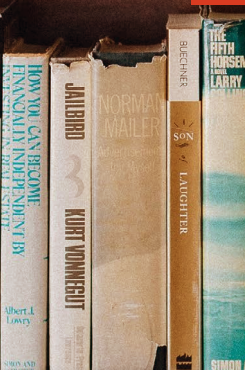


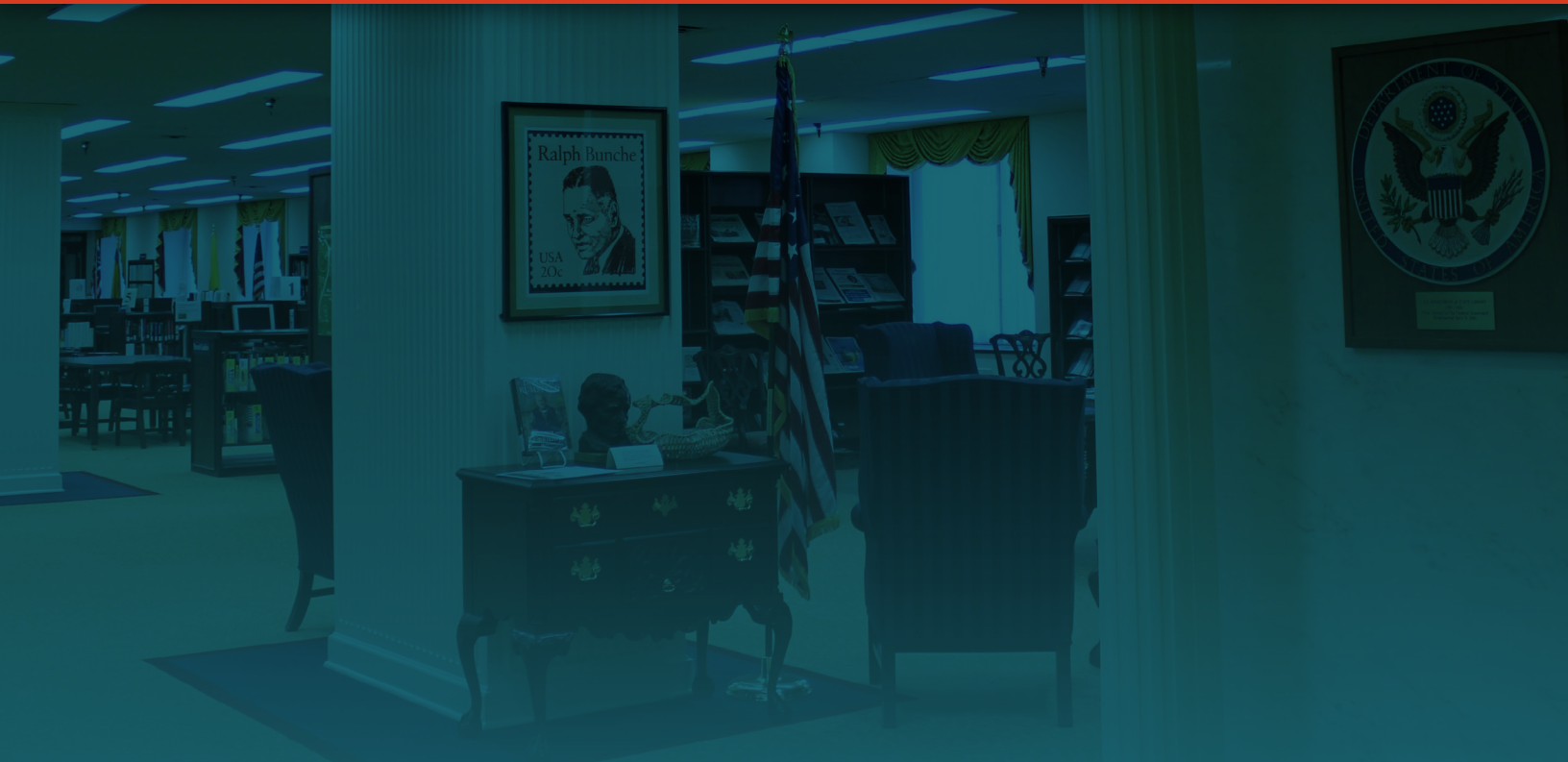


# Guide to Federal Librarianship



## 1 Federal Information Professionals: Life in the Civil Service





# Guide to Federal Librarianship

## 1

## Federal Information Professionals: Life in the Civil Service

▲  
Pictured above: The Ralph J. Bunche Library of the U.S. Department of State is the oldest Federal Government Library, established in July 1789 when Thomas Jefferson was the first Secretary of State. In 1997, it was named after Dr. Bunche, the first person of color to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

