Knowing what a journalist does and what opportunities are available to graduates in this field is necessary to anyone interested in a journalism career. This reprint discusses five major categories of journalism careers: writing and editing the news for print and electronic media, commercial and professional writing, advertising, public relations, and broadcast journalism. Other areas described include photojournalism, teaching, and freelance writing. General information is provided about educational requirements, job hunting, advancement, pay, hours, working conditions, and opportunities for women and minorities. A checklist of personal characteristics that have been attributed to good journalists and a list of pamphlets and booklets about journalism and related jobs complete the discussion. (K5)
Journalism: The Whole Story

A reprint from the Winter 1976 Occupational Outlook Quarterly,
The U.S. Department of Labor's Career Guidance Magazine
"If your journalism classroom is crowded, get used to it. For one thing, the journalism classroom is likely to be crowded for the next few years. For another, the marketplace for journalism graduates may be just as crowded." So reads the first paragraph of a warning statement issued in October 1975 by the Association for Education in Journalism to beginning journalism students across the nation. It's no secret that the market for journalism graduates is crowded, but that should not discourage the skilled and dedicated student from pursuing a career in this field.

A wide choice of journalism careers awaits college graduates with good writing ability, intense perseverance, and some general writing experience. Career possibilities range from general news reporting to photojournalism. Within this range are occupations in daily and weekly newspapers, public relations, advertising, broadcasting, magazines, and technical or business writing.

But, whatever specialties they choose, aspiring journalists must build a solid academic foundation in the liberal arts and gain a wide knowledge of what is happening around them. By acquiring basic journalistic skills, well-roundedness, and some early experience in writing, journalism students will have prepared themselves well for their career.

Questions To Ask. What do I want to accomplish as a journalist? Am I serious about journalism as a career, or is it just something in which I have a general interest? Am I willing to buckle the competition and work consistently toward obtaining experience and, eventually, that first job out of college? If you are a journalism student, you should have already asked yourself these questions; if you are undecided, consider them carefully. If your answer to the first question—Why journalism?—is "... because I enjoy writing and have an innate curiosity about everything," then journalism may be your field. If your answer is "... because I want a comfortable, good paying job from the start," you had better think again.

Journalism occupations are usually demanding, with long hours, high pressure, and few prospects for getting rich. On the other hand, for the dedicated journalist, the rewards far outweigh the costs. What rewards? A feeling of usefulness, service to the public, or simply the sight of the product of your efforts in print under your own byline—these are just a few.

If you're unsure about journalism as a career, there is one good way to find out if it's right for you—try it. Community organizations and editors of local newsletters are always looking for help. But you should decide early on a journalism major, at least by your junior year of college, as journalism is something not to fall back on, it is a full-time major that requires time outside the classroom and many hours of persistent job hunting before and after graduation.

Summer is a good time to gain important on-the-job experience. For undecided students, there is volunteer work in the community print media; for journalism majors, there are a number of internship programs offered by associations and by colleges and universities.

The Beats. Knowing what a journalist does and what opportunities are available to graduates in this field is necessary to anyone interested in a career in journalism. Five major categories of journalism careers are writing and editing the news for the print and electronic media, commercial or trade and professional writing, advertising, public relations, and broadcast journalism. Other areas include photojournalism, teaching, and freelance writing.

Newspaper Reporting and Editing. A newspaper reporter collects the news by interview, through research, or from wire services and either writes articles upon return to the office or phones in the information to a rewrite. The reporter can work a "beat," such as city hall or municipal court, or be on general assignment, reporting different stories daily. Often faced with a deadline, the reporter has...
little time to rewrite an article. More time and research, however, are required for features, articles about special topics that are not current events.

Resources available to a reporter include professional authorities, witnesses, libraries, and the "morgue," or inhouse library of old articles at the newspaper office. Some newspapers have instant news-reprint systems to aid reporters doing research on stories.

News copy editors read copy—the typewritten text of a newsstory—correcting spelling and grammar. They check details, such as names, dates, and places, and often compose headlines. Depending on the size of the newspaper and its staff, copy editing may include working on page layout, photoediting, or judging how newsworthy a story is. In general, copy editors work with manuscripts to provide "clean" and coherent copy for print.

The managing editor of a newspaper directs and supervises day-to-day newsroom operations. The city editor determines the coverage of local news. The wire editor sits and evaluates foreign and national news from wire services such as the Associated Press (AP). These job titles and functions do, however, differ from paper to paper.

