25th, 2010

Many IIPs leverage their information skills to help clients use information resources to their best advantage. Marge King discusses strategies to help non-profit organizations pursue funding opportunities. Marjorie Desgrosseilliers presents the experience of six IIPs in enhancing the marketing productivity of their clients. Ulla de Stricker, a knowledge management consultant, describes the value proposition for clients in engaging consultants. Karen Blakeman and Scott Brown discuss social media as tools for marketing and branding and show why it is essential to integrate social media into a business’s research and reputation management strategy. Sarah Hager Johnston, whose clients are in the insurance and risk management field, discusses several key components in clarifying the reference question when developing a research proposal. Deb Hunt’s article shows how IIPs can help clients generate value from their knowledge assets by improving enterprise knowledge management practices.

Crystal Sharp can be reached by email at crystal<at>cdsharp.com. CD Sharp Information Systems, Ltd., www.cdsharp.com, offers customized, innovative strategies and 12 years of experience to the development, facilitation and writing of multidisciplinary research grant proposals. Crystal Sharp is a past president of AIIP.
PART II
Information Professionals and the Nonprofit Sector
by Margaret King

Nonprofit organizations are a crucial part of our society, providing help to the needy, education, much needed research for diseases, affordable childcare, improvements to global health and much, much more. One of the main challenges within the nonprofit sector (sometimes referred to as the charitable sector) is a continual need to raise money to support the mission of individual organizations. Unlike the for-profit sector, revenue streams are rarely based on products or services. And if they are, the revenue produced from these products and services rarely covers the costs to produce them. These money challenges have opened doors and provided career opportunities for independent information professionals. To discuss these challenges and how information professionals can help solve them, I’ll use the terms funder to indicate a “source of money” and funding to indicate “money.”

Funding typically comes from four external sources – individuals, foundations, corporations and government entities. Searching for funding opportunities is often called prospect research. As I am sure you can imagine, the Internet plays a big role in prospect research. Sorting through the vast amount of information, though, can make prospect research a time-consuming and labor-intensive process. Fortunately, there are some great subscription-based tools to help researchers find information in a timely and efficient manner.

Prospect research can significantly reduce the time it takes for a nonprofit organization to get to know a potential funder while increasing the quality of information. In general, prospect research is a multifaceted process of information retrieval, analysis and dissemination of information. This information can be at the core of identifying, cultivating and soliciting funders. It often uncovers shared values and prospective funders’ friends and associates who may help form a basis for institutional involvement. Additionally, prospect research is used to understand a prospective funders’ giving capacity.

With individual funders, learning about them and taking an interest in them can lead to a very long and mutually beneficial relationship. But, like most relationships, it requires hard work to learn about one another, and the process takes time. Prospect research can shorten this process significantly. For individual funders, the researcher is most concerned about biographical and financial information so that they may develop a better understanding of giving preferences and giving capacity. To develop individual donor profiles, researchers consult biographical and general reference books, scan journals and newspapers and search computerized databases, as well as non-published public records to cull the necessary information required to develop a profile.

To uncover corporate funding opportunities, the researcher is more concerned about matching the corporation’s target market with the nonprofit organization’s constituency. For corporate prospect profiles, the researcher will gather information to understand how the funder will benefit by providing support or sponsorship to the nonprofit organization. The researcher is likely to consult general reference materials, scan journals and newspapers and search databases like Hoovers and Morningstar Document Retrieval.
To uncover foundation funding opportunities, the researcher is interested in understanding the giving preferences, finding the grant proposal submission guidelines and knowing who is on the board of directors and the foundation’s giving history. To gather this information, the researcher is likely to perform both primary and secondary research. The primary research typically involves phone calls to the foundation’s office to learn about giving preferences, guidelines for submitting proposals and deadlines. Secondary research in the United States usually involves consulting with databases like the Foundation Center, the NOZA Philanthropy database and GuideStar for lists of directors and giving history.

With government funding opportunities, it is less about building relationships and more about solving a problem that the government (whether it be local, state, provincial or federal) views as a significant issue for its people. Competition for government grants is generally very high because the amount of funding can be significant. Finding government funding can be complicated and may require both primary and secondary research. At the local level, primary research is likely to be the most productive method. It will likely include telephoning the local government manager and/or elected officials and interviewing them about funding opportunities. In the United States, federal agencies are required to post funding opportunities at grants.gov and most agencies do, but not all. Sometimes, researchers may use the Freedom of Information Act to obtain information about previous awards with the goal of gaining insight into the agency’s approval process. In any case, researchers should also spend time helping their clients understand any obligations that are associated with government funding. (Government grants typically have lots of them, and not fulfilling these obligations can get your client into trouble.)

Changes in funding and/or inadequate funding will influence the sustainability of a nonprofit. Using appropriate research tools, finding reliable information, analyzing information and organizing the funding opportunity findings are the hallmarks of good information professionals in providing valuable and necessary support to nonprofit clients. Since funding is a perennial challenge for most nonprofit organizations, opportunities abound for information professionals and prospect researchers.
PART II  
Enhance Your Marketing Productivity: Hire an IIP  
by Marjorie Desgrosseilliers  

Independent information professionals (IIPs) help businesses make money.  
Bold statement, yes. But it’s true.  

We IIPs have always provided services that enhance the marketing productivity of our clients. Using our varied research expertise (knowing how and where to find information), professional insight and experience, we help our clients solve specific problems, make informed decisions, provide direction and guidance to their own clients and, in many cases, ultimately add to their bottom line – which, if you think about it, is what marketing is all about.  

