Information Automation Limited (IAL) is a specialist research and consultancy company located in Mid-Wales and formed early in 1987. IAL’s work is in the areas of information creation, use and management within the library sector. Since 1987, IAL has come to be recognised both nationally and internationally as a leading expert in the field of electronic resources. The founder members and the current team have extensive experience of the online database and resource industry, including the publishing, evaluation, use and exploitation of all forms of electronic information. IAL specialises in training in these areas and has worked for institutions such as the British Council, the University of Wales, Aslib’s Career Development Group and the European Union. IAL has also developed and marketed two online training software packages that were produced in-house.

IAL also provides consultancy on library automation and in-house text and information retrieval systems, and its customers in this sphere range from the BBC to a Diocesan Board of Finance.

IAL has wide-ranging research interests in the information industry. Work has included the production of an evaluative guide to CD-ROM products, a large-scale European user survey, investigations into the availability in Britain of educational and training courses in library and information work, and investigations into network management and into the use of electronic information services in British Universities. All of these projects, undertaken on behalf of research funding bodies or well-known publishing houses have led to the publication of results.

As the World Wide Web has taken over from other networks as the principle infrastructure for the delivery of databases and other electronic resources, IAL has positioned itself to embrace the new medium. As well as extending its work in related areas to the Web, the company now has many years experience in electronic publishing and the design and development of Web sites.

Work undertaken by IAL is carried out by a small team of information professionals, whose objective is to produce high-quality work to schedule. The importance of client satisfaction in this small and competitive industry is never under-estimated by a company which has already achieved a very creditable growth and is determined to maintain this impetus in the years to come.

Chris Armstrong
Managing Director
and Founder
Information Automation Limited has experience in the following areas.

Consultancy for in-house information systems

Information Automation Limited has the ability to assess your company information needs from outside - an information audit. Many organisations hold a wealth of information resources which are neither recognised nor utilised efficiently within the company. Such untapped data affects the efficiency of the company and represents a valuable asset.

Information Automation Limited is familiar with the complete range of text and information retrieval and management packages which are available to handle in-house information. We have the appropriate experience to:

- evaluate your information in order to suggest the best means of access to it
- give advice on suitable retrieval software
- evaluate your requirements for additional information
- design databases suited to your information
- provide retrospective data input
- provide data formatting and conversion
- advise on future data use within your corporate structure
Information Automation Limited has experience in the following areas.

Publication of Monographs, Directories and Reports

Information Automation Limited prepares and produces publications for print in any of the areas covered by our expertise. These include reports following on from research, directories prepared from in-house databases, textbooks, workbooks, proceedings, journals, edited collections of papers and monographs, as well as the technical editing of specialist journals.

Information Automation Limited has worked for Gower/Ashgate; Bowker-Saur; Mansell; The Library Association; the British Library; the British Council; the UK Online User Group; the Association for Sandwich Education and Training; and the Library Information Technology Centre.

Titles produced by Information Automation Limited include:

- Manual of Online Search Strategies (now in its 3rd edition)
- CD-ROM Information Products: the Evaluative Guide
- Information Studies Courses in the UK
- World Databases series (12 subject-based directories)
- Keyguide: Online and CD-ROM Database Searching
- ASET Directory of Sandwich Courses (annual -1993)
- Youth Library Review (journal)
- Database Information Quality (Library & Information Briefing 62)
- UKOLUG Quick Guide to the Internet
- UKOLUG Quick Guide to CD-ROM Networking
- Changing Patterns of Online Information (conference proceedings)

as well as many reports.
Information Automation Limited has experience in the following areas.

Consultancy for Electronic Information Services

• Information Automation Limited is able to advise on the use of online, CD-ROM and Internet information resources. There are some 15,000+ remote databases available to users in industry, business and education and almost as many databases on optical discs, as well as countless Internet resources; matching your needs to what is available is often confusing, difficult and time consuming - the informed opinion of an outside expert who can evaluate your options and suggest the appropriate route forward can be invaluable.

In order to smooth the path, Information Automation Limited can:

• evaluate your information needs
• conduct demonstration online searches
• advise on the most appropriate resources and the means by which they may be accessed
• advise on contracts
• advise on training
• provide customised training which will suit your personnel and information needs
• provide backup and support during the initial period of use
• prepare user aids and documentation
Information Automation Limited has experience in the following areas.

