



The printing industry offers fulfilling career opportunities with room to grow.

KNOWLEDGE AND TRAINING

By becoming a Digital Press Operator, you gain in-depth knowledge about the press and the printing process and learn how to handle, maintain, troubleshoot and manipulate various printing components such as toner and paper. Printing is a trade that can be learned through on-the-job training and formal education. Press operators acquire the skills and knowledge they need in a number of ways—through high school and post-secondary programs (often associated with graphic design), apprenticeships and on-the-job learning. To find a list of schools and training providers, go to the CPISC website at www.cpisc-csic.ca

STEPPING STONES

The printing industry offers fulfilling career opportunities with room to grow. With experience, training and a good performance record, workers can move up to senior positions including senior press operator, lead hand, shop foreman/supervisor and production manager. As well, press operators can move into other departments such as estimating and sales. Mastering the operation of a variety of presses can open many doors: you can also become an entrepreneur and start your own business.

Many of the skills you learn as a Digital Press Operator are transferable and can lead to success in other industries.

The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

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To order more copies of this document or for information contact:


The Canadian Printing Industries Sector Council
1110-151 Slater Street
Ottawa, ON K1P 5H3

Toll-free: 1-888-688-0293
Email: info@cpisc-csic.ca


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OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE:

DIGITAL PRESS OPERATOR



DIGITAL PRESS OPERATORS work with some of the most advanced printing equipment to produce materials that Canadian companies, government departments and other organizations use every day to get business done. For example, some of those big glossy billboards and posters you see were printed on wide-format digital presses. Operating a digital press demands strong technical skills, a sharp eye for quality, and a commitment to teamwork—all of which lead to career prospects throughout the printing industry.

"There's always something to keep you interested. Every job you print is unique, with its own set of requirements and challenges. You really get to put your skills into action."

— FRANK MCPHERSON, DIGITAL PRESS OPERATOR


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DID YOU KNOW?
 Digital printing is growing at an extremely rapid pace. Between 2000 and 2005, the number of digital presses in North America jumped from 12,000 to 44,000.

PRINTING: A FIELD OF OPPORTUNITIES

Canada's fourth-largest source of manufacturing jobs, the printing and graphic communications industry extends from coast to coast, supporting 8,500 establishments nationwide and employing more than 90,000 men and women.

The industry has changed a lot over the last ten years. Technology and computers now play a major role in putting ink on paper.

Right now is a great time to consider entering the printing profession. Like many industries, printing is going to see a large number of employees retire in the coming years, creating demand for talented new workers.

Why a career in printing?

- *Investment in the future:* the majority of printing firms have either recently invested or plan to invest in training, recruiting and upgrading skills to keep pace with the changes in technology
- *Opportunity:* nearly half of all printing jobs (47%) are in press operation and finishing departments
- *Compensation:* wages paid in printing have gone up consistently—more than 25% between 1997 and 2004
- *Innovation:* the printing industry has been a leader in adapting to new technologies

Look for forecasts for printing employment in the Labour Market Information section of the Canadian Printing Industries Sector Council (CPISC) website at www.cpisc-csic.ca

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ON THE JOB

Digital printing is a “dynamic” process—the printer can generate images differently with each and every print run. Because of this flexibility, digital presses today are the preferred producers of customized printed goods such as financial statements, chequebooks, personal advertisements, flyers, concert tickets and more. Digital printing makes it possible for companies to target messages at specific audiences quickly and at a low cost.

How digital printing works

The most common digital technology is electrophotography, a five-step process of imaging, inking, toner transfer, toner fixing and cleaning. Most commonly, an organic photoconductor drum receives a charge—like a photographic negative—of the content to be printed. The negative areas are neutralized so toner will stick to them: when paper passes the drum, the toner adheres to it. This is the fixing process afterwards the machine runs a cleaning process to clear excess toner off the drum for the next job.



Being a Press Operator

Whether running a digital press or some other type of press, the operator is in charge of the whole process, ensuring consistency from start to finish including safety. Once the run begins (after the preparation stage, called 'makeready'), the operator ensures the quality of each printed sheet. This is especially critical in digital printing, when the information can vary from sheet to sheet with customization. For example, if you're printing a run of cheques, you have to be sure the personal information on each set of cheques is different and correct. Operators also maintain the cleanliness and organization of the pressroom, as well as the press itself. In addition to printing quality media, the press operator must also communicate with other departments to ensure the job overall is carried out according to client specifications.

UP FOR THE TASK

All press operators must possess basic, core and operating skills to perform their duties. Each set of skills contributes to the position in different ways. The following are just a few examples taken from the skill standards developed and validated by industry professionals through the Canadian Printing Industries Sector Council (CPISC).

BASIC SKILLS: are essential in every occupation. They are also called enabling skills because they make it possible for workers to use and develop other skills.

Reading: Reading simple and brief work-related materials, e.g., labels

Writing: Writing short notes, e.g., log entries

Mathematics: Calculating fractions, e.g., ink ratios

Interactive communication: Listening to and understanding information, e.g., following verbal instructions

Planning and organization: Plan and organize activities, e.g., work area

Decision making: Making decisions in a timely manner

Problem solving: Identifying problems and their solutions

Computer literacy: Using computer software and equipment

CORE SKILLS: cover those elements that comprise a broad-based knowledge of the industry. For the most part, some will cut across process areas, although some may be more relevant to a particular process area.

Teamwork: Working collaboratively with others to achieve organizational goals

Health and safety: Adhering to health and safety and environmental standards, regulations and policies

Printing process: Understanding the steps involved in printing processes

Workflow processes and control: Adhering to production schedules and requirements

Quality assurance: Verifying accuracy and quality of work to ensure that products meet expectations

Client service: Providing service excellence to internal or external clients

OPERATING SKILLS: From preparing to print through press operation and maintenance, press operators must possess specific technical skills in order to:

Follow makeready checklists

Identify paper types and their appropriateness for a job

Prepare toner

Monitor colour quality

Control press department conditions

Ensure quality control and determine quality level using control devices such as a densitometer or spectrophotometer

Maintain equipment and workspace to prevent downtime, maximize output and ensure health and safety

To access the complete list of press skill standards visit www.cpisc-csic.ca