

## Stella Dextre Clarke – Professional Profile

### Overview

During my lifetime the information landscape has changed dramatically, as physical libraries both large and small have been first supplemented and then mostly replaced by computer files, electronic collections and networks, and awesome power to analyse and revolutionize data flows. Fortunately an early grounding in the principles of information management has not obliged me to stick with the ways of the past. New technology has brought new, diverse opportunities and an expanding potential customer base of people wanting to be helped towards information of one sort or another.

### Beginnings

The first subject I studied was Chemistry, but after my graduation in 1968 the prospect of spending more time washing laboratory glassware did not appeal. Instead I moved on to Information Science, which offered the chance to pursue interests in any or all of the sciences, while also developing linguistic and editorial skills, and working directly with people. Information Management, as the main practical outlet for Information Science, offers the same career prospects today – and more.

### Professional development

My first job as a qualified information scientist was to provide information services to scientists and engineers. This involved answering queries, abstracting, indexing, issuing bulletins, etc., and progressively led into development of the information systems needed to support such services. As a result I came to specialize in development of what are now termed “Knowledge Organization Systems (KOS)”, such as thesauri and classification schemes. This specialty is a fascinating area and still allows one to keep in touch with diverse areas of society and knowledge, whether sciences or humanities.

I developed as a manager too, and eventually threw off the shackles of secure employment to become a consultant. In consultancy the Boss is still around, in the shape of one’s clients, but as each contract comes to an end there is an opportunity for change, renewal and fresh challenges. And in the information field, work is plentiful.

Having now reached retirement age, I have become ever more involved in a professional society – ISKO (International Society for Knowledge Organization). Currently I chair its UK Chapter. A retirement pursuit like this allows one to keep up all the old interests, while helping the next generation to advance still further.

### Opportunities for the future

Now that technology has paved the way for knowledge and information to make an impact on every aspect of our lives, the opportunities for managing that information are more widespread and potentially rewarding than ever before. Information professionals do have to reach out and grasp them, however, or else our skill-set could

be submerged in the tide of information technology developments. Core skills such as classification, plus a commitment to serving the users of information, will carry us all into a rewarding, expanding, diversified future.