

## Information scientist

### Job Description

Information scientists organise, manage and develop information systems, which are used to store, analyse and retrieve data for clients. They work primarily with electronic resources and ICT systems, and increasingly less with paper-based ones, to source and research the information that is required. They also develop new systems such as databases and are often involved in the creation of web content.

Information scientists have a key role in many types of organisations and handle all types of information including scientific, technical, legal, commercial, financial and economic. Their role may cover one particular information function or the management of a complete system.

### Typical Work Activities

The roles of librarian and information manager/officer/scientist are almost indistinguishable, other than the context in which they practise. In addition, the term 'information specialist' is becoming more widely used to describe the work of an information scientist. All are concerned with managing information in order to make it easily accessible to members of a particular group or organisation.

As an information scientist, you will provide an information function to a particular organisation. This depends on the nature of the organisation or company.

Work activities can vary a great deal but include all or some of the following:

- developing and managing electronic resources;
- using electronic and printed resources to respond to enquiries;
- creating and developing web content;
- selecting and acquiring new resources;
- cataloguing and indexing materials;
- conducting information audits;
- scanning and abstracting material;
- writing and editing technical reports;
- overseeing the development of new information systems;
- managing and overseeing the specification of databases;
- advising on end-user support systems;
- analysing statistical information;
- managing the promotion of services through publicity material, demonstrations and presentations;
- training colleagues and clients on how to use specific databases and systems;
- circulation of current information issues to staff.

### Work Conditions

- Range of typical starting salaries for qualified professionals: £19,145 - £27,738 (salary data collected Nov 08).
- Range of typical salaries for chartered professionals (e.g. after two - five years in the role): £23,000- £40,000 (salary data collected Nov 08).
- Range of typical salaries at senior level (e.g. after 10 - 15 years in the role of Head of Service): £37,000 - £72,000 plus (salary data collected Nov 08). The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) ([www.cilip.org.uk](http://www.cilip.org.uk)) provides downloadable salary guides on their website (jobs and careers section).
- Salaries vary depending on the sector, region, size of the organisation, qualifications and experience.
- Salary progression is reasonable with the highest salaries being achieved in the private sector.
- Working hours are typically seven to eight hours per day, Mondays to Fridays. Some organisations will operate a shift system to cover evenings and Saturdays.
- Work is usually office based and involves contact with professional colleagues, senior managers and clients.
- Some experienced information professionals, with established reputations, work independently as consultants providing specialist advice to established libraries or undertaking projects on behalf of organisations that do not employ professional information staff.
- Contract work is increasing.
- Part-time and job-sharing opportunities are available, and there is potential for working from home. Career breaks are possible.
- Men are currently under-represented in this role. Approximately 70% of the information scientists who are members of CILIP are female.
- Jobs are available throughout the UK, with a concentration of positions in the South East and around major cities such as London, Cardiff, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Leeds and Manchester.
- There are also opportunities to work abroad with multinational companies and non-profit organisations or by undertaking a job swap with the LIBEX Exchange Programme ([www.cilip.org.uk/jobscareers/libex](http://www.cilip.org.uk/jobscareers/libex)) (for CILIP members).
- The work environment can be pressurised and often involves working to tight deadlines. Dealing with confidential enquiries may also be required at times.
- Travel within a working day and absence from home overnight are occasional, and overseas travel is uncommon.

### Entry Requirements

Unless your first degree is related to information science, most employers will require a postgraduate qualification in information management accredited by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) ([www.cilip.org.uk](http://www.cilip.org.uk)). A list of accredited institutions can be found on the CILIP website.

Full-time postgraduate courses take a year, but it is possible to study part time over two to three years. Robert Gordon University, the University of Wales, Aberystwyth and Northumbria University also offer distance learning options. Successful completion of a CILIP-accredited course will enable you to register for chartership and apply for professional posts within the UK. The qualification is also recognised by the American Library Association ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)) and the Australian Library and Information Association ([www.alia.org.au](http://www.alia.org.au)).

Entry without a degree or HND is not possible.

You will normally be expected to have a minimum one year's work experience before starting a full-time course. The CILIP Graduate Training Opportunities ([www.cilip.org.uk/qualificationschartership/GraduateTrainingOpportunities](http://www.cilip.org.uk/qualificationschartership/GraduateTrainingOpportunities)) scheme (published every October) provides a range of opportunities for graduates to undertake an approved pre-course traineeship and is well-regarded by university courses. Having relevant work experience will also be useful when applying for funding. Traineeships are carried out in member organisations of the SCONUL (Society of College, National and University Libraries) ([www.sconul.ac.uk](http://www.sconul.ac.uk)).

