



Autumn 2004

*Skills Update is the newsletter of the SFIA Foundation*

# Skills Update

## SFIA Training Workshops Up and Running

The first *Understanding SFIA* course ran in June at the London offices of the British Computer Society.

The course explored the rationale behind SFIA, the details of the framework, the benefits of using SFIA, and implementation methods.

The final stage of the course involved using SFIA to make assessments of IT staff from less formal descriptions of their skills.

The course, run on behalf of the SFIA Foundation by Ron McLaren of e-Skills Management and Sheelagh Flowerday of Flowerday-Hobbs, is aimed both at people implementing SFIA,



and those applying for accreditation as SFIA Consultants.

Those obtaining full accreditation from this course were Jeremy Barton of Azlan Training, Al Jones of the Ministry of Defence

and Paul Cooper of Ergon IT Consulting.

The next course runs on January 12<sup>th</sup> 2005. For a complete list of accredited consultants and for more information on the course, visit [www.sfia.org.uk](http://www.sfia.org.uk).

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*SFIA gurus: delegates on the course in June*

## Sir Peter Gershon to address watershed event

The third SFIA Conference takes place on November 24<sup>th</sup> 2004 at the DTI in London. Delivering the keynote will be Sir Peter Gershon, former chief executive of the Office of Government Commerce.

According to SFIA Foundation operations manager Ron McLaren, this year's conference marks a watershed.

"Last year's conference discussed the background to SFIA and its benefits," says Ron.

"That was understandable given the fact that the framework was new to most people. However, at this year's conference we're able to look back at what SFIA users have learnt over the past year and focus on the very practical side of how to

make SFIA work in your organisation. There will be an emphasis on real-world implementations."

An exhibition will run alongside the conference, featuring suppliers of services relating to SFIA.

Attendance at the conference is free. To learn more about attending or exhibiting, visit [www.sfia.org.uk](http://www.sfia.org.uk).

The SFIA Foundation is a not-for-profit body jointly owned by:



### IMIS chooses SFIA for membership assessment



*Rickwood: "SFIA is increasingly recognised as an industry standard."*

IMIS (Institute for the Management of Information Systems) wanted to change the way it assessed potential members to make the process more objective and bring its requirements in line with developments in the IS industry.

"We chose SFIA as a way to assess potential members because of its increasing recognition as an industry standard," says chief executive Ian Rickwood.

"SFIA offers a quantifiable way of measuring an individual's skills, it can be mapped to other standards and qualifications, eg NVQs, and it is accessible and easy to understand."

SFIA brings a number of benefits to IMIS members. Individuals can benchmark their skills against industry standards at the same time as applying for membership and the application process is quicker and easier.

Membership assessment is on-line, allowing instant assessment world-wide, rather than lengthy waits for application forms to arrive in the post. The system also reduces the marking and processing time for IMIS staff. However, it is not just an application form; it is an 'intelligent' assessment process.

For more information, visit: <http://www.imis.org/application/>

### BCS launches new SFIAplus-based service

The British Computer Society has launched its latest solution for IT employers to manage and develop the IT skills within their organisations.

The BCS CareerDeveloper web-based solution enables organisations to effectively plot the career development

of their IT team by managing employees' skills and competencies and identifying areas of training need.

David Clarke, BCS chief executive believes tools such as CareerDeveloper are vital investments for an industry plagued by project failure and negative public image.

While the recently launched BCS SkillsManager is targeted at individuals, CareerDeveloper is aimed at the IT manager or director who wants to do more to develop his or her team members, to ensure that they are motivated, and that they are given goals and know how to achieve them.

### ... news in brief ... news in brief ... news in brief ... new

#### SFIA v 3.0 Coming Soon

Work on the latest update to SFIA has begun, according to BCS Professional Director Malcolm Sillars.

The revision will enable the framework to take into account developments in telecoms and mobile technologies.

In addition, suggestions for changes will be gathered in a wide consultation process. To learn more, mail [msillars@hq.bcs.org.uk](mailto:msillars@hq.bcs.org.uk)

#### SFIA Goes International

World-wide interest in SFIA continues to grow, with the recent translation of SFIA into Japanese by K K Puraido. Meanwhile, the Chilean Computer Society has adopted it, and US-based IT training company SQL Soft+ are using it for IT skills audits. Closer to home, the Irish Computer Society's Skills Cert programme, which runs on SFIA, is now entering its third year. For more, see [www.ics.ie](http://www.ics.ie).

#### Free SFIA Workshop

Skills management technologists InfoBasis will be running a free workshop on 'Implementing SFIA' at their Oxfordshire offices on December 1st.

The workshop will include case studies of deploying SFIA worldwide, and using it job rationalisation, as well as a chance for delegates to discuss their own aims.

To find out more, visit [www.infobasis.com/events](http://www.infobasis.com/events)

### Army Deploys SFIA

The modern Army depends heavily on Information Systems (IS), and these systems, whether on the battlefield or in support, in turn depend on capable personnel. The Army's success, then, depends on highly-trained IS professionals with exactly the right skills for their jobs.

