

Developing the professionals of the future

Views from experts in 'library schools'

City University London

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The SCONUL *Focus* editorial team contacted academics from a number library schools to elicit their opinions on the skills that librarians of the future will need and to determine how they are rising to the challenges. Their responses are given below.

How does your library school engage with the active profession?

City University London (soon to be City, University of London, when we join the federal University of London) has a longstanding focus on the needs of business and the professions. All our courses have a vocational emphasis, and our library school, #citylis, shares this.

We are well known for our longstanding relationship with our professional body, CILIP, and with leaders in the profession, many of whom contribute to our courses. We have an active engagement with our alumni, and they often feature as guest speakers as they are keen to share knowledge and skills with our current cohort of students.

To increase our visibility, we also work closely with LIS recruitment agencies, such as Sue Hill Recruitment and TFPL.

We were early adopters of social media, and all our students are encouraged to share and communicate their course experience, work and professional opinions via our blog, their own blogs and on Twitter. Our students are encouraged to link their assignments and dissertations to real life practice, and to communicate their progress and achievements via social media. See our blog, <http://blogs.city.ac.uk/citylis> for more details.

We offer an optional mentoring scheme, whereby students are paired with someone from within the profession in order to structure, reflect on and develop their roles in LIS.

Follow us [@citylis](#) on Twitter.

What challenges have you seen in the past ten years and how have you met them? What future changes do you predict will be needed?

The library / information world has seen great and continuing change over the past decade in three respects: technological developments, with the move to a largely digital information environment, and a greater emphasis on data in addition to published information; economic changes, with reduction in funding for many public sector activities and for library / information units in many environments; and social changes, with on the one hand a vastly increased access to digital information, and on the other an increasing digital divide, as well as a greater need for development of information and digital literacy.

These changes have impacted on library / information jobs in all sectors, not least in academic libraries. Many roles have changed significantly, and some have shrunk or even largely disappeared; conversely, new roles have appeared,

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for instance research data management, repository management and digital asset management.

Our response has been to modify our curriculum so as to include coverage of these new topics while retaining core skills and perspectives. All our modules have been affected by these changes, and some – for example, our modules on digital information technologies and on digital libraries – have been effectively recreated. We have also made increasing use of practitioners as guest lecturers, to convey an up-to-the-minute picture of the changing environment and the implications for library / information employment and careers.

Our profession has always evolved with developments in technology and changes in the socio-political environment, and professional education has kept pace. This will be increasingly necessary in the immediate future, as the pace of change is likely to increase. We see a particular need to ensure that City graduates are fully equipped to deal with developments in social media, big data and digitisation. However, it is important to balance the technological aspects of the curriculum with coverage of professional, social and ethical aspects. Our courses need to embrace interdisciplinarity and to continually engage with the communication processes of other disciplines and new methodologies, so that the importance of the processes of documentation continue to be seen as necessary for preserving the record of humankind. We think it is important to retain the connection with the profession by linking new issues with frameworks such as CILIP's Professional Knowledge and Skills Base (PKSB).

What skills are necessary for being a successful librarian or information professional?

The same range of skills is necessary today as have been always necessary: a blend of professional, technical, managerial and interpersonal skills. New topics are, of course, always arising, and they have to be included – among current hot topics are data visualisation, social media data analysis, advocacy and demonstrating the impact of information. The challenge for educators is to help students develop the newer skills needed, particularly technical, while not marginalising more traditional ones; and to do so within the context of an increasingly crowded curriculum. At City, we do this by focusing strongly on conceptual basics, which we believe all students need to know, and then encouraging specialisation matching a student's own interests. For instance, in our Information Organisation module, all students cover the basic principles of resource description, metadata, subject analysis, etc. They are then able to focus on their chosen aspects by attending an optional cataloguing skills workshop, for example, or by creating a taxonomy and thesaurus as an assignment.

What programmes do you offer and what jobs do your graduates go to?

We offer two programmes at City: MA / MSc Library Science and MSc Information Science. They are closely related, and indeed have a common first term during which students can swop between them. Both have full-time and part-time routes, and both are CILIP-accredited. The Library Science curriculum has an emphasis on collection development and management, while Information Science emphasises information management, access and retrieval. Both courses offer excellent employment prospects, with 90% of our graduates obtaining suitable employment by, or shortly after, the end of their course.

About half our graduates go into jobs in academic and public libraries, a quarter into special libraries and information units and a quarter into other

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information roles, including publishing, web content management, research and consultancy.