Candidates need to show evidence of the following:

- IT literacy and the ability to use a range of IT packages, databases and software effectively;
- good communication skills, both oral and written;
- the ability to work as part of a team;
- knowledge and understanding of the requirements of information users;
- good research skills;
- good customer service skills;
- the ability to work accurately and pay attention to detail;
- organisational skills and a methodical approach to work;
- an ability to problem solve and think laterally.

Information work is largely computer based, so IT literacy is essential along with an expertise on databases and the ability to search for and retrieve information effectively online. Although professional training usually covers this, those without IT skills will be at a disadvantage. Qualifications such as the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) are recognised as demonstrating competence in a wide range of IT skills.

Competition for postgraduate courses and pre-course experience is fierce so begin looking early in your final year. Geographical mobility can be an advantage.

Funding for postgraduate courses is available through the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) ([www.ahrc.ac.uk](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk)) under the Postgraduate Professional and Vocational Awards Scheme, but competition for funding is fierce.

It is illegal for employers to discriminate against candidates on the grounds of age, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation or religious faith. For more information on equality and diversity in the job market and how to handle discrimination, see Handling Discrimination ([www.prospects.ac.uk/links/discrimination](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/links/discrimination)).

### Training

Training in specialist databases, IT systems and resources that will be used in the workplace is usually done on the job.

Once in post, you can begin the process of obtaining chartered membership of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) ([www.cilip.org.uk](http://www.cilip.org.uk)). There is more than one pathway to chartership, but it is usually necessary to have a CILIP-accredited first degree or postgraduate degree in information science/management and one or two years' approved experience in information work.

Continuing professional development (CPD) is important in a fast-changing profession. Short courses, workshops, seminars and conferences are plentiful and are supplied by professional associations such as CILIP and its affiliated interest groups as well as commercial trainers. These courses cover a wide range of information science related areas including:

- ICT and the internet;
- management skills;
- marketing;
- abstracting and indexing;
- data protection and freedom of information;
- development of electronic resources.

Masters degrees are available for experienced information professionals and can be studied full time, part time or by distance learning. Most universities offering library and information management courses offer research degrees.

## Career Development

Information science professionals can gain a great deal of experience while working in post but often need to change jobs in order to progress. This means that you will have to consider changing both employer and location in order to gain promotion and further your career. Progress also depends on your particular area of specialised skills and knowledge. Those working for larger organisations and in the public sector may have more opportunity for career progression with the same employer than those working in smaller or more specialist information units.

Competition for jobs at all levels is high, so perseverance and dedication are required to find a job and gain promotion. Career progression is often achieved by moving into managerial positions, which provide greater management responsibilities and broader job interests.

Continuing professional development (CPD) is valued and is also necessary due to the continually changing nature of the profession. Keeping in contact with professional bodies, such as the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) ([www.cilip.org.uk](http://www.cilip.org.uk)), and taking up training and networking opportunities will benefit your career development.

## Typical Employers

Due to the broad scope of the information science field, employers cover a wide variety of sectors.

The nature of the work depends on the needs of a particular organisation. An information science professional's choice of employer will depend on their interests, particular areas of specialised knowledge and skills. Typical employers can include:

- industrial companies, e.g. pharmaceutical development companies and manufacturing companies;
- commercial organisations, e.g. banks, insurance companies and consultancies;
- professional practices, e.g. architects, law firms, accountants and trade and research institutions;
- educational bodies and institutions, e.g. training bodies;
- not-for-profit organisations;
- government departments and agencies;
- local authorities.

Information science professionals may also work on a self-employed basis or run their own company providing information consultancy, training and expertise to particular organisations.

