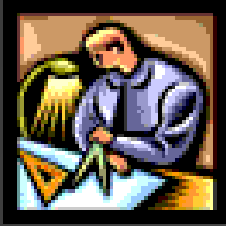




CAREER IN TECHNICAL WRITING

Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor



TECHNICAL WRITER / TECHNICAL COMMUNICATOR

- ▶ Produce instruction manuals and other supporting documents to communicate complex and technical information more easily.
- ▶ They also develop, gather, and disseminate technical information among customers, designers, and manufacturers.

QUICK FACTS: TECHNICAL WRITERS

Quick Facts: Technical Writers	
2010 Median Pay	\$63,280 per year \$30.42 per hour
Entry-Level Education	Bachelor's degree
Work Experience in a Related Occupation	1 to 5 years
On-the-job Training	Short-term on-the-job training
Number of Jobs, 2010	49,500
Job Outlook, 2010-20	17% (About as fast as average)
Employment Change, 2010-20	8,500

DUTIES



- ▶ Determine the needs of end users of technical documentation
- ▶ Study product samples and talk with product designers and developers
- ▶ Work with technical staff to make products easier to use, and thus need fewer instructions
- ▶ Organize and write supporting documents for products
- ▶ Select photographs, drawings, diagrams, and charts that increase users' understanding
- ▶ Get usability feedback from customers, designers, and manufacturers
- ▶ Revise documents as new issues arise

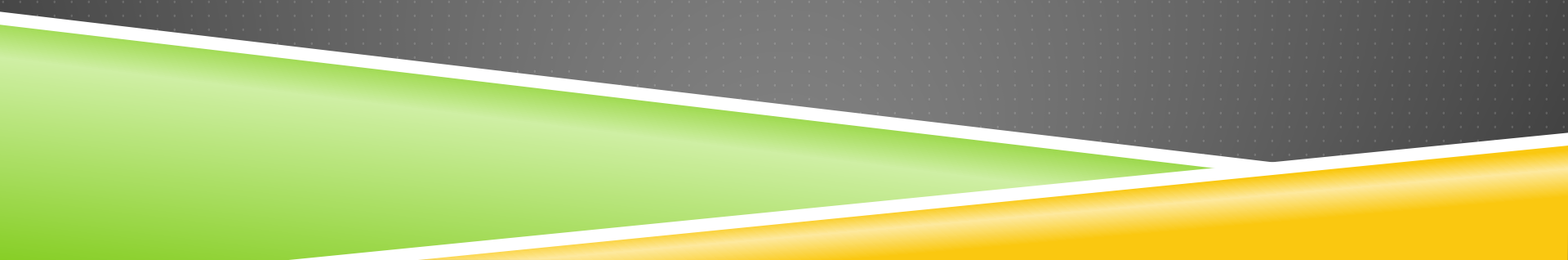
TECHNICAL WRITERS CREATE

- ▶ operating instructions,
- ▶ how-to manuals,
- ▶ assembly instructions,
- ▶ “frequently asked questions” pages.

After a product is released, technical writers also may work with product liability specialists and customer service managers to improve the end-user experience through product design changes.

► Technical writers often work with engineers, scientists, computer specialists, and software developers to manage the flow of information among project workgroups during development and testing.

Therefore, technical writers must be able to understand complex information and communicate the information to people with diverse professional backgrounds.

- ▶ Applying their knowledge of the user of the product, technical writers may serve as part of a team conducting usability studies to help improve the design of a product that is in the prototype stage.
 - ▶ Technical writers may conduct research on their topics through personal observation, library and Internet research, and discussions with technical specialists.
 - ▶ Increasingly, technical information is being delivered online, and technical writers are using the interactive technologies of the Web to blend text, graphics, multidimensional images, sound, and video.
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QUICK FACTS

- ▶ Technical writers held about 49,500 jobs in 2010. The following industries employed the most technical writers in 2010:

Computer systems design and related services	17%
Architectural, engineering, and related services	7
Management, scientific, and technical consulting services	7
Software publishers	5
Scientific research and development services	4

HOW TO BECOME A TECHNICAL WRITER

- ▶ A college degree is usually required for a position as a technical writer. In addition, experience with a technical subject, such as computer science, Web design, or engineering, is important.