Further information on City courses can be found at:

<http://www.city.ac.uk/department-library-information-science#unit=library-school>

Dublin Business School



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How does your library school engage with the active profession?

Academic staff on the MSc in Information and Library Management at Dublin Business School (DBS) are active practitioners as well as experienced lecturers. Programme faculty members include well-known industry experts such as Dr Christoph Schmidt-Supprian, Dr Clare Thornley, Dr Marta Bustilo, Mark Farrell and Caitriona Sharkey. This infuses the teaching and learning experience on the programme with real world industry insights and knowledge. Guest speakers from the library and information sector are also an integral element of the programme. The incorporation of a three-week work placement further strengthens ties with personnel working in the sector. Placements have been secured in the libraries of Dublin City University, Maynooth University, Dublin Institute of Technology and many others. Students are also taken on site visits. In the academic year 2015–16, students visited the National Archive, the National Library of Ireland and the Digital Resources and Imaging Services Department of the Library of Trinity College Dublin (TCD).

DBS Library runs an annual library seminar, which is described in more detail in the article by Marie O'Neill in this [issue](#). The MSc in Information and Library Management is accredited by the Library Association of Ireland (LAI). Library Association of Ireland personnel come in to talk to students from the outset of the programme about the benefits of membership.

What challenges have you seen in the past ten years and how have you met them? What future changes do you predict will be needed?

The IT environment in which librarians operate has become increasingly complex. To prepare graduates for this, Dublin Business School chose to offer an MSc qualification with a strong IT focus. A unique feature of the programme is the module Network Resource Management, which also incorporates cloud computing. Libraries are increasingly hosting software on the cloud, which involves a myriad technical, financial and legal considerations. In accordance with the pedagogical ethos of an MSc, DBS students also carry out applied and technical projects such as deploying and configuring Koha, an open source library management system in a laboratory setting.

Other challenges that have emerged during this period include the rise of Google searching, decreasing library budgets, the public sector recruitment embargo and library closures. Modules such as the Teaching Librarian and Management for Information and Library Professionals equip students with the

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management and advocacy skills to meet these challenges. The incorporation of an employability module into the programme called the Personal and Professional Development module was designed to enhance graduates' recruitment prospects.

Income-generating activities (software design, hosting, support, consultancy, events and library businesses) will become a more significant part of library operations in the future. Modules on innovation, entrepreneurialism, digital marketing and project management offered alongside more traditional library modules would prepare graduates for this. Future articulations of library programmes will incorporate modules such as the Research Librarian and the Librarian as Publisher to reflect new roles and activities in the sector.

What skills are necessary for being a successful librarian and Information professional?

A passion for the acquisition and sharing of knowledge is essential. All modules on the MSc in Information and Library Management at DBS have been mapped to the UK's CILIP PKSB, which outlines the skill set favoured by employers in the sector (see Fig. 1). The recent Future Libraries Symposium event at TCD Library showcased a number of library directors and leaders such as Roly Keating, Executive Director of the British Library; Mike Keller, the University Librarian of Stanford University; and Richard Ovenden, Librarian, Bodleian Libraries, who in addition to having a passion and love for scholarship are also impressive innovators, project managers, fundraisers, marketers and speakers.



Fig 1. CILIP's Professional Knowledge and Skills Base

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What programmes do you offer and what jobs do your graduates go to?

DBS offers the MSc in Information and Library Management on a full-time day, and part-time evening basis. Modules can also be completed on an individual basis by qualified librarians for CPD purposes. The full list of modules is available at <http://www.dbs.ie/course/postgraduate/msc-information-library-management>. Graduates of the programmes have gone on to library posts in Trinity College Dublin, the Department of Agriculture, Arthur Cox Legal Firm, University College Dublin, the National Gallery of Ireland, Fingal County Council, the Bar Council of Ireland, the JCSP School Libraries Scheme and many others. The programme is an MSc in Information and Library Management. Consequently graduates are also taking up posts in the broader information management sector. One graduate secured a post with Amazon as a taxonomist. Digital Asset Management is also a growing area of employment for graduates of the programme interested in careers in the broader information management sector.

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Aberystwyth University



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How does your library school engage with the active profession?

