



# **Guide to Working in Health Information**

Revised edition  
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# Introduction

## Why choose health information?

Health information is required by a wide range of people in a variety of situations at any given time. The information provided may be about medical tests or treatments, clinical trials, conditions and diseases or how to access the information, but the list of possible topics is infinite. As a health information professional you may be working with health professionals such as doctors, nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, biomedical scientists amongst many others; patients, the general public, researchers or businesses etc.. Thus health information helps health professionals provide quality care, provides evidence for researchers improving health care outcomes, helps patients to find out about their conditions and make informed choices and helps the public find answers to their questions.

Health information professionals provide an essential service to the communities they serve and it can be a very rewarding career as your input really makes a difference.

## What job title might you have?

A health information professional may have any of a wide range of job titles such as:

Librarian or Assistant Librarian	Library Skills Trainer
Information Services Manager	Information Officer
Learning Resources Adviser	Outreach Librarian
Knowledge Manager	Academic Liaison Librarian
Electronic Resources Librarian	Web Editor

Whatever the job title, all the jobs will have the fact that they work with health information in common.

## Where do health information professionals work?

Health information professionals can work anywhere that health information is needed and that includes:

National Health Service	- hospitals, primary health care, call centres
Academic institutions	- colleges, universities, royal colleges
Research centres	- academic institutions, charities
Industry	- pharmaceutical, publishing, insurance, medical equipment
Charities	- provide information to a wide range of organisations and individuals including charity staff and members, research centres, government bodies and the general public
Public libraries	- reference libraries covering health information and promotion

Independent sector	- professional associations, charities, voluntary organisations
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## What skills and experience might you gain?

There are a wide variety of jobs available in the health information field, so the skills and experience gained will vary widely according to the job you are applying for. As a general guide, the types of skills or experience gained from working in health information include:

Experience of using online information sources, magazines, books, CD-ROMs to answer a wide range of enquiries that users may present.
Skills for evidence-based practice, information seeking, online resource use, referencing, critical appraisal or using the Internet, to name a few.
The ability to find the right information to answer questions.
Being able to organise information in a logical and straight forward way so that users can access the information they need as quickly as possible.
Web site creation skills.
Team working skills by working as part of a team within an information service or with other professions to ensure the service meets the requirements of every interested party.
The ability to manage a budget effectively.
Marketing skills to promote your service.
User education skills to give teaching sessions or to write manuals.
Appraisal skills to monitor the performance of your service.
The ability to manage strategically.
Experience of providing outreach services to those working away from the main site.
The ability to manage staff effectively.

## What is the work like?

To find out more about the type of work undertaken by a health information professional take a look at these **case studies**:

**Working in a Further / Higher Education College: Learning Resources Advisor** (*Appendix A*)

**Working in an NHS Organisation** (*Appendix B*) *New*

**Working in an NHS Trust: Assistant Librarian** (*Appendix C*)

**Working in an NHS Trust: Electronic Development Librarian** (*Appendix D*)

**Working in an NHS Trust: Trust Librarian / Education & Training** (*Appendix E*)

**Working in an NHS Trust: Senior Librarian** (*Appendix F*)

**Working in an NHS Trust: Library Services Manager** (*Appendix G*)

**Working in an NHS Trust: Library Services Manager** (*Appendix H*)

**Working in an NHS Trust: Library Manager** (*Appendix J*)

**Working in a Pharmaceutical Company: Medical Information Officer** (*Appendix K*)

## **Why my sector? Health Librarians and Working in an NHS Library: Article from the journal Impact (Appendix L)**

### **How much will I get paid?**

Health Information workers may be working in wide range of organisations so pay scales available to them may vary. In the early years of your professional career you can expect salaries to be generally comparable with that of school teachers, and later on your salary will very much depend on the path you choose. The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals(CILIP) has produced a number of salary guides which will provide basic information about the wages you can expect in different sectors of the profession. The main guides of interest for health information professionals will be the ones concerned with health care, higher education, further education or special libraries. Follow the link below to access the guides:

<http://www.lisjobnet.org.uk/jobseek/salary>

## **Training and Qualifications**

### **What training and qualifications will I need?**

To start on the path to becoming a health information professional you need to follow an information / library studies bachelors degree or postgraduate diploma or masters degree, accredited by CILIP.

A student with a bachelors degree in an unrelated subject needs to gain work experience in an information service, usually for one year, and then can follow a postgraduate course. The CILIP Graduate Training Opportunities (incorporating the SCONUL Trainee Scheme) offers graduate job opportunities in a wide range of settings for the one year pre-postgraduate diploma / masters work experience (see

<http://www.cilip.org.uk/qualificationschartership/GraduateTrainingOpportunities>).

Please note that there are some instances when an employer will ask applicants to have a degree in a subject related to their organisation, as well as an information / library degree, for example you would need a science degree to work in the information departments of some pharmaceutical companies. Therefore if you do have a particular sector in mind it is worth contacting potential employers before embarking on your degree.

