

Mid-Pandemic Job Prospects for a Technical Writer

By Kendall Graham

As the first wave of the coronavirus came in thick in the spring of 2020 I, like many others around the country, lost my job in March. The following month, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported the unemployment rate as 14.8%, reflecting the impact of the pandemic on our labor force. I consider myself a practical person. I like to prepare for all eventualities. Knowing that unemployment benefits were not a sustainable living method and that returning to the workforce was imminent, I began to search for job openings.

The results I saw were largely for hospitality jobs, a consequence of living in a tourist destination. The few that were not of that sector were more of the same types of jobs I had been reluctantly taking in lieu of finding positions in my chosen field. I got my Bachelor's degree in English and Communications, but instead of the writing-centric jobs I desired after graduating, I worked for two years in other fields that I hoped would allow me to expand my palate of marketable skills in the meantime. I was a production assistant and host at a local radio station; I was Assistant Manager at a clothing retailer; my last job was a stint in the rising cannabis industry making MIPs (Marijuana-Infused Products).

Six months after being laid off, I found a job as the Office Manager at a non-profit organization; the national unemployment rate [had dropped by half](#) to 7.8% between March and September 2020. Much of the revenue that nonprofits receive is from grants, so a thought came

to mind: if I could gain the skills to become a grant writer, then maybe I could increase my earning potential. A survey from the National Association of Colleges and Employers finds that earning prospects are increased substantially for those with Master's degrees in several industries; among these industries are "Communication and media studies," [which sees](#) a 47% increase in the average salary between someone with a Bachelor's versus a Master's, up to about \$62,000. I grew up in a working-class family in one of the wealthiest tourist spots in the country; it has informed my perspective on money and earning. Being raised among wealth but without access to it means money is usually on my mind; it is a goal. I was taught that the way to achieve my goals is to work hard.

However, a difficulty further impacting my job hunt is that I don't have the previous experience frequently required or suggested by employers. [Many other young college graduates](#) share this burden; it feels like you get stuck between a rock and a hard place in this situation. You have the degree that you were told would help your chances at finding a job, but all those jobs want you to have both a Bachelor's *and* 5 years of professional experience? It can be difficult enough to complete a degree without also having to work simultaneously. To add to the struggle, because I haven't been able to find jobs in my field, I haven't been gathering those suggested years of experience, or filling my portfolio with the culminating efforts of that experience.

One of the major reasons I enrolled in the Professional Writing program is because I'll be producing professional documents that I can show as proof of my skills to future employers. That will hopefully allow me to seek and obtain higher-paying positions. The trend of pursuing more postsecondary education is represented in [data from the National Student Clearinghouse](#): there

was a 4.6% increase in Graduate enrollment from last year, up to 2.8 million Graduate and Professional students enrolled in accredited programs, indicative of more individuals seeking to gain further professional or specialized skills.

The good news is that employment prospects for my chosen fields of writing, editing, and Communications appear somewhat hopeful. [Projections](#) by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that in the sectors for Technical Writers, Writers and Authors, and Editors, prospects could increase between 2020 and 2030 by 11.6%, 8.5%, and 5.1% respectively. This is a purported increase of about 6,000 Technical Writing jobs, 12,000 jobs for Writers and Authors, and 5,000 Editor jobs in the 10-year period. All three of these fields also typically require only a Bachelor's entry-level education. U.S. News & World Report [found there to be](#) above average upward mobility for technical writers, and ranked the job #2 in “Best Creative and Media Jobs.”

With that in mind, it should make the process of finding a job for someone with a Bachelor's in English, like me, not insanely difficult. But I have not had the particular luck yet to find the job I desire. Is this due to the current job market and the availability of such jobs, my particular skills or lack thereof, or the small isolated community in which I live? All three appear to be playing a factor.

Daniel Bachman, in the U.S. Economic Forecast for 3rd Quarter 2021 [by Deloitte Insights](#), suggests that part of the decline in the labor force is due to the departure of older people who likely won't return once the pandemic is over. Nearly half of the decline in the labor force consists of people of retirement age, 55 years or older, who will likely pursue retirement, freeing

up positions for the younger crowd to come in and obtain. Coupled with what Bachman describes as the “widespread adoption of new technology” due to the pandemic, it can stand to reason that young college graduates, like me, who grew up with an affinity for all things digital, can find success within the current job climate.

One of my first classes in the Professional Writing program is a class on writing grants and proposals. For the final assignment, we produced a detailed grant for a nonprofit organization. I was able to use my actual workplace for inspiration. The course highlights the exact kind of trajectory I hope for my graduate career to take; being able to produce documents relevant to my professional life while still pursuing my personal interest in writing. I plan to continue building my portfolio with pieces from the courses I take. Once I feel comfortable enough, I will begin to pursue writing jobs again, now with the confidence of being more empirically skilled, and with a cautious optimism of the rebounding job market in which I can apply those skills.