There are many ways in which we keep in touch with the professions that our courses focus on – in our case this is library and information services, and archives and records management. In Wales we have good links with MALD, the Museums, Archives and Libraries Division of the Welsh Government, which is based in Aberystwyth, a stone's throw from the university. We have been fortunate in receiving support from MALD via a Workforce Development Grant, which allows sponsorship for a limited number of students living or working in Wales. We are lucky to have a global body of alumni who keep in touch with us, and we make use of a range of guest speakers and external lecturers to

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bring a dimension from 'practice' into the course; these include our colleagues from the libraries at Aberystwyth University, as well as the public library, local records offices and the National Library of Wales (also based in Aberystwyth). 'Aber' is very much an 'information town', making it a great place to do Information Studies. We offer semester-long practical projects in conjunction with local libraries and archives. We have active membership of appropriate professional organisations such as CILIP, ARA, Archives and Records Council Wales. We are also involved in joint projects with professional archive and library services such as the Wellcome Trust, and the Archives and Records Council Wales Digital Preservation Group.

Our distance-learning students, who are already working in libraries, archives and other information services, undertake some work-based assignments. In addition, many of our full-time students have the opportunity to work on assignments relating to professional practice and have worked on archive and rare books collections held locally. We are also very aware of the developing need for CPD, which I hope is reflected in our growing range of short stand-alone courses. Our accreditation by professional bodies CILIP and the ARA also helps us to stay engaged and current.

What challenges have you seen in the past ten years and how have you met them? What future changes do you predict will be needed?

Higher education has been and is currently undergoing significant changes. This inevitably impacts on all academic disciplines, and information studies / science is no exception. As we are usually smaller or specialist departments, we have always had to justify and explain our existence in a way that more 'mainstream' subjects don't. In many ways the development of the internet and social media has been a boon for us as they bring issues around information retrieval, description and curation far more centre-stage than they have ever been. There is also a serious challenge here, as most information professionals will be keenly aware: the UK and global financial situations have had an impact on the profession – public libraries have been significantly affected, and the library schools are well aware of this impact. Having said that, recruitment remains buoyant and I am constantly impressed by our professional, committed, skilled and intelligent students and their belief in the profession. Despite current pressures, it is a rewarding career in which it is possible to develop professionally in many directions – customer service, research, using technology and teaching.

We keep our established courses relevant through the updating and introduction of new modules – which happens continually. It's as much about making existing courses more focused and current as it is about totally new offerings. For example, we have just started running a new module in Knowledge and Information Architecture. In recent years we have also introduced new degree schemes in Digital Curation, Digital Information Services, and a brand new postgraduate certificate in Digital Preservation.

What skills are necessary for being a successful librarian or information professional?

I regularly ask our students this question as part of an ongoing research project! The replies are varied but tend to centre around flexibility – the range of skills needed, including communication and people skills, ease with the developing technological / digital environment, ability to work under pressure, an interest in research and problem-solving, teaching and, in recent discussions, an emphasis on advocacy and ethics – which reflects a trend in the information profession. Management of people can very quickly become part of the needed skill set for a new professional too. The need to be willing to update or adapt your skills to

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new environments, and, of course, the traditional skills and understanding that are the foundation of library and information work – how and why information is organised to preserve and provide access – remain strong.

What programmes do you offer and what jobs do your graduates go to?

In the last couple of years we have developed our suite of course offerings, including new degrees in Digital Curation, and Digital Information Services, and an upcoming postgraduate certificate in Digital Preservation. This is in addition to our established flagship postgraduate degrees in Information and Library Studies, and Archive Administration, which remain very popular. We also offer an undergraduate BSc in Information and Library Studies by distance learning, which is ideal for those who are already working but don't have previous experience of higher education. It is fully professionally accredited, like all our degrees, by CILIP (and in the case of Archive Administration, the ARA).

I consider one of our strengths to be our provision of distance-learning courses. The programmes we offer are flexible, to allow students to combine study with work and the demands of everyday life, but they are also highly structured, providing a clear path to a final qualification. Being able to combine study and work is important when students have to take into account, more than ever before, how they will fund their learning. We have also been able to expand our range of standalone short courses delivered online, which are excellent for CPD but may also count as credit should you decide to take one of our degree courses.

Our courses in Archive Administration and in Information and Library Studies remain broad-based introductions to the field, which I think appeals to those starting out in their careers and gives the student a strong base from which to further develop their career and specialise.

