Exploring careers in information management

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Modern organisations are increasingly recognising that data, information and knowledge are among their most crucial assets, and particularly in these days of big data and artificial intelligence, information management is the heart of any organisation.

Modern organisations simply could not function without well-organised, up-to-date and accurate information. Resources like capital and people are, of course, vital, but modern organisations grow by exploiting information effectively, imaginatively and safely. Indeed, in the context of digital transformation, information is a key strategic asset, be it data about customer behaviour and social media use, business intelligence, information about competitors, or the knowledge of expert staff.

As a result, the skills of the information manager have never been more in demand.

It is essential in every organisation that timely, accurate and complete data and information are available for decision-making. The information manager makes this possible. The core of information management is durable skills in organising information to ensure that decision-makers get the information they need, e.g. through well-designed intranet search and retrieval. They also define how organisations manage information use and compliance through information and data governance.

Another important foundation is knowledge management which is about managing human expertise in the organisation. Knowledge management often involves the promotion of information sharing within an organisation to break down silos of knowledge and preserve 'organisational memory'. It is also about understanding how to create communities of practice to encourage your experts to share the 'tacit' knowledge that they have gained from experience but struggle even to put into words.

Of course, IT is central to data and information today, but information management is as much about the human side of digital technology design and use. For example, it is about understanding how customers search for information and how colleagues can be encouraged to share knowledge quickly and safely.

Organisations are increasingly grasping that artificial intelligence is only as good as the data it is trained on. It's not just about algorithms, it's about organisations curating and stewarding their data so that AI models are trustworthy. Data quality becomes even more of a vital organisational priority in this context.

The successful information manager has technical skills, but also strong leadership, collaboration and negotiation skills. They will spend as much time with people as with technology. So, if you want to achieve that balance, information management is the perfect position for you. If you come from a computing background, information management balances your strong digital skills with a management focus. Or if you have more of a management background it gives you that fundamental grasp of technologies that is so vital for the digital side of any business.

The exciting thing about information management as a study subject is that the principles apply to every sector of work and to any size of organisation. What information governance looks like in a health organisation, with all the sensitive and confidential information about patients it holds, could be quite different from a Fortune 500 company, but in both cases, information management must be a priority. Governments and charities need information management as much as private companies.

Information management is also the foundation for many specialisms, such as developing and managing databases; records management; UX design; business intelligence or data visualisation; and project management. Each of these can be a career in their own right. Or in a small enterprise, one might be more of a 'jack of all trades' across many of these roles.

An MSc in information management gives students a rounded introduction to all that it offers. The course will balance theory and the very practical hands-on skills that every organisation is crying out for, like building an accessible, usable website or preparing a professional presentation.

The degree equips students with the skills required to thrive in the dynamic and rapidly changing field of information management. Upon completing the course, students will be well-prepared for a career in either industry, the public sector or research. Graduates can pursue a range of roles that draw upon their expertise in data, technology, and business. Examples of such roles include information or knowledge manager, data / information governance specialist, data privacy analyst, and more.

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