The 50th Anniversary IMIA History of Medical Informatics Project

Casimir A. Kulikowski

Department of Computer Science, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, Piscataway, NJ, USA

Corresponding author: Prof. Casimir Kulikowski, PhD. Rutgers University, New Jersey, USA. E-mail: kulikows@cs.rutgers.edu

Review

ABSTRACT

At the meeting of the IMIA Board in 2009 in Hiroshima, it approved an IMIA 50th Anniversary History Project to produce a historical volume and other materials to commemorate the anniversary of the foundation of the predecessor of IMIA—the IFIP-TC4 in 1967. A Taskforce was organized under the direction of Casimir Kulikowski, then the VP for Services of IMIA, and since that time it has met regularly to plan and implement the 50th Anniversary History of IMIA as an edited volume, and as material available online on a Media Presentation Database. The IMIA Taskforce is gathering IMIA-related archival materials, currently accessible through a prototype media repository at Rutgers University in order to help those contributing to the book or writing their own recollections and histories. The materials will support a chronicle of the development and evolution of IMIA, its contributors, its sponsored events and publications, educational and other professional activities. During 2013 Workshops were held at the Prague EFMI-STC meeting in April and at the MEDINFO 2013 Congress in Copenhagen in August.

Keywords: Medical Informatics, Medical History, History, Informatics for the History of IMIA.

1. BEGINNINGS OF THE IMIA HISTORY PROJECT

The IMIA Board meeting in Hiroshima in 2009 approved the creation of the IMIA History Taskforce, consisting of representatives from the various international regions that comprise IMIA: George Mihalas (Europe); Hyeoun-Ae Park (Asia); Sedick Isaacs (Africa); Alvaro Margolis (Latin America), Casimir Kulikowski (North America –Chair). With the passing of Sedick Isaacs in 2012, representation for Africa has been assumed by Lyn Hanmer.

There have been meetings of the IMIA History Taskforce at Medinfo 2010 in Cape Town, and at two IMIA-sponsored regional meetings since then (INFOLAC 2011 and APAMI 2013). A number of original contributions to the IMIA History Project have been solicited and are beginning to be published as articles in the IMIA Yearbook (1, 2, 3, 4).

These add to the growing collection of published materials, including recollections of IMIA leaders such as (5) and pioneering historical informatics work from the USA's National Library of Medicine (6), of Morris Collen (7), and the Nursing Informatics History Project (8, 9).

During 2013 George Mihalas, Jana Zvarova and Casimir Kulikowski organized a panel on the history of EFMI at the EFMI STC in Prague (10), in April, and a workshop was organized by Casimir Kulikowski at the World Congress of Medical Informatics (Medinfo 2013) held in Copenhagen in August (11). Both these meetings were very successful in eliciting many commitments to contribute archival documents and produce new historical papers from biomedical and health informatics researchers and practitioners from around the world. This paper is an updated version of the presentation at

the EFMI STC meeting in Prague, and joins those from other European contributors at that meeting.

2. PROTOTYPE MEDIA PRESENTATION REPOSITORY FOR IMIA ARCHIVAL AND HISTORICAL MATERIALS

To help collect original IMIA-specific documents and other archival materials, and making them available to the authors contributing to the 50th Anniversary volume, we have built a prototype media presentation repository, or wiki, at Rutgers University's Department of Computer Science, focusing on those who have contributed to IMIA over the past five decades, and the events and publications they have been involved in (<http://infohistory.rutgers.edu>) (12). A screen shot of a timeline with selected medical informatics events related to the evolution of IMIA is illustrated on Figure 1.

The wiki supports visual and graphical summaries, with timelines connecting events and people mentioned in documents, providing a spatial and temporal indexing that facilitates navigation through the original materials, also facilitating the analysis of their contents.

Materials comprising the major original documentary contents currently available through the repository at Rutgers include:

- Correspondence related to the formation of IMIA and its Bylaws;
- Board and General Assembly meeting notices and minutes;
- Correspondence about decisions regarding the World Congresses of Medical Informatics (Medinfos), and the preparations and other documents, flyers, and minutes of meetings;

Figure 1. IMIA Chronicle - a screen shot of a timeline with selected medical informatics events from 1960 to 2010

- Correspondence about special (usually Working Group) conferences sponsored by IMIA and links to resulting publications;
- Correspondence and documents related to IMIA's relations to regional and (national) member societies.

