CILIP Style Guide

This guide is for CILIP staff and members that represent the organisation including Trustees, the Presidential Team and Member Network committees. It is designed to help you write and communicate in a consistent way.

We want people to have a consistent experience, whichever part of CILIP they interact with, and to support and build our brand.

Please also use:

- The CILIP brand guide for details about logos, font and images.
- Design templates for Member Networks to produce A3, A4 and A5 documents.
- Pull-up banner design templates for Member Networks.

The design templates for Member Networks are available through the CILIP communications team: marketing@cilip.org.uk. Please also send the team any questions about this guide or the CILIP brand.
Who we are

We are the independent voice that represents and champions all information professionals. With our Royal Charter we help our members develop their skills, build successful careers and deliver high quality information and library services.

How we define our personality:

- Friendly and personal
- Clear and well-informed
- Confident
- Open
- Progressive
- Inclusive and accessible
- An effective advocate
- A champion of equalities and diversity
- Enabling
- Collaborative
- Focused on shared goals
- Public good
- The value of the sector
- Growth
- Customer focus
- Keeping it simple and effective

It's important for us to be

Our motivations

Our relationships

Our conversational style

The value of the sector

Growth

Customer focus

Keeping it simple and effective

Enabling

Collaborative

Focused on shared goals

Friendly and personal

Clear and well-informed

Confident

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Progressive

Inclusive and accessible

An effective advocate

A champion of equalities and diversity
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<td>When writing and communicating if you do nothing else make sure you:</td>
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<td>Keep it simple</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use plain English.</td>
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<td>• Write in short sentences and paragraphs.</td>
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<td>• Avoid complicated grammar.</td>
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<td>Be personable</td>
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<td>• Think about your audience.</td>
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<td>Use visuals</td>
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<td>• Build brand through quality photos, focusing on people.</td>
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<td>• Explain using infographics, charts and graphs.</td>
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<td>• Avoid stock images.</td>
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<td>Be accessible</td>
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<td>• Avoid using smaller font than point 11.</td>
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<td>• Text should stand out from the background.</td>
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<td>• Use html, avoid locking information in PDFs.</td>
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Our tone at a glance

Our tone is what we say and how we say it. The way we write and talk influences the impression we make. The way we talk will change depending who we are talking to, but our tone should be consistent.

Our tone

- Confident
- Clear
- Strong
- Approachable
- Informed
- Independent
Our tone: confident

We are proud to represent the library and information sector. We will provide positive leadership and robust challenge where necessary. We will showcase people, buildings, design and services from across the sector and the impact they make.

How to do it

Plan before you start

Decide what you want to say, who you are talking to and why you want to talk to them.

Then decide what your most important points are and order what you are saying to start with the most important.

Be direct

Be focused and certain in what you are saying. Have conviction and use your passion and energy.
Our tone: clear

We will use straightforward language and information, and good design. We will tailor our approach depending on audience. Our messages and presentation will be clear and have the maximum impact possible.

How to do it

Use plain English

- Keep your sentences short. Aim for no more than 15 to 20 words per sentence.
- Be punchy, concise and vary sentence length to keep your writing interesting.
- Be focused by making one point in each sentence – make a related point at a push.
- Keep your paragraphs short. Aim for three to five sentences per paragraph.
- Aim to write for the broadest audience possible. Complicated language can be alienating.
- Keep punctuation simple, avoid brackets, semi-colons and exclamation marks.
- Use an active rather than passive voice.
- Avoid jargon, explain acronyms, don’t use slang, don’t use overly-complicated language and avoid cliché.

Example of active voice, ‘We advocate for the sector.’

Example of passive voice, ‘Advocacy for the sector is provided by CILIP.’

Use formatting

Use text boxes, bullet points, bold and italics and dividing lines to emphasise and break-up text.

Check and test

Once you’ve written something have a break and read it again. Could it be clearer? Ask someone else to read it.

Readability tests provide a useful check. If the reading age is over 14 then your text is more complicated than a broadsheet newspaper. Writing apps like HemmingwayApp provide useful pointers, but don’t rely on them.
Our tone: strong

We speak for the whole library and information sector and are open to everyone that wants to become a member and join our community. We are stronger together and the bigger we are the more influence we have.

How to do it

Be open

We are open to everyone that wants to join. Make people feel welcome and talk about what ‘we can do together’ rather than ‘you’ and us’. Don’t exclude people by using overly-complicated language, jargon or assuming prior knowledge.