So how do we do it? The proof, as they say, is in the pudding.  

Providing Specific Marketing Services:  
SmartyPants Research & Marketing  

Some IIPs, like my agency SmartyPants Research & Marketing (www.smartypantsresearch.com), provide marketing services to our clients; we make sure they get found by the search engines (enabling potential clients to find them), we tighten up website content to improve stickiness and (unlike traditional Yellow Page, newspaper, television and radio advertising) we market our clients to their targets more directly and inexpensively, pinpointing exactly which marketing tactic elicits what response.  

Recently, SmartyPants worked with a city council incumbent in her bid for re-election. Four years before, she’d won her race by a narrow margin of 157 votes, winning two of her city’s 25 precincts. This time around, she was faced with some tough opposition and needed to win a preliminary election before the primary or main election.  

We added analytics to and optimized her website; monitored her opponents via news alerts on Google and on social media outlets such as Twitter and Facebook and researched issues. We also wrote, created and delivered her email marketing campaigns.  

She breezed through the preliminary election, and three months later, she won 25 out 27 precincts (the city had added two since the previous election) and landed an impressive 63% of the vote in the primary election. Though our client had built up her own credibility during the four years she’d been on the council, she acknowledges that SmartyPants played a big role in her win. Influential groups and people are now watching her very closely. As a side note: candidates in neighboring cities liked her email campaigns so much, that they “borrowed” them and used them for their own campaigns. Didn’t someone say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery?  

Leveraging Contact Networks: Red House Consulting  

Many IIPs, like Jocelyn Sheppard of Washington, Pennsylvania’s Red House Consulting (www.redhouseconsulting.com), have created vast networks of valuable contacts, which they are able to leverage in helping their clients. Recently, a teen health and wellness educator wanted to market herself more aggressively as a speaker and author of educational materials for children and adults. She’d also authored a book she wanted to target at a general audience.  

Marjorie Desgrosseilliers is the smartypants behind SmartyPants Research & Marketing and is its CEO and owner. An IIP for 15 years, Marjorie helps businesses market themselves effectively utilizing targeted, inexpensive ways to market their services, search engine optimization and Internet marketing. You can reach her at marjorie<at>smartypantsresearch.com or 425-408-0368.
Jocelyn and her team engaged in research of the client’s specific target segments, providing essential market information. Combining that research with interviews conducted with their own network contacts, Red House assembled specific strategies for promoting the educator’s books and educational materials. Jocelyn arranged for a graphic designer to create a new logo and made recommendations on the print collateral design. She introduced the educator to an agent and created a road map for her to begin qualifying for speaking engagements on the college speaking circuit.

The client said that Red House’s services were “worth every penny” she paid.

Enabling Confident M&A Decisions: Carine Research

Carine Research (www.carineresearch.com) is an Australian IIP firm that specializes in merger & acquisition research. Principal Heather Carine has been preparing business proposals, looking at new business opportunities and formulating strategic ideas for businesses in the UK, the United States and Australia for over 10 years.

She was approached by a foreign private equity firm looking to invest over A$400M in a significant Australian business – it was to be a new portfolio asset for the equity firm. Heather researched the Australian business people who would play a continuing role in the Australian businesses that were being evaluated, and she prepared detailed business profiles going back almost 25 years into the Australian executives’ experience. The report included the executives’ business and board experience, associated companies and their key business. These profiles helped to provide the foreign client with the reassurance it needed to proceed with the high profile transaction.

Without the timely and detailed information and analysis that Heather provided, her client would not have been able to confidently move ahead with the decision that quite lucratively expanded its portfolio and bottom line.

Supporting Sales and Marketing Personnel: Research-Ability LLC

Many IIPs work directly with sales personnel and marketers – uncovering information vital to understanding a market, creating strategies to approach that market or even just simply providing lists and generating leads. By providing this crucial service, IIPs enable marketers and sales people to drill down to their target markets faster and spend more time doing what they do best…getting on the phone and making sales.

Susan Wald Berkman has provided business information and strategic company overviews to sales and marketing personnel for over 20 years – the last two as CEO of her own firm, Research-Ability (www.research-ability.com) in Coral Springs, Florida.

She recently worked on a project for a firm who develops marketing strategies and programs for associations. In order to market himself and his client appropriately and productively, her client needed research on a specific industry such as where it was, where it was going and major company players. The better her client could understand the market, the more relevant and practical his strategy would be to market his client association to potential members.

Susan compared the end client’s membership tiers and their value proposition to those of other associations in the same industry. The final report to her client included an overview of the industry, challenges in the industry, the trends and opportunities, key players, demographics and a competitive analysis. Based on the information and input Susan provided, her client was able to construct a successful marketing strategy and plan for his client.

Expanding a Publication’s Reach: DLS Information Services

Wishing to increase his circulation/readership, a co-owner of a small local business periodical contacted Diane Stubbs’ Scottsdale, Arizona-based DLS Information Services (www.dlsinfo.com). He needed to identify the most beneficial geographic areas in the Phoenix metropolitan area.

Diane identified circulation areas having a large percentage of business/professional people, a large lunch-time population, employment density by category, potential for employment growth, wealthiest zip codes and the highest number of daytime diners – specifically, those who partake of mid-scale to fine-dining lunch.

