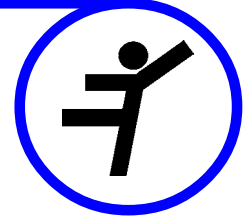


Desktop Publishers



Occupational Brief Title Codes:

- D.O.T.: 979.382-026
- G.O.E.: 01.06.01
- S.O.C.: 43-9031
- O*NET™: 43-9031.00
- N.A.I.C.S.: 561410
- H.O.C.: CRA

Work Classification Based Related

D.O.T. Occupations:

- Blueprinting-Machine Operators
- Electronic Prepress System Operators
- Instant Print Operators
- Line-up Examiners
- Printers
- Type-Copy Examiners

Interests Based Related

G.O.E. Occupations:

- Aerial Photographer
- Electronic Masking System Operators
- Engravers
- Form Designers
- Paste-Up Artists
- Patternmakers
- Photoengraving Finishers

Skills Based Related

O*NET Occupations:

- Computer Operators
- Film and Video Editors
- Precision Printing Workers
- Scanner Operators
- Typesetting and Composing Machine Operators and Tenders

Noteworthy Quote:

“For me, the most gratifying aspect of desktop publishing is the sense of accomplishment I receive from taking all the elements involved and creating an attractive, marketable piece for publication.”

—Diane L. Kahn, Desktop Publisher,
Moravia, New York

Desktop publishers (ˈdesk-top ˈpub-lish-ers) use a personal computer and page layout software to combine text and graphics to produce publication-quality documents for print production, digital display, or digital distribution.

The term desktop publishing (DTP) is somewhat misleading. The computer does not reel out hundreds of copies of magazines, books, or newsletters, as a printing press does. Instead, desktop systems produce camera-ready or laser-ready copies of documents. These materials can then be reproduced or printed by traditional or digital means.

Desktop publishing started with the technological creation of the Postscript language in the early 1980’s. Hundreds of software programs such as Adobe® PageMaker®, Corel Ventura®, Adobe® FrameMaker®, or Microsoft publishing programs such as Microsoft® Office Publisher® and Macromedia programs such as Dreamweaver® and Flash®, are now available for all personal computers.

Desktop publishing can save companies a lot of money. It simplifies many prepress operations such as typesetting and page layout. The speed and power of desktop technology enables users to do more work in less time. DTP also gives companies or other users greater control of their publications. By producing these materials in-house, manufacturers can quickly update publications to match changes in their products or business operations.

Desktop technology is now firmly established in a wide range of businesses, industries, and organizations. Almost anything that can be printed can be produced using desktop publishing software. The list of products includes advertising and marketing materials, letterheads, logos, business cards, instructional manuals, reports, calendars, brochures, posters, fliers, magazines, newsletters, newspapers, books, and packaging. DTP software can also be used to create digital proposals, presentations, advertising campaigns, and Web sites.



Desktop publishers should have a good eye for design and presentation.

Photo by CGP

Work Performed

The personal computer is the principal tool in desktop publishing (DTP). With the help of desktop software, drawing programs, scanners, libraries of clip art and photographs, and a broad range of typefaces and symbols, desktop publishing specialists can assemble text and graphics (pictures) into hundreds of kinds of different documents.

Desktop publishers may be called *desktop publications specialists*, *DTP operators*, *electronic publishing specialists*, *electronic pagination system workers*, *digital electronic prepress technicians*, *technical publications engineers*, or *web publications designers*. Although their titles may vary, the duties of desktop publishers are essentially the same.

To begin an assignment, desktop publishers review the job order to learn the specifications. Using a keyboard and a mouse, they may enter text directly into the computer. Or they may transfer text electronically from a disk or through a modem. To create pages, desktop publishers may begin by scanning or entering graphics into the computer. They then enter the text and graphics into the page layout; manipulate the graphics; choose type styles and sizes; adjust spaces between letters, columns, and lines; choose justification, color, and contrast.

To arrange text and graphics on the pages, desktop publishers use layout specifications along with their own artistic sense. By entering commands in the computer, they adapt text and graphics to fit into an established page layout or template on the computer screen. They are able to completely manipulate an image to look the way they want it to.