Magazine Writing and Editing

Writing for a commercial magazine is mainly feature writing. Magazine articles, therefore, require more indepth researching and interviewing. Although reporting for news magazines is similar to newspaper reporting, the magazine writer faces a later deadline and has more time for rewrite and followup.

Managing editors of magazines are responsible for pictorial and reading content. They assign work to staff writers, arrange layout, and perform general administrative duties. Editorial assistants type copy, answer letters, interview callers, research stories, and read manuscripts submitted by freelance writers. Magazine copy editors check finished copy for accuracy, grammar, spelling, punctuation, organization, and readability.

Writing for a business publication or technical journal requires a basic understanding of the subject. These publications provide business and professional people with news and information about their specialized fields. Some business magazines, such as Fortune, have a large circulation and cover many subjects; others, such as Iron Age, concern a single industry. Many of them lack the shiny covers and showy format of the commercial magazines.

Technical writing can include collecting and updating information on subjects such as products, services, technological advances, marketing techniques, and government regulations. Beyond writing and editing, occupations in the business press include circulation work, specific field coverage, and specialization in printing publications.

Public Relations Public relations (PR) work incorporates all forms of communication—broadcast and print media and face-to-face discourse. PR encompasses public information, investor relations, and consumer services. Within all these areas, the public relations worker does any or all of the following jobs:

- Programming: analyzing problems, defining goals, organizing activities
- Building relationships: gathering information from colleagues, staff, and outside sources.
- Writing and editing: drafting reports, news releases, speeches, newsletters, or technical material.
- Setting up channels of communication: developing relationships with the media and organizing information flow.
- Working with production: doing layout work, design, and photography.
- Planning exhibits and conventions.
- Speaking with customers or to groups and colleagues.
- Researching and evaluating: gathering facts, surveying techniques to evaluate the effectiveness of PR.
Junior employees answer telephone calls, work on mailing lists, help with research, write brochures, and scan newspapers for relevant information.

Most PR specialists work for business corporations, but other employers include professional associations, labor unions, schools, government agencies, and PR firms.

Broadcast Journalism.

According to a former director of television news, "Broadcast journalism is demanding, exhausting, and competitively never-ending." But it can also be quite exciting. Broadcast journalists are in the middle of the action. Their work includes newswriting, reporting, editing, and production. Because the broadcasting media are audible as well as visual, a writer must be able to write copy that will sound well when delivered in broadcast. In broadcast journalism, reporting refers to the spoken presentation of the written news.

There are two kinds of broadcast news—network and local. Network news covers only the national scene and is closely timed and synchronized. Local news covers local stories and is less structured than network news. Because of its informality, local news broadcasting allows freedom in programming. It is part of the community, local reporters have more local influence, and they gain more community recognition than do network reporters. On the other hand, network news reporting usually pays better and is more prestigious.

Beginning positions in broadcast journalism include desk assistant, newsroom secretary, and production assistant. From these positions one can advance to researcher, unit manager, or assistant producer.

Although the number of straight newswriters is diminishing and the number of newswriter-reporters is increasing, there are still many off-the-air writers. Writers gather, report, or rewrite news. They also call in stories or write documentaries. The biggest demand for newswriters exists at the stations that produce hourly news reports. Continuity writers draft commercials, public service messages, and promotional announcements, and, at times, program material. They must have a creative imagination and be able to write persuasive copy and produce material quickly—often under the pressure of a deadline.

The news specialist writes about and reports on one area of the news. For example, a sportscaster may write copy, interview guests on the air, or ad lib to fill unused time in a broadcast, but the subject—sports—remains the same. Another type of specialist, the correspondent, covers a geographic area, often reporting on the scene for broadcasting later. Some specialists operate on a freelance basis, working under contract on one or a group of presentations.

Former reporters occupy many of the supervisory or production positions in a news department. Some serve as news editors, the people who edit copy and draft editorials to be delivered on the air. Others work as assignment editors, deciding who should cover which stories. News directors guide overall policy, supervise reporters, and often act as reporters themselves.

The copywriter must understand consumer needs and be able to evoke public response by writing meaningful copy—the text of an ad—directed to consumers and their needs. Copywriters are part sales agent, part interpreter, and part artist, but mainly they are persuasive writers who understand the product and the public.

Photos and Freelancers.

The press photographer or photojournalist combines photographic ability with a journalistic eye. Some have said a photojournalist of the future should be a writer or journalist who can also take good pictures. A news photograph not only documents a story but also presents a story in itself by capturing what could not otherwise be expressed. Because photojournalists deal with the unexpected, as do reporters, they must be prepared to work at any hour of the day or night.