As a direct result of the information DLS provided, the periodical was able to increase circulation from 18,000 to 111,000 copies, and attract higher caliber advertisers and award-winning writers. The success of this publication and the increased circulation is evidenced on newsstands, on street corners...
and in libraries and restaurants/cafes and by the number of awards they have won since the completion of that project.

**Giving Strength in Numbers: Earthsense LLC**

Some IIPs, like consultant Wendy Cobrda of Syracuse, New York’s Earthsense (www.earthsense.com), develop databases and other informational tools. Earthsense’s syndicated data helps manufacturers of products with green characteristics to understand trends in the market and to justify expansion, marketing and other plans. Wendy was asked to help determine which factors correlated with high sales for a destination retailer (a destination retailer sells specialty goods and draws from a larger pool of consumers relative to locations that are more convenience-oriented, such as grocery stores, convenience stores, gas stations). She spent a month analyzing the current 30+ locations and determined markets that had similar characteristics.

The numbers led Wendy into a side analysis, which revealed an unexpected and very interesting finding: she discovered that, in some markets, her client’s current locations were too close together. As a result, they were cannibalizing each other’s business.

Based on that finding, the client closed several locations. The remaining stores quickly took up the sales slack and rose higher in sales rank for the chain. Because of Wendy’s keen understanding of the numbers, she was able to provide her client with crucial input that ended up saving them millions of dollars.

**IIPs Enhance Marketing Productivity**

As you can see, IIPs can differ greatly in the form our services take – some (like me) offer actual marketing services, some offer statistical analysis, some offer telephone interviewing, some create databases or similar information tools and so on. The variations are infinite.

However, the common thread that runs through most IIP businesses is that the basis or the how of what we do to enhance our clients’ marketing productivity lies in unearthing, analyzing, synthesizing and even creating information – providing clients with tools to make informed decisions and/or to help their clients make informed decisions about them.

In the end, what we do tends either to save or make our clients money. And in this economy, that makes us, and them, very happy indeed.
PART II
Consulting: Helping Clients Plan, Adapt, Choose...and Much More
by Ulla de Stricker

Close to 150 AIIP members include consulting in their professional profiles in the AIIP member directory. A brief inspection of sample profiles confirms that, indeed, they offer consulting services in a vast variety of information domains from chemistry and engineering to aviation and public policy. Some AIIP members have backgrounds in librarianship and related disciplines, and knowledge management and records management are also well represented among the areas in which AIIP members consult.

How Are Consultants Different from Researchers or Freelancers?

What sets consulting apart from research services or freelance support? What is the difference between a consulting assignment and a competitive intelligence assignment? What are clients paying for when they engage an AIIP member in a consulting project as opposed to a market research project?

The short answer focuses on the contrast between, “Here is the data, you decide what to do” and, “Here’s what I recommend you do...” More specifically, we can say the following:

- Research and investigative work mobilizes unique and highly specialized skills to deliver to the clients impossible-to-find information, data and analyses they are unable to obtain themselves, but it tends to stop short of recommending a course of action. The client is expected to weigh the evidence provided so as to determine a forward path, and the researcher is not connected to the clients’ decisions.
- Freelance services are typically provided to a client needing specialist support or project assistance; the client provides direction and the freelancer applies his or her expertise.
- Consulting, on the other hand, revolves around advising clients about what they ought to consider doing; hence consultants are very much connected to the clients’ decisions and subsequent actions. Consulting does not preclude research or tactical work and often arises from investigation or from, for example, an organizational information audit. Consultants have traditionally been the subject of some joking references. (It’s a familiar jibe that a consultant is someone who borrows the client’s watch and then advises the client that time is a scarcer resource because it’s now 4 pm.) Some have an impression that consultants, as glib purveyors of the management fad of the day, cruise through client organizations leaving behind, along with their six-figure bills, politically fashionable but impossible-to-implement-in-practice recommendations – in other words, delivering no value but causing lots of resentment on the part of the staff on the ground.

Naturally, the truth is otherwise. Most consultants take pride in their roles as trusted partners who care deeply about steering their clients in the best direction.

Why Do Clients Hire AIIP Consultants?

Typical drivers for our consulting assignments include budget cuts, changes in operational focus, upcoming program reviews and organizational planning frameworks. A common trigger is the client realization that “We can’t go on like this” or “We don’t have the required skill sets in house.” In some cases, the consulting project is occasioned by retirement or management turnover.
— a new manager may wish to get off on the right foot and engage consulting help to manage a steep learning curve quickly and devise an appropriate set of priorities in light of various impacts and pressures. Common to many consulting engagements is the client’s consideration that the contemplated effort’s duration — say, a few months — does not warrant creating a new full time position.

What Do AIIP Consultants Do for Their Clients?

The focus of each engagement naturally depends on the client’s business and circumstances. Our work may involve technical assistance as well as management advice. The following is a small sample of projects we might undertake:

- Digitizing a fragile archival collection (where we recommend equipment, software and workflow)
- Re-designing an information support unit’s services based on a user needs assessment
- Shaping from scratch a new product or service
- Designing a community awareness campaign
- Crafting a social media communication approach
- Constructing a business case for a new venture or purchase for sustaining existing funding
- Developing an evidence-based white paper or presentation
- Recommending policies and design for a corporate document repository
- Assisting management in succession planning and recruiting

Yet in every project, our key contribution is our expertise, experience and insight. For example, our access to the latest information technology developments gives us the opportunity to encourage clients to move into new territory; our cumulative experience over many years gives us the perspective to advise how to align such a move with the organization’s direction and priorities.