### Contents

- The Federal Information Professional Field .....3
- The Hiring Process .....5
- Competencies and Professional Development .....6
- Ready for the Future .....8

## 1. Federal Information Professionals: Life in the Civil Service

Federal information professionals perform a variety of roles across all federal agencies in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. Knowledge navigators perform essential information science roles:

- » Connecting people to information
- » Ensuring access to information both physical and digital
- » Developing and managing agency collections
- » Researching and developing new information technologies
- » Serving as stewards of federal information resources

Information practitioners are skilled in the appropriate discipline or subject-matter field of their agencies. Because the information for each agency is highly specialized, these positions often require knowledge of a particular subject area, language, or skill, with specializations in a number of fields including biological, medical, social or physical sciences, education, fine arts, business and industry, humanities, law, music, and engineering.

This chapter offers a brief overview of the federal information professional field and its librarian series, the federal hiring process, competencies, professional development, and tips for starting a federal career.

---

For the latest information on available positions, visit [USAJOBS.gov](https://USAJOBS.gov).

---

### *The Federal Information Professional Field*

#### **U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM)**

The [OPM website](#) describes the agency as an organization that “serves as the chief human resources agency and personnel policy manager for the Federal Government. OPM provides human resources leadership and support to Federal agencies and helps the Federal workforce achieve their aspirations as they serve the American people. OPM directs human resources and employee management services, administers retirement benefits, manages healthcare and insurance programs, oversees merit-based and inclusive hiring into the civil service, and provides a secure employment process.”

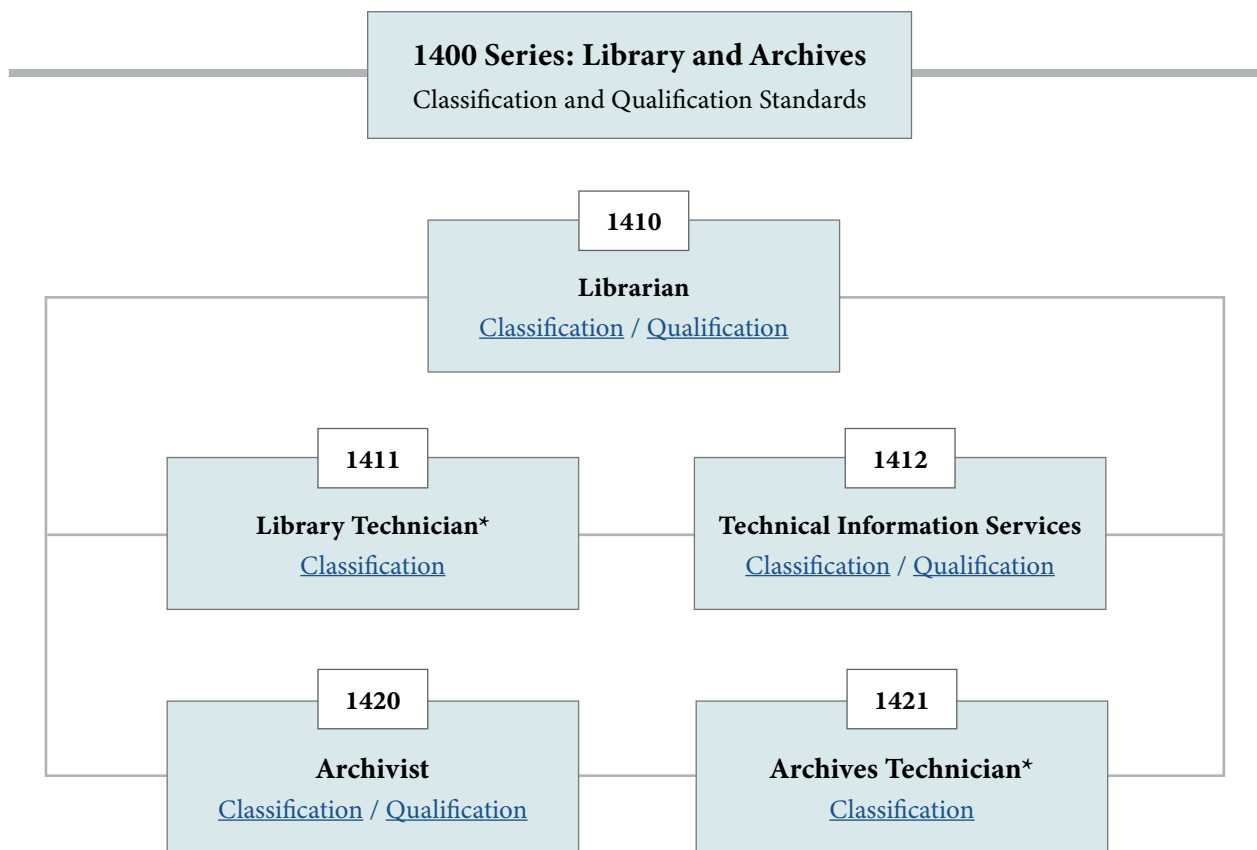
One of OPM’s roles is to define position classification standards and create functional guides to define federal occupations, establish official position titles, and describe the various levels of work. Of interest to information professionals are the classification standards for OPM’s Library and Archives Group.