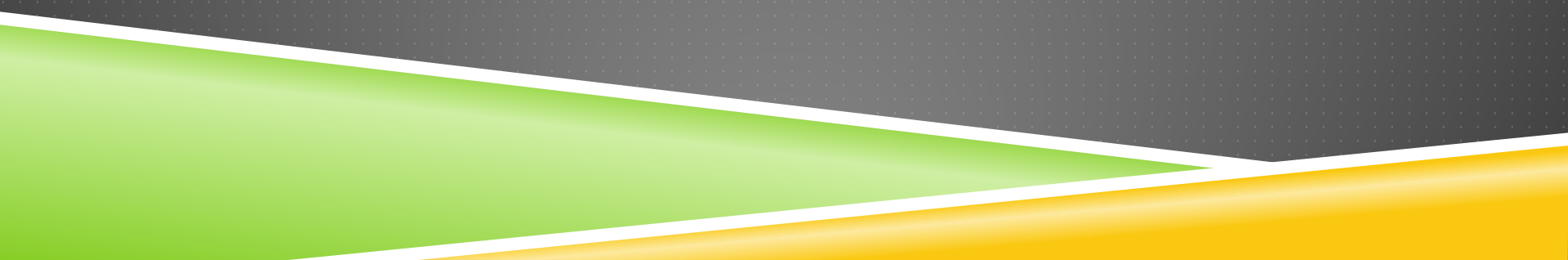




EDUCATION

- ▶ Employers generally prefer candidates with a bachelor's degree in journalism, English, or communications.
- ▶ Many technical writing jobs require both a degree and knowledge in a specialized field, such as engineering, computer science, or medicine.
- ▶ Web design experience also is helpful because of the growing use of online technical documentation.

WORK EXPERIENCE

- ▶ Some technical writers begin their careers not as writers, but as specialists or research assistants in a technical field.
 - ▶ By developing technical communication skills, they eventually assume primary responsibilities for technical writing. In small firms, beginning technical writers may work on projects right away; in larger companies with more standard procedures, beginners may observe experienced technical writers and interact with specialists before being assigned projects.
 - ▶ Prospects for advancement generally include working on more complex projects, leading or training junior staff, and getting enough work to succeed as a freelancer.
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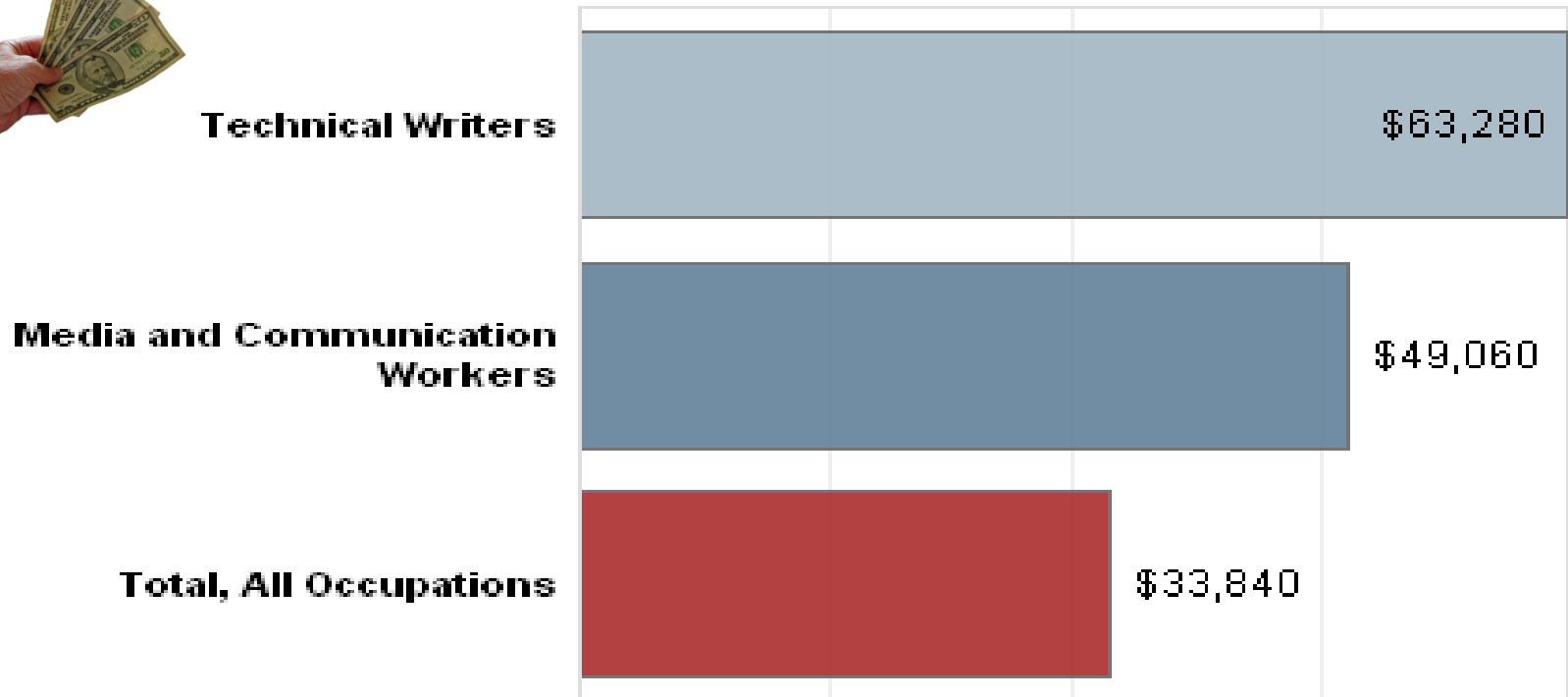
IMPORTANT QUALITIES

