

# Publishing Industry Workers



## Occupational Brief Title Codes:

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- G.O.E.: 01.06.01, 11.08, 01.01, 08.01.02
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- O\*NET™: 43-9031.00, 27-30, 27-1011.00, 41-3011.00
- N.A.I.C.S.: 5111
- H.O.C.: No Code

## Occupational Subtitles:

- Advertising Sales Agents
- Advertising and Promotions Managers
- Art and Design Workers
- Art Directors
- Business Operations Specialists
- Chief Executives
- Classified Advertising Clerks
- Computer Specialists
- Customer Service Representatives
- Distributors
- Editors
- Production Managers
- Public Relations Specialists
- Reporters
- Sales Representatives
- Writers

## Work Classification Based Related

### D.O.T. Occupations:

- Camera Operators
- Graphic Designers
- Screen Writers
- Title Searchers

## Interests Based Related

### G.O.E. Occupations:

- Photoengravers
- Producers
- Research Assistants
- Telemarketers

## Skills Based Related

### O\*NET Occupations:

- Counter and Rental Clerks
- Film and Video Editors
- Radio and Television Announcers
- Receptionists and Information Clerks

**Publishing industry workers** (ˈpub-lish-ing ˈin-dus-try ˈwork-ers) perform a wide variety of activities to produce print materials, as well as audio, CD-ROM, and other electronic media, except software.

The publishing industry produces a variety of printed materials including magazines, books, newspapers, directories, greeting cards, databases, calendars, and other publications. Increasingly, publishing firms are also producing material in other formats, such as audio, CD-ROM, or other electronic media. The publishing industry consists of five major areas: newspaper publishers; periodical publishers; book publishers; directory and mailing list publishers; and all other publishers including greeting card, calendar, art print, map, and atlas publishers. The publishing industry does not, however, include software publishers—a separate industry.

Newspapers report events taking place locally and around the world. Textbooks and technical, scientific, and professional books provide nearly half of the revenue of the book publishing industry. The other half consists of all other typical material found in a bookstore, as well as juvenile, religious, paperback, mail-order, book club, and reference books. Periodicals fall into two basic types: business-to-business, called trade, which serve a particular industry, profession, or service; and consumer, which are written for general audiences.

## Work Performed

The number and type of workers employed vary with the type of publication, the size of the company, and the variety of media in which the company publishes. However, most occupations in the publishing industry fall into one of four categories: writing and editing; production; advertising sales and marketing; and general administration.

Some publishers have a staff of *writers*, *reporters*, and *editors* who research, write, and edit articles, stories, and other text for the publications. *Photographers* and



*Most occupations in the publishing industry fall into one of four categories: writing and editing; production; advertising sales and marketing; and general administration. Photo by CGP Staff*

**artists** are also brought in to supplement the stories with photos and illustrations as needed. Other publishers purchase their material from outside sources—mainly independent “freelance” writers, photographers, or artists. In this situation, the publishers must obtain the legal right to publish the material from the content providers before publication.

After the story or article is written, editors review the manuscript (text) to check that the information it contains is accurate. They edit and rewrite the text, as needed, to ensure that it uses correct grammar and a writing style that is clear and interesting. Editors may also do original writing, such as producing editorials for newspapers or columns for magazines. In book publishing, they oversee the acquisition and selection of material, often working directly with the authors to achieve the final product.

Most publishing companies employ several types of editors. **Executive editors** generally have the final say about what will be published and how it will be covered and presented. **Managing editors** are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the editorial department. They make sure that material produced conforms to guidelines and that deadlines are met. **Associate and assistant editors** give assignments to writers and reporters, oversee projects, and do much of the editing of text. **Copy editors** review manuscripts or reporters’ copy for accuracy, content, grammar, and style.

**Art and design workers** also work closely with the editorial department. They photograph news events, illustrate children’s books, and design book jackets and magazine covers, for instance. They lay out every page of the publication using scanners and word processing and desktop publishing software. **Art directors** determine the overall look of the publication. They select type sizes, styles, and fonts; and oversee placement of text, artwork, photographs, and any advertising on the page.

The sale of advertisements, including classified ads, is a major source of revenue for magazines, newspapers, and directories such as the telephone Yellow Pages. Magazines, newspapers, and directories employ many **advertising sales agents**. Using demographic data developed by the market research department, they make presentations to potential clients promoting the use of their publication for advertising purposes. Most commercial advertisements are produced by advertising agencies. However, small businesses may require the help of the publisher’s **copywriters** and **graphic artists** to create an advertisement.

