SMR BRIEFING
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INFORMATION & KNOWLEDGE STRATEGY FOR SPECIALIZED LIBRARIANSHIP:
KIM DORITY INTERVIEWS GUY ST. CLAIR ABOUT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY'S M.S. IN INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE STRATEGY

QUICK TAKES:

- Guy St. Clair teaches in Columbia University's School of Continuing Education M.S. in Information and Knowledge Strategy program and is working as a subject matter expert (SMR) for the university.

- In describing the program, St. Clair says it is not about information skills or librarianship or similar discrete disciplines. These are important skills and disciplines, but they are primarily about collections.

- A distinguishing characteristic of the information and knowledge strategy program is that it is not a collection-based approach to knowledge development and knowledge sharing (KD/KS). The Columbia University program is a management-based approach to KD/KS.

- While understanding the role and value of these discrete disciplines, corporate and organizational management requires qualified leadership and management staff to pull these – and other – disciplines together, to provide an enterprise-wide approach to knowledge strategy.

- The M.S. in Information and Knowledge Strategy moves KM into the leadership and management arena, educating knowledge strategists to influence corporate and organizational success and positioning them to link the corporate knowledge strategy with organizational business strategy, ensuring organizational effectiveness.

- Knowledge strategists will facilitate new ways of thinking about knowledge, ensuring an enterprise-wide flow of information and knowledge. They will look at things like ROI and performance measures and focus on systems thinking. Their primary role is to be the organization's change agent in terms of KD/KS. That's why they are there.

- This education can be universally applied, in any of the information- and human-capital intensive industries.

- To succeed in the program (and as knowledge strategists), students must have energy, be willing to work hard, and be enthusiastic about the role of knowledge in society and in the workplace. They should have leadership skills (or have an interest in developing leadership skills), and they must have a commitment to moving forward in a field that is evolving at a rapid pace. And students must be ambitious, about themselves and about their contribution to the workplace.

- If someone already has the MLIS but has been working for awhile and hit a plateau in their career, Columbia University's M.S. in Information and Knowledge Strategy is a degree that will be useful for opening up new career opportunities.

KEY WORDS: Columbia University, Columbia University M.S. in Information and Knowledge Strategy, knowledge management, KM, knowledge services, knowledge strategy, strategic learning, specialized librarianship, librarianship – education, M.S. in Library and Information Science, i-schools

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[Kim Dority is founder and president of Dority & Associates, an information strategy and content development company. On the advisory board of the University of Denver's MLIS program, Kim created and teaches a course on alternative career paths for LIS students and practitioners and is the author of *Rethinking Information Work: A Career Guide for Librarians and Other Information Professionals* and the infonista.com blog.]

Kim Dority: Guy, you're heavily involved in this program at Columbia University. I want to provide an opportunity for you to clearly distinguish this degree from the MLIS, the master's degree in library and information science. You guys did a great job answering several of these questions in the **information session** that's posted on YouTube. I want to ask them again so you can get those answers out to another potential audience who may not have viewed the video.

Guy St. Clair: Thanks, Kim. And I'm honored that you've asked me to speak with you. I've had a long association with specialized librarianship, and since many of the strategic knowledge professionals practicing in that field have the MLIS degree, I hope my comments will be of interest to them.

And before we get started, I should offer a disclaimer: Although I'm involved in the program, these remarks are my own, and should not been thought of as "official" or "authorized" by Columbia University. I'm tremendously excited about the program, but I'm just one player on the team and I wouldn't want anyone to think that what I'm saying is in any way an official statement about the program. These are simply my observations and my own opinions.

KD: Good observation, Guy. Thanks for pointing that out.

What type of professional are you targeting with this program? To me, what you are going for here is someone who is or wants to be deploying their information skills in a leadership and strategy role, and has the self-confidence and political savvy to be able to do so. Would that be an accurate description?

GStC: Let's begin with that. First of all, the program isn't really about information skills, not as we use the term to connect with the work of information professionals like specialist librarians. Indeed, the information and knowledge strategy program is not about librarianship or any of the specific disciplines that make up what we generally think of as the components of the "knowledge domain."

These are all important disciplines, but they are primarily about collections, including of course modern digital collections. One of the most distinguishing characteristics of the information and knowledge strategy program - as my colleague Andrew Berner has pointed out - is that it is not a collection-based approach to knowledge development and knowledge sharing (what we like to call "KD/KS"). The information and knowledge strategy program is a *management-based* approach to KD/KS. Going even further, another SMR colleague, Dale Stanley, says the information and knowledge strategy approach goes even beyond a management approach to KD/KS, to a cultural or organizational-*effectiveness* perspective about how to deal with knowledge.

So the program is not about collections, or the discrete disciplines that work with collections. And once we start thinking about the management- or cultural- or effectiveness-approach to knowledge and knowledge value, we discover something about what corporate and organizational management needs. While understanding the role and value of these discrete disciplines, what the enterprise *really* requires is qualified leadership and management staff to pull these – and other – disciplines together, to provide an enterprise-wide approach to knowledge strategy. In doing so, the knowledge strategists – the people who graduate from the Columbia University program – are then positioned to link the corporate knowledge strategy with the organizational business strategy, thus ensuring organizational effectiveness.

KD: So how would you describe the difference between knowledge management (KM) and "information and knowledge strategy?"

