

Careers in PTW

What can YOU do with a Professional and Technical Writing emphasis? Quite a bit! PTW is a versatile field allowing a student to move in several directions, including technical writing, usability and UX, web creation, instructional design, medical design, editing, journalism, non-profit writing, medical writing, and visual design.

Technical Writing

Common Titles

Content Manager, Documentation Specialist, Documentation Writer, Engineering Documentation Specialist, Engineering Writer, Handbook Writer, Information Architects, Information Developer, Process Description Writer, Project Manager, Report Writer, Specifications Writer, Technical Communicator, Technical Writer

Typical Duties

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, “[t]echnical writers, also called technical communicators, prepare instruction manuals, how-to guides, journal articles, and other supporting documents to communicate complex and technical information more easily. They also develop, gather, and disseminate technical information through an organization’s communications channels.” Technical writers have been known to create help systems, build web pages, create “how to” videos, and more.

Average Salary

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics says that the average salary for technical writers is \$73,160 with 50% making between \$53,990 and \$89,730.

Job Availability in the Area

Technical writing jobs are available in both Colorado Springs and Denver/Boulder. The jobs in The Springs tend to focus on government contractors while the jobs in Denver tend to be in the high tech sector.

Job Availability in the US

Technical writing jobs are available all over the U.S., but you tend to see them in high tech sectors. That means, most jobs are concentrated on the East and West Coast as well as tech heavy cities like Austin, Phoenix, Denver, and Dallas.

Required Skills and Suggested Training

Market trends suggest that PTW students need a basic toolset including writing/editing skills, design skills, usability skills, teamwork skills, and technical skills – the more technical skills, the more marketable the writer. We strongly recommend that you complete an internship while enrolled

(ENGL 3150) so you can continue to build your technical literacy, as well as learn more about the industry.

Usability/UX (User Experience)

Common Titles

Human Factors Professional, Usability Tester, UX Designer, UX Specialist, Information Architect, Information Developer, Instructional Design

Typical Duties

UX professionals enhance the user experience. They work with software, web sites, online learning systems, etc. to assure a product is functional and appealing. They may be involved in the planning, the design, and the building stages of a product or website, or they may be brought in to evaluate an existing product or website. Planning stages often involve research work such as focus groups, surveys or persona development. The design phase may include performing tasks such as card sorting, architecture review, or scenario writing. Evaluating an existing or new product may involve classic usability testing, focus groups, or heuristic testing.

Average Salary

Glassdoor reports the average salary of a UX Designer in the US is \$87,883. Payscale states that an average salary is \$71,748 with salaries ranging from \$47,018 to \$101,286.

Job availability in the Area

Several usability/UX/information architecture jobs are typically available in The Springs. (This number has grown in recent years.) There are more available in the Denver and Boulder markets. Note that many require strong technical skills, including web design capability.

Job availability in the US

The Usability/UX field is growing! CNN money places three UX jobs in their Best Jobs in America list: User Experience Researcher (19% 10-year job growth), User Interface Designer (27%), and User Experience Designer (13%).

Required Skills and Suggested Training

PTW students should strive to take as many different usability courses as possible. These courses should introduce students to the research skills, technical skills and critical thinking skills necessary to enter the field. Design courses are encouraged. Basic technology skills are an absolute must, with more tech skills creating more opportunities. Human factors or psychology courses are also suggested. Internships are ideal.

Web Creation

Common Titles

E-Learning Developers, Professional blogger, Web Content Writer, Web Designer, Web Developer, Web Content Manager, Information Architect

Typical Duties

Depending on the position, web professionals may do everything from plan, write content, design, create and maintain web-based systems.

Average Salary

Salaries greatly depend on the technical expertise needed for the position. According to Glassdoor, web content writer salaries average \$34,120 nationally and \$46,070 in the Denver area. Web designer salaries, a position that requires more programming skill, have a national average of \$47,281 with Denver salaries averaging \$51,835.

Job availability in the Area

Web designer jobs are available in the Denver area and may be paired with UX capabilities. We see fewer jobs in The Springs.

Job availability in the US

Web designer and web writer positions are available all over the U.S., but you tend to see them concentrated in high tech sectors. That means, most jobs are concentrated on the East and West Coast as well as tech heavy cities like Austin, Phoenix, Denver, and Dallas. Web writers often work freelance.