As defined in OPM’s *Handbook of Occupational Groups and Families*, “This group includes all classes of positions the duties of which are to advise on, administer, supervise, or perform professional and scientific work or subordinate technical work in the various phases of library and archival science.”

Each series has a numerical designation, and for Library and Archives Group, the series number 1400 includes subunits by level of position:

- » 1410 – Librarian Series
- » 1411 – Library Technician Series
- » 1412 – Technical Information Services Series
- » 1420 – Archivist Series
- » 1421 – Archives Technician Series

For more details, review the [Library and Archives Group descriptions](#) in the *Handbook of Occupational Groups and Families*. OPM also manages USAJOBS, used by federal agencies to post job opportunities and by job seekers to search for jobs by agency, occupation, location, and more.



\*Library and Archival Technicians do not have unique qualification standards; their qualification standards fall under the [Group Coverage Qualification Standards for Clerical and Administrative Support Positions](#).

Because there are so few jobs in the 1400 series, librarians, archivists, technical information specialists, and library/archival technicians may want to broaden their search to other job series. There are job opportunities in a variety of areas:

- » Knowledge Manager
- » Website Manager
- » Intelligence Analyst
- » Social Media Manager
- » Records Manager
- » Public Affairs Officer
- » Information Technologist
- » Program Analyst or Manager
- » Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Manager

When applying for positions outside the 1400 series, applicants need to translate knowledge, skills, abilities, and work experience into the language of the job description. For tips on applying for a federal position, review the [applicant FAQs](#) on the USAJOBS website.

### *The Hiring Process*

USAJOBS offers a [step-by-step guide to applying for a federal position](#).

The basic steps include creating a profile, searching for jobs, and preparing and submitting an application. Reviewing current job offerings in the information profession will identify both common job requirements and specialized knowledge and skills required by different fields and organizations. Some agencies and positions require applicants to provide additional documentation and answer eligibility questions.

Once the application is completed, the agency offering the position reviews the application, interviews selected applicants, selects a candidate, and makes a job offer.

---

#### Applicant will:



#### Agency will:



## Background Checks and Security Clearances

According to USAJOBS, all hires undergo a basic background check. The background check process starts after you accept a job offer. All background checks ask questions about residency, work history, educational background, and any military history or police records. Most federal jobs are assigned sensitivity and risk levels, based on their responsibilities and duties. Sensitivity has to do with the position's potential impact on the national security of the United States. For example, a non-sensitive position has no impact on the national security. Risk has to do with a position's potential to damage the public's trust in the federal government.