GStC: KM is, as Larry Prusak once put it, is "working with knowledge." From my perspective, once you get beyond the collection focus, if you're working with knowledge you're almost obligated to take into account the strategic role of knowledge in the company or the organization's success. There are programs that teach KM, and many of the programs offer graduate programs, some from the engineering perspective and some from the information science point of view. At Columbia University, the information and knowledge strategy program is different. It's unique. We're taking the whole idea of

KM and moving it into the leadership and management arena, educating information strategists to influence corporate and organizational success.

KD: Who do you see as your primary target market for this degree?

GStC: At the site for the program, we describe how the program is really attractive to three groups of people: mid-career individuals looking for new challenges, those who want to expand or extend their current roles, and current or future entrepreneurs who recognize the opportunities to create new ventures in the knowledge domain.

I go beyond that. When I speak to people about the program, I ask them about their ambition, about what they want to get from their careers, from their work. In his new book, David Brooks (in *The Social Animal: The Hidden Sources of Love, Character, and Achievement*), talks about *thumos*, the Greek desire for recognition and union, which goes beyond the other drives for money and success. I think the successful knowledge strategist puts all those attributes together, for the benefit of the employing organization, and I think those are the people who are being attracted to working with information and knowledge strategy.

KD: What types of job titles would you foresee graduates holding when they move into their new roles based on this degree?

GStC: The titles, I think, will depend primarily on their work. These people, who will probably most often be referred to as "knowledge strategist" or – if they are at a senior management level – as Director, Knowledge Strategy or VP, Knowledge Strategy or something like that – will be employed to facilitate new ways of thinking about knowledge in the organization. Their job will be to ensure an enterprise-wide flow of information and knowledge and, as I said, to connect knowledge strategy with corporate strategy. Of course they'll look at things like ROI and performance measures, and I think they will be very much focused on systems thinking. Their primary role – as I'm sure you've guessed by now – is to be the organization's change agent in terms of KD/KS. That's why they are there.

So their titles will reflect that, and I expect in addition to "knowledge strategist" we'll see titles like consultant, knowledge architect, information or knowledge analyst, knowledge process engineer, management engineer, knowledge specialist, collaboration specialist, KM systems manager. We'll also see these knowledge strategists moving into the corporate CKO, CIO, CLO realm. Those titles aren't going away anytime soon, and the graduates of the Columbia program are going to be very well qualified to take on responsibilities having to do with knowledge, information, and strategic learning.

KD: Any specific industries or emerging growth areas where you feel this degree will be especially in demand?

GStC: From where I sit, I think these graduates are going to be everywhere. This education can be universally applied, since knowledge strategy is required in all organizations and industries, including for-profit, not-for-profit, non-profit organizations. So these knowledge strategists will be working in any of the information- and human-capital intensive industries, simply because information and knowledge strategy is all about KD/KS and human interaction and communication.

Because of this universal application, we've tried not to target any specific fields or disciplines, but we're getting major responses from some specifics areas. These include healthcare, legal, corporate (that is, business and financial), business and professional services, media (entertainment, publishing, fashion, and all the "glamour" industries), education and academic institutions, science and technology, telecommunications, of certainly gratifying to me, from management consulting.

KD: The 16-month program is described a "hybrid" approach; can you describe the benefits of this approach?

GStC: The program is built on an online platform that encourages splendid opportunities for interaction. We're using just about every tool you can think of to enable students, faculty, and the university's administration to work together, to communicate directly and interact in ways that will provide the students with the best education we can provide for them.

That said, there's no getting around the value of face-to-face, personal interaction, which is why the program has three short residencies. These times spent together – working with some of the recognized leaders in KM, knowledge services, and knowledge strategy – will enable everyone (students, faculty, and invited visitors) to come together and explore in-depth topics, giving them a truly valuable intellectual experience. And in the residencies, not only do we all get to know one another personally, we'll all be together in New York. As you know (says this New Yorker!), that can be fun!

KD: What are some of the courses that feel are especially important/unique in this program, and not likely to be found in MLIS programs?

GStC: I have to be careful here, because I'm teaching two of the courses and I don't want to seem to be promoting my own courses. The seven core courses and the electives (you can read about them [here](#)) have been very carefully chosen, as has the faculty, to provide a stimulating intellectual experience for the students while preparing them for very practical applications once they leave the program and are working as knowledge strategists.

OK. I'll self-promote a little. Having a course in entrepreneurial knowledge services and relating the entrepreneurial focus to all the other courses is going to provide a tremendously valuable opportunity for students. Since you're directing this interview primarily to people in the LIS community, I'll just point out that entrepreneurial management is sometimes missing in that field. Whether providing internal consulting services within the company or going out into the external community to bring knowledge services to a wider audience, entrepreneurial thinking is critical, and I'm very excited that we're going to be offering this kind of course.

KD: What characteristics, attributes, or strengths do you feel would best suit students for the types of roles this degree will prepare them for?

GStC: Energy, willingness to work hard (this is a program at Columbia University, with all that that implies – the intellectual requirements are demanding), focus, enthusiasm about the role of knowledge in society and in the workplace, leadership skills – or an interest in developing leadership skills – and a commitment to moving forward in a field that is becoming more and more exciting as time goes on.

And, as I said, ambition. Our students must be ambitious about themselves and their contribution to the workplace.

KD: If someone already has their MLIS but has been working for awhile and hit a plateau in their career, do you think this degree might be a useful way of opening up new career opportunities?

GStC: Yes.

KD: Thank you, Guy, for sharing your thoughts about this important program with us.

GStC: Thank you, Kim, for providing the opportunity. All of us on the Columbia University M.S. in Information and Knowledge Strategies team appreciate your thoughtful interest in the program.