Breakout Session 6

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? PROGRESS AND PROSPECTS FOR THE INFORMATION PROFESSIONAL

Facilitator/Scribe: Sheila Corrall

Key drivers of change included:
- demand for round-the-clock support (24/7)
- pressure for continuous cost reduction
- constant need to justify existence/prove value-for-money
- changes in business practices (eg off-shore and outsourced operations)
- complexity of licence arrangements for information products

Defining the key roles expected for IPs in the future

Wide variety of job titles used for IP roles, with emphasis more on research and analysis, than on information management.

Trends evident included:
- convergence of functions, eg
  - information + knowledge management
  - knowledge + records
- specialisation of roles, eg
  - sector specialist
  - data management

Significant current roles included acting as trainer, consultant and manager (including negotiating licences/contracts and managing off-shore operations/quality-checking research of remote staff) as well as rolling out and supporting new desktop products. Advising on copyright-related matters, such as re-use of data has also become significant.

A key point here is the expected trend towards end-user searching has reversed in some cases, with the mix of end-user and expert searching determined by staff status, corporate culture and personal preferences, requiring nuanced judgement and diplomatic handling by IPs.

New roles (using contract staff) have been created specifically to support late-night working. Also creative use of gap-year student interns leading to new category of

junior researchers, enabling senior IPs to concentrate on more specialist sector-based/value-added research.

Identifying the skill set and personal attributes needed

IPs need a complex mix of specialist (professional/technical), generic (managerial/personal) and context-related (organisation-specific) knowledge, skills and attributes.

Adaptability, the ability to anticipate and willingness to delegate are among the qualities particularly admired in IP leaders.

Key qualities sought in new recruits to the corporate sector include:
- knowledge of a core set of information resources
- aptitude to master new products quickly
- excellent interpersonal and communication skills
- ability to work under pressure and handle stress
- demonstrable interest in the industry or sector
- willingness to keep up-to-date with market trends
- good fit with team and organisational culture

Creating a future-proof personal development plan

CILIP framework and tools seen as over-complicated. Many IPs use templates provided by company for annual performance appraisal, although competency frameworks sometimes not relevant to IPs.

Working through a set of self-development questions can help people to focus, eg
- **Goal** – <u>what</u> competency do I want to develop?
- **Purpose** – <u>why</u> do I want to develop this? (eg current job, future role)
- **Methods** – <u>how</u> do I plan to develop it?
- **Timescale** – <u>when</u> will I start/end/review progress?
- **People** – <u>who</u> will help, guide and support me?
- **Resources** – what resources ('<u>wherewithal</u>') will I need to succeed?

Useful sources of professional learning include end-users/company clients, business partners and competitor firms, as well as learning from experienced colleagues, professional networks, etc.