Required Skills and Suggested Training

Web creation and design requires programming skills. At the least, a PTW student should minor in Computer Programming. Web writing does not require as many technical skills, though some programming skills would be ideal.

Instructional Design

Common Titles

E-Learning Developers, Information Architects, Information Developer, Instructional Designer, Technical Trainer, Trainer

Typical Duties

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Training and development specialists plan, conduct, and administer programs that train employees and improve their skills and knowledge."

Average Salary

The salaries of these positions often depend upon the technical level of the position. Instructional Designer salaries average \$58,975 in The Springs, \$62,044 in Denver, and \$63,672 nationally.

Job availability in the Area

Denver has many Instructional Design jobs at this time, but they are less common in The Springs.

Job availability in the US

Instructional Design jobs are available throughout the U.S.

Required Skills and Suggested Training

Market research suggests that PTW students who want to be instructional designers need writing and communication skills, technical skills, and education skills. Any PTW course that touches on web writing, design, usability, or interactive learning should be helpful. Students should focus on building an instructional design portfolio.

Medical Writing

Common Titles

Handbook Writer, Health Science Writer, Health Technical Writer, Medical Illustrator, Medical Technical Writer, Medical Writer, Scientific Publications Editor, Scientific Writer

Typical Duties

According to Dr. Suhasini Sharma (Perspectives in Clinical Research), "Medical writing involves writing scientific documents of different types which include regulatory and research-related documents, disease or drug-related educational and promotional literature, publication articles like journal manuscripts and abstracts, content for healthcare websites, health-related magazines or news articles."

Average Salary

According to Glassdoor, medical writers average \$76,031 nationally and \$76,648 in the Denver area.

Job availability in the Area

Medical writing jobs are rare in The Springs. We see a few medical writer jobs posted in the Denver area from time to time. We see some freelance work in medical writing across the U.S., and these postings can be found through the job board of the America Medical Writers Association.

Job availability in the US

Medical writers can be found across the U.S., often in areas that focus on pharmaceutical or medical technologies. The America Medical Writers' Association is a good resource, as their job board will list medical writer positions.

Required Skills and Suggested Training

Breaking into medical writing can be a challenge. Ideally, PTW students who want to be medical writers should have an advanced degree in a medical or related field. However, it is possible to break into the field if the writer has a strong understanding of medical concepts and ideas. Students who seek to enter the medical writing field at the least should have a minor in a science such as biology or chemistry. Double majoring in a medically-related field will give an undergrad the best chances at procuring a job in this area.

Editing

Common Titles

Editor, Technical Editor, Textbook Editor, News Press and Magazine Executive Editors, Managing Editors, Assignment Editors, Assistant Editors and Copy Editors, Proofreaders.

Typical Duties

An editor's tasks are "more analytical, as they must review, manage, and guide a particular work or series of works to successful publication." per Study.com These are wide ranging duties from planning, scheduling project management and personnel management, to content revision and selection and fact checking what is used or not for a publication.

Average Salary

From the Bureau of Labor Statistis May 2016 data, editors may expect a national median salary of \$57,210 and \$27.51 per hour.

Job availability in the Area

Positions are found in Denver, Boulder and Colorado Springs. The average salaries in Colorado are \$58,130 per year and \$35.70 per hour. The average hourly starting salary in Colorado Springs is \$17.00/hr.

Job availability in the US

From the BLS, the projected job growth (2012-2022) projects a national decline of ~2%. The heaviest concentration of editing related careers are found on the east and west coasts, Texas, Illinois and Florida.

Required Skills and Suggested Training

PTW students who want to be editors should focus on editing and writing classes, though technical editors also require technology skills. Internships are strongly advised.

Journalism

Common Titles

Digital and Social Media Specialist, Information Professional, Media and Communications Public Relations specialists, Broadcast Media Specialist, Blog Writer, Commerce Journalist, Journalist, Speechwriter, Technical Reporter, Travel Writer

Typical Duties

Media specialists inform the public about current events and investigate and fact check information and events. According to the BLS, Media and Communications specialists "create, edit, translate, and disseminate information through a variety of different platforms."

Average Salary

From the Bureau of Labor Statistics 2016 data, the median annual salary was \$54,780 in May 2016, which was higher than the median annual wage for all occupations of \$37,040.