In addition, we are producing short summaries of notable events involving IMIA, together with short biographical sketches (profiles) of IMIA contributors. Both include photographic records of people and locations, focusing on IMIA-related activities, and pictures of the research and publications of the IMIA participants designed to illustrate the contributions of the members to medical informatics. These materials have been scanned and made available by former IMIA Secretary, Diarmuid UaConaill, and the current CEO of IMIA, Peter Murray, while also drawing on the records of Steven Huesing, the first IMIA Executive Director. Besides the correspondence materials related to significant IMIA events along the association's timeline, we have added links to the tables of contents from the *IMIA Yearbook of Medical Informatics*, and major journals of the Association: *Methods of Information in Medicine*, and the *International Journal of Medical Informatics*. We are also gradually adding tables of contents of conferences associated with IMIA, its Newsletter, and predecessor activities – like the Elsinore Conference in 1966 that served as the catalyst for the formation of IFIP-TC4. In addition, we are gradually adding links to tables of contents from

other early journals in the discipline like *Computers in Biomedical Research*, and *Computers in Biology and Medicine*. The purpose is to have available as much material as possible so text analysis methods can be used to carry out temporal correlation analyses of participations and contributions to IMIA events and publications.

3. FUTURE PLANS

The challenge facing the IMIA History Taskforce and the Editorial Board of the 50th Anniversary History Project, is how to summarize the international dimensions of the evolution of a highly interdisciplinary scientific and technological field like biomedical and health informatics. The prototype repository at Rutgers provides a preliminary version of an easily accessible archive for the documents of IMIA, and information about its contributors, events, and organizational evolution. The overview timeline provides a convenient point-of-entry to compile and search for specific dates, periods, and people. The indexing by document-type will enable the writers of the history to access the items of interest by region, country, or working group, and special interest group, as well as the World Congresses on Medical Informatics (Medinfos) and other meetings sponsored by IMIA. In addition to conventional archival media-based approaches, we will be exploring more recent software analytics tools for analyzing the text in the documents and correlating the contents with that in the published literature, so as to develop a detailed picture of the participation

of different researchers and research groups in the activities of IMIA throughout its history. This can show how “professional social networks” of scientists, practitioners, and education specialists have led the activities of the organization, complementing conventional citation analyses. The patterns of participation and interaction between different regional and world-wide activities of IMIA will be clearly outlined and displayed on maps and correlated to summaries of the subfields of specialization of medical informatics. In this way, the main themes that have dominated the discourse and publications in our discipline can be more clearly defined, and included in the interpretive historical narratives. The sessions at EFMI-STC in Prague (12) and the Workshop at Medinfo 2013 (11, 13) have led to the commissioning of the histories of the different national and regional societies and associations that comprise IMIA so they can be included in the 50th Anniversary IMIA History volume. By investigating the use and development of new analytical summarization and visualization methods, these activities also contribute to the development of specialized informatics methods in support of historical research. And, they will be doing this to produce comprehensive, interesting narratives about the accomplishments and challenges of a unique international professional organization in informatics itself: IMIA.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: NONE DECLARED.

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The IMIA Vision

The International Medical Informatics Association (IMIA) is the world body for health and biomedical informatics. As an 'association of associations', IMIA acts as a bridging organisation, bringing together the constituent organisations and their members. IMIA provides leadership and expertise to the multidisciplinary, health focused community and to policy makers, to enable the transformation of healthcare in accord with the world-wide vision of improving the health of the world population.

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Latest news updates

ICANN and Safeguards for Health Domains - .health (<http://wp.me/pvCUS-1Rk>)

IMIA has expressed concern to ICANN about the proposed generic safeguards for health-related new Internet domain names. Together with other organisations, IMIA are calling on the ICANN Board to delay the allocation of .health and other health-related names until adequate safeguards, and baseline conditions for their implementation, are in place. Please add your voice by sending a similar letter of concern (see news item at <http://wp.me/pvCUS-1Rk>)

iHealth 2014 Conference - Orlando, FL, USA; 30 January - 01 February, 2014 (<http://wp.me/pvCUS-1Pf>)

The

Next IMIA GA Meeting

IMIA General Assembly 2014

Wed, 28/08/2013 - 00:00

The 2014 IMIA General Assembly will be held on 31 October 2014 in New Delhi, India in conjunction with APAMI2014 conference (www.apami2014.com)

hims14
Annual Conference & Exhibition

Register today.

Upcoming Events

January 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11