With my business case written and approval achieved, I was off to Geelong for the HIMAA Conference!

Driving down to Geelong for the Coding Seminar I was looking forward to a few days of catching up with old friends, staying in a funky hotel (hope it’s got Foxtel!), taking my new car for a spin, and going out on the town to some of the local haunts. Now I must admit those aims were pretty much achieved, but the best thing about this conference was that I came away on the Friday evening tired yet feeling invigorated about both my career and the profession in which I work.

The quality of the Health Information Management presentations at this conference was generally very good, and the trade exhibition was relevant and well presented. The theme of the conference was ‘change’, and this characteristic of the profession was certainly borne out by many of the speakers. Think about it for a minute. Every single day you go to work and every day you don’t there is change happening. During the time we were at Geelong, changes were occurring at our work places and we weren’t even there – amazing! We all need to actively participate in ensuring that the Health Information Management profession is at the forefront of changes that are continuing to occur in health.

What does that mean? It means that we do not accept the status quo. It means selling ourselves as intelligent individuals who aren’t just cellar dwellers. It means telling everyone proudly we are Health Information Managers. Wine isn’t the only good thing that comes out of the basement! Put your fingerprint on the institution in which you work and leave a legacy for those to come! ‘Invent’ change: be dynamic, lead it, implement it, and act on it.

This conference showed me that there are many HIMs throughout the land involved with many exciting and innovative developments. Often, these developments are taking place in environments outside the traditional sphere of innovation. These HIMs are changing the paradigm in such a way that others, like myself, are inspired to resist the temptation to sit back and rest on our perceived laurels.

Professional jealousy is a phrase that is a good one to remember. If you see others being involved in the many exciting projects occurring around Australia then it is up to you as an individual to catch up and better your ‘rivals’. And even more importantly, put a paper in at the next conference and tell us about it so the circle of knowledge continues.

It behoves all of us as a professional group to ensure the continuation of HIMAA conferences as stand-alone entities by making certain our particular institutions are represented adequately at future conferences. It is even more important that we reclaim our professional ground by maintaining a large and active membership, and this can only be achieved by rejoining the Association every year and encouraging others to do the same.

Although this conference and this article are probably examples of preaching to the converted when it comes to professional issues, the most inspiring aspect of the conference was the fact that there is still passion about our profession and where it is heading. Let’s hope this conference is the first step in a long journey.

The next HIMAA conference will be held in Wellington, New Zealand, probably in November 2006. Start writing your business cases now to attend next year, and better still, start thinking about what you are going to present as a conference paper!

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