



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

KNOWLEDGE AND TRAINING

By becoming a Web Offset Press Operator, you gain in-depth knowledge about the printing process and learn how to handle, maintain, troubleshoot and manipulate the various components such as ink and substrate. 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, visit 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 Web Offset 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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OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE:

LITHOGRAPHIC WEB OFFSET PRESS OPERATOR



Picture a series of four-story towers, fifteen to twenty or more in a row – that's what a lithographic web offset press looks like. To say the least, it's an impressive piece of machinery! Today's web presses are used to produce a wide range of high-quality materials: magazines, newspapers, retail catalogues, phone books and other printed media that require mass distribution. **WEB OFFSET PRESS OPERATORS** need strong technical skills, sharp eyes, and a commitment to teamwork—all of which lead to career prospects throughout the printing industry.

"Look around and everywhere you turn you see printed products. Posters. Flyers. Newspapers. You name it, we produce it."

- ALEX CHARLES, WEB OFFSET PRESS OPERATOR

 

Canadian Printing Industries Sector Council

DID YOU KNOW?

The majority of companies in Canada's printing industry are small firms, located in virtually every region and community.

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

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

In recent years, technological advances have radically improved the quality of web offset press printing so that today, these machines can be used to produce rich, crisp, full-coloured documents.

ON THE JOB

The web offset press is used for what's known as "long-run printing"—the production of regular publications such as newspapers, magazines and telephone directories, produced in huge quantities. In recent years, technological advances have radically improved the quality of web offset press printing so that today, these machines can be used to produce rich, crisp, full-coloured documents.

How web offset printing works

Web offset presses are considered by some to be the ultimate print producers. The "web" in web offset press refers to the large roll of paper used. The web travels through the press at incredibly high speeds. Printing on both sides of the paper at once a web press operator can print in excess of 70,000 signatures an hour. The operator has to "balance" ink and water in the printing units so that a clear image transfers from the printing plates to the blankets and then onto the paper (web). The web may then pass through a dryer in a

"heatset" operation where the ink is "set" or dried to prevent smudging. In a "coldset" operation the dryer isn't needed as the ink is formulated to dry quickly without the heat. The web then comes into a folder where the continuous stream of paper changes into the individual signatures desired. Using some of the most technically advanced equipment in the industry web presses produce an ever changing variety of work in a fast paced exciting environment.

Being a press operator

Whether running a web offset press or some other type of press, the operator is in charge of the whole process, from the roll of paper to the last fold in the folder. Operating a web offset press is very hands-on. To be a successful press operator, you need technical skills, mechanical aptitude and a solid grasp of the printing process. Managing a web offset press can be challenging, but once you have the skills they'll carry you to many other opportunities in the industry.



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 to prepare work for printing

Thread the web around rollers and through the press to the folder, making sure the tension is right for proper printing

Prepare the drying system, whether heatset or coldset

Monitor printing quality

Perform troubleshooting to solve problems as they arise

Control press department conditions

Ensure quality control and determine quality level using devices such as densitometers or spectrophotometers

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