Realising the importance of identifying and developing the skills of its IS professionals, in March 2001 the Defence Training Review mandated that the MOD's IS skills should be described using the Skills Framework for the Information Age. SFIA is an internationally recognised dictionary of IS skills, owned and maintained by the SFIA Foundation, a not-for-profit body made up of the UK's leading IS professional organisations.

By using a central, standard skills dictionary, the Army aimed to understand both the skills requirements of IS posts and the skill levels of the professionals within them. From this would come job descriptions and personal development plans (PDP) which shared a common language and were understood across the Army. This in turn would enable training to be focused on the specific needs of individuals or posts, making it more efficient and more effective.

A central database of skills would also allow experts with particular combinations of skills to be located easily. In

addition, because SFIA is a recognised standard for the measurement and reporting of IS skills, developing staff against SFIA meant that – in line with policy – they were well equipped for civilian life when they re-entered it.

The Directorate of Command and Battlespace Management (Army) quickly took upon itself the role of promoting SFIA throughout the Army. Major Colin Code of DCBM(A)'s Human Resources cell, soon realised this could not be done manually. "Following our initial investigation, we determined that software would be required to minimize any administrative burden in implementing SFIA. We also needed software to realise the full benefit of the information we were collecting."

"With this in mind, we set out to find the right supplier. We soon discovered that InfoBasis was the only software supplier accredited by the SFIA Foundation. They already had a system built for SFIA, and it met our requirements."

"We knew that SFIA and the system could not be introduced into the Army overnight. After all, we were not only introducing software, we were also changing processes as well. That meant we needed a methodically managed project. We began with the investigation of SFIA in 2002. The next stage was

documenting process changes, and then procuring, customising and testing the software, including deploying it over RLI, the Army's high-security internal network. Then, in the summer of 2004, with testing completed, we deployed SFIA to over 1,000 seats."

When SFIA was finally deployed, it was done so in a way that fitted into the Army's own workflow requirements. In addition, the language used reflected Army terminology such as Posts, Units and 1st SROs and users were allowed to manage their own details through self-service functionality.

"We learnt a lot during our comprehensive trial period," said Major Code. "The process of configuration not only produced a system that met our needs," he added, "it also introduced us to some new ways of thinking about skills. Now, using training gap analysis we can set personal development plans that work both for the individual and for the Army. We also have a clear view of how we should be building our job specifications in line with SFIA."

The eventual aim is to deploy a tool that is the basis for an accredited Continued Professional Development (CPD) scheme to furnish an electronic portfolio of skills which can be 'carried' by the user anywhere within the Army.



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*The Army: Aiming for e-portfolios of skills*

### Last word



*SFIA Foundation  
Operations Manager  
Ron McLaren reviews a  
year of progress.*



株式会社プライド

*The logo and name of  
the K K Puraido  
company, who have  
translated SFIA into  
Japanese.*

We look forward to seeing you at our Conference on November 24th. We are delighted that Sir Peter Gershon will be speaking at the conference. As chief executive, Office of Government Commerce, he did so much to emphasise the need for professionalism in this industry. Once again, we are grateful to the DTI for hosting the event at their Conference centre in Victoria Street.

This has been a year of progress.

Consultant accreditation is now under way – you can see the names of our first Accredited Consultants on the SFIA web site.

SFIA training is available, the first course having been run at the BCS's office in London. The course deals with the structure and details of SFIA, the benefits adopters should be seeking and what implementation approaches are appropriate.

The training company InterQuad has signed up as a SFIA Accredited Partner. Adrian Hall of InterQuad

sees SFIA as an opportunity to present training courses in a way that relates to fundamental IT skills. It's all about helping companies to make the best of their training investment.

A number of organisations have adopted SFIA, and you will be able to hear some of them talk at the Conference. One of them, The British Council, is pleased that using SFIA in the re-writing of 80 IT job descriptions has provided a much more accurate description of the skills needed.

Our Directors are involved with the European Commission's e-Skills Forum, looking at IT skills across the EU. André Richier, who is responsible for the e-Skills Forum, recently spent a day in the UK, to meet and talk with people associated with SFIA. Terry Watts, Dorrie Giles, Malcolm Sillars, Ian Rickwood and I represented the Foundation, while the user perspective was put by Major Colin Code of the Army, and Steve Carroll of Gist Ltd, part of the BOC

Group. Tom Sandman of InfoBasis attended and described the success InfoBasis is having with the SFIA-based version of its ESI product. Terry Hook from e-skills UK was also present.

André was impressed with the practicality of the UK approach to this subject.

SFIAplus has been well and truly launched by the BCS and is clearly welcomed by users. These products give a new way forward for users of the BCS's respected Industry Structure Model.

And now, the Far East! The Japanese Version of SFIA has been launched by the K K Puraido company of Tokyo. As providers of IT services and consultancy they see a substantial opportunity for SFIA.

As for the future, the SFIA 2004 Update Project will soon be under way, led by Malcolm Sillars. Keep an eye on the web site for news. We want your input.

See you in November!

*Ron McLaren*

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Skills Update is the newsletter of the SFIA Foundation, published three times a year. To be added to the mailing list, please mail the publisher.

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