Job availability in the Area

In Colorado, a Digital Media Specialist average salary is \$43,895 per Glassdoor.

Job availability in the US

Media and communication specialists' careers have a projected growth of 4% nationally. Journalism positions are found throughout the U.S.

Required Skills and Suggested Training

PTW students should focus on writing and editing classes. Internships are advised.

Non-Profit Writing

Common Titles

Grant Writer, Non-profit Writer, Proposal Writer, Fundraiser

Typical Duties

Proposal and Grant Writers research, draft, edit, and submit proposals and conduct project management tasks that help organizations or individuals receive funding. Grant Proposal Writing has a strong focus on marketing and developing strategies for fundraising with strong skills in proof reading, editing, design and layout of documents for non-profits. Proposal/Grant writers are often freelance contractors with a wide-ranging income based on individual experience. Many non-profits desire volunteer unpaid personnel at the entry level.

Average Salary

In Colorado, the average Proposal Writer salary is \$58,491 with a national average of \$49,500 (Glassdoor.com). Hourly wages vary greatly at \$20.00 to \$100.00 per hour depending on experience

(BLS 2016 data) and are grouped with writers in general. Non-profit writers tend to claim a lower wage.

Job availability in the Area

Most paid positions are entry to mid-level and are available in the Denver, Boulder and Colorado Springs areas.

Job availability in the US

Nationally positions are concentrated on the East coast (D.C to Boston) and West Coast S.F. Bay & L.A. areas along with Dallas/Houston, Texas, Atlanta, Georgia regions showing the most postings (Indeed.com). Data suggests slow growth of ~ 2% in the field (per BLS).

Required Skills and Suggested Training

PTW students who want to be grant or proposal writers should focus on writing heavy courses. Graduate programs in Non Profit Management are also encouraged to advance in the field.

Business Writing

Common Titles

Contract Writer, Copywriter, Globalization & Localization Specialist, Market Researcher, Marketing Communications Specialist, Marketing Writer, Policies and Procedures Writer, Proposal Writer, Public Relations Specialist, Social Media Coordinator

Typical Duties

Job descriptions from Study.com describe a business writer as "an employee or freelance contractor who works for a business to write proposals, business reports, and business plans...[or a person] who researches and writes stories about economics and businesses for publications in print or on the Internet."

Average Salary

From the BLS, Colorado is in the top 5 at an hourly mean salary of \$35.90 and \$74,660. Colorado Springs average salary \$42,862 (Glassdoor.com)

Job availability in the Area

Business writing positions are available in both the Colorado Springs and Denver/Boulder areas.

Job availability in the US

Per the BLS expected job growth of 4% in media and business communications fields are projected.

Required Skills and Suggested Training

PTW students who want to be business or marketing communications writers should focus on writing and design courses. Technology courses will help enter the business portion of the technology sector. Business writers should take some business courses and might even minor in Business, focusing on Marketing. Internships and membership in Society for Technical Communications (STC) to enhance opportunities.

Visual Design

Common Titles

Documentation Designer, Graphic Designer, Illustrator, Medical Illustrator, Technical Illustrator, Visual Designer, Web Designer, Web Developer

Typical Duties

Graphic Designers create artwork with software for print or digital multi media, and require knowledge of software applications, editing, proofreading and web page content. Many in this field do freelance contract projects.

Web developers on the other hand have to have strong programming and coding skills from creating apps to maintaining computer operating systems. They also test user experience, UX Usability, and need strong writing and communication skills. A PTW degree compliments a Computer Science degree for this field.

Average Salary

Salaries depend upon the technical skill sets required for required types of software applications. Graphic Designers can expect an average \$52,290 yearly and \$25.14 per hour while from 2016 BLS reports, Web Developers nationally average \$66,130 or \$31.79/hour for their work. In Colorado, Developers average \$66,238 per Glassdoor.com.

Job availability in the Area

From entry to midlevel skills, Colorado opportunities can be found throughout the Front Range in a wide variety of businesses (Indeed.com/Glassdoor.com).

Job availability in the US

Job growth for Graphic Designers/Illustrators is expected to grow slowly at only 1% while Web Developers are increasing as much as 12% per the BLS Computer and IT occupation reports.

Required Skills and Suggested Training

PTW students focusing on visual design should take design-heavy courses whenever possible, supplemented with visual arts courses. Internships advised.