

Pursuing a  
Career in  
Legal  
Information



BRITISH AND IRISH  
ASSOCIATION OF  
LAW LIBRARIANS



## What is BIALL?

The British and Irish Association of Law Librarians (BIALL) was set up in 1969 and is the professional body which represents those working in a legal information environment. We currently have in the region of 800 members representing all job sectors and all national regions. We aim to enhance the professionalism and status of Legal Information Professionals (LIPs) and co-ordinate their interests into a single influential voice on the national stage.

### **These are achieved through a variety of activities which include :-**

- Organising seminars, training courses and social events
- Hosting an annual residential conference which explores current relevant issues
- Publishing the journal *Legal Information Management* and the *BIALL Newsletter* - both quarterly titles which help to keep members up-to-date with the latest developments in our sector
- Publishing a range of other titles and an annual salary survey
- Providing bursaries to members to attend both national and international conferences
- Strengthening links with international organizations
- Providing a topical website and an email discussion list
- Developing a voluntary code between BIALL and both publishers and data providers

BIALL is managed by an elected Council, while everyday responsibility is divided among various standing committees such as Awards and Bursaries, Conference, Legal Information Group, Legal Information Management, Membership Services, PR and Promotions, Professional Standards & Development, Publications and the Web Board. All members are volunteers and all members of BIALL can sit on a Committee

## Membership of BIALL

Membership is open to all working in a legal environment which also includes legal publishers, suppliers and agents. We also welcome overseas information professionals as members. We have several levels of membership including :-

- Individual
- Institutional
- Student
- Retired

For current rates and a full list of benefits – please see our website

## What are Legal Information Professionals?

Legal Information Professionals (LIPs) are information specialists who usually work in a law library or legal information service. This would include Librarians, Information Officers, Know-How Officers and Knowledge Managers

### **Possible roles and responsibilities of LIPs may include:-**

- Procuring resources
- Legal research using both hardcopy and on-line resources
- Liaising with colleagues and clients
- Management of internal know-how
- Training users

### **This can offer a very interesting and diverse career. Essential qualities for someone considering a career in this field would be :-**

- Good communication skills
- Strong IT skills
- An interest in law and current affairs
- Confidence and enthusiasm
- Ability to be flexible and thrives on a challenge
- Enjoys working both as a part of a team or on your own
- Solid time management skills

## Where do LIPs work?

- **Academic institutions** : Universities which run law courses will have a law subject specialist
- **Professional institutions** : Such as the Law Society or the Inns of Court
- **Law firms** : Will generally have a library and information department
- **Industry and commerce** : Many companies have an in-house legal library or information centre
- **National and Local Government** : Including Governmental Departments
- **Freelancers and Consultants** : Normally are self-employed and often working part-time on information related projects

## What qualifications do I need ?

It isn't essential to have a degree to enter the profession but you will probably find that many of the higher grades of job will not consider you without one. The main options open to potential LIPs are either :-

- Undergraduate degree in librarianship or information studies
- Postgraduate degree in librarianship or information studies

## A law degree can be an advantage but is not essential

Many postgraduate courses will only offer you a place if you have had some work experience in an information environment. It is also an ideal way for you to see whether such a career would be of interest to you before embarking on postgraduate study. The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) publishes a list of pre-qualification traineeships (including some based in law libraries) which last for one year and provide such valuable experience (<http://www.cilip.org.uk/qualificationschartership>).

Information on vacancies can be found in several sources including the BIALL website ([www.biall.org.uk](http://www.biall.org.uk)). Vacancies that cover the profession as a whole are included in the *CILIP Gazette* ([www.cilip.org.uk](http://www.cilip.org.uk)). There are also several specialist job agencies that can help – full lists of these are included under the “careers” section of the BIALL website.

## Where do I find legal information jobs ?

If you have any further questions : please visit:

[www.biall.org.uk](http://www.biall.org.uk)

or email us at:

[admin@biall.org.uk](mailto:admin@biall.org.uk)