In order for us to apply our expertise, experience and insight we rely on mutual trust as the foundation for a successful consulting engagement. Clients trust consultants to recommend the best option in light of the circumstances at hand, and consultants trust the clients to be open and honest about challenges, limitations and organizational goals.

What Is the Value Proposition for Clients to Engage Consultants?

Whether the motivating factor for clients is a desire for prudent planning, a need to cope with unforeseen circumstances, a requirement for compliance with new regulations or a lack of in-house expertise for a one-time project, clients obtain several key benefits:

- Consultants are cost effective: Ramping up skills for a special project internally is an option, but probably an expensive one in the long run. Clients appreciate the return they get on their investment in the right expertise for the project at hand, and the predictability of cost is a bonus when the consulting fee is fixed in advance.
- Consultants bring to bear their practical experience from other projects: Clients value the fact that in addition to the expertise required for the project, consultants bring nuanced insight from having seen how a particular approach worked in practice in other settings.
- Consultants bring an unbiased approach: Clients value the fact that the advice they get is free of attachment to “the way we’ve always done it” and unencumbered by organizational politics.
- Consultants are effective in delicate situations requiring unusual finesse in communications or calling for a neutral party to be the source of unwelcome or difficult news. Clients are in a better position to carry out change when everyone is aware the recommendations for it came from external experts.

However, the most important benefit clients mention is associated with peace of mind. They appreciate knowing that experienced and capable people, with a track record of delivering worthwhile results, are on the team to minimize risk and maximize the likelihood of success. They like the stress reduction inherent in not having to venture into unfamiliar territory to take on tasks for which they are not prepared — and they like the opportunity to add to their skills as they participate in the unfolding project. Where it is possible, we consultants attempt not only to produce the agreed deliverables but also to teach by example the client’s staff members how to perform a process or design a future project. One testimonial of which I am particularly proud was “Ulla leaves a lot of knowledge behind.”


Social Media – An Essential Research Tool – Karen Blakeman

Personal and professional networks such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn are where many people now exchange news and information. It is where they share gossip and ask questions about both minor and major issues. People share videos and photos on YouTube and Flickr. Social media is where they let off steam if they get bad service in a restaurant or an airline lets them down. And if they are really annoyed they may resort to a hate campaign via a blog: quick and easy to set up and picked up almost immediately by search tools such as Google or Bing. It is no wonder, then, that many companies and organizations of all types and sizes are using social media to monitor and respond to negative feedback and also as a marketing tool.

I work with all types of organizations, and one of the services I offer is advice on the use of social media as an essential part of research and reputation management. Googling on your own company’s name or on the names of your competitors is not enough. Although Google, Bing and Yahoo all now incorporate social media in their search results, it is only a small selection and not a reliable way of finding out what is being said on a subject. Some personal and professional networks, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, limit the amount of information that Google can search, so you have to be a member of these services and logged in before you can conduct a thorough search. During my public open access workshops and in-house sessions I take people through each of the social media networks and show them how to monitor them more effectively and efficiently.

It comes as a shock to many of them that there is so much going on in social media. About three years ago one of my clients was dismayed that information about a new product had been leaked to the public several months before launch. They thought that they had managed to keep its development top secret. A quick search on Blogpulse – a search tool that concentrates on blogs – revealed the source of the leak. Blogpulse has a Trends option that displays a graph showing how often the words you have searched on have been mentioned in blog postings over time. For this particular company’s product we found a peak of discussion immediately after launch, which was to be expected, and a larger peak about six months earlier. Clicking on the earlier peak displayed the postings and how the disclosure had occurred.

There had been an industry conference that my client’s marketing director had attended. Unfortunately he drank a little too much wine at the conference banquet and blurted out the details. There are bloggers at every conference and it only took one to overhear that remark and make that information public knowledge. On a positive note, many industry experts and gurus use their blogs to write about what is happening in their sector together with opinions and analysis of the significance of those developments.

Blogs are now a well-established means of publishing information and, while there is still a large amount of insignificant drivel in the blogosphere, many bloggers take care and time over their articles. For imparting information rapidly and on the spur of the moment people turn to Twitter.
You have 140 characters in which to tell your followers and the world what is happening and of interest to you at any particular moment in time. It can be accessed from your desktop computer, laptop, iPhone – in fact almost any communication device. Someone could be tweeting on useful information they are hearing at a conference or complaining about the appalling customer care provided by a company. The former might be a link to a presentation being given by the keynote speaker that includes a glowing endorsement of your product; the latter, a serious breakdown in communications between your organization and a customer. But are you aware of either of them?

There are many tools that make it easy to set up automatic searches and alerts for mentions of a company name or product. But finding the right tool for the job can be trickier, and this area is another in which I work closely with clients. Would you prefer to integrate Twitter with Outlook? Twinbox, a plug-in for Outlook, is perfect for this function. Or perhaps tools such as Seismic or Tweetdeck that can be used on laptops and mobile devices are more suited to the way you work.

Monitoring Facebook for discussions of you or your services or products is essential if you are to nip bad press in the bud. Respond appropriately and you can turn negative feedback into a positive story. Bad press can also creep into the professional network LinkedIn. Many LinkedIn users automatically send their blog headlines and Twitter feeds to their profile, and these posts can initiate wider discussions in the Groups.