However, there are many routes that you can take to become a health information professional, before following a degree course. For example:

You can work as a library assistant and gain City & Guilds or SNVQ qualifications which will provide entry onto an Information Studies degree (see <http://www.cilip.org.uk/qualificationschartership/QualificationsforLibraryAssistants>).

Many universities recognise the skills of mature students and have adopted widening participation policies that encourage applicants without traditional qualifications. It is also worth noting that some degree courses can be undertaken part-time or remotely with distance learning.

CILIP is committed to implementing a new framework of qualifications in March 2005 which will provide more routes to qualifications and will recognise members experience and qualifications from within and outside of the information field. There will be a greater emphasis placed on work-based learning. You can keep up-to-date with this at <http://www.cilip.org.uk/qualificationschartership/FrameworkofQualifications>.

### **CILIP Accredited Undergraduate & Postgraduate Courses**

Please see <http://www.cilip.org.uk/qualifications/where.html>.

### **Undergraduate & Postgraduate Courses With A Specific Health Information Element**

Some of the CILIP accredited courses listed above may have a health information element, but it is not always obvious from the course / module titles. If you are interested in attending a particular institution it is always worth discussing with them if they do incorporate health information. The courses listed below were accredited with CILIP when this guide was last updated, but please check with institutions before applying.

#### **Aberystwyth**

MSc / Postgraduate Diploma in Health Information Management

The following courses offer the optional module Health Information Management:

BScEcon Information & Library Studies Single Honours

BScEcon Information Management Major

BScEcon Information Management Single Honours

The Postgraduate courses at Aberystwyth are being updated at present. Please contact the University to confirm the inclusion of health information modules.

Department of Information Studies, University of Wales, Llanbadarn Fawr, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion SY23 3AS

Tel: 01970 622188 direct; Fax: 01970 622190

<http://www.dil.aber.ac.uk/index.htm>

## **Brighton**

MA in Information Management offers:

Health Informatics Module: Communication & Technology in Healthcare

MA in Health Informatics (*Seeking CILIP accreditation for this course.*)

CMIS School Office, School of CMIS, University of Brighton, Lewes Road,  
Brighton BN2 4GJ

Tel: 01273 642428

<http://www.cmis.brighton.ac.uk>

## **Bristol**

MSc in Information & Library Management offers the following optional modules:

Public Libraries; Health and Medical Information Services

Special Libraries; Health and Medical Information Services

(Please note that the University of Bristol will not run these modules after the 2004-5 academic year.)

Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol, 35 Berkeley Square,  
Clifton, Bristol BS8 1JA

Tel: 0117 928 7147; Fax: 0117 925 4975

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/education/programmes/masters/milm/>

## **Liverpool**

BA Business and Information offers the optional module:

Health Information Management

Information Management Group, School of Business Information, Liverpool  
John Moores University, John Foster Building, 98 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool  
L3 5UZ

Tel: 0151 231 3596 ; Fax: 0151 707 0423

<http://cwis.livjm.ac.uk/bus/cilm/>

## **London – City of**

The following courses offer the optional module Health Policy and Information Management:

MSc / Postgraduate Diploma in Information Science

MA / MSc / Postgraduate Diploma in Library and Information Studies

The following courses are **not accredited by CILIP**, but may be of interest:

MSc / Postgraduate Diploma in Health Informatics (Credited by NHS Information Authority at MSc level.)

MSc in Healthcare Technologies

MSc in Pharmaceutical Information Management

Department of Information Science, City University, Northampton Square,  
London EC1V 0HB

Tel: 020 7477 8381

Fax: 020 7477 8584

<http://www soi.city.ac.uk/informatics/is/>

### **London - Metropolitan**

MA in Information Services Management contains the optional module Health Information.

Department of Applied Social Sciences, London Metropolitan University,  
Ladbroke House, 62-66 Highbury Grove, London N5 2AD

Tel: 020 7133 5107; Fax: 020 7753 5763

[www.londonmet.ac.uk/depts/dass/subjectareas/informationmanagement/](http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/depts/dass/subjectareas/informationmanagement/)

### **Loughborough**

BSc Information Management and Computing

BSc Information Management and Business Studies

All include the following optional modules:

Consumer Health Information

Information and Knowledge Management in the NHS

Department of Information Science, Loughborough University, Loughborough,  
Leics. LE11 3TU

Tel: 01509 223052 direct; Fax: 01509 223053

<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/ls/>

### **Manchester**

The following courses offer the optional module Information in the Health Service:

BA Information and Library Management

BSc Information Management

Department of Information and Communications, Manchester Metropolitan  
University, Geoffrey Manton Building, Rosamond Street West, off Oxford  
Road, Manchester M15 6LL

Tel: 0161 247 6144 direct; Fax: 0161 247 6351

<http://www.mmu.ac.uk/h-ss/dic/>

## **Sheffield**

MSc Health Informatics

The following courses offer the optional module Healthcare Information:

BSc Information Management

MA Librarianship

MSc Information Management

MSc Information Systems

MSc Chemoinformatics

Department of Information Studies, The University of Sheffield, Western Bank,  
Sheffield S10 2TN

Tel: 0114 222 2630 (enquiries); Fax: 0114 278 0300

<http://www.shef.ac.uk/is/>

## **Funding Opportunities:**

### **Undergraduate courses**

There is a maximum charge for tuition fees for undergraduate courses per annum, although this might be lower depending on your financial situation. You should apply to your Local Education Authority (LEA) once you have a conditional offer of a place, as they can then assess the amount of tuition fees you will have to pay.