Consultancy on Internet Use and Resources

- Information Automation Limited has gained considerable expertise in the professional use of the Internet as a communication medium: for e-mail, publications, secondary resources, database access, and corporate publishing.

- Information Automation Limited is able to advise on the location and use of Internet and World Wide Web resources, and on the development and construction of a Web presence.

- Information Automation Limited can:
  - organise training courses on all aspects of Internet use
  - explain the importance of quality and the evaluation of new resources on the Internet in the light of the current lack of quality control and the ease with which any person or organisation can publish material on the Internet
  - help with ‘information overload’
  - advise on the most appropriate resources and on the location and evaluation of new resources
  - advise and help in the production of a high-quality Web site, designed to meet client’s needs
  - There is more on our Web Design service later.
  - provide backup and support during the initial period of use
  - prepare user aids and documentation
Information Automation Limited has experience in the following areas.

Training for Remote Database and Resource Use

Information Automation Limited has considerable experience - going back some 18 years - in training for online searching. With the vast range of databases and information systems available today, choosing the correct system is only the first stage in gaining successful access to the information you need.

- Information Automation Limited offers a range of training and familiarisation options which will enable the smooth introduction of access to new external resources: online, CD-ROM or Internet. In order to maximise your online time we can provide

- training across a range of CD-ROMs, online host services and databases, and the Internet. Training is structured both to meet the needs and experience of your staff and to include the particular databases which interest the client

- user aids and training documentation, look-up charts and supplementary manuals

- ongoing seminars and up-dating workshops

Additionally, Information Automation Limited can supply Computer Assisted Learning software which will enable continuing in-house training and search practice to take place. Our long experience in the use of virtual training packages enables us to offer a unique “after-sales” service.
Information Automation Limited has experience in the following areas.

Desk Research, Surveys and General Services

• Information Automation Limited has undertaken a range of surveys and research projects which culminate in published reports or papers. We are able to:

  • undertake questionnaire and telephone surveys; user surveys; information audits; resource monitoring; skills audits; etc
  • undertake online and manual research
  • develop resource directories
  • prepare documentation, user aids and training materials
  • attend and report on conferences and exhibitions
  • undertake data input, proofing and document layout/design work
  • undertake Desk Top Publishing (DTP) work
  • maintain private databases used to “spin-off” print products via our DTP service
  • organise seminars
  • develop virtual training packages and quick-help aids
Information Automation Limited also has the following remit.

The Centre for Information Quality Management (CIQM)

- The work carried out by Information Automation Limited over the years has centred on online and CD-ROM databases, and more recently on Internet resources. One of our concerns, along with many other information professionals, is the poor quality of some of the data retrieved by users. With the advent of CD-ROMs and the Internet, many information users are not professional information scientists but the end users of the information, and they are often not equipped either to judge what they have found or to discover new ways of locating better information.

- The Centre for Information Quality Management has been set up by The Library Association and the UK Online User Group to act as a clearing house to which database users may report problems relating to the quality of any aspect of a database being used (search software, data, indexing, documentation, training). CIQM undertakes to forward the problem to the appropriate body (information provider, online host, CD-ROM publisher) and route the response back to the user.

- This activity has enabled the collection of statistics on database quality issues which have been fed back into the information industry. It is hoped that this will result in a progressive improvement in quality. The service is free to users.

- A programme of research into ways in which database quality can be assured to users has included the “Database Labelling” project in which information providers produce and publish mini-specifications for their databases. Users are able to tell exactly what a database can accomplish and how well it has been produced.

- CIQM continues to monitor the quality of electronic resource provision and is active in a number of research projects in this area.
Information Automation Limited and Web Publishing.

In recent years, the work of Information Automation Limited has expanded to embrace the World Wide Web. Among our particular activities in this area is the design and development of Web sites for clients.

Information Automation Limited maintains a simple approach to Web Site design which ensures that sites are easily navigable, pages do not take long to load and that the site is easily accessed by all browsers. We do not incorporate large graphics, Java script or moving images unless the owners of the site require them and they are necessary to present the information appropriately. All Web pages include full Dublin Core metadata and where necessary sites are publicised to major search engines.

Information Automation Limited uses an information architecture approach to the design of Web Sites that ensures that the end product satisfies both our own stringent quality checks and the stated requirements of our clients.

The following pages demonstrate our work in this area.