Resource sharing in the form of PowerPoint presentations (Slideshare), videos (YouTube, Vimeo) and photographs (Flickr, Picasa) is a major component of social media. If you are looking for inspiration for a presentation, want to see what was discussed at a conference or simply need a photo for an article or publicity material, then social media is where it is all happening. Do check, though, the copyright before you re-use material in any form. It may be readily available and free, but that does not mean it is copyright free. Most people assign one of the Creative Commons licenses to their work, but that does not mean you can do what you want with it. One form of the license allows you to re-use and distribute the material as long as you acknowledge the author and do not sell the information or incorporate it into a commercial work. Another gives you complete freedom to do anything with it. There is usually a link that provides you with further details – click on it.

These services are just some of the social media that can be used as part of your research strategy. Tracking all of them may seem daunting at first, but once you have done your initial search there are usually options for running and receiving automatic updates by RSS feeds. These can be pulled together into a feed reader such as Google Reader but, again, there are many other tools to fit every style of working. I am often asked to set up monitoring services for my clients. Once the feeds are running and I have identified how the client would like to view them, I then show the client how to edit and adapt the feeds to meet changing needs. One of the more popular tools is Netvibes. It is very simple to set up and customize and it is free.

An example of a Netvibes page is shown below (Figure 1). So now you are ready to get started on your social media research strategy. If you are still feeling a little bemused, I am always available to lend a helping hand. How do you contact me? Through social media, of course.
Social Media for Marketing, Branding and Awareness - Scott Brown

I’ve spoken with librarians, independent information professionals, small business owners, government agencies, corporations and job seekers about these tools for driving awareness, personal branding and marketing. Many of the principles remain the same, in any context.

Why do these tools work? These tools work because they are essentially online versions of in-person networking. When you go to a conference or a gathering, you get to share what you do and what you enjoy with the people you meet. You get introduced by people you already know to new people you don’t know yet.

The same thing happens online. Because you are sharing your knowledge, expertise and personality, people can get to know you in more depth. Whether you’re looking to enhance your professional contacts and online presence or looking for clients for your business, social networking tools can help.

They also work because, on the top tools, there is a high level of participation. You’ve undoubtedly seen invitations from friends, coworkers and colleagues to connect on some of these tools. Did you know that if Facebook were a country, it would be the world’s 3rd largest in population? Did you know that 80% of companies now use social media tools for recruiting, and 95% of those companies use LinkedIn? Why not tap into these huge, worldwide networks?

From any professional standpoint, these tools make it easier for people to discover you. When you use social networking tools, you raise visibility, awareness and access to you or your organization. There are more ways people can actually find you and connect with you online.

Why should you care? The benefits of social networking tools are very similar to the benefits of in-person networking – whether you’re networking within an organization, networking as an organization or as an individual.

Some of the very real benefits you can realize are:

- Acquiring new customers
- Gathering feedback from your customers or community
- Raising awareness of your community efforts and connections
- Building your community network
- Fund raising

The beauty of it is, these benefits can apply to you no matter who you are or what your business is – independent practitioner, librarian, government agency, corporation or non-profit.

Differences in professional use. Many people come to social tools initially for personal use – for example, their friends or family may be using Facebook to stay connected. If you’ve only used these tools for personal use, it may seem strange to think about using them professionally. It’s not hard to make the leap. To me, the main differences in using social tools for professional purposes are in tone and content.

You wouldn’t typically walk into an interview and show pictures of your family. It’s the same with social tools. If you’re using them professionally, keep the content and tone professional. This doesn’t mean you have to be formal – I think one of the best things about social tools is how much fun they are. But it also means thinking twice about posting that rant about your boss.

As I’ve observed my own and others’ use of social tools, I feel that using social tools effectively requires a shift in thinking about yourself and how you show up in the world. Here are some of these shifts:

- From simply broadcasting information to being willing to have a conversation
- From being the authority (though you are the authority on you) to being a moderator
- From you talking to your audience to the audience talking among themselves

In some ways, it really requires a willingness to be more open and transparent and somewhat vulnerable. “What if someone says something negative? What if I get criticism?” With social tools, there is an element of loss of control, and you have to ask yourself the question: Can I handle that? Only you know the answer to that question.

What should you do? So you’ve decided you’re ready to dive in or do more. Choosing the right tool or choosing a tool to add to your online presence should be a thoughtful process. Here are some factors to help you think about some of the current top tools:

Facebook – www.facebook.com

For local businesses, nonprofits, public libraries and other community...
organizations, Facebook is a very popular tool to give greater visibility to your company, specialties, products and offerings in the community. When community is key, Facebook can be a powerful tool.

**Blogs** – such as Typepad, Wordpress and Blogger
Think of blogs as a form of informal publishing. They are great tools if you are creating a lot of content – opinion, editorials, research, news, etc. You can use blogs as forums to increase visibility and awareness of your thought, your vision and your interests. When content is key, blogs may be the tool for you. Blogs are content-intensive; you need to be sure you are committed to feeding the beast.

**LinkedIn** – www.linkedin.com
LinkedIn has grown to be one of the top global professional tools. I think of it as a resume or curriculum vitae on steroids. Recruiters everywhere are using LinkedIn to find executives and employees. The powerful thing about LinkedIn is that you can showcase your skills, your interests, your presentations, your awards and honors, your reading recommendations and more, all on LinkedIn. When connection is key, especially professional connection, LinkedIn is the tool for you.

**Twitter** – www.twitter.com
It’s extremely easy to get up and running on Twitter. All you do is create an account, start tweeting (writing micro-posts) and following people. Often times, individuals and organizations use Twitter as an extra layer of advertising and contact. Twitter is truly like a flock of birds – sometimes there is a lot of noise, but you can quickly get the word out and find out the latest buzz. Twitter really is the intersection of connection and fast-moving content. When connection, content and speed are key, Twitter fits the bill.

