

This is one of a series of Fact Sheets on the photo imaging sector developed by industry experts to help people new to the sector understand the different job roles and the skills required in order to succeed. Fact Sheets are based on Job Profiles developed by Skillset. For the full list of *Job Profiles for the Audio Visual Industries*, visit www.skillset.org. We aim to keep this information as current as possible - a fully updated version will be available in the Winter of 2006. All Fact Sheets can be downloaded and printed from our website www.skillset.org/careers. To give us feedback, e-mail careers@skillset.org.

Professional photographic laboratories and photographic libraries employ Digital Imaging Technicians. Increasingly, photography is a digital process, and the traditional techniques of photographic production are being replaced by digital techniques. More and more images are originated digitally, although negatives and transparencies are also scanned so they can be digitally printed. A Digital Imaging Technician will work on computers scanning, copying, manipulating photographic images, and do design and layout work. There can be a high level of contact with the client (often a professional photographer), especially in a photographic laboratory, so the technician needs a good understanding of the end uses that may be made of the images produced. They must be able to interpret the client's instructions accurately and work under pressure to meet deadlines without compromising quality. The work can involve a wide variety of techniques such as restoring old photos, removing someone from a shot, or making posters and advertising leaflets. Most professional laboratories which produce exhibition work, offer design services in addition to their photographic printing, so design and layout work is increasingly becoming part of the Digital Imaging Technician's role.

The work

The work is very varied. In a laboratory, the technician will work at a computer (usually a Mac) and is expected to assess, adjust, manipulate, resize and amend files prior to printing. Prints can either be produced on photographic paper or on a wide range of surfaces using inkjet type printers. They may also need to archive and catalogue images for later retrieval. In a photo library the technician will deal with newly acquired images when they arrive. They will be scanned into the computer system, which may involve cleaning up the images, re-sizing and re-touching. There can also be re-scanning of existing material to another size, to meet a client's brief, and even re-shooting of material on transparencies. The role requires high-level data and colour management, and the technician needs to be able to accurately assess the colour, density and contrast level of images. All digital equipment must be properly calibrated to produce optimum results, which is another part of the technician's work. Scanning images for high end use requires patience and close attention to detail. Technicians need to manage their workflow to ensure it is efficient and precise.

Essential knowledge and skills

A good knowledge of the current version of Photoshop is essential (and understanding of other versions desirable). Other software packages that may also be required include Quark, Illustrator, and InDesign. As most digital labs and studios are Mac-based, experience in using Macs as well as PCs is an advantage. A photographic background is useful in order to have a good "eye" as much of the work involves the interpretation of client's requests.

A Digital Imaging Technician needs:

- normal colour vision - this is essential
- to be able to work individually and be part of a team
- to be flexible and adapt to new techniques and new processes
- to be methodical and careful but able to learn quickly
- to keep up-to-date with rapidly changing technology

Typical career routes

There are no formal entry requirements for laboratory work. A strong desire to work in the industry is essential, plus a keen interest in photography and a high standard of computer use. Some people will have laboratory experience in mini labs or photofinishers that have similar machines to professional laboratories but require a lower skill level. They can provide a useful entry point to the industry. Some technicians start as photographic printers before adding digital imaging skills to their existing work. It is usual to have prior experience in a professional laboratory before working as a Digital Imaging Technician in a photo library.



England Helpline
08080 300 900

Scotland Helpline
0808 100 8094

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The Sector Skills Council for the Audio Visual Industries

Training and qualifications

A graphic design qualification will be useful. Training on the job can take up to three years before someone is sufficiently proficient. Some of the major suppliers to the industry offer training opportunities on specific pieces of equipment. Laboratories, which train "on the job", may also offer day release to local colleges in order to increase their staff's skill level. This can lead to NVQ/SVQ accreditation at different levels in Digital Imaging, or Digital Imaging and Photography. Specialist picture libraries usually prefer graduates in Electronic Imaging.

Health and Safety

It is desirable in all occupations involving computers and equipment to have an awareness of health and safety matters.

Where to go for more information

Skillset is the Sector Skills Council for the Audio Visual Industries. For information about training and professional qualifications, links to the Skillset network of training partners, and access to the comprehensive Skillset course database, visit www.skillset.org

Skillset Careers is the UK's only specialist media careers advice service delivering individual career solutions when and how you need them. For detailed media careers information and advice, contact one of the free careers helplines. Call **08080 300 900** in England (also available to callers from Wales and Northern Ireland) or **0808 100 8094** in Scotland, or visit the website www.skillset.org/careers

The Association of Photographers (AOP) is a trade association of professional photographers, who campaign vigorously for photographers' rights and have had a key influence on the development of professional photography in the UK. Their publication *Beyond the Lens* is widely recognised as the definitive industry guide to copyright and licensing law, ethics and business practice. The AOP has a number of affiliated colleges and promotes, maintains and develops relationships between education and the professional industry. It also publishes *IMAGE* magazine, which reports on current trends in professional photography and image making. www.the-aop.org **T: 020 7739 6669**. The AOP has a Digital Imaging Group (DIG).

Professional Photographic Laboratories Association

Their website contains details of member companies.

www.ppla.pmai.org

British Association of Picture Libraries and Agencies (BAPLA)

BAPLA is the UK trade association for picture libraries and agencies and the largest organisation of its kind in the world, with over 400 member companies. Their vacancies board is the most comprehensive listing of current opportunities available. Many individual libraries' websites (eg Getty Images www.gettyimages.com) contain information on training and job vacancies.

www.bapla.org.uk **T: 020 7713 1780**