You can get loans from various sources to help pay for your living costs whilst at University. You can apply to your LEA for a student loan, which are low interest but have to be paid back once you start a job. You may be able to get supplementary grants if you have dependants, are disabled or there are other special circumstances. Universities can also offer access funding or hardship funding, contact the student services/ support offices at the university for more details.

### **Postgraduate courses**

When you apply for a place on a postgraduate course, the University will have some funded places available, through the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB), which pay for fees and some living costs. Some Universities may also have a few places where the university pays your fees.

For additional university specific funding information please contact the individual universities you are interested in attending.

More details on funding opportunities for library courses at all levels can be found on the CILIP website at:

<http://www.cilip.org.uk/qualifications/finance.html>

## Further Information

### Organisations

There are a number of organisations that support those already working in health information but many can also offer advice and guidance to those thinking of becoming health information professionals.

### UK

#### Health Libraries Group (HLG)

HLG, the compiler of this Guide, is the forum in the UK for all those working or interested in libraries and information services that provide health and community care information. HLG is a special interest group of the Chartered Institute of Library and Health Information Professionals (CILIP), but you do not need to be a member of CILIP to join.

For further information on the benefits of being a member of HLG and how to join please visit the HLG Website at <http://www.cilip.org.uk/hlg>.

#### Libraries for Nursing (LfN)

A special interest group of HLG.

<http://www.cilip.org.uk/groups/hlg/lfn/>

#### Information for the Management of Healthcare (IFMH)

A special interest group of HLG.

<http://www.ifmh.org.uk>

AIOPI (Association of Information Officers in the Pharmaceutical Industry)

<http://www.aiopi.org.uk>

ASLIB Biosciences Group

<http://www.aslib.co.uk/sigs/biosciences>

CHILL (Consortium of Health Independent Information Libraries in London)

<http://www.chill-london.org.uk>

HeLicon (Health Libraries & Information Confederation)

<http://www.gp-web.net/HELICON>

SHINE (Scottish Health Information Network)

<http://www.shinelib.org.uk>

UHSL (University Health Sciences Librarians)

<http://www.uhsl.ac.uk>

UKCHIP (UK Council for Health Informatics Professionals)

<http://www.ukchip.org>

UKHiS (UK Health Informatics Society)

<http://www.bmis.org>

UMSLG (University Medical School Librarians Group)

<http://www.umslg.ac.uk>

## **International**

CHLA (Canadian Health Libraries Association)

<http://www.chla-absc.ca/>

EAHIL (European Association for Health Information and Libraries)

<http://www.eahil.org>

IFLA (Health and Biosciences Section)

<http://www.ifla.org/VII/s28/index.htm>

MLA (Medical Library Association – USA)

<http://www.mlanet.org>

## **Publications**

### **Directories of Health Libraries**

Dale, P. Guide to libraries and information sources in medicine and healthcare , 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. British Library, 2000. ISBN 0712308563

Libraries in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland 2004. 30th ed. Facet Publishing, 2003.

ISBN 1-85604-475-0

(31<sup>st</sup> edition is due in September 2004.)

Ryder, J. (ed.) Directory of Health Library and Information Services in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland 2002-3, 11th ed. Facet Publishing, 2001.

ISBN 1-85604-378-9

### **Career Guides**

Pantry, S. and Griffiths, P. Your essential guide to career success. Facet Publishing, 2003.

ISBN 1-85604-491-2

### **Guides to Health Information and Professional Skills**

Booth, A. and Brice, A. (eds) Evidence-based practice for information professionals: a handbook. Facet Publishing, 2004.

ISBN 1856044718

Booth, A. and Walton, G. (eds) Managing knowledge in health services. Library Association Publishing, 2000.

ISBN 1856043215

(Out of print, but is available from <http://www.shef.ac.uk/scharr/mkhs/>)

Kiley, R. (ed) A guide to healthcare resources on the internet. Royal Society of Medicine Press, 2001.  
ISBN 1853154733

Madge, B. How to find information: complementary and alternative care. British Library, 2001.  
ISBN 0712308857

Madge, B. How to find information: health care. British Library, 2001.  
ISBN 0712308733

Millares, M. (ed.) Applied drug information: strategies for information management. Applied Therapeutics Inc., 1999.  
ISBN 0915486288

Morton, L.T. and Godbolt, S. (eds) Information sources in the medical sciences. Bowker, 1992.  
ISBN 0862915961

Snow, B. Drug information: a guide to current resources. Scarecrow Press, 1999.  
ISBN 0810833212

Walton, G. and Booth, A. (eds) Exploiting knowledge in health services. Facet Publishing, 2004.  
ISBN 1856044793

Welsh, S., Anagnostelis, B. and Cooke, A. Finding and using health and medical information on the internet. Aslib-IMI, 2001.  
ISBN 0851423841

### **Newsletters / Journals**

Health Information & Libraries Journal  
Published on behalf of the Health Libraries Group of CILIP by Blackwell.  
Print ISSN 1471-1834  
Online ISSN 1471-1842  
Information at <http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journal.asp?ref=1471-1834>

He@lth Information on the Internet  
Royal Society of Medicine Press  
ISSN 1460-4140  
Information and selected free issues at  
<http://www.cilip.org.uk/update/index.html>.