Be wary of lists – they can unintentionally exclude people. ‘We work hard to lobby for school, prison and University libraries,’ to describe our lobbying could make people who don’t work in these sectors or in libraries to feel excluded.

Be wary of negative language

For example say ‘Have your say through our survey until 8 June.’ Not, ‘The survey will close on 8 June. After this point members won’t be able to have their say.’

Celebrate success

We represent an amazing community 87,000 information professionals across the UK. We will show our pride in what they do and their impact by using stories, quotes and case-studies.
Our tone: approachable

We are a network of people. We welcome everyone to join our community and we want you to feel at home. We are friendly and personable. We will use images and stories from our members, the places they work and their customers.

How to do it

Be friendly

Personalise greetings whenever you can.

‘Hello Mark’ is a good way to start a newsletter, ‘Dear Mr Taylor’ is too formal.

Use you and we

Use ‘you’ when talking about your audience and ‘we’ when talking about CILIP. This will make your writing more conversational and approachable. For example:

Do say, ‘You can apply to become a mentor.’

Don’t say, ‘Members can apply to become a mentor.’

Be conversational

Have a person in mind you are talking to and speak to them directly. Use straightforward and clear language that’s easy to understand.

Ask questions

Using open questions will help engage your audience and keeps the tone varied.

‘Are you ready for data protection reform?’
Our tone: informed

We will check our facts and be as accurate as possible. However, we are human and if we get things wrong we will admit it and where possible correct it. We will draw on the expertise of the sector and make evidence-based decisions.

How to do it

Use evidence to tell stories

Use facts, figures and evidence to back up your statements.

Real life examples of people, places and their customers will bring our stories to life. Use the highest quality photographs and images possible.

Proofread

Carefully proofread to avoid spelling mistakes and grammatical errors. They look unprofessional.

Use our community

We will draw on the knowledge of our members and community. Use polls, surveys and ask for people’s opinions. This will help involve people in our work and make sure we are well informed.

Facts Matter

Check your facts and figures carefully. Where appropriate show where your figures are from but be wary of over-complicating materials with references.

Use hyperlinks and endnotes rather than footnotes to show sources.

Unless absolutely necessary round figures to the nearest whole number, say ‘63 per cent of staff’ not ‘62.9 per cent of staff’.

We’re human

We are human and if we make a mistake we should correct it, acknowledge the error and provide the right information.
Our tone: independent

We are the only independent voice for the UK’s library and information sector. We are guided by our Royal Charter and charitable status - to develop and improve library and information services and to act in the public good.

How to do it

Be constructive

We will acknowledge the difficulties, provide robust challenge where necessary and are constructive in our approach. If we see a problem we should suggest a solution and work towards achieving it.

Collaborate

Independence gives us the freedom to work with organisations who share our aims and values. We will promote our partnerships and associations.

We will identify opportunities to work with our members, their organisations and customers.

Take care of the brand

Our brand is one of our greatest assets. It is unique and distinguishes us from other organisations. It is how people recognise us, and builds trust and confidence. Make sure what you say and how you say it is with consistent with this guide, the brand guide and the templates provided.
Example: writing a newsletter

Compelling subject lines

With email subject lines, use actionable language. This doesn't necessarily mean using verbs, although it certainly helps, e.g. ‘Don’t miss out on the CILIP Conference’.

Personalise by audience where possible – and this doesn’t simply mean using their name, e.g by member/non-member, location, sector and behaviour.

Prioritise clarity then think about catchiness.

Make sure your subject line corresponds with your copy.

Words to avoid as they’re likely to trigger spam filters: ‘free’, ‘% off’ and ‘earn’.

Some examples of subject lines that don’t work:

- ‘A webinar for everyone...Check out upcoming webinars!’
- ‘Celebrate the Most Wonderful Time of Year with Our Holiday and Winter Invitation...’
- ‘Count me in!’

Email copy

Make the message more relevant by personalising using available data and content.

Write in the second person by using ‘you’, ‘you’re’ etc.

Talk about benefits rather than features e.g. ‘Get a promotion’ rather than ‘Improve your skills’.

Keep it brief.

Make a clear call to action. If using buttons, make sure these stand out by using colour. Text should be action orientated, e.g. ‘read our report’.
Example: writing an administrative email

An administrative email is an important communication to confirm a booking, provide a receipt or provide information so a member or customer can complete a task. It is important that emails are:

- Friendly and approachable.
- Provide clear and accurate information.
- Written in plain English.