- ▶ **Communication skills.** Technical writers must be able to take complex, technical information and translate it for colleagues and consumers who have nontechnical backgrounds.
- ▶ **Detail oriented.** Technical writers create detailed instructions for others to follow. As a result, they must be detailed and precise at every step for the instructions to be useful.
- ▶ **Imagination.** Technical writers must be able to think about a procedure or product in the way that a person without technical experience would think about it.
- ▶ **Teamwork.** Technical writers must be able to work well with others. They are almost always part of a team: with other writers; with designers, editors, and illustrators; and with the technical people whose information they are explaining.
- ▶ **Technical skills.** Technical writers must be able to understand and then explain highly technical information. Many technical writers need a background in engineering or computer science in order to do this.
- ▶ **Writing skills.** Technical communicators must have excellent writing skills to be able to explain technical information clearly.

PAY

Technical Writers

Median annual wages, May 2010

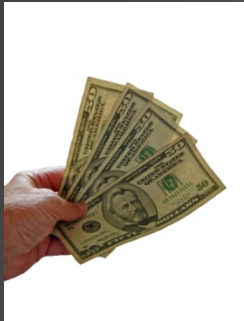


Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics

- ▶ The median annual wage of technical writers was \$63,280 in May 2010. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$37,160, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$100,910.

MEDIAN ANNUAL WAGES IN THE INDUSTRIES EMPLOYING THE LARGEST NUMBERS OF TECHNICAL WRITERS IN MAY 2010 WERE:



Software publishers	\$76,410
Computer systems design and related services	66,860
Scientific research and development services	64,890
Architectural, engineering, and related services	62,350
Management, scientific, and technical consulting services	62,290



JOB OUTLOOK

Technical Writers

Percent change in employment, projected 2010-20



Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

WORK CITED

Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2012-13 Edition, Technical Writers, on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/technical-writers.htm> (visited November 05, 2012).

TECHNICAL WRITING AT

Gulfstream®



TECH WRITING JOB DESCRIPTION AT GULFSTREAM

- ▶ Technical Writer I is responsible either individually or with other team members for the writing of major portions of publication revisions, it's contents, and business processes.
- ▶ Support the complete workflow process to ensure successful completion of each revision cycle and distribution to technical publications. This includes support for various quality processes to ensure accuracy, ease of use, and time delivery of each revision cycle in the Technical Publication environment.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

- ▶ Participates in the review, analysis, and modification of technical documents required to gain a thorough understand of how complex systems operate and are required to be integrated into technical manuals
- ▶ Participates with team to ensure all internal department workflows and business processes are followed for issues relating to producing and delivering technical manuals and Computerized Maintenance Program (CMP)
- ▶ Participates in discussion with internal/external customers in the development of specifics project requirements for the development of sources data to enable a seamless incorporation of new data into the publication environment
- ▶ Participates with team member in providing liaison with technical Operation, Completion Center, Production and/or Completion Engineering, and Service Center personnel to derive information and ensure its approval for incorporation into technical manuals.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

- ▶ Ability to read and interpret blueprint and Engineering Orders.
- ▶ Must have a basic knowledge of aircraft tools, test equipment, vendor coding, parts nomenclature, maintenance procedures, and or aircraft equipment and maintenance (obtained through experience, research, or training).
- ▶ Associates degree or relevant experience in English, Engineering, or other relevant subject.
- ▶ Preferred knowledge of FAA regulatory/ documentation requirements and FAA writing ability.



TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Technical communication is a broad field and includes any form of communication that exhibits one or more of the following characteristics:

- **Communicating *about technical or specialized topics*, such as computer applications, medical procedures, or environmental regulations.**
- **Communicating *by using technology*, such as web pages, help files, or social media sites.**
- **Providing *instructions about how to do something*, regardless of how technical the task is or even if technology is used to create or distribute that communication.**

They make information more useable and accessible to those who need that information, and in doing so, they advance the goals of the companies or organizations that employ them.



THE FOLLOWING IS A PARTIAL LIST OF THE DIFFERENT JOBS
WITHIN TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION:

- ▶ **Technical Writers & Editors**
- ▶ **Indexers**
- ▶ **Information Architects**
- ▶ **Instructional Designers**
- ▶ **Technical Illustrators**
- ▶ **Globalization & Localization Specialists**
- ▶ **Usability & Human Factors Professionals**
- ▶ **Visual Designers**
- ▶ **Web Designers & Developers**
- ▶ **Teachers & Researchers of Technical Communication**
- ▶ **Trainers and E-Learning Developers**

WORK CITED

Defining Technical Communication, Society for Technical Communication,

<http://www.stc.org/about-stc/the-profession-all-about-technical-communication/defining-tc>, 2012

(visited November 05, 2012).