Health Libraries Group Newsletter  
ISSN 0266-853X  
Available online for free at <http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/hlr/newsletter/>.

Journal of the Medical Library Association

ISSN 0025-7338

Available online for free at <http://www.mlanet.org/publications/jmla/index.html>.

## Websites

BIOME

Quality assessed gateway to web sites containing information on health and the life sciences, including patient information. <http://www.biome.ac.uk>

British Library's health information pages

Includes details of health information websites and databases plus details of special interest groups and email discussion lists for health information professionals.

<http://www.bl.uk/collections/health/health.html>

BUBL

Lists selected internet resources from a huge range of subject areas.

<http://www.bubl.ac.uk>

Subject pages of interest include:

BUBL: Health <http://www.bubl.ac.uk/link/h/healthlinks.htm>

BUBL : Medical sciences, medicine

<http://www.bubl.ac.uk/link/m/medicallinks.htm>

BUBL: Information Science. Includes links to career guides.

<http://www.bubl.ac.uk/link/linkbrowse.cfm?menuid=19>

CILIP – jobs section

Includes job advertisements and job hunting tips.

<http://www.lisjobnet.org.uk/>

Guardian Newspaper – jobs section

<http://jobs.guardian.co.uk>

Information World Review

<http://www.iwr.co.uk>

Jobs.ac.uk recruitment site

<http://www.jobs.ac.uk/sector/library>

Job Hunting: Finding work in information and libraries

Includes links to salary guides, job advertisements and job agencies.

[http://www.cilip.org.uk/jobs\\_careers/jobs.html](http://www.cilip.org.uk/jobs_careers/jobs.html)

Medical Library Association in the United States

Includes a career guide to becoming a medical librarian (inevitably with a US slant) and a host of other useful pages for health information professionals.

<http://www.mlanet.org/>

National Electronic Library for health - NELH  
Health librarian and information professional portal.

<http://www.nelh.nhs.uk/librarian>

Netting the Evidence: A SCHARR introduction to EB practice on the Internet  
A list of resources available via the Internet to support health professionals and students in their evidence based practice.

<http://www.shef.ac.uk/scharr/ir/netting>

NHS Structure

The initial page describes the NHS in England, but links are provided to the NHS in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

<http://www.nhs.uk/england/aboutTheNHS/default.cmsx>

## Join HLG

For further information on the benefits of being a member of the Health Libraries Group (HLG) and for details of how to join please visit the HLG Website at

<http://www.cilip.org.uk/hlg>

## Your Feedback

This Guide is very much an ongoing and interactive project and HLG would very much welcome your feedback. Please send any comments, corrections, additions or improvements to Michelle at [michelle.wake@ulsop.ac.uk](mailto:michelle.wake@ulsop.ac.uk). If you have found the Guide useful do let us know.

# **Appendix A**

## **Working in a Further / Higher Education College: Learning Resources Advisor**

### **Organisation:**

I've found that working within a FE/HE college is a challenging and varied role where the primary aim is to support staff and students in their teaching and studying.

In my college 80% of students are on further education courses and require a different level and kind of support from those on HE courses.

It is essential that we develop a good understanding of the curriculum so that we can provide the resources required by all students for their assignments.

In my college, there are 5 learning resources advisers who manage the library resources for their subject areas.

I provide support and resources for courses in physical and occupational therapy; health & social care; childcare & education, pre-foundation studies and beauty therapy & hairdressing.

### **Main Duties:**

- Managing stock in my subject areas e.g. ordering items; classification and cataloguing of new stock and editing stock to ensure currency of information.
- Liaising with teaching staff to ensure library stock reflects course content, checking reading lists for modules (and ordering items where necessary) and keeping staff / students up to date with new developments in the library and getting feedback on services by attending course committee meetings.
- Maintaining Intranet pages for subject resources with links to journals; training materials; databases, useful websites and resources for modules.
- Helping to provide a general enquiry service to students during all opening hours, where you could be asked about any subject or computer programme.
- Providing tours and inductions for new staff and students plus training sessions on searching the Internet, using databases and referencing skills.
- Producing help sheets for specialist resources in our subject areas and resource lists for the students on a particular module

- Producing current awareness bulletins for staff and posters to market our services
- We are also part of service improvement groups specialising in marketing, developing workshops or staffing issues.

**Tracey Hunter**

Learning Resources Adviser – Health & Social Studies  
Colchester Institute Library [tracey.hunter@colchester.ac.uk](mailto:tracey.hunter@colchester.ac.uk)

# Appendix B

## Working in an NHS Organisation: Information Specialist

### Organisation:

I work for the National Collaborating Centre for Cancer (NCCC) which is a partner organisation of the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE).

