CHAPTER INNOVATION AWARD

Profile

**Chapter:** Metropolitan New York City, Northeast Region  
**Submitted by:** Melissa G. Dederer, CRM, President ([Melissa.Dederer@pharma.com](mailto:Melissa.Dederer@pharma.com))  
**Project:** Utilize the new Task Force approach to find a way to better meet the needs of our area RIM professionals

Needs Assessment

During fiscal year 2009 - 2010, the Metropolitan New York City Chapter of ARMA International, in keeping with ARMA International’s process of using task forces, developed a task force approach to project management. Our Chapter President, Melissa G. Dederer, CRM, understood that many of our Board and Committee members were already burdened with their regular duties and that this made new initiatives difficult to staff and implement. She, with full faith that this process would succeed, established the first Task Force of the year. The Task Force included both Board and Committee members.

This first Task Force team was organized to study how the chapter could reach a more diverse audience. For the past five years, the chapter has had very successful all day winter workshops (usually held in February or March). Although the winter months in New England could cause traveling/commuting issues for our members, these all day educational events were attracting over 100 participants, many of whom did not usually attend our monthly evening educational and networking meetings (at which attendance averaged around 70 people). Even though these annual events were attracting a large audience, we realized we needed to find a way to meet the needs of our area RIM professionals (both members and non-members) on a more regular basis. This task force was asked to provide a project plan for accomplishing this. The innovative result became known as “ARMA @Noon”.

The Task Force was faced with the following challenges:

- How to better meet the needs of the entire community, both current RIM professionals and those with interest
- How to deliver more affordable educational and networking events while still keeping the cache of our regular evening meetings
- How to hold joint meetings with other groups, such as the Special Library Association, AIIM and HIMANYC, each of which has a different pricing structure
- How to overcome the stigma of our past poor response to daytime meetings
Solutions

- A questionnaire was developed by the Task Force.
- The questionnaire was circulated to our extended mailing list (members, “099” people within our metropolitan area and non-members who had attended other events) via Survey Monkey.
- Survey results were compiled by the Task Force and circulated to the Board.
- Our Vice President for Interdisciplinary Relations, Donna M. Severino, created ties with several other groups: Special Library Association, AIIM and HIMANYC (Medical Records).
- Task force members Mary Sherwin and Jason C. Stearns, CRM, suggested lunch meetings.

Implementation

Up until about 7 years ago, the Metropolitan New York City Chapter had experimented with holding alternating morning and lunch educational events. These meetings diluted our mission and attendance at these events was not at the levels we were hoping for.

For the past 15 years, the chapter has had its evening educational and networking meetings at a variety of venues throughout New York City, including the Princeton Club, the Harvard Club, the Williams Club and the Midtown Executive Club. These venues and the New York market in general are quite expensive. Even with vendor sponsorship and chapter supplements, the cost to attend these events was considerably higher than what the Board preferred. The Board was aware that not all of our attendees had organizational support to attend these meetings even when the topic was particularly suited for them. Thus, as stated above, we knew we were not addressing the needs of our entire community.

- Jason C. Stearns, CRM, volunteered his office’s (New York Life’s) conference space for meetings. This eliminated the expense for the venue and offered affordable food service.
- “Flash of Genius” – During a Board meeting, it was suggested by several members to have both evening and lunch events.
- The Board decided to hold a contest for naming these new lunch meetings so they would have a brand that was distinctive from the current evening educational events. One of our vendor sponsors offered a prize for the member who contributed the selected name. The suggestions were collected by our President, Melissa G. Dederer, CRM, and were presented, anonymously, to the Board for their review and voting. The Board selected “ARMA @ Noon” and the
The Metropolitan New York City Chapter has successfully held six “ARMA @ Noon” events throughout this fiscal year, with average attendance around 40 per meeting. Our most well attended “ARMA @ Noon” was our May joint meeting with AIIM, which had over 60 people attending. Typical of our evening educational events, these new lunch time events are open to chapter and non-chapter members alike. Unlike our evening events, however, we are able to offer these ARMA@Noon events to both members and non-members at the same price of $10.00, which (in New York City) is a typical cost of a deli lunch. Post-meeting questionnaires confirm what our Task Force set out to accomplish: a new, well-regarded educational event has been implemented that satisfies many of our RIM professionals who are not always able to attend our evening educational events. We have successfully dealt with cost constraints and been able to engage colleagues in other information professional specialties.