The freelance writer submits manuscript for sale to publication editors. Experience on a newspaper or publication staff prepares the writer for freelance work. Because of the independent nature of their work, freelance writers must be well disciplined and able to work without supervision or direct guidance. The directories listed at the end of this article provide several sources for names and addresses of publications that might serve as markets.
Courses in economics, psychology, business administration, and art are helpful to journalists going into public relations or advertising. Courses in science or economics are helpful for someone going into technical or business writing. Photogjournalism requires the mechanical and visual proficiency of basic photography.

According to the Newspaper Fund—a nonprofit foundation that encourages young people to consider careers in newspaper journalism—graduate study is not necessary for the beginning journalist. However, many experienced professional journalists return to school for more intensive study.

Experience. Regardless of what career a student pursues, executives expect good writing ability and at least some writing experience from a new employee. You can acquire experience in many ways:

- High school students can gain early experience by working on the school paper or by being a “stringer,” reporting on high school news for the local newspaper. For the college student, the best sources for summer or part-time work are at the college paper and the small town or community papers. On-the-job experience not only offers students writing experience but familiarizes them with all aspects of the newsroom, including journalistic jargon.
- A good way to obtain early experience in writing is to receive an internship with a newspaper, wire service, or magazine. The Newspaper Fund offers internships for college students and a program which establishes workshops to encourage high school students of a minority group to consider journalism careers. The Fund also publishes a booklet listing the journalism scholarships available from schools and associations.

That First Job. The clue to a successful job hunt is an early start and an active search. This means sending out résumés early in your senior year of college. Directories of newspapers, magazines, and other media provide the necessary addresses for contacting these publications. Once again, the small town paper is a good place to start.

Large dailies, such as the Washington Post or the Chicago Tribune, require a minimum of 3 years’ experience on a daily paper, evidence of good writing ability, well-roundedness, a broad education, and a commitment to the written press. As for starting out in the mailroom, a personnel worker at the Post says that is “next to impossible.” Carl Bernstein, the White House reporter, is an exception to the rule. A college dropout and a copyboy who convinced an editor he could write, Bernstein worked hard and was very lucky. He does, however, possess qualities that a prospective journalist should have—drive and curiosity.

The ability and the willingness to move to another city is very important. Often students want to find work in their college town or in a desirable city such as San Francisco. According to Jane Adams, a journalism placement counselor at the University of California at Berkeley, “Many students have to leave the Bay Area and then come back.” She says that geographic mobility is essential for a journalism graduate looking for that first job.

The Job Market. A survey of 1975 journalism graduates has been conducted by the Newspaper Fund. Results of that survey seem to contradict the popular belief that journalism is an unmarketable major. Over 80 percent of the students polled found media-related jobs within 6 months of graduation. Over 50 percent found jobs within only 2 months. Of all the jobs accepted, 23 percent were on daily or weekly papers: public relations and broadcast journalism accounted for another 20 percent; graduate or law school, advertising, and other media took up the rest.

Historically, although the unemployment rate for recent college graduates has been lower than that of the average for those aged 16 to 25, it has been consistently above the national average. If the study is indeed representative of the national population of journalism students, the unemployment rate for journalism graduates in 1975 was only 7.7 percent—below the national average of 8.5 percent.

When asked about satisfaction with work, most of the students replied that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with their first jobs. The main function performed by the graduates was information gathering; other functions, in order of frequency, were writing and reporting, editing, sales and marketing, copy display, photography, and management.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects an annual average of 2,200 job openings a year for newspaper reporters between 1974 and 1985. For technical writers, the estimated number of openings is 1,150. The Newspaper Fund projected there would be 2,500 job openings for journalism graduates in 1975. The employment outlook is favorable due to limited openings and high competition.

The positions are there, but they are filled quickly, often before an ad is placed. The job market is also tight for those who restrict themselves to one occupation or geographic area and for those who are unwilling to accept less than what they had hoped for. Obviously, not all graduates surveyed were looking for jobs on the daily papers, but most were looking for...
writing jobs. Although the survey recorded that students generally found media-related jobs, results show that students were taking their third or fourth choices—not finding the jobs they had dreamed about.

A "foot-in-the-door" is the key to a journalism career. That first job may not be the best, but it is a start and perhaps the first step of a long climb. Most positions are filled within the staff, and, once you are in, you've got a chance. Be willing to work at the copy desk—that may be the only job available, and it could well be the fastest way to the top.