Example of a badly written email:

Subject: Reference 74448 Registered User Services

Dear member

Following a recent booking (for a Really Interesting Exhibition) please find your tickets attached. If you have requested to pay by invoice payment for the invoice is due strictly in 30 days. We will consider non-payment against our terms and conditions as a non-attendance; & the ticket will be null and void.

Any questions should be referred to the website.

Why it’s bad:

- It’s rude. It is focused on penalties and terms and conditions. It doesn’t recognised that someone has just booked to come to an event.
- The subject doesn’t say who it’s from or what it’s about so is more likely to not be read.
- It’s not personalised and it’s impersonal.
- It’s confusing and isn’t written in plain English.
- It uses complicated grammar and there are spelling mistakes.

Example of a well-written email:

Subject: Your booking for the CILIP Exhibition

Hello Mark

This is your booking for the CILIP Exhibition, the UK’s biggest gathering of library and information professionals.
Here are your tickets

- Mobile ticket
- Paper ticket

Event details

Venue: St George’s Hall, Liverpool, LV1 1PP

Dates: 14 – 15 August 2017

Add to your calendar

Visit www.CILIPexhibition.com for full details about the event and to plan your visit.

If you have any questions please contact us and we will be happy to help, exhibition@cilip.org.uk

We look forward to seeing you in Liverpool.

Joy Williams

The Exhibition Team

Why it’s better:

- It’s friendly and polite. It includes positive information about the event,
- The subject line accurately describes the email.
- It uses ‘you’ and ‘we’.
- It uses a friendly personal salutation.
- It provides useful details about the event and how to find out more.
- It uses formatting to highlight key information
- It says who the email is from.
Example: writing a press release

Press releases are carefully worded communications designed to interest the media and get coverage. People working in the media are very busy, so pointless or confusing press releases are just annoying.

Example of a badly written press release:

**Nominations for the 2017 Award are now invited**

*The CILIP award is offered to an individual, individual(s) or a group of people in recognition of outstanding work in the field of library science.*

*The Award is open to individuals or groups from anywhere in the world; however, nominations must be made by a Member of CILIP.*

*Nominations should be for achievement that meets one or ideally more of the following criteria: Raising the profile of the information profession within an organisation or field of endeavour in a way which can or has become an exemplar to others; raising the awareness of the value of Library Science in the workplace;*

*Continues...*

Why it’s bad:

- The headline isn’t clear what the press release is about.
- It’s not written in plain English and uses complicated grammar.
- There are spelling and grammatical errors.
- The order is wrong, it doesn’t start with the most important information.
- It isn’t clear what the story is.
Example of a well-written press release:

**First double American win for the CILIP Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Medals**

- *Ruta Sepetys'* refugee story *Salt to the Sea*, a fictionalised account of the worst maritime disaster in history, takes 80th anniversary Carnegie Medal.
- *Illustrator Lane Smith* credits British illustrators as his inspiration as he triumphs in the Kate Greenaway Medal category with picture book *There is a Tribe of Kids*.

For the first time ever in the history of both the CILIP Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Medals, the UK’s oldest and most prestigious children’s book awards, winners from the United States have triumphed in both categories announced today, Monday 19th June, at a ceremony at RIBA in London.

*Continues...*

Why it’s good:

- The release is focused on a clear story.
- The use of formatting helps quickly identify the key messages.
- It packs in important information about **who**, **what**, **where**, **when** and **how** at the start of the press release.
**Written house style tips A-Z**

This guide has been written to help produce a consistent written style across our communications and documents. Facet Publishing and Information Professional have their own guides. If something isn’t covered contact the Communications Team by email [marketing@cilip.org.uk](mailto:marketing@cilip.org.uk).

**Acronyms**

Explain an acronym the first time you use it – apart from household names like BBC.

After explaining it use the acronym in the rest of the text. In most cases the acronym is used for brevity, so if an organisation or phrase is mentioned only once, you do not need to use an acronym.

Write the full name followed by the acronym in brackets, ‘Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) have today announced....SCL are...’

Avoid using too many acronyms as they can be alienating, not everyone is familiar with them and not everyone will start reading at the beginning of the text, and therefore may miss the explanation.

