



## Desktop Publishing Is a Creative Job That Can Give You a Stable Future

By Douglas May

**If you're creative and good with computers, desktop publishing could be a great career for you. Desktop publishers work in a variety of capacities — about 35% work for newspaper, periodical, book, and directory publishers, while almost 25% work in the printing industry. Employers usually prefer to hire experienced desktop publishers, so those without experience would be wise to acquire a degree in desktop publishing or graphic design, or to get some training through a certificate program. Overall employment is expected to experience little or no change over the 2008-2018 decade, but most desktop publishers with experience and training like their jobs and usually have a solid work history.**



Computer software is used by desktop publishers to format and combine text, data, charts, photographs, and other graphic art or illustrations into prototypes of pages and other documents to be printed. After that, the publishers

print the document using a high resolution printer or send the materials, in print or electronically, to a commercial printer. Materials created by desktop publishers include books, brochures, calendars, magazines, newsletters, newspapers, packaging, and forms.

Desktop publishers perform a wide variety of creative tasks in a workday. They usually design and create graphics that accompany text, convert photographs and illustrations into digital images, and can maneuver the text and images to display information in an enticing and readable format. They design page layouts, develop presentations and advertising campaigns, and sometimes do color separation of pictures and graphics material. Desktop publishers may write some of the text or headlines used in newsletters or brochures. They also may translate electronic information onto film or other traditional media if the final product is to be sent to an offset printer. Desktop publishers are increasingly employed in-house as companies bring the production of marketing, promotional, and other kinds of materials in-house.

Computers allow desktop publishers to perform many design and layout tasks much more easily than in previous years. Some of these tasks used to require large and complex equipment, in addition to extensive human effort and time. Advances in computer software and printing technology, however, continue to enhance desktop publishing work, making desktop publishing more economical and efficient than before.

Computers enable desktop publishers to enter and select formatting properties, such as the size and style of type,

column width, and spacing. Print formats can be stored and displayed on a computer monitor. Images and text can be rearranged, column widths altered, and material enlarged or reduced. Other information, such as charts, pictures, or additional text, can also be added. Scanners capture photographs, images, or art as digital data that can be either incorporated directly into electronic page layouts or further manipulated with the use of computer software. The desktop publisher then can make adjustments in the original color print or transparency. A whole newspaper, catalog, or book page, complete with artwork and graphics, can be produced on the screen exactly as it will appear in print. Digital files are then utilized to produce printing plates. Similar to photographers and multimedia artists and animators, desktop publishers also can create special effects or other visual images using film, video, computers, or other electronic media.

Companies where desktop publishers work are usually clean, air-conditioned, and quiet, and the publishers typically work a standard 40-hour workweek. Some, however, work varied schedules that may include night shifts, weekends, or holidays, depending on the production schedule. Workers with limited training and experience may assist more experienced staff on projects while they learn the software and gain practical experience at the job. Desktop publishing software, like all digital media these days, continues to evolve and gain in technological sophistication. Desktop publishers need to stay informed of the latest developments as new and improved techniques are discovered. As they gain experience, they may advance to positions with greater responsibility, and move into supervisory or management positions. Some desktop publishers start their own companies or work as independent contractors, while others with more artistic talent and further education find job opportunities in graphic design or commercial art positions.

Despite the fact that the overall number of desktop publishing jobs is not projected to increase much over the next decade, job opportunities for desktop publishers are expected to be



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good because of the need to replace workers who move into managerial positions, move on to other occupations, or leave the labor force. Job prospects will be better for those with experience, as many employers prefer to hire experienced workers. For individuals with little or no experience, opportunities should be best for those with

computer backgrounds or certifications in desktop publishing, or for those who have completed a postsecondary program in desktop publishing, graphic design, or web design.

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