Moving Up. Although some fields, such as broadcasting, are characterized by strong competition, the majority of journalism students in the Fund survey said that opportunities for advancement were at least fair. Because advanced positions are usually filled within the field, the key is getting into broadcasting and working your way up. Large papers tend to have more opportunities for promotion to the middle management levels.

What are the higher level positions? Executive positions are available in all journalism areas. In broadcasting, there are producers, program directors, and assignment editors. Newspapers and magazines have managing editors, editorial directors, and special section editors. Advance positions for reporters who want to avoid managing include feature writer, columnist, and special correspondent. Many journalists prefer to move into freelance writing, others decide to work on that long-planned novel. Photojournalists can become photoeditors. Some journalists who have been in the field for a time teach journalism courses or become visiting lecturers at universities. Teaching is one area that has a very high level of demand. With the increased enrollment in journalism schools, the demand for teachers has also increased. Quintus Wilson, executive secretary for the Association for Education in Journalism, says that the association receives four times as many requests from schools seeking teachers as from people looking for teaching positions.

What About Pay? Starting salaries for most journalism occupations range between $130 and $160 a week. Over 18 percent of the students who responded in the Fund survey received beginning salaries over $200 a week, yet only 10 percent were very satisfied with their earnings. This response is surprising since the average beginning pay for recent liberal arts graduates in 1975 was $170 a week.

The Newspaper Guild is the union which represents writers and editors of magazines and newspapers, news photographers, and advertising salespeople. The Guild negotiates for starting salaries and for salaries by years of experience up to a certain number of years. The highest salary set by a union contract is called the "top minimum." Employers can pay more at any level of experience, but they are not required to increase pay beyond the top minimum. Weekly starting minimums as of April 1, 1976, ranged between $123 and $432 for reporters and photojournalists under union contracts.

Top minimums for the same group ranged between $185 and $475 a week. Copy and rewrite workers receive an extra increment over the minimum set and can sometimes earn over $200 more with experience. The average top minimum for magazine editors is about $450 a week, while writer-reporters receive from $50 to $100 less. Advertising copywriters receive between $290 and $490 a week. Broadcast journalists received an average of $200 a week in 1975.

Salaries also vary with the size and circulation of the publication. The upper end of the pay scale is unlimited, for example, a few executive editors of wide-selling magazines earn as much as $80,000 a year.

Pay depends on qualifications and experience. Nonunion publications pay solely on this basis, while union shops use these criteria to determine levels above those which are set by union contracts. In all fields, executives and more experienced workers receive higher salaries.

Earnings of freelance writers are not standardized, they vary with the quality of the work, its length, and the type of publication that purchases it. Unlike staff reporters and broadcast journalists, freelancers have no representative body to bargain for minimum levels or standard pay rates. Feature articles for newspapers have brought in from $25 to $200, but there is no pay limit. One freelancer reports receiving about $400 from the Washington Post for an article which required about a month's work.

Newspapers also pay by article length, usually about $6 per column of print. The slick or general interest magazines, such as Esquire or Playboy, pay in the hundreds or even thousands of dollars for an article, while more refined, literary magazines, such as the New Yorker and the New York Times Magazine, pay less because of their added prestige. More affluent publications, like the Reader's Digest, may pay even more.

Freelance editors and ghostwriters earn flat rates, but ghostwriters can also receive royalties on book sales. Editors are sometimes paid by the quantity of copy they edit, receiving around $12 50 a column for their freelance editing services.

Hours and Working Conditions. On the average, most journalists work about 40 hours a week, but for many the workday is not the usual 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. For reporters, the day may extend into the late evening hours if a particular story requires more work or
research. Reporters are often on call to cover stories at any hour. Also, because of deadlines for morning or afternoon papers, many writers will work in the early morning hours. The nonreporting jobs, such as those in public relations and advertising, are characterized by more regular hours.

Broadcast journalism, photojournalism, and reporting are high-pressure occupations. Deadlines must be met. Photojournalists are on call at all hours of the day or night to catch an event on film as it occurs. Freelance writers set their own hours but put in about as much time as full-time, salaried writers, albeit on different schedules. Therefore, although freelance writing requires discipline and responsibility, it is also more flexible than more structured jobs.

Many journalists change jobs frequently early in their career, working up to more responsible positions some change from one medium to another. However, most large dailies require a real commitment to the written press before hiring a full-time reporter.

