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Identifying core competencies for records management and information governance professionals: A job advertisement analysis (Poster)

Abstract:
Records and information management (RIM) has been well needed in both public and private sectors for decades. The recent progression toward enterprise wide information governance (IG) provides a good example of RIM's fast-paced evolution. However, what should those being hired for a RIM/IG position know? What other qualities should they bring to the job in order to survive and thrive? Unfortunately, there is a dearth of empirical research that addresses these concerns. This proposed poster will report an on-going project that aims to identify core competencies for this group of information professionals by using a job advertisement content analysis approach.

Résumé:

Introduction

Records and information management (RIM) is not a new field. As a modern professional practice, it has been thriving in both public and private sectors for more than a half century (Robek, et al., 2002). Given the rapidity of technological advancement, the field keeps its pace and evolves swiftly. The recent progression toward enterprise wide information governance (IG), of which RIM is a component, can be regarded as a good example of this fast-paced evolution.

In this data-intensive digital age, what should those being hired for a RIM/IG position know? What other qualities should they bring to the job in order to survive and thrive? These are fundamental concerns that need constant attention.

Unfortunately, there is a dearth of empirical research that addresses these concerns. If we truly want to grow this field and enhance its educational standards, identifying core competencies, such as essential knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs), for RIM/IG professionals is imperative.

The purpose of this on-going study is in two-fold: (1) to assess the current state of the job responsibilities required of RIM/IG professionals; and (2) to identify KSAs demanded by employers of such professionals. Two research questions guide this study:
- What is the current state of job responsibilities demanded for RIM/IG professionals?
- Which KSAs do RIM/IG professionals need?

Context
Unlike other established professions (e.g., law, medicine, and librarianship), few RIM/IG professionals receive formal training from university degree programs. Instead, quite often they learn on the job or through continuing education opportunities provided by professional associations. This may make the field vulnerable to disturbances from other professions (Abbot, 1988). Concentrating on the KSAs required of RIM/IG professionals, this study attempts to contribute some abstract knowledge beneficial for strengthening the field.

This piece of research is necessary for the following reasons. First, competence information is an integral part of any occupation or profession. True professions are committed to developing and maintaining a standardized body of knowledge (BOK). This BOK usually comprises a unique set of concepts, methods, and theories. As part of the BOK, competence information is one of the pillars that have elevated RIM/IG as a recognized professional field. In the absence or weak presence of such information, there is an obvious need to fill the void.

Second, RIM/IG competence issues remain relatively understudied. For any established professions, their BOK is constantly reviewed, extended, and updated through scientific inquiry or scholarly learning. In the RIM/IG field, however, relevant competence studies (e.g., Cox, 2000; Pember, 2003; ARMA International, 2007) were either insubstantial or rather dated. There is an urgent necessity to revisit the area and update perspectives.

Third, identifying competencies for RIM/IG is vital for designing an appropriate and adequate curriculum to train and develop future workers in the field. Understanding work and how it is changing is essential to all educators and/or advisors who prepare people for the workplace. Developing RIM/IG education without knowing KSA requirements of the field would be directionless and unproductive. Thus, this study is compulsory to help educators to provide resources that job seekers need when they consider RIM/IG job opportunities.

Relevant Studies
At least three similar or relevant studies have been conducted previously. Cox (2000) examined and compared job advertisements published between 1976 and 1997 for entry-level archivists and other information management professionals. But his focus was not on identifying an exhaustive list of competencies. Rather, it attempted to discover evidence that witnessed sort of paradigm shift. Pember (2003) reported a content analysis study on 79 recordkeeping job advertisements posted in Western Australia. She has identified a spectrum of required knowledge and skills from the employers' perspective. However, the study was actually conducted in the year 2000 and we are unsure to what extent those findings would still be applicable to today's social-technical environment. ARMA International published their RIM Core Competencies in 2007. These competencies do not exactly represent employers' viewpoint. Instead, they were generated and validated by a group of elite RIM professionals. This endeavor serves as a benchmark tool but has not been updated for some time. Against this backdrop, our ongoing research will definitely overhaul and augment these studies.

Methods
To address those two aforementioned research questions, a comprehensive content analysis approach is used to analyze recent RIM job advertisements. This methodology is selected for two reasons. First and foremost, it is well suited for this research inquiry. Analysis of job advertisements has been one of the two conventional approaches used for assessing and identifying skill sets required of an occupation (e.g., Ahsan et al., 2013; Harper, 2013; Hoffman & Bresciani, 2012; Kim et al., 2013; Marion, 2001; Marion et al., 2005; Park et al., 2009). The other conventional approach is to conduct surveys on a targeted population. Second, the methodology is particularly appropriate for investigating the research questions posed above. Compared to the survey approach, which usually gathers perceptual, self-report data, job advertisement analysis approach focuses more on objective and factual data that disclose employers' needs and preferences for new hires. Considering that no human subjects are involved in, the job advertisement analysis approach is not influenced by those cognitive and situational issues that are frequently seen in survey studies.

In this study, we collect full-text notices of job openings posted on a number of major job search websites related to RIM/IG positions (such as ARMA, ICRM, Glassdoor, Indeed, etc.) between November 2016 and January 2017.

A systematic content analysis is undergoing using the following procedures:
- Data reduction. For each notice of job opening collected, its data is initially reduced and designated into four general classes: (1) job title; (2) job responsibilities; (3) required qualifications or skill sets; and (4) preferred qualifications or skill sets. The reduced data is compiled into a finalized data set.
- Initial coding. We employ an open and substantive coding approach, based on the grounded theory, to manually identify fundamental categories that are emergent from each general class (i.e., job title, job responsibilities, required qualifications, and preferred qualifications) within the data set. The deliverable at this stage are four lists of basic categories initially identified. Each identified category is defined with the terms either from the data set or from the established relevant literature.
- Recoding and normalization of the categories. Using these four initial lists of basic categories, we then re-code the entire data set, and carefully review frequencies to ensure discriminant validity between the various categories. More importantly, during this process, previously built categories may be collapsed, revised, or merged with others, while new categories may be created and added. Accordingly, definition to each category are modified. Also, because multiple coders are involved in this coding process, so their work will be reconciled, and the inter-coder reliability coefficient (Cohen's kappa) will be calculated.
- Frequency counts. One major output of this study will be frequency counts of the categories. The frequency with which categories appear will be a good indicator of importance in the data set akin to a measure of overall popularity. Therefore, a priority of job responsibilities and KSAs demanded for RIM professionals will be identified.
- LDA modeling. Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA)-based topic modeling approach will be used at the end of this research project to identify the "hot" topics among the gathered texts. In the LDA modeling approach, a document is viewed as a collection of "bags of words," assuming that each document has the probability of several topics and that topics

are associated with different conditional distributions over a fixed set of words (Li, et al, 2011).

Current Status of the Project
We are now still in the phase of data collection and initial processing. So far we have collected 298 job advertisements. We expect to have solid preliminary results to be presented in June.

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