Classified advertising sales are generally handled by **classified advertising clerks**. Because books do not have advertising, book publishers generate sales through the use of elaborate publicity campaigns. **Public relations specialists** set up book signings and media interviews with authors. They also place advertisements in relevant publications.

**Customer service representatives** respond to customer inquiries and take orders. **Sales representatives** go to places such as libraries, schools, and bookstores to promote the sale of their publications. **Advertising and promotions managers**, called **circulation directors** at some magazines and newspapers, study trends and devise promotional campaigns

to generate new readers. They work with the distribution department to ensure the publications are delivered on time.

Major book publishers often have large warehouse operations, where books are stored and from which they are delivered as needed. There, **stock clerks** and **order fillers** keep track of inventory and assemble customer orders. Newspapers and magazines distribute each issue only once. Immediately after they are printed, newspapers are transported to **distributors**, **driver/sales workers**, and **individual carriers** who deliver the newspapers to newsstands and residential customers. Magazines are mailed to subscribers or shipped to retail distributors.

Computerization, and digital technology in particular, is having a significant impact on the publishing industry. Digital photography eliminates the need for film processing, and allows for easy manipulation of images. Electronic mail allows advertisers and writers to send their ads and text directly to the publisher’s editorial and production departments for insertion. Desktop publishing software also allows for easy manipulation of content and page lay out.

To keep the computer systems running and to implement new technologies, publishers employ **computer specialists**. As publications are published in more than one format, additional workers are needed to develop the new formats. Audio books, for example, require **sound engineering technicians** to transfer the books to tape. Books are also beginning to be produced electronically, so that they can be read on hand-held “readers” or on computers.

Much of the publishing industry is venturing online. Newspapers, in particular, and some magazines have extensive Web sites that are updated around the clock as news breaks. These Web sites may have their own writers and editors to supply content, however, for the most part, they reformat material developed by the print publication’s regular staff. Most online ventures are managed by **webmasters** and **Internet site developers**. They work with the design, editorial, and production departments in order to implement content changes and redesigns of Web sites.

To oversee the production of the publication, publishers employ **production managers**. They set up production schedules and see that deadlines are met. They also determine how much it will cost to produce a publication or an advertising insert. In general, production managers try to keep costs under control while maintaining quality.

The industry also employs a variety of **general and financial managers** and **administrative support staff**. They help run companies by handling the business side of the organization. Publishers, for example, are the **chief executives** of the company and are responsible for implementing company policies. **Business operations specialists** negotiate the copyrights for material, and grant or deny others the right to reproduce or reprint their company’s copyrighted material.

### Working Conditions

Publishing industry workers experience varied working conditions depending on their position. However, meeting

deadlines is one of the primary conditions of employment in this industry. Magazines and newspapers, in particular, are published on a very tight schedule, and workers must be prepared to meet these deadlines. This can often make for a very chaotic and stressful environment.

Many writers, editors, and reporters work from home, particularly in book publishing, sending manuscripts back and forth using electronic mail. Travel may be required to perform research and conduct interviews. Many advertising sales agents also travel in order to meet with potential customers, although some sell over the telephone.

At company headquarters, most work in comfortable, private offices. Those in newspaper publishing, however, may work in large, noisy, cubicle-filled rooms. Classified advertising clerks and customer service representatives increasingly work in call-center environments, manning telephones much of the day.

### **Hours and Earnings**

Publishing industry workers typically work 35 to 40 hours a week. However, employees may frequently be required to work overtime. Working nights, weekends, and holidays is also common, especially for those working on newspapers. Newspaper distributors and drivers usually work 5 to 6 hours a day, often in the middle of the night. There are also significant opportunities for part-time employment in this industry.

Earnings for publishing industry workers vary by the position, the worker's skill and experience, the size of the employer, and the type of publication. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2004, those working in periodical publishing earned an average of around \$726 a week. Those in book publishing earned an average of about \$650 a week, and those in newspaper publishing earned an average of around \$570 a week.

Writers, editors, and reporters working on major metropolitan newspapers or those with technical expertise for specialized magazines usually have the highest earnings, averaging roughly \$20 an hour. Advertising sales representatives usually earn a base salary, averaging around \$16 an hour, plus a commission based on sales. Art and design workers, including desktop publishers, generally earn around \$14 an hour. Customer service representatives earn an average of \$12 an hour.

Benefits also vary. Most employers offer paid holiday, vacation, and sick time; medical insurance; and retirement savings plans. Self-employed and freelance workers, however, must provide for their own insurance and benefits.

### **Education and Training**

Workers enter the industry with various educational backgrounds. Employers look favorably on job applicants with a broad educational background as well as useful job skills. In general, job applicants must be high school graduates with verbal and written communication skills, and be computer literate. They should also be ready to undergo the

frequent retraining made necessary by rapidly changing printing and publishing technology.