Some journalism jobs include long-distance travel and time spent away from the office. Work places are often noisy and lacking in privacy. The more business-oriented jobs such as advertising and public relations are conducted in more businesslike surroundings.

All journalism occupations involve a great deal of contact with people, both in and outside the office, for communication is what journalism is all about.

Opportunities for Women and Minorities. Employment of women and minorities today is increasing in some fields of journalism more than in others. The general trend is toward open and equal hiring practices in all areas. Some fields, such as public relations and advertising, have historically been more open to hiring women to fill executive as well as nonadministrative positions. On the other hand, men predominate in editorial positions on the larger dailies. However, more women are now entering that level too. They are even entering the business press, long a male enclave, at an increasing rate.

Helena Czarniejezki of the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi, says that opportunities for women have improved, but women still have a more difficult time finding a job than do men. Mary Utting of Women in Communications, Inc., says women are more visible in the media now, but the situation is "still not too good on the management level." She says, "There is still prejudice—attitude rather than fact—and that will take time to change." Minorities are also increasing their representation. The Newspaper Fund sponsors programs to encourage students of minority groups to enter journalistic professions. As of May 1976, the Fund approved over $60,000 in grants to 14 Urban Journalism Workshops and 12 High School Visitation Programs for 1976. Newspapers and journalistic organizations contribute to the funding for these programs.

The Urban Workshops bring high school students from minority groups onto college campuses during the summer to study journalistic techniques and to obtain information about careers in journalism. In the High School Visitation Program, reporters from a minority group visit the schools to introduce students to newspaper work. A $2,000 scholarship is offered annually to the participant who writes the best feature article. In its annual scholarship guide, the Fund lists a number of other scholarships and programs offered specifically to students from minority groups and all other journalism scholarships offered by colleges and organizations across the country.

But Is Journalism for You? A quick and easy way to find out whether you are journalist material is to look down the following list of personal characteristics and abilities which have been attributed to good journalists by educators, editors, and journalistic associations:

- writing ability
- personal drive, aggressiveness, assertiveness
- initiative and perception
- ability to think analytically under pressure
- imagination
- willingness to work
- willingness to seize opportunity
For More Information. The following booklets and pamphlets will tell you more about journalism and related jobs. They are free unless otherwise noted.

"Jobs and Opportunities for Writers"  
(Including a large, self-addressed, stamp, envelope.)  
Writer's Digest 9933 Alliance Road Cincinnati, Ohio 45242

"Education for a Journalism Career"  
(a list of accredited programs)  
Milton Gross, Sec'y-Treas., ACEJ  
School of Journalism  
University of Missouri  
Columbia, Mo. 65201

"Look Into Journalism"  
(directed to high school students)  
"A Newspaper Career and You"  
"1976 Journalism Scholarship Guide  
"A Directory of College Journalism Programs"  
The Newspaper Fund, Inc.  
P.O. Box 300  
Princeton, N.J. 08540

"Facts About Newspapers 1976"  
"Your Future in Daily Newspapers"  
American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation  
P.O. Box 17407  
Dulles International Airport  
Washington, D.C. 20041

"Advertising A Guide to Careers in Advertising" (55 cents)  
"What Advertising Agencies Are — What They Do — And How They Do It" (40 cents)  
Offered Material Dept  
A A A A  
200 Park Ave  
New York, N.Y. 10017

"Careers in Broadcast News"  
Radio and Television News Directors Association  
1735 DeSales St. NW.  
Washington, D.C. 20036

"Come up to a Rewading Career in Journalism"  
National Newspaper Association  
491 National Press Building  
14th St. NW.  
Washington, D.C. 20045

"Career in Public Relations" (plus additional information)  
Public Relations Society of America, Inc  
PRSA Career Guidance  
845 Third Ave  
New York, N.Y. 10022

These organizations can also send you information.

Quill and Scroll Society  
National Association for High School Journalists  
School of Journalism  
University of Iowa  
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

Society of Professional Journalists  
Sigma Delta Chi  
35 East Wacker Dr.  
Chicago, Ill. 60601

Women in Communications, Inc  
8305-A Shoal Creek Blvd  
Austin, Tex. 78758

Jobs are what the Occupational Outlook Quarterly is all about. It is a how to do it magazine covering new and emerging occupations, training and educational opportunities, salary trends, job prospects through the mid-1980's... exactly what young people need to know to plan careers with a future.

The Quarterly is must reading for students, guidance counselors, and others who want to keep abreast of occupational developments.

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