INTRODUCTION
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