High school students should work on the school paper, yearbook, and other publications. A part-time job at a local paper or print shop will also give students an idea of what this work entails. Production workers generally have a high school or vocational school background. Writers, reporters, and editors often need a college background in English, communications, or journalism. A college degree with course work in marketing, communications, business, and advertising is also preferred for most advertising, sales, and marketing positions.

Workers with computer and literary aptitude are especially in demand. Word processing and desktop publishing course work are essential. Formal graphic arts programs, offered by technical schools, community and junior colleges, and some four-year colleges, provide an introduction to the industry. Two-year programs typically provide technical skill, while bachelor's degree programs prepare students who may want to enter writing, editing, marketing, or management.

New employees are often trained informally on-the-job. The length of training varies by occupation, type of publication, and the publishing company. Workers often start as assistants to experienced staff. As trainees gain experience and demonstrate their skills, they learn how to perform more complicated tasks with less supervision. Some jobs can be taught within a few months. Others require years of training and experience.

### **Personal Qualifications**

Two of the most important skills needed in the publishing industry are the ability to communicate well, and the ability to meet tight deadlines. Writers and editors need to be able to express ideas clearly and logically, and to write under pressure. Advertising, sales, and marketing positions require excellent interpersonal skills. Publishing industry workers must be able to get along with others, as well as be self-motivated, well-organized, persistent, independent, and able to handle rejection. Tact, enthusiasm, and a sense of humor are helpful.

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**

In 2004, the publishing industry employed over 900,000 workers. Newspaper publishers employed over half of the workers. Most of the rest worked for periodical publishers, book publishers, and directory and mailing list publishers. Others worked for publishers of greeting cards, maps and atlases, art prints, and calendars.

Despite the local nature of most newspaper reporting, the newspaper industry is dominated by several large corporations that own most of the newspapers in the country. Many of the smaller companies are also increasingly buying several newspapers in a single region, called "clustering." In this way,

several local newspapers can be produced more efficiently while sharing the same printing plant.

Book publishing is also dominated by a few very large companies, primarily based in New York City. However, some midsized and small publishers across the country are thriving, particularly those that specialize in certain subjects. Magazine or periodical publishers range from small one- or two-person shops to large media conglomerates that may publish dozens of magazines.

### Employment Outlook

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment in the publishing industry will remain strong. The need for news and information continues to grow, further fueling the growth of the publishing industry. Books, newspapers, and magazines, produced in a variety of media, will be needed to keep people informed.

Textbook publishers are expected to benefit from a growing number of high school and college students, as well as the need to implement new learning standards in classrooms. Technical and scientific books and journals will be needed to relay new discoveries to the public. More businesses and organizations are using magazines to promote new products and retain customer loyalty. This will create continued growth in custom publishing, in which a magazine publisher produces customized newsletters and magazines for various clients.

Efficiencies in production, however, will cause a decline in employment for some positions. This industry attracts a large number of applicants, especially at nationally known publications. Keen competition can be expected for most writing and editing jobs. There is also a trend toward using more freelance writers.

Those with excellent communication skills, a college degree, and good computer skills will have the best opportunities. Workers with specialized knowledge and those who can write on subjects appealing to minority and ethnic readers will also have better job prospects.

### Entry Methods

Most professional jobs in this industry require experience, especially if one wants to work for a top publishing firm. Experience can be obtained by working for a school newspaper or by working part-time or summers in a publishing company. In addition to experience, college students often get valuable job leads by performing an internship with a publishing company.

Most people start by working for small publishing companies or newspapers in smaller cities and towns, and then working their way up to better paying jobs with larger newspapers or publishers. Others break into the field by doing freelance work.

News reporters often start by covering local community events or criminal cases. Writers and editors often start as assistants, performing fact-checking, doing research, or copy

editing along with clerical tasks. Sales and advertising workers also often start as assistants, performing clerical, telemarketing, and customer service tasks.

### Advancement

The size and scope of the publishing industry allow for great advancement opportunities for those with skill and determination. Writers and reporters can advance to editorial positions. Some choose to continue writing and advance by becoming nationally known experts in their field. News reporters may advance to reporting regional or national news. Those in advertising and sales may advance by taking on bigger, more important clients, or by going into management.

### For Further Research

**Association of American Publishers**, 71 Fifth Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, New York, NY 10003. Web site: [www.publishers.org](http://www.publishers.org)

**Newspaper Association of America**, 1921 Gallows Road, Suite 600, Vienna, VA 22182-3900. Web site: [www.naa.org](http://www.naa.org)

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