

Mapping the UK information workforce in the Library, Archives, Records, Information Management, Knowledge Management and related professions

Hazel Hall

Edinburgh Napier University
Centre for Social Informatics, 10 Colinton Road,
Edinburgh EH10 5DT, UK
h.hall@napier.ac.uk

Robert Raeside

Edinburgh Napier University
Employment Research Institute, 219 Colinton
Road, Edinburgh EH14 1DJ, UK
r.raeside@napier.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

A workforce mapping project was carried out in the UK between August 2014 and October 2015. It was commissioned by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) and the Archives and Records Association (ARA) to enhance understanding of the nation's workforce in Library, Archives, Records, Information Management, Knowledge Management and related professional roles. Based on the statistical analysis of secondary data sources such as the UK *Labour Force Survey*, as well as responses to an online survey, a long-needed data baseline was produced by a project team of six from Edinburgh Napier University. Key findings relate to an estimated population of 86,376 workers, their general demographics, qualifications and memberships and the diversity of the population as a whole. Of particular interest are the findings on pay differences and seniority according to gender, and the low ethnic diversity of the population surveyed.

Keywords

Archives, demographics, information management, knowledge management, labour force, library, libraries, records, UK, workforce

INTRODUCTION

In summer 2014 the UK's Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) and the Archives and Records Association (ARA) issued a tender for a contract to map the nation's population of Library, Archives, Records, Information Management, Knowledge Management and related professionals. At the time that the work was proposed there was a lack of understanding of

this group of workers in the UK. Even very general workforce demographics were unknown. Yet without such information it is challenging for any professional body (regardless of domain) to plan and develop activities such as membership growth, advocacy, and policy development. Questions that appear to be relatively straightforward, such as whether or not a particular population is representative of the national labour force as a whole, are difficult to answer.

From the outset the scope of this workforce mapping project was considered by the funders as ambitious (CILIP, 2014, p.9). This was partly in recognition of certain characteristics of the workforce that make it difficult to track. These include the high number of volunteer workers, particularly in Archives, and the recent growth in employees who engage in information work, but who do not recognise it as such.

A team from Edinburgh Napier University won the contract to complete the project. It comprised three researchers from the Centre for Social Informatics (CSI) – Dr Hazel Hall, Christine Irving and Dr Bruce Ryan – and three from the Employment Research Institute (ERI) – Dr Robert Raeside, Dr Tao Chen and Dr Matthew Dutton. This team of six offered expertise in a wide range of different research methodologies, with strengths in qualitative approaches amongst the CSI members, and quantitative approaches amongst those in the ERI. They also had a track record of conducting research of a similar nature. Of note is prior work on the future of the information professions conducted a decade ago by Hall, and presented at the ASIS&T annual meeting in Austin Texas in 2006 (Hall & Abell, 2006). With relevant domain knowledge that could draw on professional backgrounds in Library and Information Science (LIS) (Hall and Irving) and publishing (Ryan), and a detailed understanding of techniques for exploring labour force composition and characteristics (Raeside, Chen and Dutton), the team was ideally placed to undertake the Workforce Mapping Project for CILIP and ARA.

This paper (and associated poster) discusses the implementation of the Workforce Mapping Project, relates

its key findings, highlights its value and impact to date, and indicates how the work may be extended in the future.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORKFORCE MAPPING PROJECT

The project was completed in two phases. The first phase ran between August 2014 and January 2015, during which time a scoping literature review was undertaken. The output of this exercise was an analysis of similar workforce mapping projects. It considered prior studies from both within and beyond the domain and geographic focus of the Workforce Mapping Project, and lessons learned on strengths and weaknesses of prior approaches.

The literature review revealed that there is much methodological choice for conducting work such as this. Regardless of methods adopted, however, attention needs to be paid to strategies related to encouraging (often hard-to-reach) workers to participate in data collection exercises, as well as to sampling to ensure adequate penetration of the target population. Of particular note here are the varied levels of response rates from project to project and, in some cases, a lack of accessible information on response rates in the published research. In addition, this literature review work highlighted the value of seeking expert opinion to understand the nuances of the sector, using secondary data sources, and deploying software tools in the research.

Also in Phase 1 the two statisticians on the team (Raeside and Chen) completed initial work on estimating (1) the workforce size on the basis of available UK national statistics and (2) the likely levels of penetration to be expected in the empirical work to be completed in Phase 2.

Phase 2, which began in February 2015, started with the testing and piloting of the online survey that became the main data collection tool for the empirical work. At the same time a sophisticated communications plan was drawn up. This was based around the call 'Put yourself on the map' to ensure that the link to the survey reached the widest possible audience (Hall, 2015a). The final version of the survey was made available for six weeks in March and April 2015. In this period data were collected on three main themes: (1) workforce demographics; (2) qualifications and professional memberships of the workforce members, and (3) the diversity of the population under scrutiny.

From May to October 2015 the project team was heavily involved in data preparation and analysis, and then writing up the work as a project report for CILIP and ARA. The final output of the study was presented at a launch event in London in November 2015 (Hall, 2015b).

