

Career Opportunities in Journalism

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Career Services

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Here to help you get ahead.

Journalists make a living with words, so they must write quickly, concisely, precisely, and well—skills that can take a lifetime to master. Start early. Employers will see any and all writing experience, especially internships in the field or experience at a student publication, as a strong indicator that you have begun developing the skills needed to succeed as a journalist.

Now until graduation: **intern, intern, intern.** Between internships, work at *The Megaphone* or other university publications. The more writing and reporting experience you can acquire before getting into the job market, the better positioned you'll be to land a good entry-level position. And that goes for aspiring journalists who are starting this process after graduation as well....

To ensure your future career success:

- ✓ Gain as much experience as possible in writing, reporting, editing and design/lay-out through a range of internship, volunteer and campus involvement.
- ✓ Conduct informational interviews with professionals in the field to explore career options and learn what you need to know.
- ✓ Plot out a career strategy. Professionals in writing careers can advance rapidly if they know where they want to go, develop the necessary skills and network accordingly.
- ✓ Take the time to proactively develop your own professional skills: **write everyday!**

The seven main areas of journalism represented below are: **Newspaper Publishing, Magazine Publishing, Broadcast Journalism, Photojournalism, Web Publishing, Wire Services, and Technical Writing.**

Newspaper Publishing

The largest employer of journalists is the newspaper industry. There are about 6,400 newspapers published in the United States today (1,422 daily and 5,000 weekly) – even the smallest towns in the nation are covered by a local or regional paper. Although they compete with other media – radio, television, and the Internet – newspapers are still an essential source of news and information for the public. Broadcast and electronic media cannot provide the in-depth news coverage and analysis that newspapers offer. Most large metropolitan newspapers appear daily. Some papers such as *USA Today* and the *Wall Street Journal* are national in scope and, therefore, skip over much regional news. Smaller suburban and local papers, which are usually published once a week, concentrate on news that affects their immediate areas.

The newspaper industry is definitely governed by the notion of “paying your dues”. Long hours, working on the weekend and rapid deadlines are all common job features. New journalists most often begin working for a small paper in which a number of job titles are held by one person. This can be an excellent training ground to sample various jobs and find a match for your skills. Professionals advise that novices spend time deciding whether to focus on reporting/writing or on editing, which includes managing, editing and writing.

Job Titles: Reporter/Correspondent, Photojournalist, Investigative Journalist, Editorial Cartoonist, Columnist, Editor, Editorial Writer, Copyeditor/Proofreader, Corporate Advertising Manager, Circulation Sales Manager, Human Resources Manager, Marketing Representative, Promotion Manager, Web Designer, and Senior Online Producer. Also consider: Accountant, Auditor, Bookkeeper, Payroll Specialist, and Vice-President of Finance.

Magazine Publishing

Magazines can be organized into two groups. The first and larger group is made up of **consumer magazines**, many of which address a niche market related to hobbies and leisure activities (*Tennis, Vegetarian Times*), or offer a variety of news, information, and entertainment (*The New Yorker, Esquire*). The “big three” news magazines, *Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News & World Report* are influential consumer magazines that have large circulations and employ large staffs. Niche consumer magazines usually have small staffs and rely on freelance writers for much of their content. The second group is **trade or professional magazines**, which contain material of interest to certain industries or professions. For example, *Editor & Publisher* helps newspaper professionals stay abreast of events and trends affecting their business. Deadlines tend to fall farther apart in the magazine industry than at newspapers, so the pace can be a little less break-neck. Working at a news magazine is quite different from working at a newspaper. There is not all that much room in the publication for the actual stories – the magazine comes out just once a week and a lot of space is taken up by advertising; many of the articles have to be very brief. This intensifies competition among the writers, who jockey to get their stories in the magazine with their bylines in the largest font possible. The atmosphere is also different in that it's a lot more corporate than at most newspapers – the organization is very hierarchical, there's no newsroom, just cubicles and offices, and the men wear ties to work every day.

Magazines offer the opportunity for beginning journalists to both hone their skills and develop expertise in a specific content area. While new candidates will also begin at the bottom, by working hard and taking initiatives, there is room for rapid advancement. Professionals recommend that people seeking a career in the magazine industry have a broad liberal arts background, writing skills, as well as a specific major or field of interest. New career seekers should intensely research their publications of interest, understand the target audience and be able to offer creative ideas and suggestions which are vital to a magazine's success.

Job Titles: Publisher, Staff Writer, Executive Editor, Copy Editor, Managing Editor, Editorial Assistant, Senior Editor, Fact Checker, Associate or Assistant Editor & Proofreader

Broadcast Journalism

Broadcast Networks Networks, such as ABC, CBS, NBC and FOX, operate by paying local stations, called affiliates to carry both network-produced shows and programs purchased from other sources. Networks employ thousands of newscasters, but they seldom hire anyone without some type of television experience.

