



Rachael Abbott

Senior Data Scientist

Introduce yourself. Where do you work? What is your job role?

My name is Rachael Abbott, I am a Senior Data Scientist (Computer Vision) at Liberty IT. I have been with the company since September 2022.

What does your job entail?

My job is to prepare Liberty IT for computer vision projects that will help alleviate some of the workloads analysts must do manually. Some days I will be coding in python, putting together pipelines or training algorithms. Other days will be spent researching and planning.

How did you get into this line of work?

After completing my master's, I started a PhD to push myself further and learn how to code. Before this point, I had avoided any computing models at university because I hadn't a background in it. I began to search for a PhD that would allow me to learn how to code and get industry experience simultaneously. I finally found one in computer vision, a new domain, in 2017. By the time I had finished my PhD four years later, computer vision had exploded, and there were loads of jobs in it, from agriculture, medicine, insurance, manufacturing security and defence.

Outline your career to date

I have worked as a Research Fellow at QUB researching multi-modal object detection and as an AI Engineer at Cirdan detecting cancer in histopathology imagery. Now I am working as the first computer vision specialist at Liberty IT.

Tell us about your qualifications and training

I have an undergraduate Applied Mathematics and Physics degree from QUB and a PhD in Computer Science which was industry sponsored by Thales Glasgow and QUB.

What qualities are required for your job – personal and professional?

An essential quality in my job is always to be willing to learn new things. Every day a new algorithm will be released or a new state-of-the-art model, so it is important to keep up to date. As this is a new field, change will regularly come from how you store, label and prepare your data to how to track and create repeatable code. It is, therefore, important to stay open-minded and evaluate all new ways of doing things.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

Surround yourself by people who are smarter than you and you will always learn and be challenged.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I sea swim, surf, and participate in CrossFit and yoga.

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself?

I swam in a relay across the North Channel from Northern Ireland to Scotland overnight through lots of Lion's Mane Jellyfish.

Who has inspired you most in your life?

My Mum.

What advice would you give your 16-year-old self?

Do more research into the many different career paths available, especially in Data Science, Machine Learning and Software Development. These kind of career pathways were not promoted at my school as much as Medicine, Law and Engineering.