

# A study of the UK information workforce



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## Introduction and project objectives

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In 2014 the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) and the Archives and Records Association (UK and Ireland) (ARA) commissioned Edinburgh Napier University to undertake an ambitious project which aimed to map the library, archives, records, information management and knowledge management professions in the UK.

The key objectives of the project were:

- to improve the currency and depth of information that we have about our workforce
- to gain an accurate picture of the scope, size and demographics of the workforce
- to begin to understand possible demographic trends in the sectors (using data from previous surveys) to enable us to plan for growth
- to improve the information we have about areas of the information professions that have previously proved difficult to map
- to develop a clear set of recommended outcomes, strategies or plans based on the data collected
- to ensure the sustainability of this work; in particular how the data set can be updated in future
- to inform and engage the sectors on the outcomes of the project.

## Methodology

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The project was split into two distinct phases:

- **Literature review and methodology** (July 2014 – January 2015)  
The project team undertook a review of previous projects both within and outside the profession and considered the lessons learnt from these exercises. They looked at currently available data sets (such as the UK Labour Force Survey) and created the methodology for this project.
- **Survey and analysis** (February 2015 – November 2015)  
Following user testing, the survey was launched in March and closed on 1 May. The survey was promoted through a vast range of networks and included advertising on Facebook. This was followed by an intensive period of data analysis and review. The executive summary was released in November 2015.

## A significant study

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This study is important for a number of reasons. It may be the first national workforce mapping study of the library, archives, records, information management and knowledge management domains ever conducted in any country. This is also the first workforce mapping study produced for any of the individual domains since the 2011 closure of Lifelong Learning UK. The last (remotely relevant) research was the *Library, archive, records and information management services workforce survey* produced by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service in 2012.

The findings of the CILIP / ARA report are drawn from a data set of 10,628 survey responses, a statistically significant proportion of the estimated 86,376 workforce and perhaps an unprecedented survey sample. This makes the findings even more robust than those used in the national UK Labour force survey and gives CILIP and ARA (and the wider sector) a strong evidence base for their future advocacy work.

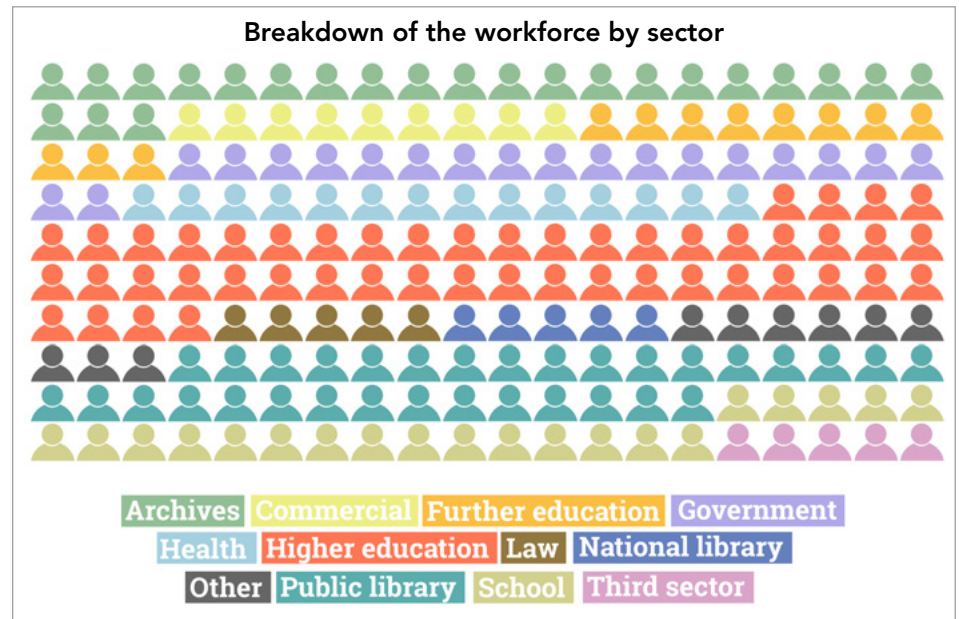
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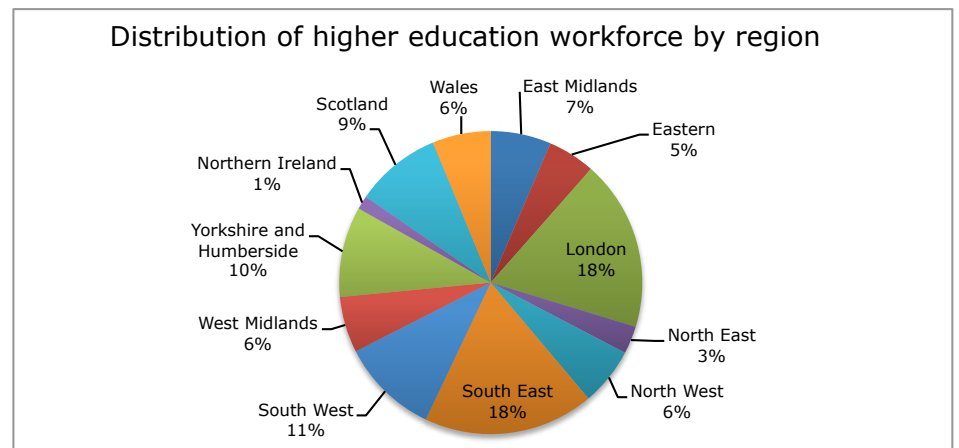
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## The UK information and higher education workforce

The survey estimates the size of the UK information and higher education workforce at 86,376. Libraries employ the highest proportion of workers (59.4%).