The NCCC develops evidence-based service guidance and clinical guidelines for the NHS in England and Wales on treating and caring for people with cancer.

Each service guidance or clinical guideline is treated as an individual project so our work is driven by the principles of project management.

My main task is to identify relevant clinical research studies on specific cancer topics. I work very closely with researchers who critically appraise the clinical research studies I have identified.

My job is very interesting and challenging and the work of the NCCC should lead to improved care and treatment of cancer patients.

### Main duties:

- Supporting and contributing to the work of Guidance Development Groups – each of which includes approximately 20 senior healthcare professionals, national patient/carer organisation representatives and NHS managers drawn from across the UK along with staff of the NCCC.
- Designing comprehensive search strategies using evidence-based methods such as search filters.
- Searching a range of medical and healthcare databases.
- Critical appraisal of literature search results.
- Developing and maintaining our own databases using bibliographic software.
- Recording a clear audit trail of all work undertaken.
- Management of interlibrary loans.
- Maintaining professional skills by attending training courses and conferences.

I have also had the opportunity to become involved in wider NHS issues for the NCCC such as the Pay Modernisation programme. I am the Agenda for

Change lead for my organisation and I am a Knowledge & Skills Framework trainer.

**Karen Field**  
Information Specialist  
National Collaborating Centre for Cancer (NCCC)  
The NCCC is hosted by Velindre NHS Trust, Cardiff  
[karen.field@nccc.wales.nhs.uk](mailto:karen.field@nccc.wales.nhs.uk)

# Appendix C

## Working in an NHS Trust: Assistant Librarian

### Organisation:

The NHS Trust I work for provides hospital and community services for 300,000 people, employing some 6,400 staff.

The aim of the Library is to provide a comprehensive information service to all employees of the Trust and medical and nursing students on placements from the local universities.

The majority of the Library funding is provided by the Trust, the University of Glamorgan and the Postgraduate and Undergraduate Deans of the University of Wales College of Medicine.

I work in a team of four – a senior librarian, assistant librarian (myself) library assistant and clerical assistant.

### Main Duties:

- Assisting in the development of user education including the preparation of leaflets and guides and instructing staff and students in the use of databases and the Internet.
- Undertaking literature searches on online databases via HOWIS (Health of Wales Information Service).
- Dealing with telephone and personal enquiries as required.
- Maintaining and developing an up to date stock of books, periodicals and videos to reflect the needs of each user group and providing an information service from that stock to answer enquiries.
- Providing an inter-library loan service ensuring rapid delivery to staff of any book, article or video that they might need.
- Developing use of information technology systems within the library, such as an automated issue system.
- Managing the budget that is provided by the University of Glamorgan as their contribution to Library funding.
- Undertaking training to update and acquire skills, including attendance at relevant study days and courses.
- Showing new staff and students around the Library as part of their Trust induction.

- Keeping up to date with literature in librarianship by reading appropriate articles.

**Philip Rawle**  
Assistant Librarian  
Princess of Wales Hospital  
[Postgrad.Library@bromor-tr.wales.nhs.uk](mailto:Postgrad.Library@bromor-tr.wales.nhs.uk)

# Appendix D

## Working in an NHS Trust: Electronic Development Librarian

### Organisation:

North Staffordshire Medical Institute Library serves the University Hospital of North Staffordshire NHS Trust, North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare Trust, and four Primary Care Trusts as well as the wider healthcare family – including local social services. We are also open to the general public for reference and information.

I work in a very professional environment. It is often quite busy, and many of our users are pressed for time and have quite complicated requirements. Our main task is to support healthcare staff by providing them with the timely and relevant information that they need to do their jobs. Ultimately this means finding, retrieving and delivering the right books, journal articles, conference papers, leaflets, websites etc. for their enquiry. Before that though we may have to first identify what they want by searching healthcare literature. In support of this task we provide guidance, training and awareness for healthcare professionals themselves on how they can find, retrieve and use information tools and resources.

As well as the Library Services Manager, there are four professional librarians working in my library. My title is Electronic Development Librarian, and I am responsible for trying to maintain and develop the library's electronic/online services and resources.

### Main Duties:

- Redesign and re-launch of the library website.
- Website maintenance and development.
- Registering users for the library's online journal subscriptions.
- Registering users for other online services such as the NHS Core Content Collection and electronic books.
- Helping library users with the computers – e.g. showing them how to use the scanners or CD-writers.
- Keeping track of the library's online journal subscriptions.
- Develop ways of providing library services electronically to users who cannot physically visit the library very often.
- Assisting other library services with electronic development – e.g. developing a library database for GP surgeries.

- Help to prepare user education materials such as the current library services guide.
- Staffing the library's main counter and providing an enquiry service: issuing and receiving books; taking requests for books and journal articles; allocating PCs; showing users how to search the catalogue and how to find the book or journal they want; looking up information.
- Help with literature searches.
- Help with library and information skills training sessions.
- Marketing the library service.
- Keeping statistical and other records of activities.