Thanks to the strength of our distance-learning courses, many of our students are already working in an information environment, and they often achieve promotion or are able to move to a new role or a different job as a result of doing the course. Overall, graduates go on to work as information professionals (librarians, information and records managers, archivists) in local and national government (libraries, archives and museums), health services and law firms, the military, charities, schools, colleges and universities, and ICT-rich organisations around the world. My feeling is that the majority of graduates still go on to work in academic, public or school libraries, or local archives or records offices – but within these traditional employers there are many new roles, particularly in the developing digital environment; and there are opportunities in museums, media libraries and services and the health, law and business sectors too. My advice to students if they are interested in a specific area is to supplement their education by getting some kind of relevant experience, e.g. work shadowing or volunteering, as this helps to establish their commitment to and knowledge of the field.

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University of Ulster



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How does your library school engage with the active profession?

At Ulster University, the Library and Information Management programme is very closely connected with the active profession. As the course is designed to enable those working in the sector to study part time for professional qualification (the PGDip and MSc are accredited by CILIP), all our students are working in library and information roles (with a small number on voluntary internships). We regularly seek feedback from employers regarding the curriculum and the skills and knowledge they expect our graduates to have, and we bring in top library and information professionals as guest speakers in our Leadership in Libraries for the Future module. We also deliver CPD training and workshops in library workplaces.

What challenges have you seen in the past ten years and how have you met them? What future changes do you predict will be needed?

The course at Ulster is almost ten years old. It developed out of a Postgraduate Certificate in School Library Management and now is designed to meet the requirements of those working in a range of organisations across the library and information sector and in library and information roles in other sectors. So initially the focus was on building this new course, ensuring that it was delivering the best possible curriculum and meeting the needs of employers. The course also has an important role in developing a local research base through postgraduate research at Masters and PhD levels. The one big change is that from September 2016 the course will be fully online for all new students. It will involve live weekly seminars as well as use of asynchronous discussion and the virtual learning environment. Peer learning is a very important aspect of the course and this will be just as crucial in an online environment. One big benefit of moving online will be that participation will not be limited to those able to travel to the university. We recognise the importance of flexible delivery for those who are already in employment.

What skills are necessary for being a successful librarian of information professional?

- excellent organisation, communication and ICT skills, including being able to make effective use of social media for professional purposes
- good knowledge and understanding of core or traditional library and information skills and topics
- strong understanding of what is involved in management and leadership at all levels within an organisation
- recognition of the importance of research as an evidence base for decision-making and good practice
- commitment to continuing professional development

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What programmes do you offer and what jobs do your graduates go to?

- Postgraduate Certificate in Library and Information Management (one year, part time, fully online from September 2016)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Library and Information Management (two years, part time, fully online from September 2016, CILIP accredited)
- MSc in Library and Information Management (three years, part time, fully online from September 2016, CILIP accredited). Individuals who already hold a PG Dip in LIS/LIM or librarianship degree from elsewhere may be eligible to enter year 2 or year 3 of the MSc and undertake the dissertation to obtain the Masters.
- PhD (three years full time or six years part time)

Our graduates are working right across the library sector – in school libraries, further and higher education libraries, public libraries, special libraries (including Army Library Services, the Assembly Library, the Linen Hall Library, and the voluntary and community sector) and commercial organisations (for example, global law firm Allen & Overy).

University College Dublin



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How does your library school engage with the active profession?

Professionals teach as occasional lecturers, give talks at networking events, serve as guest lecturers in modules, and employ a number of our students during their postgraduate programmes. They also serve as observers for students' final capstone presentations. In turn, our students attend and volunteer at professional conferences and events and work with professionals as clients on their capstones.

What challenges have you seen in the past ten years and how have you met them? What future changes do you predict will be needed?

The biggest challenge we've seen is in the sheer amount of knowledge and skills that librarians need. Technical skills are an obvious area, but professionals are writing grant applications, marketing, collaborating on national and international projects and working with new communities of users. Ongoing economic factors have shrunk budgets but have made libraries more essential than ever as rich resources for low-cost / free entertainment, job-seeking, and community spaces. As a school, we've responded to these challenges by regularly updating our classes, creating opportunities for students to work with community partners and hosting alumni networking events. The coming years are going to require that librarians think ever more broadly (and perhaps with fewer financial resources) about the role of the library in society and prepare themselves and their institutions accordingly, as they are called upon to help their stakeholders navigate social media, steward digital resources, even

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work with 3D printing and create 'maker spaces'. (Maker spaces are physical spaces, often community run, where people can come together to learn about and work on design projects of interest. These workshops contain a variety of equipment, hand and power tools, craft supplies, computers and 3D printers. Members can learn from each other and collaborate to learn new skills and apply them through workshops, events and unstructured time. Libraries are increasingly setting aside bespoke or pre-existing space and acquiring such tools for their patrons.)

