
Preparing for a career in printing and publishing:

An open letter to advisors and students

by Dr. Cynthia Carlton Gillispie and Dr. Vincent W. Childress

Where are you going? Where do you want to go? Printing and publishing majors often fail to identify what they would like to do upon graduation. A student who spends four to five years in a graphic communication program that deals extensively with the use of graphic processes and techniques should identify and prepare for a particular job field. Unless students prepare themselves by wisely selecting major courses and electives, participate in relevant activities, and search out career information, they may experience difficulty getting a job and/or may need additional training. It is similar to the old aphorism, "If you are not sure where you are going, you will most probably end up in another place." Therefore, graphic communication students must research, plan, and specialize in appropriate fields of study as they take courses within the field.

Planning for related fields

The field of graphic communication is composed of several disciplines, industries, and technical fields. Many of these fields are very specialized and support the overall graphic effort. Students can greatly enhance their career potential by identifying a field in which they wish to work and by taking appropriate courses. It is incumbent upon the faculty advisor/counselor to continuously advise students about their career goals and the courses they should take. Early in their educational program, students must answer the question, "What do I want to do when I graduate?" The answer to this question will help the advisor suggest ways students can best prepare themselves to attain their goals. A student, however, will often answer the previous question with a question, "What options are

Prepress	Production	Management
Designer Digital prepress operator Desktop publisher Web page designer Multimedia author Screen printer Estimator Photographer Scheduler Computer animator Copywriter Editor Proofreader Color specialist	Offset press operator Flexographic press operator Screen printer Gravure press operator Folder operator Foil stamp operator Collator/stitcher operator Research and development	Marketing/sales representative Production manager Production supervisors (various departments) Quality control Human resources specialist Public relations specialist Account specialist Training specialist Technical representative Supplier Teacher (from Flecker & Groff, 1998; National Scholarship Trust Fund, 1997; and Education Council of the Graphic Arts, 1997)

Table 1: Career possibilities in graphic communication

available to me?" The answer is that there are many possibilities available, provided the students have properly prepared. Some of those possibilities are listed in Table 1.

Students can pursue many fields upon receiving a bachelor's degree in graphic communication with a concentration in printing and publishing. There is enormous potential in graphic communication, because printing, media, and related companies employ a wide range of personnel (see Flecker & Groff, 1998; National Scholarship Trust Fund, 1997; Education Council of the Graphic Arts, 1997). The coursework required to prepare for a given field within graphic communication depends upon the specific field. For example, a student interested in printing management as a career should

take courses in electronic imaging, data entry and manipulation, and print production. Students interested in writing text for printed pieces can be writers, copywriters, editors, proofreaders and/or public relations specialists. Flecker and Groff (1998), the National Scholarship Trust Fund (1997), and the Education Council of the Graphic Arts (1997) identify and describe the job titles mentioned above as well as those below.

If students are planning their education paths in particular directions, then they should consider adding additional courses to their programs of study as suggested in Table 2.

Graphic design and layout

A graphic designer plans the piece to be printed and establish-

es its mood and style. An illustrator creates drawings, charts, graphs, or full color artwork to complement written words. A page-layout artist uses a computer to design artwork and the text according to the designer's layout. Salary: \$30,000–\$60,000.

Production supervisors

Supervisors generally have managerial skills along with strong mathematical and mechanical aptitudes. Salary: \$30,000–\$65,000.

Sales representatives

Sales representatives are usually self-starters with excellent communication skills. They have the ability to understand and work well with people. Sales representatives have a working

knowledge of the entire publishing process and know how to sell all of the company's services to customers. Salary: \$30,000–\$100,000 and up.

Estimator

Estimators have knowledge of printing production and design. Estimating is a liaison position—one of the links between sales and manufacturing. The estimator provides the information that will help the salesperson bid competitively on a project. Salary: \$25,000–\$45,000.

Production manager/coordinator

Production managers or coordinators are responsible for normal operation of the design and

printing process. They are decision makers and implement company policy and plans for production and expansion. Production managers ultimately supervise most production personnel. Salary: \$40,000–\$60,000.

Marketing specialist

Marketing specialists work in public relations, advertising, or marketing. They are responsible for promoting the work of a company through the use of advertising campaigns, brochures, print, television, radio, and public appearances. Salary: \$35,000–\$60,000.

Computer animator

Computer animators work in

filmmaking, video game development, accident reconstruction, and multimedia. Other fields might include advertising, publishing, and business. After a general education in graphic communication, advanced training in a specialty school that offers animation courses is highly recommended. The period of training may be six months to a year. Training might also involve an internship with a related company. Salary: \$40,000–\$60,000.