**Angus Leitch**  
Electronic Development Librarian  
North Staffordshire Medical Institute  
[angus.leitch@uhns.nhs.uk](mailto:angus.leitch@uhns.nhs.uk)

# Appendix E

## Working in an NHS Trust: Trust Librarian: Education & Training

### Organisation:

Providing a library and information service to a hospital community is particularly interesting and challenging. The library supports all staff, not just doctors and nurses and their requirements are very different. My particular role as library and primary care trainer is to make sure that all staff are equipped with the necessary skills to access and effectively search the databases and websites relevant to their work. In this I liaise closely with the IT department. Staff are trained in groups in the IT suite, particular staff group or in one-to-one sessions and in the case of primary care staff training is usually delivered at their surgeries or medical practices.

### Main Duties

- Designing, delivering and evaluating training courses in information retrieval skills to all Trust staff and to staff in local Primary Care Trusts, using biomedical databases and other quality health information resources on the internet.
- Providing inductions and library tours to all new Trust staff and inductions to new medical staff. Providing inductions and tours to all new students on placement in the Trust.
- Promoting the training offered using presentations at clinical meetings, workshops and other training opportunities.
- Liaising with the IT, HR, and Research and Development departments to provide seamless training across the Trust.
- Liaising with other librarians and trainers to provide seamless training within the Workforce Development Confederation and across the region.
- Networking generally within the wider health community to raise awareness of resources and training opportunities available to healthcare staff.

Producing and maintaining training materials for the Workforce Development Confederation's virtual library.

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# Appendix F

## Working in an NHS Trust: Senior Librarian

### Organisation:

I am the Senior Librarian in an NHS Trust which provides both acute care in a General Hospital and in community hospitals over a large rural area. We offer a multidisciplinary service, so our readers come from all professions and disciplines within health care. We also offer services to a growing number of students from all health professions on placement within the Trust. We support their clinical, research, and educational needs with both physical and “virtual” resources, making use of the Library’s Intranet page to assist readers in community and primary care settings at a distance from the Trust’s headquarters.

There are three members of the library staff, and it is important that we are able to carry out all routine library duties and procedures and answer all kinds of queries, but we also have our own special areas of interest. The Assistant Librarian is responsible for services to students, for inter-library loans, journals and binding; the Library Assistant maintains the Library web page on the Trust’s Intranet, is responsible for the design of all library forms and publicity material and runs the photocopy service. Both support our current awareness services. We all keep up-to-date with professional developments by attending courses and training sessions run by the Trust and by external bodies.

### Main Duties:

- Ensuring that the Library Service meets the specifications of the HeLicon (Health Libraries and Information Confederation) accreditation scheme; ensuring that the Library Service meets any targets set by the annual Commissioning visit (a visit by the Dean’s team from the University of Wales College of Medicine).
- Stock selection, in consultation with our readers; classifying and cataloguing on to the all-Wales catalogue for health care libraries; preparing new books bulletins.
- Using databases and the Web to search for information on readers’ behalf; teaching readers to use the databases and the Web to search for reliable, evaluated material; preparing teaching materials.
- Promoting and supporting evidence based practice and clinical effectiveness to clinicians and managers.
- Writing and selecting the content for the Library Homepage on the Trust’s Intranet.
- Attending meetings of committees within the Trust with an educational remit, e.g. the Multi-professional Education Group, the Medical and Dental Education Committee.

- Promoting the Library Service by providing publicity and information about the services we provide.
- Taking part in research projects, e.g. the North Wales Clinical Librarian Project.
- Supporting special projects like the Modernisation Programme.
- Maintaining links with AWHILES, the Welsh health libraries co-operative organisation; with HOWIS (Health of Wales Information Service)
- Liaising with external suppliers, journal agents, booksellers etc.

**Anne Jones**  
**Senior Librarian**

# Appendix G

## Working in an NHS Trust: Library Services Manager

### Organisation:

Working within the NHS gives a huge variety to your role as the libraries are generally small so everyone is expected to have a hands-on approach. The opportunities for trainee librarians are great because of the variety of tasks, getting involved in enquiry work and management of the staff team from day one.

NHS libraries are usually working with comparatively small budgets and so library resources can be limited. The service is very much a "special library" one with current awareness services and urgent action requests for patient care taking priority. There is a wider range of users than one would imagine at first. Porters and Nursing Auxiliaries may rely on the library for their first experience of computer use whereas Subject Specialists such as Nurse Consultants may need training on the use of evidence-based healthcare literature. Junior staff of all kinds: doctors, nurses, optometrists, radiographers etc. need support for their education and training.

### Main Duties:

- Managing stock e.g. ordering items; classification and cataloguing of new stock and editing stock to ensure currency of information.
- Inter-library loan service to provide specialist materials not provided by the library itself.
- Liaising with Trust Management and the Regional Library Advisers to ensure the library service reflects the Nationally Agreed standards for NHS Libraries.
- Maintaining Intranet pages with links to journals; databases, useful websites and resources for a variety of healthcare professions.
- Helping to provide a general enquiry service to local NHS Staff via phone, fax and email.
- Providing tours and inductions for new staff and students on placement in the hospital or primary care setting.
- Providing training in literature search techniques across a variety of healthcare databases.
- We are also part of the South West Library Link providing information exchanges in our Regional area.