What skills are necessary for being a successful librarian or information professional?

Librarians are increasingly called upon to be familiar with, if not experts in, new technologies, including open source software, social media, scripting / programming, and even 3D printing. Even if the librarian doesn't know the specifics, s/he will work with IT professionals and thus need to 'talk the talk'. Staying current will require them to be creative in finding venues for gaining new skills and knowledge. Online courses, local events and online forums dedicated to specific software or topics are all sources of information. Being an advocate for the profession through traditional and social media, talking to policy makers and the public, and writing in professional publications is also increasingly needed.

What programmes do you offer and what jobs do your graduates go to?

We offer an LAI-accredited Masters in Library Science and a Graduate Diploma. Graduates work in 'traditional' librarianship positions, but some are pursuing careers elsewhere as information managers, social media analysts and data analysts. We also offer an MSc in Information Systems and a Graduate Diploma. These graduates tend to work in industry, in technology-intensive positions. Our newest programmes, which commenced in 2015, include an MSc, Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate (CPD) in Digital Curation, the first such programme in Ireland. All programmes are both full time and part time, and we expect to be rolling out more CPD offerings in the coming years.

University of the West of England



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How does your library school engage with the active profession?

In a number of ways. We have regular specialist teaching slots when professionals come in to talk about a topic (and often their own route into the profession). Many of our students are already working and are encouraged to raise and discuss relevant current professional issues in their study groups. On a broader level, the course is accredited against the CILIP PKSB, itself developed in consultation with the profession. We also have an informal steering group of local employers who provide input into teaching topics and overall course strategy.

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What challenges have you seen in the past ten years and how have you met them? What future changes do you predict will be needed?

Obviously the closure and downgrading of purpose of public libraries has had an impact, as have the changing requirements, on academic libraries. We have tried to open our course up to different types of information professional – while at the same time trying to provide exposure to new or alternative professional roles. We see an increasing future overlap with other information and communication roles, but with information professionals retaining their focus on information and customer-centric skills.

What skills are necessary for being a successful librarian or information professional?

This is a big question! In general: flexibility, adaptability, good communications skills, service innovation. Also, of course, core information handling skills, leadership and project management, customer services. There is an increasing emphasis on value, return on investment, quantitative research skills, digital resource management.

What programmes do you offer and what jobs do your graduates go to?

We have just the MSc in Information Management. Graduates go on to work (amongst other areas) in academic or education librarian roles, health and law libraries, publishing companies, government agencies.

Robert Gordon University



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How does your library school engage with the active profession?

We have very strong links with the professions in public, academic, specialist and school libraries and in information management in other sectors. Many of us are active in CILIP (e.g. I am past President of CILIP Scotland and former chair of the Board of Trustees of CILIP Scotland). We also have representation on the board of Scottish Library and Information Council and other professional groups. We have an industry liaison group and all staff are actively engaged in a range of professional organisations and networks. We particularly value collaborative work with library services and have some interesting research activities in this area.

What challenges have you seen in the past ten years and how have you met them? What future changes do you predict will be needed?

The key challenges have been the impact of the economic downturn and public sector cuts and the particularly gloomy news on public library closures

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in England (nothing like the same here in Scotland). Although public libraries are only one part of the information sector, these press stories cast a negative shadow over how the sector is perceived as a whole. Many areas of the profession have fewer professionals doing bigger jobs, so courses such as ours have had to reflect this. As I see it, there are two challenges facing LIS education providers. The first is how the profession is perceived (mentioned above); the other is the recruitment of students in the context of their fees and the higher education environment. Again, there are differences between the situation in Scotland and other parts of the UK, but everyone faces challenges in a very competitive marketplace.

What skills are necessary for being a successful librarian of information professional?

If they have completed a professional qualification, I take the professional skills (information searching, knowledge organisation, etc.) as read, but I reckon their interpersonal and communication skills and their ability to network, be creative and innovative and to seek solutions are what really matter. I'm a great believer in the notion of the creative and reflective practitioner and think that is core to what makes a successful librarian.

What programmes do you offer and what jobs do your graduates go to?

We have MSc Information and Library Studies and MSc Information Management on campus and by distance learning. We also have a Graduate Certificate Information Studies course, which is effectively an access route to our Masters course for those with work experience. We are about to launch a new Graduate Certificate in Petroleum Data Management, which has been sponsored by and developed in conjunction with the oil and gas industry.

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