**Addresses**

Postal:

In a single line: 7 Ridgmount Street, London, WC1E 7AE

Over multiple lines:

7 Ridgmount Street  
London  
WC1E 7AE

Email:

Use all lower case e.g. my.name@cilip.org.uk not My.name@cilip.org.uk.
AGM
Use AGM rather than Annual General Meeting.

Apostrophes
The main uses of apostrophes are to:

- Show ownership, ‘Peter’s book’.
- Indicate missing letters, ‘I can’t’.

If a word ends in an ‘s’ put the apostrophe at the end of the word, e.g. ‘Members’ fees’.

BAME
Use BAME to describe black, Asian and minority ethnic rather than BME.

Brackets
Use sparingly. Consider simplifying the sentence, using commas or dashes instead.

Bullet points
- Put a full stop at the end of each one, except when it’s short phrase or single word.

Don’t use other punctuation such as semi-colons at the end of bullet points.

Capitalisations
DON’T WRITE USING ALL CAPITAL LETTERS – IT LOOKS LIKE YOU’RE SHOUTING.

Avoid capitalisations within sentences except for proper nouns, job titles and the following terms and products:

- CILIP Board and Trustee
- Devolved Nations
- Impact Toolkit
● Information Professional - to refer to the magazine
● Leaders Network
● Levels of professional registration – Certification, Chartership and Fellowship
● Member Networks
● Membership categories – Member, Student, Leader and Registered Professional
● Presidential Team, President and Vice President
● Professional Knowledge and Skills Base
● Regional Member Networks
● Register of Practitioners
● Royal Charter
● SocialLink
● Special Interest Groups
● Virtual Learning Environment

It is not necessary to capitalise ‘information professional’, ‘knowledge manager’, ‘librarian’, ‘library’ or ‘information service’ unless a particular person, place or job title is referred to, e.g. Bodley’s Librarian or The London Library.

On websites and in emails text in buttons and headers should not use capital letters apart from the first letter of the first word.

Document, report and event titles should use capital letters at the start of each word. Descriptions of documents, reports and events do not need to use capitalisation other than the first letter of the first word.

**Chief Executive**

Use ‘Chief Executive’ rather than ‘CEO’.

**CILIP**

When introducing the organisation refer to CILIP as ‘CILIP, the library and information association’ and ‘CILIP’ after that. ‘CILIP: Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals’ is our full, formal name and should be used for official purposes, e.g. when sending information to the Charity Commission.
Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Not ‘Continuous Professional Development’.

Dates

Use the format ‘date month year’ e.g. ‘2 January 2018’.

I.e. or e.g.?

Use i.e. to introduce a word or sentence that makes what you have said clearer or provides additional details, ‘...strategic points i.e. airports or military bases.’

Use e.g. to give an example, ‘Think about how you can develop these skills, e.g. by taking extra courses.’

IT

Not ‘ICT’ or ‘Information Technology’.

Italicics

Avoid over-using italics. They should be used sparingly for emphasis and for book or magazine titles.

Member Networks

Local CILIP networks in England are Regional Member Networks. Groups by specialism or interest are Special Interest Groups. Collectively they’re called Member Networks.

Newsletters

To describe email and hard-copy newsletters use ‘newsletters’, not ‘eNews’, ‘eBulletins’, ‘email newsletters’, or ‘eUpdates’.

Northern Ireland

Use in full rather than the acronym NI, except when used in a proper noun i.e. ‘Libraries NI’.
Numbers

- Spell out numbers one to nine and use numerals from 10 to 999,999.
- Above that use m (million), bn (billion) and tn (trillion), e.g £5bn.
- Use a comma every three 0s.

Per cent

Use ‘%’ or ‘per cent’. Don’t use ‘percent’.

Price

Use ‘£10 a month’ and ‘£120 a year’.

Phone numbers

In most cases use the format ‘020 7255 0500’ or ‘0141 353 5637’. If you’re writing for an international audience use ‘+4420 7255 0500’.

Postnominals

ACLIP (Certification), MCLIP (Chartership) and FCLIP (Fellowship) are described as CILIP postnominals e.g. ‘Your CILIP postnominals’.

Punctuation

Use a single space after a full stop.

Avoid complicated grammar such as semi-colons and brackets. Use full stops, dashes and commas instead.

Use exclamation marks as little as possible.

SocialLink

Our professional network is called ‘SocialLink’, not ‘Social Link’ or ‘Sociallink’.