Higher education is the largest workforce sector, and employs 21.6% of the workforce, estimated at 18,657. Sixty-four percent of them identify as being in libraries, 14% in archives, 5% in records management, 12% in information management and 5% in knowledge management.



The pie chart shows the regional distribution of the higher education sector.

This breakdown correlates with the overall breakdown of the UK information professionals, though since higher education is a significant percentage of the workforce this is unsurprising. It also reflects that of the UK working population in general, as reported in the *Labour force survey*.

The largest proportion of the higher education workforce holds front-line posts (34%), which is lightly lower than the overall workforce figure of 38%.

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## Key findings

### 1. Women dominate the workforce

The overall gender split of the overall workforce is 78.1% female, 21.9% male. The split in higher education is 77% female, 23% male.

The gender split of the UK workforce as a whole is 50.1% female, 49.9% male.

### 2. Women are under-represented in senior management

Male workers are more likely to occupy management roles than their female peers. The 10.2% of men in senior management roles is almost double that of female workers (5.9%).

### 3. There is a significant gender pay gap

The study identified that men in the sector earn more than women. Of those working more than 22 hours a week and earning £30,000 or more annually, 47% are men but only 37.3% women.

According to the Fawcett Society, the national gap was 14.2% in 2014.1 However, it is not suggested that this is cause for celebration. Whilst it has not been tested as yet, it is suggested that the lower pay gap identified in this study is offset by the gender split of the profession.

### 4. The workforce is highly qualified

The UK information workforce is academically well qualified: 61.4% have a postgraduate qualification. The highest qualification of most of the UK general population is A-level or equivalent. Of those that hold qualifications relating to library and information science, 50.5% have a postgraduate qualification. However, it was found that in higher education, 60% had a postgraduate qualification relating to the profession.

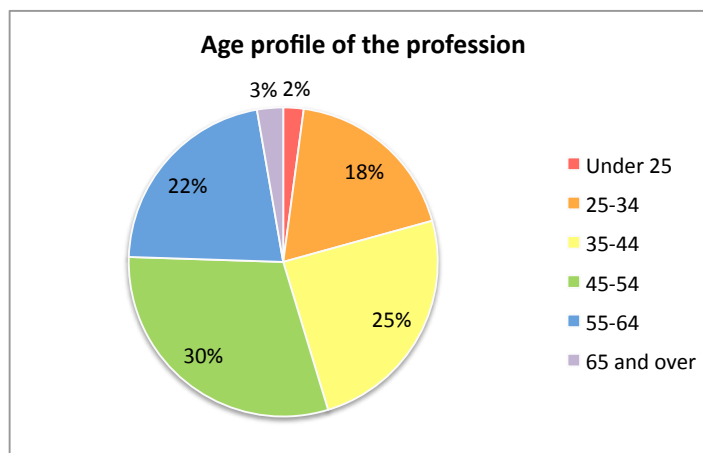
### 5. High-earners are more likely to hold professional qualifications than low-earners

Whilst no direct link was found between academic qualifications and pay, a significant link was found between professional qualifications and earnings; 64.8% of the workforce earning £40,000 or more hold a professional qualification.

In the higher education sector 34.5% of the workforce hold a CILIP professional qualification (Certification, Chartership or Fellowship). This correlates with the overall workforce.

### 6. There is an ageing workforce

The highest proportion of the workforce falls in the 45–55 age band.



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Fifty-five percent are over 45 years of age; the equivalent figure for the UK as a whole is 41%. However, it has been suggested that further work is required to look at trends. A study conducted by MLA South East in 2005 puts the figure of those who are over 45 at around 54%. This might suggest that whilst the information workforce is generally older, the age profile of the workforce is fairly stable; this will also need to be tested in trend analysis over the coming years. It might also suggest that the profession tends to attract those who come to the profession as a second or third career.

## 7. There is low ethnic diversity within the workforce

It was found that 96.7% of the workforce identify as 'white' compared to 87.5% identifying as 'white' in UK labour force survey statistics.

### Next steps

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This research establishes a long-needed data baseline. ARA and CILIP intend to repeat this study on a regular basis so that trends may be identified, and associated work on similar themes may be carried out by sub-groups within the domains.

It is intended that the results of the research will be shared with members and key stakeholders through an online data platform. This is currently being scoped and it is hoped that it will be launched later in the year. The data platform, which will be freely available to members, will enable users to query the data and benchmark themselves against key data sets. Organisations and other stakeholders will also be able to access the data, but there will be a charge for this, in order that data collection activity may be sustained in future.

ARA and CILIP have already begun to consider how they will address the issues arising from this report through targeted programmes and partnership working. At CILIP, the Ethics Committee have been charged with considering CILIP's role in tackling diversity within the sector; in particular, how do we make the profession an attractive career choice for everyone?

For the latest information on the project and to register your interest in the data platform, visit the website: [www.cilip.org.uk/workforce](http://www.cilip.org.uk/workforce)

### References

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<http://www.ons.gov.uk/surveys/informationforhouseholdsandindividuals/householdandindividualsurveys/labourforcesurvey/lfs>

A study of the UK information workforce, CILIP/ARA, 2015. See <http://www.cilip.org.uk/about/projects-reviews/workforce-mapping>

[http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/09/gender-pay-gap-women-working-free-until-end-of-year?CMP=share\\_btn\\_link](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/09/gender-pay-gap-women-working-free-until-end-of-year?CMP=share_btn_link) [accessed: 16 March 2016]

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