Cable Operations The growth of cable news and information networks such as CNN and FOX News Network has created more jobs for broadcast journalists. Providing constant news programming, these stations offer greater entry-level opportunities than do the networks. In fact, rumor has it that CNN hires more entry-level people than any other broadcast news operation in the world. On a community level, a new trend toward local, 24-hour cable news stations is opening up more opportunities for aspiring broadcast journalists. News 8 Austin is an example of cable stations committed to providing round-the-clock news coverage to their respective communities – a task that demands a sizable and dedicated staff of journalists. Your local community access channels also produce news programs, although the paid news staff tends to number as few as one or two people

Local Stations There are more than 10,000 local television and radio stations in the United States, which provide a wealth of jobs for broadcast journalists. Local stations operate in and broadcast to a set geographic area known as a market. The majority of local stations are either commercial or public broadcasting affiliates, which, besides carrying some of the network's lineup of original programming, broadcast syndicated shows and locally-produced newscasts. Those stations not affiliated with a network, called "independents," rely heavily on syndicated programming, although many do produce local news programs.

To pursue a career in the highly competitive field of broadcast journalism requires that career seekers possess an intense amount of focus, commitment and assertiveness. Professionals caution that a career in broadcasting is not as glamorous as it is often portrayed and requires people who "...aren't afraid to work, work, work." It's a 24 hour, seven day a week job, meaning you always have to be available. Similar to print journalists, broadcasters typically begin in small markets for low pay while they develop their professional skills and contacts. Future career seekers need to be knowledgeable about a range of subjects, skilled in both preparing and developing stories, as well as reporting them on the air.

Job Titles: News Desk Assistant, Weather Reporter, Continuity Writer, News Reporter, Anchor (Newscaster), Scriptwriter, News Writer, News Director, Announcer (Radio), Sportscaster, Assistant News Director & Writers for Internet

Photojournalism

Sometimes a picture can speak volumes. Photographers make an important contribution to news coverage and need skills similar to those required of other journalists, such as an instinct for the revealing detail that makes a good story. You deal with deadlines just like writers and must work efficiently, since you may have multiple assignments in different locations during the course of a shift. In addition, you need to know how to use a camera and how to develop and print photographs. As more publications upgrade their photo processing technology, a familiarity with digital cameras and imaging software is viewed as an increasingly valuable asset in a job candidate. News photography jobs are very competitive so you will need some experience at a student publication or working as a stringer to help you build a portfolio before you can get full-time work at a publication. It is very common for photographers to work as stringers or freelancers. As a photographer, your contribution will include: shooting photographs for assignments; developing and printing photographs; working with reporters, news editors, and photo editors to determine how to photograph story subjects; keeping your eyes open for spontaneous subjects.

Wire Services

Wire services, also known as news agencies or press associations, are newsgathering and reporting organizations that provide their subscribers with up-to-date, round-the-clock news stories and photographs. The two largest wire services in the United States carry general news: the Associated Press (AP) and the United Press International (UPI). Wire services are much like newspapers in their daily operations, except that the "wires" transmit stories via satellite to their members and subscribers (newspapers, magazines, broadcast news programs, and government agencies, which then print the stories). For the wire, there is no "final edition," since deadlines come night and day and many wire service bureaus operate 24-7. Newspapers often print wire service stories with little or no editing. Subscribing to a wire service enables newspapers to carry coverage of events outside their local area without sending reporters on costly trips to news scenes.

Book Publishing

For people who have highly developed writing skills, but prefer editing, and enjoy working on projects more involved than those in a newspaper or magazine setting, book publishing is often an attractive option. In this field, editors have the opportunity to read and review thousands of manuscripts in consideration for publication. Several types of publishing houses exist: trade book or mass market, children's book, paperback, textbook, small press, university and religious. Beginning a career in this industry can be somewhat difficult because professionals must possess a high level of analytical skills and be adept at understanding and critiquing specific genres of writing.

Job Titles: Editorial Chief, Line Editor, Manuscript Editor, Editorial Director/Publisher, Editorial Assistant, and Literary Agent

Technical Writing

For writers who enjoy dissecting dense information and working independently, the technical area can be a good fit. A technical writer needs to have scientific or technical knowledge, excellent writing skills and a logical mind that is capable of understanding the relationships between a whole and its parts, and can communicate this information to a particular audience. Future career seekers should have strong writing training and study in a technical field, such as computer science. Professionals often work on a freelance basis or for a specific publication or organization. Entry-level technical writers begin by assisting advanced writers and as they develop their skills, often move into an editorial role.

Job Areas: Computer Hardware and Software Product Manuals, Articles & Reports on Trends in Scientific and Technology Community, and Research Laboratory Reports