Symbols

Ampersands (&) should not be used except where they appear in a company name or for brevity on social media.
Square brackets

Are used to provide essential explanatory information by an editor, and most commonly used in quotes.

Time

Use the twelve hour clock, e.g. ‘3:30pm’. If you are talking to an international audience don’t forget the time zone code e.g. GMT.

Quotation marks

Use double quote marks at the start and end of a direct quote. Use single quote marks for quoted text within the quote. For example:

George said, “There’s an old saying in Tennessee that says, ‘fool me once, shame on you’ or something like that.”

Use single quote marks for words that aren’t direct quotes, i.e. L’Oreal’s slogan ‘because you’re worth it’ has been used for forty years.

Use single quote marks for a quote in a headline or title.

Websites

Hyperlink text where possible. If you write a website address don’t include https://www. and use a shortcut URL where possible, so use cilip.org.uk/privacy rather than http://www.cilip.org.uk/events/page/privacyconference.

Years

For a span of years use ‘2015-17’, not ‘2015/17’.
Common acronyms

ACE  Arts Council England
ALA  American Library Association
ALIA  Australian Library and Information Association
APPG  All-Party Parliamentary Group
ARA  The Archive and Records Association
ARLIS  Arts Libraries Society (UK and Ireland)
ASCEL  Association of Senior Children’s and Education Librarians
BA  Booksellers Association
BAILER  British Association for Information and Library Education and Research
BCS  British Computer Society: The Chartered Institute for IT
BIALL  British and Irish Association of Law Librarians
BIC  Book Industry Communication
BL  British Library
CDL  Committee of Departmental Librarians (UK Government)
CFLA  Canadian Federation of Library Associations
CILIP  Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
CILIPS  Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland
CJILL  Consortium of Independent Health Information Libraries (in London)
COLRIC  Council for Learning Resources in Colleges
EBLIDA  European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations
Fed-IP  The Federation of Health and Care Informatics Professionals
GLAM  Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums
HSCSG  Health and Social Care Strategy Group
HEE  Health Education England
ICO  Information Commissioner’s Office
IFLA  International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
IL  Information Literacy
ILI  Internet Librarian International conference
IM  Information Management
IMA  Information Management Alliance
IRMS  Information and Records Management Society
K&IM  Knowledge and Information Management
KM  Knowledge Management
LACA  The Libraries and Archives Copyright Alliance
LAI  Library Association of Ireland
LIANZA  Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa
LIS  Library and Information Sector/Services
LISA  Library and Science Abstracts
LTF  Leadership for Libraries Taskforce (England)
MALD  Museums, Archives and Libraries Department (Welsh Government)
MLA  Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (closed in 2012)
NLS  National Library of Scotland
NLT  National Literacy Trust
NLW  National Library of Wales
PA  Publishers Association
PDS  Parliamentary Digital Service
PLSS  Public Library Skills Strategy
PKSB  Professional Knowledge and Skills Base
PRAB  Professional Registration and Accreditation Board
RDA  Resource, Description and Access
RLUK  Research Libraries UK
SCL  Society of Chief Librarians
SCONUL  The Society of College, National and university Libraries
SLA  School Library Association
SLA  Special Libraries Association
SLIC  Scottish Library and Information Council
SLN  School Librarians Network (yahoo group)
SLS  Schools Library Service(s)
SQA  Scottish Qualifications Authority
STV  Share the Vision
TRA  The Reading Agency
YM  Your Membership
UHMLG  University Health and Medical Librarians Group
Acronyms: CILIP Special Interest Groups

ARLG  Academic and Research Libraries Group
CIG   Cataloguing and Indexing Group
CLSIG  Commercial, Legal and Scientific Information Group
CDE   Community, Diversity and Equality Group
GIG   Government Information Group
HLG   Health Libraries Group
ILG   Information Literacy Group
ILIG  Information Library and information Group
K&IM  Knowledge and Information Management Group
LIHG  Library and Information History Group
LLIRG Library and Information Research Group
LSG   Local Studies Group
MmIT  Multimedia Information and Technology Group
PATMG Patent and Trademark Group
PrLG  Prison Libraries Group
PMLG  Public and Mobile Libraries Group
PPRG  Publicity and Public Relations Group
RBSCG Rare Books and Special Collections Group
RMG   Retired Members Group
SLG   School Libraries Group
UkeiG UK eInformation Group
YLG   Youth Libraries Group