## Sources of Vacancies

- Library and Information Gazette, published fortnightly by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) ([www.cilip.org.uk](http://www.cilip.org.uk)) and also available online as Lisjobnet ([www.lisjobnet.com/Lisjobnet](http://www.lisjobnet.com/Lisjobnet));
- Jinfo ([www.jinfo.com](http://www.jinfo.com)), an online database of jobs in information;
- Jobs.ac.uk ([www.jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk)), jobs in UK academic institutions;
- The Guardian ([www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk));
- The Times ([www.timesonline.co.uk](http://www.timesonline.co.uk));
- Prospects Directory;
- The GET Directory;
- Graduate Training Opportunities ([www.cilip.org.uk/qualificationschartership/GraduateTrainingOpportunities](http://www.cilip.org.uk/qualificationschartership/GraduateTrainingOpportunities));
- specialist journals such as Times Higher Education ([www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/](http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/)), New Scientist ([www.newscientist.com](http://www.newscientist.com)) and Information World Review ([www.iwr.co.uk](http://www.iwr.co.uk));
- regional and local press.

There are a number of specialist library and information recruitment agencies including: Sue Hill Recruitment ([www.suehill.com](http://www.suehill.com)), INFOmatch Recruitment Services (CILIP) ([www.cilip.org.uk/jobscareers/infomatch/](http://www.cilip.org.uk/jobscareers/infomatch/)), TFPL ([www.tfpl.com](http://www.tfpl.com)), Glen Recruitment ([www.glenrecruitment.co.uk](http://www.glenrecruitment.co.uk)) and ASLIB Professional Recruitment ([www.aslib.co.uk/recruitment/index.htm](http://www.aslib.co.uk/recruitment/index.htm)).

## Related Occupations

- Academic librarian
- Archivist
- Careers information officer
- Database administrator
- Information officer
- Information systems manager
- IT consultant
- Patent attorney
- Public librarian
- Records manager

## Information Sources

### Bibliography

AGCAS and Graduate Prospects products are available from higher education careers services.

#### AGCAS Publications

[Handling Discrimination](#), AGCAS Information Booklet

#### Graduate Prospects Publications

Prospects Directory

Prospects Postgraduate Funding Guide

#### Other Publications

*Aslib Membership Directory*, [The Association for Information Management \(Aslib\)](#), Annual

*Financial Assistance for Study*, Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), Annual

*The GET Directory*, GTI Specialist Publishers (<http://www.groupgti.com>), Annual

*Graduate Training Opportunities*, Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), Annual

*The Guardian*, Guardian Newspapers Ltd, Daily

*Libraries and Information Services in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland*, [Facet Publishing](#), Annual

*Library and Information Gazette*, [Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals \(CILIP\)](#), Fortnightly

*New Scientist*, Reed Business Information, Weekly

*The Times*, Times Newspapers Ltd, Daily

*Times Higher Education*, TSL Education, Weekly, Friday

*Update*, Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), Monthly

### Websites

American Library Association, [www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)

ASLIB Professional Recruitment, [www.aslib.co.uk/recruitment/index.htm](http://www.aslib.co.uk/recruitment/index.htm)

Australian Library and Information Association, [www.alia.org.au](http://www.alia.org.au)

Glen Recruitment, [www.glenrecruitment.co.uk](http://www.glenrecruitment.co.uk)

INFomatch Recruitment Services (CILIP), [www.cilip.org.uk/jobscareers/infomatch/](http://www.cilip.org.uk/jobscareers/infomatch/)

Information World Review, [www.iwr.co.uk](http://www.iwr.co.uk)

Jinfo, [www.jinfo.com](http://www.jinfo.com)

Jobs.ac.uk, [www.jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk)

LIBEX Exchange Programme, [www.cilip.org.uk/jobscareers/libex](http://www.cilip.org.uk/jobscareers/libex)

Lisjobnet, [www.lisjobnet.com/Lisjobnet](http://www.lisjobnet.com/Lisjobnet)

Sue Hill Recruitment, [www.suehill.com](http://www.suehill.com)

TFPL, [www.tfpl.com](http://www.tfpl.com)

### Addresses

Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), Whitefriars, Lewins Mead, Bristol BS1 2AE Tel: 0117 987 6500 URL: [www.ahrc.ac.uk](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk)

The Association for Information Management (Aslib), Holywell Centre, 1 Phipp Street, London EC2A 4PS  
Tel: 020 7613 3031 URL: [www.aslib.co.uk](http://www.aslib.co.uk)

Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), 7 Ridgmount Street, London WC1E 7AE  
Tel: 020 7255 0500 URL: [www.cilip.org.uk](http://www.cilip.org.uk)

SCONUL (Society of College, National and University Libraries), 102 Euston Street, London NW1 2HA  
Tel: 020 7387 0317 URL: [www.sconul.ac.uk](http://www.sconul.ac.uk)