

PROFILE OF AN AERONAUTICS TECHNICAL WRITER

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We were asked to prepare a brief profile of the aeronautics technical writer (ATW) for whom a program was created at École d'Aerotechnique, Collège Edouard-Montpetit. For this purpose, we have included the Canadian Classification and Description of Occupations (CCDO) profile below which the reader should refer to before continuing. The CCDO is used by personnel offices and Statistics Canada for different professions. With a few variations, all ATW's are required to perform the duties described in the CCDO profile.

CANADIAN CLASSIFICATION AND DESCRIPTION OF OCCUPATIONS**TECHNICAL WRITER (3351-178)**

Writes manuals and related technical publications concerned with the description, installation, operation and maintenance of electronic, mechanical and other equipment: Acquires knowledge of product by referring to trade and technical specifications, sketches, notes, drawings and catalogues. Verifies knowledge of product by interviewing personnel engaged in developing or improving equipment and by observing performance of experiments and methods of production. Analyzes material and writes, in clear and concise language, draft publication. Oversees preparation of illustrative material, making rough sketches to aid artist in making final drawings, and selects photographs, drawings, sketches, diagrams and charts. Selects, organizes, edits and revises articles, bulletins, manuals or similar productions.

May assist in preparation and layout of work for publication. May specialize in particular technical subject and be designated accordingly; for example, Aeronautical-Engineering Technical Writer (air and space craft).

Documents that may be written vary from descriptive brochures to service manuals, but most work involves service manuals. These include operating manuals, wiring manuals, illustrated parts catalogs, overhaul manuals, corrosion control manuals, etc. For this reason, the ATW must have basic knowledge of airframe, powerplant and systems (electrical, mechanical, hydraulic and fuel), as well as considerable skill in the reading and interpretation of blueprints. Note that all of these skills are taught at the community college level.

Given the subject area in which the ATW works, both scientific and linguistic competencies are essential. The scientific side requires rigour in thought and logic as well as concern for precision and objectivity. The linguistic side requires an awareness of language that allows for expression in a style that is both clear and concise.

It should be mentioned that a fundamental requirement is the ability to write easily in English. This does not mean that English is necessarily the ATW's mother tongue and, in fact, a number of ATW's are not English. They tend to be the Conrads of "state of the art".

One characteristic of ATW's and, in fact, most technical writers is a personality factor. Because they often operate between the designer and the user (in this case, engineers and technicians) and because they frequently consult both, the ATW must possess considerable tact, effective interviewing skills, as well as persistence.

One skill that is becoming increasingly important is word-processing. Within five years, all aircraft manuals will be generated from a company's computers including text and drawings, and the copy produced will be camera-ready. Already, Canadair requires wp ability as a hiring criterion.

Currently, an ATW can expect a starting salary between \$20,000 and \$25,000 per year. Those employed by a company working on military contracts (not so rare) must be able to pass a security clearance (RCMP) which may present a problem for certain students, particularly since the criteria for evaluation are not available.

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