Within organizations, it can be difficult starting to use these tools because of firewall and security issues. In all likelihood, though, people within your organization – faculty, staff, engineers, researchers – are using some kind of social tool, internally or externally, to collaborate and share information. I think of these as playgrounds, and the same rules that applied as kids apply to these communities:

- Go out and find the playgrounds, and think about which playgrounds appeal most to you. Where can you provide the most value?
- Ask to play. Tell the kids on the playground what you can offer. More often than not, the other kids will be happy to have you, and you will enrich the play.

- If you can’t find any playgrounds, consider building your own, and invite the other kids.
- Allow yourself the freedom and the time to get used to your new tools. It takes time to build your networks and to start getting your content out there. Set a reasonable time frame for yourself, at which time you’ll re-evaluate. At a minimum, give yourself at least three months with any given tool, even though this is a pretty short time frame. Just as it took you a long time to build your in-person network, it takes some time to build your online network as well.
- Don’t advertise them until you’re ready. Take the time to write some blog posts, compose some tweets or get your experience and skills into LinkedIn. Once you feel comfortable, you can let the world know. How do you do that?
- Integrate these tools with what you are already doing. Put your Twitter feed in your email signature. Make sure it’s clear and easily findable on your site. Print it on your business cards. Use your traditional marketing properties to market your new online presence.
- Another part of integrating these tools is making them a part of your day. People work differently. Are you a person who likes to schedule things? Then establish a set day and time during the week that you’ll use to update your blog, your Twitter or your LinkedIn profile. Personally, I like to build my social networking into other processes. After I check my email each morning, I tweet those things that I find interesting. For me, this works very well.

**So – what’s your plan?** Hopefully you have some idea now of which tool to choose and how to get started. So, ask yourself:

- Which tool(s) would you choose? What’s important to you: content, connection, community?
- What content would you share?
- How often – realistically – would you update it?

If you can answer these questions to your satisfaction, you’re well on your way to an even more effective online brand. Like Karen, I’m always happy to help you sort out your online social brand – just contact me.
PART II
From Reference Interview to Project Proposal: Defining Client Needs to Ensure Research Success
by Sarah Hager Johnston

Many independent information professionals (IIPs) work outside traditional library settings, interacting with their clients mostly by telephone or e-mail and relying almost exclusively on online resources and primary research to meet their clients’ diverse information needs. Many IIPs are professionally trained librarians for whom the traditional reference interview remains at the top of the list of essential skills. In fact, the reference interview takes on even greater importance when the reference question leads to large-scale, complex research projects that may require weeks or months to complete.

For most IIPs, the reference interview and proposal comprise the first phase of any large research project. In addition to communicating important information about fees and costs, work schedules, payment policies and other business details, the proposal conveys the IIP’s understanding of the client’s information needs and establishes project parameters. The proposal also offers the IIP an opportunity to discuss expected outcomes, offer an assessment of the information environment and touch on potential challenges. Most importantly, the proposal process encourages communication between the IIP and the client to ensure that both parties agree on the scope and detail of the research project, its costs and duration and its likely success. A good proposal demonstrates the IIP’s understanding of the client’s question(s), familiarity with relevant resources and how to use them, sensitivity to budget issues and ability to provide value.

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Adding Value: Independent Information Professionals

Though the content and format of any proposal are determined by the project requirements, the document should cover several key components. Objectives and Scope. Summarize what you learned during the reference interview. Describe in detail the project as you understand it: what your client wants to know, and why, and how the information will be used. By the time you start drafting the proposal, you should be able to articulate clearly your client’s information needs (“Client A has requested secondary research to assess the state of the industry on Topic X…” or “Client C has requested that IIP establish and implement an ongoing competitive intelligence service to cover the following competitors, industries, products, regions…”). Include any agreed-upon search parameters (for example, limiting the project to secondary research in U.S. sources published in the past five years). If you can’t develop this section easily, get on the phone and talk to the client again.

The IIP’s ability to identify information that is – or would be – valuable to the client is at the heart of what we do. For example, exploratory research undertaken during the proposal process might identify information that would be valuable to the client if he or she were aware of it. Suppose that your client requests research to explore aspects A, B and C about a target topic. If your exploratory research identifies aspects D, E and F as critical to the overall project, then offer your big-picture perspective to encourage the client to include the additional factors in the research plan. In the proposal, you could state this as follows: “You have asked us to find information on aspects A, B and C of the target topic. Our research plan for this work is described below. During our exploratory research, we found extensive discussion of aspects D, E and F, often in conjunction with topics ABC; these seem to be important to your inquiry because…A research plan that
includes these topics is also presented below.” Then, price out the project with the additional topics, unbundled from the initial request. If you come across this additional information during the course of the research, you can contact the client to say “I’m also finding D, E and F, and these seem important because…Would you like me to incorporate these in the project?” Then, of course, you’ll need to renegotiate the work as an add-on to the original proposal with appropriate pricing and scheduling.

**Information Environment.** Describe the information you expect to find and how well you expect that your findings will, or will not, address your client’s needs. Here’s where you can offer caveats, too, as to time and costs, especially if resources are obscure or very expensive or if you expect that results might be either very copious (thus requiring more time to sift and analyze results) or very thin (thus requiring more time to seek out substantial information). This description assumes that you have done some exploratory research to identify likely sources and methods or that you know what to do and where to look.