Desktop publishers often make changes or fine-tune the documents following reviews or edits by customers or managers of the company they work for. With desktop software, users can make changes endlessly with clicks of a mouse. A document may go through several revisions or mockups before approval.

After final approval of the document, desktop publishers may print on high resolution paper or film the completed material. They may send it electronically to a source that will use the camera-ready copy or film to complete the publishing by traditional or digital methods.

The range of duties and responsibilities for desktop publishers vary widely with employers. In a small shop, desktop publishers may have a hand in all the segments of desktop publishing: writing, editing, drafting, graphic design, and typesetting. They may operate prepress proofing and plate making systems, digital printing systems, offset printing presses, simple bindery and finishing equipment, or film and paper processors.

Large organizations may tend to keep the different functions separate. Writers write, editors edit, and illustrators or graphic designers take care of drawings and illustrations. Desktop publishers then input and lay out the document using desktop software.

Tasks also differ with experience, skills, and knowledge. Desktop publishers with basic skills, for instance, may use desktop software to compile announcements, write an informal house newsletter, or prepare business forms and invoices. They may generate reports from databases, spreadsheets, or other files. They may incorporate files into the desktop program.

Individuals higher up in the corporation may have the total responsibility for the development and production of documents such as marketing brochures, project proposals, or presentations. Using handwritten notes from a consulting team of company managers, these specialists turn raw ideas into a final printed or digital document. They may write text from scratch, edit copy, incorporate graphics and design elements, and produce the final layouts.

Desktop publishers with expertise in technical writing produce technical manuals, instruction booklets, and other publications telling owners and users how to use and care for complex machinery and equipment. These writers often work closely with company engineers who give them notes or rough drafts. Using software, they design and lay out the text on pages. These specialists sometimes work with technical illustrators who produce computer-generated drawings to incorporate into the documents. Drawings may show exploded views of parts, assembled parts, or installation procedures.

Working Conditions

Desktop publishers usually work in air-conditioned and well-lighted rooms. These workers often confer with staff such as managers, engineers, illustrators, or others who may offer advice, assistance, or instructions. Deadlines and production schedules with fast turnaround times can be a source of stress in this work.

Hours and Earnings

Most desktop publishers work eight hours a day, five days a week. Choice of working hours usually goes to employees who have been with the company for long periods of time. In peak production periods or when workloads are heavy, desktop publishers may work overtime or take work home.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in May 2004, desktop publishers earned an average of \$34,110 a year. Earnings ranged from a high of more than \$52,460 a year to a low of less than \$19,460 a year. Wages vary depending on geographic location, level of education, years of experience, and employer.

Most companies offer benefits such as medical and life insurance plans, retirement plans, and paid holidays, sick leave, and vacations. Freelance desktop publishers make their own arrangements for health and insurance benefits.

Education and Training

Desktop publishers should have good language and writing skills. They should have a knowledge of publishing and should understand design concepts. Major skills required for the production of electronic documents are graphic arts techniques, layout and design, typographic knowledge, and production knowledge.

Desktop publishers must know how to use the personal computer, the operating system, and its applications. They must master several different software packages and continually update their skills to the current versions of the programs. The more they know the better. Besides the DTP program itself, desktop publishers must know programs for word processing, spread sheets, database management, and drawing. They must know how to work with files in each of these programs and how to integrate the files into a single file in the DTP program.

Many options are available for learning desktop publishing skills. Universities and colleges nationwide have incorporated computers into their fine arts, design, or communications curriculums. Other schools have programs geared to careers in digital imaging and publishing. Vocational schools offer programs combining computer skills with traditional publishing techniques.

Software manufacturers or vendors produce tutorials and training seminars for their products. New books appear constantly. Private training companies offer instruction, workshops, and seminars. Interactive software tutorials are available on disk.

The learning curve on software has grown longer and steeper in the past few years. Desktop publishers must keep current with updates, because newer and more complicated versions of the software programs appear all the time.

On-the-job training is very important in this work. In general, learning the basics and developing competence in the technology may take from six to nine months. Learning good design principles takes longer, however. Beginners will find good training opportunities in small businesses, which teach all the tasks and duties of the work. Some employers offer internships where trainees learn design and layout, writing, and software applications for the specific business of the employers.