KEY FINDINGS OF THE WORKFORCE MAPPING PROJECT

The findings of the study are drawn from a data set of 9,103 usable survey completions from a total of 10,628. Unless stated otherwise, the statistics used for comparative purposes in the narrative below were derived from the UK *Labour Force Survey* in August 2015. The *Labour Force*

Survey is the largest household survey in the UK. It provides official measures of the employment circumstances of the UK population (Office for National Statistics, nd). The currency conversion for the salaries noted in the findings below uses exchange rates from June 20th 2016.

Demographics

The workforce population size is estimated to be 86,376. Libraries employ the highest proportion of workers (59.4%). The two largest workforce sectors are higher education (21.6%) and public libraries (12.6%). The mean number of employees in a single organisation is 30 in England, 35 in Scotland, and 50 in both Wales and Northern Ireland.

In broad terms the regional distribution of the information workforce reflects that of the UK working population as a whole. Most members (78.4%) are located in England (the equivalent figure for the general workforce population is 84%), with high proportions in England based in London (22.6%) and the South East (19.4%). The distribution of the workforce across the five domains is similar in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. However, a higher proportion of senior roles is found in England (8%) than is the case in Northern Ireland (3%), Scotland (7.3%) and Wales (7.5%). Additionally, in London there is a greater spread of the workforce across sectors than elsewhere.

Qualifications

The 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 i.e. the qualification typically gained at the end of secondary schooling at the age of 18).

57.2% of the workforce have professional qualifications. Chartered Member of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (MCLIP) is the most common (26.6%). The value of professional qualifications was also revealed in the study's findings: 64.8% of the workforce earning £40,000 (around \$59,000) or more (i.e. higher earners) hold a professional qualification.

Professional memberships

Most members of the workforce hold professional memberships (53.6%). However, this is more prevalent amongst those who are older, senior, and more established in their careers (54.5% of this category are over 45 years of age). The 'top' four professional membership bodies are ARA, CILIP, the Gurteen Knowledge Community, and the Information and Records Management Society (IRMS).

Pay

In one sense the workforce might be regarded as generally well-paid. UK national figures that show average gross pay at £26,500 (around \$39,000). Over 50% in the information professions earn more than £25,001 (around \$38,000) per annum. However, high proportions of workers who are very

well-qualified, and/or have long service, are relatively low paid. For example, 23.6% of those who have worked in the Libraries domain for over 20 years, and are employed for more than 22 hours per week, earn less than £20,000 (around \$29,000) per annum.

The highest proportion of workers who work 22 hours a week or more, and earn over £30,000 (around \$44,000) annually, are in Information Management, Knowledge Management, and Records. The data analysed showed no apparent association between pay and care-giving, nor between pay and long-term health issues. The best paid workers are found in commerce and business, higher education, national libraries, and law.

Working hours

Most members of the workforce (84.3%) work more than 22 hours a week. Part-time working is more common amongst females. There is an association between working hours and care-giving in the workforce in that care-giving is more common for those working fewer hours.

Contracts

Most members of the workforce (86.9%) hold permanent paid posts. The equivalent figure for the UK working population as a whole is 93.8%. Permanent contracts are less common amongst part-time workers. In general, there is no association between contract type and care-giving, nor is there any association between contract type and long-term health issues.

Diversity

Workforce age

The highest proportion of the workforce falls in the 45 to 55 age band. 55.3% are over 45 years of age. Given that the equivalent figure for the UK workforce as a whole is 41.1%, these findings indicate an ageing population.

Workforce ethnicity

There is low ethnic diversity in the workforce: 96.7% of identify as 'white'. This figure is higher than that of the general working population: 87.5% identify as 'white' in UK *Labour Force Survey* statistics.

Workforce gender

The overall gender split of the workforce is 78.1% female, 21.9% male. This contrasts with the gender split of the UK workforce as a whole, which is 50.1% female, 49.9% male. Men in the sector earn more than women. For example, whereas 47% of male workers earn £30,000 (around \$44,000) or more annually, the equivalent figure for female workers is 37.3%. Male workers are also more likely to occupy management roles than their female peers. The 10.2% of men in senior management roles is almost double that of women at 5.9%.

Marital status

Over two thirds of the workforce are married or cohabit with a partner (71.6%). This is higher than the UK population as a whole (57.5%) (*How have living arrangements...*, 2014).

Health and well-being

15.9% of the workforce suffer from long-term health issues. Over a third said that their illness affects their work. However, the analysis of survey responses suggested that health issues do not seem to have a negative impact on career progression.

Caring

The highest proportion of the workforce with dependent children is in Information Management (23.2%) and Libraries (21.6%). Information workers are more likely to combine work with caring than members of the general population. This ranges from 12.2% in the Archives domain to 15.9% in Knowledge Management. The headline UK figure is 11% (*Facts about carers*, 2014).

Religion

Most workers are either Christian (46%) or have no religion (49.6%). These figures are similar to those for the wider UK population (48% and 42%) (*British Social Attitudes Survey...* 2015).