**Search Strategy and Methodology.** Don’t give away the store, but offer some general guidance on how you will approach the project, what overall strategies and types of resources you will employ, the agreed-upon start date and how long you expect the project will take. This information will help your client feel confident that you have a thought-out plan and that you will not jump in at random. If your client has agreed to provide specific information or assistance (such as providing internal data in a specific format or arranging interviews with key personnel), be sure that these points are made clear. There is no need to divulge specific search strategies or identify specific databases or reference tools unless your client has requested that you do so.

**Reports and Other Deliverables.** Briefly describe what reports and deliverables you will prepare for the client, specifying formats and delivery methods, as should have been discussed in your reference interview. Your deliverables might include full text documents from database providers, compilations or aggregations of data and information (fully cited and in full compliance with copyright law, of course), analysis, narrative reports, bibliographies and indices, draft documents for the client’s further use, slide presentation, spreadsheets and so forth.

**Fees, Terms and Conditions.** In clear terms, state such things as your fees, estimated expenses, known taxes, project schedules, terms of payment, disclaimers, copyright considerations and nondisclosure notices. Make it clear that the client is paying for your time and expertise, not the quantity of information you retrieve; also make clear that you cannot guarantee such things as the quality or accuracy of information from third-party sources. Add a caveat that, if at any time before or during the project, the client requests changes in the scope of work, the budget or delivery dates, you reserve the right to issue a revised proposal outlining new parameters, a revised fee schedule and a revised delivery schedule.

A good research proposal summarizes the reference interview, delineates the research question or problem and outlines a professional approach to finding, analyzing and delivering information to answer the client’s question. You will know that you have written a good proposal when your client comes back with few questions, and when the project proceeds as expected.
PART II

The Accidental Knowledge Manager: Another Role for Independent Information Professionals
by Deb Hunt

Have you ever needed an existing print or digital file, document or image to do your work but couldn’t find what you needed? Did you need to reinvent the wheel when beginning a new project because you could not find information that resides somewhere on a shared server, your hard drive or in a filing cabinet?

If you’ve ever experienced this problem, then you can imagine what a stumbling block this must be to organizations of all types – from small businesses to Fortune 500 companies to government agencies.

Did you know?

- Organizations spend on average:
  - $20 in labor to file a document
  - $120 in labor to find a misfiled document
  - $220 in labor to reproduce a lost document
- 7.5 percent of all documents get lost; 3 percent of the remainder get misfiled
- Professionals spend 5-15 percent of their time reading information, but up to 50 percent looking for it

[Source: PricewaterhouseCoopers]

Is it any wonder that organizations of all sizes are drowning under a sea of digital and print documents, reducing their productivity and affecting their ROI?

Stephen Kaukonen, in a recent study entitled “Measuring ROI: An Award-Winning Accenture Case Study,” stated that every dollar spent on KM returned $25.06 to Accenture. This finding is a really powerful statement about the value of KM. How many other initiatives in an organization can boast a 25:1 return?

In the current economic climate, more than ever, organizations are striving to be lean and more competitive. There is a great opportunity to work with clients to fill this need to survive and thrive. Once they understand the impact that knowledge, enterprise or document management can have on their bottom line, they clamor to find a consultant who can help them.

Independent information professionals have skills that can be adapted and applied in a way that may not have occurred to them: to help organizations that are desperate to find their information assets (paper, digital, knowledge) in information overload reality. Even in tough economic times, clients recognize the competitive advantage they will gain by being able to access their knowledge easily and quickly. We can fill this need.

What Are Enterprise, Document, Record and Knowledge Management?

As I work on projects with clients, it is clear that there are many levels of information management. As solutions grow more robust, the line can blur between what kind of solution a vendor offers and what a client needs. What I do know, though, is that it’s best to right-size the software to the project.
Here are some basic definitions to understand the different types of information management:

- **Document management (DM)** encompasses indexing, searching, file check-in/check-out, version control, retention management and workflow for digital and print files.

- **Enterprise content management (ECM)** is the strategies, methods and tools used to capture, manage, store, preserve and deliver content and documents related to organizational processes. ECM tools and strategies allow the management of an organization's unstructured information, wherever that information exists. ([www.aiim.org](http://www.aiim.org))

- **Records management (RM)** is defined as the systematic control of records throughout their life cycle including long-term archiving, automating retention and compliance policies, and ensuring legal, regulatory and industry compliance. ([www.arma.org](http://www.arma.org))

- **Knowledge management (KM)** is the process through which organizations generate value from their intellectual and knowledge-based assets. Most often, generating value from such assets involves codifying what employees, partners and customers know and sharing that information among employees, departments and even with other companies in an effort to devise best practices. ([www.cio.com](http://www.cio.com))

**Case Study**

The staff of my client, a global architectural firm, were spinning their wheels trying to find images, documents and other resources that lived in many information silos. What they needed might be on someone’s desk in paper form, on that person’s computer, on the server or in a filing cabinet. This firm already was using Canto Cumulus software and had indexed some 30,000 images for staff to use in their work. There were 2.5 FTE staff devoted to this indexing, metadata and taxonomy creation and maintenance. I was thrilled when I discovered this system, but shocked to learn that they had never promoted this amazing, deep resource. When I mentioned this database in a meeting with the CEO and several department heads, the CEO told me he had tried it and hated the web interface. I immediately questioned why he wasn’t using the desktop client and he said he didn’t know there was one.