Professional Societies

Many groups promote the interests and goals of desktop publishers. The primary organization is Xplor International. Xplor International represents thousands of professionals in more than 35 countries. Xplor offers programs, forums, and related services that enhance the use of electronic document systems. Xplor also offers certification as an Electronic Document Professional (EDP). Candidates for certification must have five years

of work experience and current employment in the use and management of electronic document systems or related services.

Other associations for desktop publishers include the Graphic Artists Guild (GAG), the Printing Industries of America/Graphic Artists Technical Foundation (PIA/GATF), the American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA), and the Society for Technical Communication (STC).

Personal Qualifications

Desktop publishers should have a good eye for design and presentation. They should have the flexibility to shift from one task to another. Desktop publishers should have a knack for organizing, sorting, and manipulating data, and they should be attuned to the many details of the work such as photos, page logs, and job progress. They should be able to handle the pressure of deadlines.

Occupations can be adapted for workers with disabilities. Persons should contact their school or employment counselors, their state office of vocational rehabilitation, or their state department of labor to explore fully their individual needs and requirements as well as the requirements of the occupation.

Where Employed

Desktop technology is having a great impact on the business and commercial world. Every kind of enterprise employs desktop publishers. Large companies and corporations employ them in departments such as information technology, word processing, marketing, corporate training, public relations, and administration. Many desktop publishers work for prepress companies and service bureaus that print pages and act as intermediaries between clients and printing companies.

Publishers of books, textbooks, and directories hire desktop publishers. They also work for newspapers, printers, magazine publishers, commercial and graphic arts companies, design studios, and advertising agencies. Many work for paper-oriented companies offering services such as banking and insurance. Others work for government agencies.

Some work on their own as freelance desktop publishers. These specialists often work from home. They obtain contracts or jobs from different companies, organizations, and individuals on an as needed basis.

Employment Outlook

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2004, more than 32,790 desktop publishers were employed throughout the United States. This number is expected to increase through the year 2012. In the years ahead desktop publishing will become far more sophisticated and dynamic. Desktop technology merged with other media such as music, voice, and animation will give desktop publishers the capabilities of a film or video producer. They will produce

talking magazines as well as encyclopedias and publications that integrate facts, film clips, musical pieces, and other media.

All these developments will create employment for desktop publishers, provided they have the advanced skills and training to work with them. Desktop publishing is blurring the distinction between writers, designers, and computer operators. Even now, employers are emphasizing skill integration. Employers will look for candidates who are skilled in writing, editing, and publishing; who understand design concepts; and who have the knowledge to use all the power desktop technology affords.

Entry Methods

Job seekers should first research the market to learn what jobs are available. Most jobs are not advertised. Employers fill openings through in-house transfers or promotions, or word-of-mouth referrals.

School or public libraries have directories listing companies by industry and the kind of workers they hire. Job seekers can send a resumé to companies that interest them. Professional societies often provide career centers that list job openings.

A good way to start in this field is to sign up with a temporary employment agency. Many of these agencies offer desktop publishing services exclusively. Besides offering employment, temp agencies often offer free or inexpensive training on all kinds of software and hardware. Temporary employees make valuable contacts and get hands-on experience with the equipment.

Advancement

Skilled and experienced desktop publishers can earn more money and advance to positions with more responsibility and authority. They may move from basic DTP tasks to assignments in which they are in charge of major projects. In large corporations they may find employment as managers of desktop centers, which handle all the company's publishing concerns.

Some desktop publishers start their own business. Other experts become consultants to business, industry, and the government.

For Further Research

American Institute of Graphic Arts, 164 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010. Web site: www.aiga.org

Graphic Artists Guild, 90 John Street, Suite 403, New York, NY 10038-3202. Web site: www.gag.org

Printing Industries of America(PIA)/Graphic Artists Technical Foundation(GATF), 200 Deer Run Road, Sewickley, PA 15143. Web site: www.gain.net

Society for Technical Communication, 901 North Stuart Street, Suite 904, Arlington, VA 22203. Web site: www.stc.org

Xplor International, 24238 Hawthorne Boulevard, Torrance, CA 90505-6505. Web site: www.xplor.org

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