

From Theory into Practice: Bridging the Clinical Informatics Divide!

R. Haux¹; M. J. Ball²

¹ University of Braunschweig – Institute of Technology and Hannover Medical School, Germany, President of IMIA from 2007 to 2010; ² Healthcare and Life Sciences Institute, IBM Research, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA, President of IMIA from 1992 to 1995

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Correspondence to:

Reinhold Haux
Peter L. Reichertz Institute for Medical Informatics
University of Braunschweig - Institute of Technology and Hannover
Medical School, Germany
Reinhold.Haux@plri.de

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Marion J. Ball
Healthcare and Life Sciences Institute, IBM Research
Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA

The International Medical Informatics Association (IMIA)

Over forty years, informatics has built bridges from information technology to all levels of biomedicine: basic science research, clinical practice, health service delivery and public health, and has disseminated biomedical and informatics research from laboratory to bedside, to patients and populations across the world. Throughout those forty years, the International Medical Informatics Association (IMIA, [1]) has created and itself served as the primary bridge for people and organizations to unite efforts in these diverse domains the world over. Throughout its evolution and considerable growth, IMIA's core goals have been:

- Promotion of informatics in health care and biomedical research,
- Advancement of international cooperation,
- Stimulation of research, development and education, and
- Dissemination and exchange of information.

During recent years, IMIA has grown and changed considerably. From an initial number of twelve founding nations in 1967, IMIA developed into a worldwide network of more than 50 member societies, as well as academic and corporate institutional members, working and special interest groups, affiliated organizations and corresponding members, numbering in excess of 150, when one includes IMIA's working groups, representative member organizations, and member societies. In all IMIA represents over 50,000 individuals!

Today IMIA's regional organizations are covering all parts of our world: APAMI, the Asia Pacific Association for Medical Informatics, EFMI, the European Federation for Medical Informatics, HELINA, Health Informatics in Africa, IMIA-LAC, the Latin American and Caribbean Federation for Health Informatics, MEAHI, the Middle East Association for Health Informatics, Canada's Health Informatics Association (COACH) and the American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA). IMIA has developed into the leading international Health and Biomedical informatics organization!

The International Medical Informatics Association, over the past years, has stimulated and communicated the highest quality research, education and technology enabled applications in a new and unified world. It is well accepted that medical/health informatics is becoming one of the central disciplines for achieving better healthcare for the people of all nations and societies.

Applying our field's contributions we are reaching for a high-quality efficient healthcare system through implementing high-quality research in biomedicine and utilizing the health and computer sciences disciplines and tools in the actual health practice arena [2].

Building Bridges

Over the past 40 years, IMIA has been a "bridging organization" [3], as medical informatics is an interdisciplinary discipline "avant la lettre" [4]. IMIA is traditionally building bridges and stimulating collaboration between researchers, educators and practitioners. IMIA's mission from the start has had a mission to bring together, scientists, researchers, practitioners, vendors, consultants in a global environment to cooperate and share information and lessons learned.

Publications

IMIA can look back to a long publication record with high-quality publications [5]. Two journals, the International Journal for Medical Informatics (IJMI) and Methods of Information in Medicine (MIM), both devoted to research in health and biomedical informatics. Both Journals have been endorsed as official journals of IMIA.

Last, but not least, IMIA is proud to publish The Yearbook of Medical Informatics as comprehensive yearly periodical, not only documenting but also stimulating progress in our field [6]. This valuable publication has been invaluable to our field since 1992. Now we want to announce a new

seminal addition to this family of publication! Indeed we are now announcing a new e-enabled era for IMIA.

The Journal on Applied Clinical Informatics

IMIA recognized that 'building bridges', providing publications and serving the needs of its international membership do not stop with research in informatics. To the contrary, increasing demand for a place to collaborate, exchange ideas, expertise, and experiences is needed in applied / translational informatics made the launch of a new journal in this domain necessary.

Applied Clinical Informatics (ACI) is the first E-journal in IMIA's collection. ACI will fill a void; we feel has been empty to now. This new e-enabled publication will be an international, peer-reviewed journal, designed to cultivate broad readership across health care, in order to report on informatics topics of translational interest and on the application of informatics principals.

It is our belief that such an applied informatics journal will appeal to practicing physicians, health care administrators and CIOs as well as medical informaticians [7]. In a globalizing world with eHealth initiatives spanning across borders, such a journal should be an international effort and IMIA is the appropriate organization to support and initiate such an applied journal. Our field has the potential to play a major role in translational medicine [8].

In 2007 we discussed these ideas with Christoph U. Lehmann and fortunately convinced him to prepare a proposal for such an applied E-journal. Prior to the meeting with Dr. Lehmann, the current IMIA President had a discussions with Dieter Bergemann, Honorary Fellow of IMIA, and the Publisher and CEO of Schattauer Verlag, addressing the pros and cons of publishing such a journal. It consequently was decided to launch such an E-journal and to call it Applied Clinical Informatics (ACI). Chris Lehmann accepted the editorship.

The IMIA Board unanimously approved ACI as its third official journal [9] and the IMIA General Assembly strongly supported the launching of ACI. That also, the Association of Medical Directors of Information Systems (AMDIS, [10]), chose ACI as its official journal, may additionally highlight the importance of such a journal.

ACI will collaborate and not compete with the two already existing official journals of IMIA, the International Journal of Medical Informatics (IJMI) and Methods of Information in Medicine (MIM). These two journals are devoted to informatics research, while ACI will be dedicated to the aspects of applying the research to the bedside (computers). The intent of the ACI journal is to stimulate and support high quality publications for the practice of our field addressing an international audience, which is IMIA's mission.

Expectations

We hope that ACI will provide us with high-quality and timely publications on the practice of informatics. With this issue the E-journal is being launched after much careful preparation.

In closing let us come back to our concept of bridging. Bridges can be crossed in two directions. Expanding upon this theme, we want to build bridges from theory of Informatics to the actual practice of Informatics.

We hope and expect that ACI will be well received worldwide and we are convinced that this journal will contribute to a higher quality and efficient healthcare delivery system at the point of care, enabled by leading edge technology!

We wish great success for this new outstanding E Journal. Three cheers for ACI!

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Haaf. Schattauer accepted to launch this new publication as publishing house and to take the full financial risk. Through this decision and through the professionalism and energy of the whole Schattauer team, this new and urgently needed journal can now be launched!

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