Upon further investigation, I learned they only paid for three desktop client licenses. When I suggested they buy at least six more and train key staff and the CEO to use it, they were surprised at how reasonable the cost was and did it immediately. The CEO was so impressed with his new search capability that it was implemented firm-wide. This step alone leveraged a rich resource they already had that was organized, accessible and had the copyright owned by the firm. But, there was still much work to do.

I did an information audit, created software criteria based on the audit, researched software solutions to meet those needs and presented a report and recommendations to the CEO and key staff. (This study took place over a couple of months.) I also recommended they hire an information professional to actually implement this project, which they did. However, I had to convince them that a non-IT person had the right skill set to do it. That person is still there today, wrangling assets, making them accessible and contributing to the ROI of the firm.

**The Accidental Knowledge Manager**

I got into knowledge, enterprise and document management because I had clients who needed library automation solutions. When these clients realized how easy it was to find externally produced documents, they understood the value of having their internally created documents just as easily findable. I jumped in with both feet using transferrable skills I already possessed. I also read and attended seminars related to this field so I could be better trained and informed.

With data growth and proliferation ongoing, organizations have two choices:

- Maintain the status quo and hope employees can find relevant information when they need it
- Learn from what the Internet has taught us and leverage search technology to connect knowledge workers with information

I prefer the latter strategy.
In December 2007 Gartner conducted a web-based survey of organizations and their use or intent to use processes and technologies related to information management and found that “of more than 400 respondents, 67% of enterprises had more than six repositories … In many cases, these multiple repositories consist of departmental solutions, and the content is often duplicated in other repositories in the organization.” [Source: *Five Best Practices for Deploying SharePoint Alongside ECM Suites*, Gartner RAS Core Research Note G00157266, Karen M. Shegda, Mark R. Gilbert, April 25, 2008.]

“Files may reside in local laptops, email attachments and on paper averaging 19 copies per document.” [Source: International Data Corporation (IDC) & Document Management Alliance (DMA)]

It is clear that organizations need to invest in an information management solutions, and IIPs are positioned to bring them the expertise they need to be successful.

“If we play our KM or ‘knowledge engineer’ cards right, there are very few areas in any organization in which we won’t have significant contributions to make.” [Source: “Education for Changing Roles” by Gaye Colvin. *Information Outlook*, Oct/Nov 2009, p. 21.]

So what are you waiting for? Here is an opportunity that is only destined to grow as organizations sink under the weight of information and knowledge they cannot find.
This past spring I invited a landscape architect over to my home. We had met online when he presented landscaping ideas to the board of directors for the condo building where I operate my studio. I liked the way he had presented ideas to our board and how quickly we moved from design notes to a completed garden.

He dropped by and we took the tour (which, frankly, isn’t much of a tour when you live in a Washington, D.C., townhouse). We chatted about problems and visions for the space. I stressed my vision – I needed help improving the soil and reshaping the garden space from its present Addams Family style to one that was more welcoming.

The process was slow, but so was I. I didn’t rush proposal development – and neither did my landscape architect. By mid-May, new “business factors” had emerged and intensified my need for results. “I’m getting married at home in early August,” I told him. “I need our project complete.” In other words, I was telling my landscape architect, “build me a product.”

As a client, I had a few expectations – a visual rendering, information on cost and price points and a place where I could see the flowers online.

Weeks passed. Summer was upon us. Finally, a grand blueprint arrived. An architecture, right? But I didn’t have information on costs or how I might change the design. “What does this cost?” I asked my architect.

More weeks passed. (Summer has only so many weeks to pass… I was becoming antsy.) I feared the fancy blueprints would result in a high price, which turned out to be true. I tried (and failed) to understand his pricing, so we entered into several rounds of e-mail conversation to discuss options for building the product.

Finally I asked, “Will all this be completed by August 5?” “No,” responded my architect. “We have a lot to do. I’m thinking …. fall.”

With some anxiety, I typed an e-mail. “Do you think you could put some flowers in the soil and make it look festive for my events in August?” Then I waited.

I finally received a reply. “What do you mean by festive?”

What Went Wrong?

With a little analysis, you can see why the project failed. I was a client who wanted a product. My contractor focused on the plan.

I was a client who didn’t participate fully. I didn’t work with the contractor to lay out a structure for accomplishing what we needed to accomplish. I didn’t push for an iterative design cycle. Nor did I specify any dates when I needed planning documents to support our process and final outcome.

“I don’t have time,” I figured. “It’s just a garden.”

Just. I am reminded of all the bosses and business leaders who try to understand the invisible work of information architecture, but think, “It’s just a website.”

What Did I Want?

As I reflect on this now, I realize it wasn’t just a garden that I wanted. I wanted guests to come to our door and be
welcomed by happy, healthy plants (instead of weeds struggling to stay alive). I wanted the experience of sharing our happiness with neighbors. And I wanted to improve our neighborhood’s curb appeal.

Fortunately, my adventure in gardening turned out OK. I reconnected with a friend of a friend who’s a landscaper. “Use your artistic vision,” I told him. He completed the project within days. I remain delighted at the outcome.

In the end, I discovered that I wanted a product (and that’s what I got). And I wanted the experience that my garden provides (and I love it). But did I need to spend time and money on the architecture? Maybe not.

But when I think about providing information architecture services, maybe I’ll listen better to hear if it’s just a product my client wants. And maybe now I understand client needs a little better. ■

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