

International Medical Informatics Association (IMIA)

Annual Report to the Board and General Assembly

July 1995

President Marion J. Ball

In preparing this, my last report as IMIA President, I focus on the themes and the vision that have shaped my term in office. For the details of the past year, I refer you to the minutes and the supporting materials sent out to the Board and the General Assembly by IMIA Secretary, Bjarte Solheim.

MedInfo

Vancouver, Canada. At the beginning of July, preregistrations for MedInfo 95 topped 1600, ensuring that it would be one of the largest MedInfos ever. Certainly these numbers testify to the vitality of health informatics and to the effectiveness of the chairpersons planning MedInfo 95: Kathryn Hannah, Organizing Committee; Shigekoto Kaihara, Scientific Program Committee; and Robert Greenes, Editorial Committee. To them and to all those who helped them complete their tasks, I express my thanks and those of the IMIA Board.

Seoul, Korea. At the closing ceremonies in Vancouver, we will also hear from our colleagues in the Korean Society of Medical Informatics and the city of Seoul, in their roles as hosts of MedInfo 98. Selected by the General Assembly in Dresden in a highly competitive bid process, the venue strengthens the involvement of the Pacific Rim in IMIA. I take great pride in seeing IMIA grow in stature in Asia and in helping to realize the vision imparted to IMIA by Shigekoto Kaihara during his Presidency.

The New IMIA

Governance. The Board continues to finetune the new structure approved by the 1993 General Assembly. The Vice President for Special Activities, Hans Peterson, has developed standing orders for the IMIA officers; these will be reviewed by the General Assembly in Vancouver. Such procedural issues are critically important to the success of distributed governance with five Vice Presidents, each with a specific domain.

A Bridge Organization. Vice President Jean-Raoul Scherrer continues to serve as liaison to the International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP). He has provided a home for the IMIA archives since IFIP closed its offices in Geneva late last year. Jean-Raoul Scherrer also serves as IMIA liaison with WHO. Last year, IMIA sent representatives to CEN-TC251; in Vancouver, the General Assembly will be asked to appoint a liaison officer. These relationships strengthen IMIA as a bridge organization. Earlier this year, the World Health

Organization (WHO) renewed IMIA's designation as a non-governmental organization (NGO) in official relations with WHO. Updated information on IMIA has been forwarded to WHO for inclusion in their directory of collaborating institutions.

Enhanced Regionalism

APAMI. The inaugural meeting of the Asia Pacific Association for Medical Informatics (APAMI) in November 1994 was a great success thanks to KC Lun's work as chair and host. Joining me at APAMI in Singapore were two past Presidents of IMIA, Shigekoto Kaihara and Hans Peterson. APAMI's application for recognition as a regional members of IMIA appears on the agenda for the Board and the General Assembly in Vancouver.

IMIA-LAC. After much effort and some uncertainty, IMIA-LAC obtained funding from the Kellogg Foundation to bring 19 participants to MedInfo 95, with a preliminary stop in Baltimore/Washington to visit the National Library of Medicine, the University of Maryland at Baltimore, and the Johns Hopkins. The new President of IMIA-LAC, Amando Espinosa, will lead this group.

EFMI. Stellan Bengsston has continued to serve IMIA as liaison officer for the European Federation for Medical Informatics (EFMI), and EFMI has continued its ambitious schedule of events which IMIA representatives have attended. In January 1996, IMIA VP for WGs/SIGs, Jean-Raoul Scherrer, will assume the Presidency of the EFMI. In this new role, he plans to build upon the synergies existing between the two organizations and their working groups.

Helina. On December 21, 1994, President Elect Otto Rienhoff concluded the site selection process and notified the groups bidding for the next Helina that South Africa would host Helina 1996. In early 1995, as part of IMIA support for informatics in Africa, IMIA Board members provided the South Africans with advice on funding opportunities. As I prepare to conclude my Presidency, I am pleased to be able to make a contribution to Helina. It is my hope that the conference will give birth to a new IMIA regional group for all of Africa.

Heightened Visibility

Proceedings of two IMIA Working Groups were published in 1995 as special journal issues:

For WG6, *Concepts, Knowledge, and Language in Health-Care Information Systems*, AT McCray, J-R Scherrer, C Safran, CG Chute, eds., in **Methods of Information in Medicine** 34(1/2):1-231, 1995

For WG10, *Information Systems With Fading Boundaries*, WE Hammond, AR Bakker, MJ Ball, eds., in **International Journal Bio-Medical Computing** 39(1):1-192, April 1995

These proceedings will be joined by the fifth volume of the **IMIA Yearbook**. Edited by Vice President for Services Jan van Bommel and Alexa McCray, the newest volume will focus on *The Computer-Based Patient Record*. At the request of the Board, van Bommel continues to work at strengthening the financial backing for the Yearbook.

New Challenges

Three years ago, in Geneva, Jos Willems remarked that he had greatly enjoyed serving as IMIA President, but that he was ready to step down and to move onto new challenges. At that time, as I stood ready to take up the gavel, I could not understand his lack of regret at leaving his post. Now I do.

These past three years have been rewarding and demanding, exhausting and exhilarating. I too am ready to move on. I look forward to my year as Immediate Past President and working with Otto Rienhoff, my successor. We have accomplished much, as I point out in *Bridging To New Worlds: Reflections on the IMIA Presidency 1992-1995*, which you will find in your MedInfo 95 satchels. Yet much remains to be done.

Like several of my predecessors, I firmly believe that IMIA needs a permanent executive office. Without such an office, IMIA cannot realize the promise it holds. IMIA cannot continue as a "Mom and Pop" store, supported by its officers' donations of time, energy, office support, and funds. To sustain its growing size and complexity, IMIA needs the continuity and proactivity that a permanent office can supply. As a bridge organization and an association of associations, IMIA stands ready to assume a higher level of influence and activity. Let us ensure that it is able to do so.

A Personal Note

I could not close this report without thanking each of you for your support. For me, IMIA has become my professional family, bound by the belief that health informatics and international collaboration hold enormous promise. Together they can make our world a better place in which to work and to live.

Like family, we will see each other again and again, albeit in different roles, as we will continue to work on behalf of international health informatics.

I thank you for the last three years and for the opportunity to serve as IMIA President.