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# Appendix H

## Working in an NHS Trust: Library Services Manager

### Organisation:

I am employed by an NHS Trust with 8000 staff. I am responsible for the delivery of multidisciplinary library services to staff of the Trust, to staff of the three Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) with whom we have service agreements, and to health care students who are studying or on placement locally.

The core business of the NHS is the provision of high quality patient care. We contribute to this by supporting the library information needs of NHS staff and students engaged in education, research, continuous professional development and management, as well as in direct patient care. Catering for a wide range of users, from consultants to community nurses, from pharmacists to porters, with widely differing needs, is one of the challenges and pleasures of the job, which is certainly very interesting and varied.

### Main Duties:

- Ensuring that we provide access to a comprehensive range of information resources and to responsive library services, both via the two Trust libraries, and via the Internet.
- Managing and developing the library staff (12 in total).
- Managing the library service budget, preparing bids.
- Strategic planning, to ensure that library strategy reflects local priorities, regional initiatives, and national imperatives.
- Formulation of policies and procedures.
- Agreeing and monitoring service agreements with our 'stakeholder organisations' i.e. the PCTs and the universities.
- Monitoring quality and performance, evaluating the impact of services.
- Collaborating with local NHS and Higher Education library managers, and with the Workforce Development Confederation (WDC), to secure access to jointly-purchased resources, to share best practice, and to ensure equitable access to services and resources.
- Participating in relevant Trust committees and groups, for instance in the areas of clinical governance, education, e-learning and IT.
- Promoting awareness of and raising the profile of library services

Our Trust is planning a new hospital building, so I am now getting experience of planning a new library. I am fortunate also, to be working one day per week for the local WDC, which is giving me experience of working at a broader strategic level.

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# Appendix J

## Working in an NHS Trust: Library Manager

### **Organisation:**

Working in a large acute Trust like this one is a very challenging. There is always change within the organisation, driven by both internal and external forces. It certainly keeps you on your toes.

Library users include doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, scientific staff and managers to name just a few. We also provide a service to the large number of medical, nursing and other students who can be on placement in the trust at any one time. The information needs and skills of this large group of people are wide and varied. It is important that we keep an awareness of developments in health care to be able to identify and support developing trends.

I work with a staff of library assistants to provide the full range of library services to our users including interlibrary loans, lending, reference, enquiry and current awareness services, and training in search skills.

The supply of electronic resources is now very important to a widely spread health service staff.

### **Main duties:**

- ❑ Develop strategies, policies and services to increase the effectiveness of the library service.
- ❑ Plan and manage the library budget, produce business plans and bids for specific projects.
- ❑ Develop, implement and maintain a training programme in search skills and critical appraisal. Provide induction sessions and tours to new and existing staff as requested.
- ❑ Recruit and manage library staff, including appraisals and personal development.
- ❑ Advise trust managers in all relevant legislation affecting library services.
- ❑ Work with trust staff to develop and expand library services to meet the changing needs of staff and students at the Trust.
- ❑ Market and promote the library services, organising publicity materials and events.

- Manage the library journals and book stock to ensure it meets the needs of users – balancing electronic and paper based resources.
- Work cooperatively with local health care libraries to provide a 'one stop shop' for users across the area

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# Appendix K

## Working in a Pharmaceutical Company: Medical Information Officer / Company Librarian

### Organisation:

Working as a medical information officer/company librarian in a pharmaceutical company is challenging, varied, fast-paced and rewarding.

The medical information function is the service provided in answering enquiries and meeting the needs of external and internal customers in the provision of information about the company's products.

Medical information professionals play one of the most important roles in pharmaceutical companies in terms of customer contact. Professional development is encouraged including attending conferences, meetings and training courses.

### Main Duties:

- ❑ Enquiry handling; handling enquiries from side effects, interactions, product complaints, adverse events etc. This includes research, literature searches, gathering evidence and summarising these accurately and non-promotionally.
- ❑ Library management; management of reprints, clinical papers, purchase of books/journals, cataloguing and classification, digitisation projects, managing current awareness.
- ❑ Projects; setting up and maintaining a library website, input into the sales and enquiry database design, digitisation project, product launches.
- ❑ Promotional copy; reviewing promotional material, ensuring material is factually correct and referencing is accurate.
- ❑ Medical advice to Sales/Marketing; attending meetings, input into strategic planning of product launches and materials, input into sales force training, attending sales conferences and other sales force support.
- ❑ Contact with organisations such as NICE, Cochrane, the NHS, and other health organisations including charitable.
- ❑ Medical writing; preparation of materials, writing standard letters, summarising clinical trials and recent press/media events.

- Management; contact person for the CLA, data protection advisor, records management advisor, advising on issues relating to information protection and knowledge management, member of the crisis management team, managing information and customer satisfaction surveys.