VALUE AND IMPACT OF THE WORKFORCE MAPPING PROJECT

The full findings of this study have enhanced understanding of the UK workforce in Library, Archives, Records, Information and Knowledge Management. Of note amongst the key findings presented above are those on gender equity and low ethnic diversity in this workforce. The findings on pay, which at a superficial level give the impression of a reasonably well-rewarded workforce, are also of concern when salary levels are considered in the context of the high qualifications and long service records that members of this workforce offer. On a more positive note, it is refreshing to see that salaries do not suffer as a result of poor health or care-giving responsibilities.

More generally, the full results of this study give CILIP, ARA and other key stakeholders in the information professions a strong evidence-base for their future work, including that related to advocacy. For example, the findings have already been used to underpin elements of CILIP's Action Plan for 2016-2020 (CILIP, 2016, p. 9).

This study also has wider importance beyond the immediate needs of its sponsors. It is believed to be the first national workforce mapping study of the Library, Archives, Records, Information Management, and Knowledge Management domains ever conducted in any geography worldwide. A second marker of its importance is the study's scale. It is much more comprehensive in its coverage of the five domains of the information professions than any previous similar work, which has focused simply

on *portions* of this working population (see, for example, Learning and Skills Improvement Service, 2012). In addition, the evidence on which the project findings are based - drawn from responses from a significant proportion (11%) of the estimated population - is much more robust than that found in other sources such as the *UK Labour Force Survey*.

There are already examples of the possible longer term impact of this research. For example, on the basis of the findings on gender and ethnicity highlighted above, a call has been made for a National Library and Information Skills Strategy to address the gender pay gap and lack of diversity in the information professions (The Bookseller, 2015). The project report has also been cited as evidence in a UK government consultation report on the future of libraries (Department of Culture Media and Sport, 2016). An approach from an LIS professional body in another geography that is keen to replicate elements of this work is a further indicator of future possible impact: the adoption and spread of good practice in research design for studies of this nature.

CONCLUSION

The Workforce Mapping Project is a landmark, 'unparalleled' (CILIP, 2015, p. 2) study that has provided much-needed data on the profile of the information professions in the UK. There is an intention to repeat it on a regular basis so that trends may be identified (CILIP, 2016, p. 11). Associated work on similar themes could be carried out by sub-groups within the domains to provide an even more detailed picture of the workforce that is key to underpinning the knowledge economy in the UK.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors gratefully acknowledge those who contributed to the study by completing the survey. The team is also grateful to all those who promoted the survey link through their networks. The input of the project board, which was chaired by Mike Hosking and coordinated by Simon Edwards of CILIP, is also acknowledged.

REFERENCES

The Bookseller (2015). *Report highlights 'concerning' gender pay gap in library sector*. Retrieved June 20, 2016 from <http://www.thebookseller.com/news/report-highlights-lack-diversity-library-workers-317381>

British Social Attitudes Survey: changes in religious affiliation amongst adults in Great Britain (2015). Retrieved June 20, 2016 from <http://www.natcen.ac.uk/media/893167/religious-affiliation-british-social-attitudes.pdf>

CILIP (2014). *Annual Review*. Retrieved June 20, 2016 from

http://www.cilip.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Review2015%28AW_Web%29.pdf

CILIP (2015). *A study of the UK information workforce*. Retrieved June 20, 2016 from http://www.cilip.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/executive_summary_nov_2015-5_a4web.pdf

CILIP (2016). *CILIP Action plan*. Retrieved June 20, 2016 from http://www.cilip.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/cilip_action_plan_final.pdf

Department for Culture Media and Sport (2016). *Libraries deliver: ambition for public libraries in England 2016-2021*. Retrieved June 20, 2016 from <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-2021/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-2021>

Facts about carers (2014). Retrieved June 20, 2016 from https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library?task=download&file=policy_file&id=4762

Hall, H. (2015a). *Put yourself on the map*. Retrieved June 20, 2016 from <https://hazelhall.org/2015/03/12/put-yourself-on-the-map-complete-the-workforce-mapping-project-survey/>

Hall, H. (2015b). *Who is the 'typical' UK information worker? Headline findings of the CILIP/ARA Workforce Mapping Project*. Retrieved June 20, 2016 from <https://hazelhall.org/2015/12/02/who-is-the-typical-uk-information-worker-headline-findings-of-the-cilipara-workforce-mapping-project/>

Hall, H. & Abell, A. (2006). New role realities: avenues for extending the reach of information specialists. *American Society of Information Science and Technology Annual Meeting Proceedings*, 43(1). Retrieved June 20, 2016 from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/meet.14504301267/pdf>

How have living arrangements and marital status in England and Wales changed since 2001? (2014). Retrieved June 20 2016 from http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_356002.pdf

Learning and Skills Improvement Service (2012). *Library, Archive, Records and Information Management Services Workforce Survey 2012*. Retrieved June 20, 2016 from <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/archives/2012-larims-workforce-report.pdf>

Office for National Statistics (nd). *Labour Force Survey (LFS)*. Retrieved June 20, 2016 from <https://www.ons.gov.uk/surveys/informationforhouseholdsandindividuals/householdandindividualsurveys/labourforcesurveylfs>