Color specialist

Color specialists understand color theory as it relates to the printing process. A color specialist makes critical color judgments and fine distinctions among hues that enable impres-

Color specialist	Computer animator	Marketing specialist	Photographer	Educator
Computer technology	Design	Marketing	Digital imaging	Teaching methods
Color theory	Fine art	Management	Color theory	Curriculum development
Color management	Computer graphics	Accounting	Videography	Foundations of education
Graphic design	Videography	Advertising	Art and design	Laboratory management
Art	Commercial art	Public Relations	Computer solids modeling	Student teaching
Additional training or internship	Additional training or internship	Additional training or internship	Additional training or internship	Additional training or internship
Master's degree in graphic communication	Specialty school for animation	Internship with industries	Master's degree in graphics	State licensure requirement

Table 2: Courses that support given fields within graphic communication

sions to look like they were intended. Salary: \$40,000–\$60,000.

Careers in governmental agencies

Local, state, and federal agencies offer various career opportunities that require the creation and storage of graphic information. Some examples include in-house government printing and media services. Courses should be selected in consultation with the advisor. Salary \$30,000–\$50,000.

Educator

Educators are needed for graphic communication programs. Opportunities are available in the public school system, community colleges, and universities as well as training and development departments in firms. In order to teach at the high school level, interested students should enroll in a teacher education program and obtain a teaching license. Salary: \$21, 000–\$50,000.

Resources

There are many national resources that are available to assist in identifying career opportunities. See Table 3 at the end of this article.

Caution

The career fields shown in

Table 2 do not comprise an exhaustive list of fields in which printing and publishing graduates can work. However, the list does give students ideas from which to select a specific field of interest. Further, it emphasizes the importance of specifically preparing oneself for a particular graphic-related field. A degree in general printing and publishing provides good preparation for numerous areas of work. However, a general degree is not appropriate for some specific career paths. Students should not be misled, or allowed to mislead themselves, concerning what opportunities await them after graduation. Faculty advisors must clearly advise their students about the available career options. For example, a particular career path might require a student to opt for a double major. The student and advisor should carefully consider whether or not the second major will assist in meeting the student's career goals, and whether the student will have the time and resources necessary to complete the additional tasks.

A general education may be appropriate in some cases

There are exceptions to pursuing a specialized degree. It is not uncommon for individuals to have completed an associate degree program in graphic communication (printing and publishing) and enter the workforce. After a number of years, they

realize that additional education or training is necessary in order to advance. The bachelor degree could be an appropriate means for them to acquire the needed qualifications for career advancement. Another example might be that the student takes a part time job and later is offered a permanent position that is contingent upon the completion of a degree program. The permanent position may not deal directly with his or her chosen field of study. Examples of such permanent positions might include installing computer equipment, engineering support, or industrial sales.

Conclusion

Changes are inevitable in technological fields. Because of technological changes, employees will be given tasks for which they are not trained. Therefore, students should be prepared and understand that change necessitates that they always strive to increase and improve their knowledge.

Students should also understand that the best way to avoid uncertainty at graduation is to explore and/or specialize in an area of concentration soon after entering the university. Table 3 provides resources for career opportunities in printing and publishing.

American Forest & Paper Association
 American Institute of Graphic Arts
 Association for Graphic Arts Training
 Binding Industries of American Book Manufacturer
 Institute
 Digital Distribution of Advertising for Publication
 Digital Printing & Imaging Association
 Education Council of the Graphic Arts Industry
 Flexographic Technical Association
 Foil Stamping & Embossing Association
 Graphic Artists Guild National
 Graphic Arts Education & Research Foundation
 Graphic Arts Professionals
 Graphic Arts Sales Foundation
 Graphic Arts Show Company
 Graphic Arts Technical Foundation
 Gravure Association of America
 International Publishing Management Association
 IBFI International Association for Document &
 Information Management Solutions
 International Association of Printing House Craftsmen
 International Digital Imaging Association
 International Graphic Arts Education Association, Inc.
 International Prepress Association

National Association of Desktop Publishers
 National Association of Litho Clubs
 National Association of Printers & Lithographers
 National Association of Printing Ink Manufacturers
 National Association of Quick Printers
 National Council for Skill Standards in Graphic
 Communications
 National Scholarship Trust Fund
 National Computer Graphics Association
 Newspaper Association of America
 North American Graphic Arts Supplier Association
 NPES The Association for Suppliers of Printing &
 Publishing Technologies
 Optical Publishing Association
 Printing Industries of America
 Research & Engineering Council of the Graphic Arts
 Industry
 Screenprinting & Graphic Imaging Association International
 Society for Service Professionals in Printing
 Tag & Label Manufacturers Institute Inc.
 Technical Association of the Pulp & Paper Industry
 Technical Association of the Graphic Arts
 Waterless Printing Association
 Xplor International: The Electronics Document Systems
 Association

(from Education Council of the Graphic Arts Industry, Inc,
 1997; Flecker, S. A., & Groff, P. J., 1998)

Table 3: National resources for careers in graphic communication

References

Education Council of the Graphic Arts Industry, Inc (1997). *Discover print in the world of graphic communications* [compact disc]. Reston, VA: author

Flecker, S. A., & Groff, P. J. (1998). *Careers in graphic communication*. Sewickley, PA: Graphic Arts Technical Foundation Press.

National Scholarship Trust Fund. (1997). *Careers in graphic communications: A counselor's guide*. Sewickley, PA: Graphic Arts Technical Foundation Press.

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