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## **Appendix L**

### **Why my sector? Health librarians and working in an NHS Library**

**Vanessa Bell**

**Librarian – Selly Oak Hospital Library, Birmingham**

*(This article originally appeared in Impact: Journal of the Career Development Group Volume 7, No.2, pages 27-28.)*

Being a health librarian is more than just searching for medical information. You could work as a solo librarian, as part of a small team, or have a specialised role within a larger team. Health Librarians might work for the NHS, government organisations, universities and colleges, professional associations, national libraries, public libraries, voluntary and charity organisations, private industry and patient information libraries. Users of health libraries are not only doctors but also nurses, physicians, allied health information professionals, students and patients. As I am familiar with the NHS, it is this area that I will speak about, first by providing a snapshot of what I do and then by outlining other possible roles within NHS libraries.

I started working at the University Hospital Birmingham (UHD) NHS Trust as a Systems Librarian. Our Trust has two libraries, one at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and one at Selly Oak Hospital. We currently have seven professional librarians, each with their own specialist role. I am currently the Librarian at Selly Oak Hospital Library and the Systems Librarian for the Birmingham and Black Country Health Libraries Consortium.

The roles of NHS librarians have developed and changed in line with government legislation. A key area is the impact of clinical governance on patient care and evidence-based practice. Libraries have a major role to play by helping healthcare professionals update their information skills, and by providing access to materials and up-to-date information.

As the Librarian at Selly Oak I am responsible for developing the service at this site. In order to achieve this, I find that I am using the collection management, cataloguing, and financial management skills that I learnt at library school. I have also updated my searching skills, in line with new technologies and resources.

A large part of my time is spent conducting literature searches for staff on databases such as Medline, CINAHL and Cochrane, and dealing with reference enquiries. When I first joined the Trust my knowledge of medical terminology was mainly the result of doing science 'A' levels. However, through cataloguing and conducting searches this has now increased immensely.

I manage a library assistant who helps me three days a week, but as this is a small library I also spend two days of the week at the library counter, where most of my time is given over to dealing with inter-library loan requests and serials management.

We are currently looking to develop the promotion of the library by establishing closer working relationships with other departments. Two pilot schemes have arisen as a result of this, a dedicated library service and a current awareness service. The aim of the dedicated librarian scheme is to have a nominated librarian working with the department helping them to make optimal use of the library and its resources. The scheme offers help with literature searches and runs training sessions.

As with other areas of librarianship we are also looking to consolidate and improve electronic resources. The purchasing of key electronic resources (books, full text journals and databases) has been achieved on a national basis through the NHS Workforce Development Confederations as part of their Core Content Project, and through the National Electronic Library for Health (NeLH) Internet site. This aims to “complement and supplement the skills of NHS librarians and the resources in NHS libraries rather than trying to overlap the traditional functions of NHS librarians in providing books, journals or databases” (NeLH, 2004)<sup>1</sup>. The site draws together high quality electronic resources and provides access to them for health professionals. Again, this is one area in which the library is playing an increasingly important role, as we promote the site and help users access and understand the information.

Amongst our professional staff we have a dedicated Training Librarian and a Clinical Librarian. The Training Librarian provides training on information retrieval techniques to all NHS staff. Training is given on how to conduct searches using the clinical databases; the resources available on the NeLH; how to search the Cochrane library and how to find quality Internet resources. A typical Training Librarian would have an advanced knowledge of literature searching, may evaluate training programmes and often produce literature and training packs to supplement the training sessions. Training sessions may be group based or one to one. This role has developed because many users are unable to access the library during the day and wish to learn how to conduct searches themselves.

The Clinical Librarian aims to support evidence-based health care by; attending ward rounds, teaching sessions and meetings; providing mediated literature searches; providing digests of critically appraised literature; and supporting the development of clinical practice guidelines.

Other roles which a health librarian may have within the NHS are as a Patient Information Librarian or as an Outreach Librarian. The former provides details of self-help groups, liaises with PALS (Patient advice & liaison services) and produces specialist collections of patient leaflets on conditions. This role may require counselling skills. The latter establishes links with primary care and community-based staff, visiting regularly to establish their information needs.

They also conduct mediated literature searches, act as a consultant to practice libraries and may also offer training.

In summary the key skills needed by health librarians are good communication and interpersonal skills, as many roles involve training users on how to use medical databases. Similarly, excellent searching and retrieval skills are also needed, as we have to provide up-to-date information to support evidence-based medicine. It is also an advantage to be extremely computer literate and to have an interest in electronic resources and digital libraries.

To find out more about how libraries play an active role in the health sector visit the librarian portal on the NeLH site (<http://www.nelh.nhs.uk/librarian>). The British Library also has a section on health care information (<http://www.bl.uk/collections/health/health.html>).

CILIP's Health Libraries Group (HLG) is devoted to information professionals working in health and community care (<http://www.cilip.org.uk/groups/hlg>). In addition there are two subgroups of the HLG: Information for the Management of Healthcare (IFHM) (<http://www.ifmh.org.uk>); and Libraries for Nursing (LfN) (<http://www.cilip.org.uk/groups/hlg/lfn>).

#### References

1. <http://www.nelh.nhs.uk/faq.asp> (last accessed 28<sup>th</sup> April 2004)