Some jobs require a security clearance. The security clearance level depends on the type of access to classified information and secure facilities needed to perform your job. For more information on background checks and security clearance, visit the [USAJOBS website](#).

## *Competencies and Professional Development*

In the 2011 edition of FEDLINK's [Competencies for Federal Librarians](#), the FEDLINK Human Resources Working Group defines competencies as the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) that define and contribute to performance in a particular profession.

---

Competencies create a common bond of understanding and a common language for defining professional standards.

---

KSAs are the foundation for competency-based management and continuous process improvement, ensuring that federal librarians have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to accomplish mission requirements. Organized in a framework that differentiates increasing stages of expertise, they are used to design and develop training and educational programs, position descriptions, performance evaluation instruments, and for alignment with strategic objectives.

## Competencies

At an organizational level, competencies can provide a host of benefits to the library:

- » Strategic planning and budget execution
- » Recruitment and hiring
- » Performance management and feedback
- » Training and development
- » Career development
- » Succession management
- » Alignment with the agency's mission, function, and strategic goals

From an individual's perspective, understanding and using competencies identify options:

- » Continuing education needs
- » Goal setting for advancement
- » Performance, career aspirations, and development needs
- » Professional development plans

## Professional Development

In addition to using the competencies, many federal information professionals have found membership in professional organizations helps their development and promotion potential. Individual agencies often offer professional development and mentor programs. New professionals may contact their human resources office.

FEDLINK also provides training and educational opportunities for federal librarians and information professionals. For more information, visit the [FEDLINK Education & Training](#) webpage.

## Getting Started

Starting a new position can be overwhelming, but introductory information is available. Below are a few tips for preparing for both the interview and the first day of the job.

### *Tips*

- » **Learn about the agency.** Visit the agency website for an overview of its mission, function, goals, and objectives.
- » **Discover professional organizations.** There are a variety of organizations for information professionals that may be of interest.
- » **Check for websites and newsletters for federal employees.**
- » **Visit the [FEDLINK website](#).** Federal information specialists at all levels can find federal information resources and professional development opportunities.

### *Notes*

## Rules and Regulations

---

Understanding the rules and regulations about working for the federal government is critical to professional success.

---

While each agency and office will have specific requirements, general information about personnel regulations is in the [Code of Federal Regulations Title 5 on Administrative Personnel](#). This website links to the regulations for each federal agency. Additional information in [5 U.S. Code Part III](#) provides an overview on general performance requirements, pay, leave, and benefits.

### Resources for New and Prospective Employees

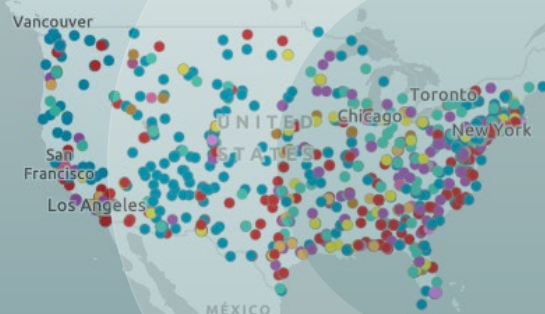
For additional details on a variety of personnel questions, OPM offers a detailed [FAQ page](#) on personnel topics including salaries and wages, leave policies, benefits, performance, and telework. Colleagues are often a source of additional information and can offer institutional knowledge.

Individual agency websites also offer additional information about job postings, locations, and other details helpful to aspiring or newly hired candidates. Both the main agency and the agency library websites may include information on a variety of topics:

- » Agency organizational charts
- » Public annual reports
- » Budgeting and funding
- » Library services
- » Patrons
- » Collections
- » History and mission statements of the library

### *Ready for the Future*

Navigating the application and onboarding process is just the beginning. As a new federal information professional, public service offers a new community of colleagues and the opportunity to support the federal information community in its mission to provide critical information services to federal agencies, Congress, the federal courts, and the American people.



View of the [FEDLINK Federal Library Directory](#) interactive map