

1996
Annual Survey of Journalism &
Mass Communication Graduates

Gerald M. Kosicki
&
Lee B. Becker

Henry W. Grady College of Journalism & Mass Communication
University of Georgia
Athens, Ga 30602
Tel: 706 542-5023 Fax: 706 542-5036
www.grady.uga.edu/annualsurveys



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Overview and Summary

- The percentage of graduates reporting they had at least one job offer or solid prospect went up in 1996 over a year earlier, as did the mean number of such jobs available
- The percentage of bachelor's degree recipients who reported holding a full-time job six to eight months after graduation in 1996 was near the level of full-time employment in 1988 and 1989-- the peak for this measure in recent years.
- The percentage of master's degree recipients with full-time work was lower in 1996 than in 1995 (though within the expected range of fluctuation due to sampling), and the actual percentage of those with part-time work increased (again within expected fluctuation)
- Salaries received by journalism and mass communication graduates with full-time jobs in 1996 were higher than those received by graduates in 1995. The increase, in the case of bachelor's degree recipients, was just enough to keep up with inflation. In the case of master's degree recipients, the increase was below what was needed to overcome the adverse effects of inflation.
- In terms of availability, at least, the 1996 graduates made gains in the area of benefits.
- Graduates of journalism and mass communication programs continue to look for work in traditional places--with newspapers, with broadcasters, in public relations and in advertising.
- Daily newspapers, television, advertising and public relations agencies continue to be the major employers of journalism and mass communications bachelor's degree recipients.
- The experience of the 1996 graduates suggests 1996 was the year the web started to make a measurable difference--if only, at that time, a small one.

Graduate Survey Methodology

The *Annual Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Graduates* is designed to monitor the employment rates and salaries of graduates of journalism and mass communication programs in the United States, including Puerto Rico. In addition, the survey tracks the curricular activities of those graduates while in college, examines their job seeking strategies, and provides measures of the professional attitudes and behaviors of the graduates upon completion of their college studies.

The School of Journalism at The Ohio State University conducts the *Annual Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Graduates* each winter. As a first step in the survey, a sample of schools is drawn from those listed in the *Journalism and Mass Communication Directory*, published annually by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, and *The Journalist's Road to Success: A Career and Scholarship Guide*, published each year by the Dow Jones Newspaper Fund, Inc. Schools list themselves in the *AEJMC Directory*. To be included in the *Guide*, the college or university must offer at least 10 courses in news-editorial journalism and those courses must include core courses, such as an introduction to the mass media and press law and ethics, as well as basic skills courses such as reporting and editing.

The sample of schools is modified each year to reflect changes in these two directories. Sample selection is probabilistic, so that schools selected represent the population of schools listed in the two directories. In 1996, 93 schools were drawn from the 449 unique entries of four-year programs in the U.S. (including Puerto Rico) in the two directories.

Administrators at the selected schools are asked to provide the names and addresses of their spring bachelor's and master's degree recipients. As the second step in the 1996 survey, a questionnaire was mailed in November or December 1996 to all spring graduates receiving either a bachelor's or a master's degree from the selected programs. A second questionnaire was sent to nonrespondents in January or February 1997. A third mailing was sent in April to graduates of schools with low return rates after the first two mailings.

The questionnaire asked about the respondent's experiences both while a student and in the months since graduation. Included were questions about university experiences, job-seeking and employment, and salary and benefits.

In 1996, the survey was mailed to 5,189 individuals whose names and addresses were provided by the administrators of the 93 programs. A total of 2,620 returned the questionnaires by the end of June of 1996. Of the returns, 2,384 were from students who reported they had actually completed their degrees during the April to June 1996 period. The remaining 236 had completed their degrees either before or after the specified period, despite their inclusion in the provided addresses. A total of 239 questionnaires was returned undelivered. Return rate, computed as the number of questionnaires returned divided by the number mailed, was 50.5%. Return rate, computed as the number returned divided by the number

mailed minus the bad addresses, was 52.9%. Of the usable questionnaires, 2,241 were from bachelor's degree recipients and 143 were from those who received a master's degree.

The findings summarized in this report are projectable to the estimated 32,150 students who earned bachelor's degrees and the 3,600 students who earned master's degrees in academic year 1995-96 from the 449 colleges and universities across the United States and Puerto Rico offering programs in journalism and mass communication.

Comparisons are made with data gathered in graduate surveys back through 1986. Data on master's degree recipients have been available only since 1990.

Sample error for the 1996 undergraduate data is 2.1%. Sample error terms for earlier surveys were: 2.0% (1990-1995), 2.1% (1989), 3.7% (1988), 2.8% (1987), and 3.2% (1986). In all cases, the confidence level is set at .05, meaning that the odds are 19 to one that the figures presented in this report are within plus or minus sample error of what would have been obtained had all graduates of journalism and mass communication programs, rather than a sample of these graduates, completed questionnaires. Sample error for responses from those receiving master's degrees in 1996 is 8.2%, nearly the same as in previous years for which data are available.

In many instances in the report that follows, fewer than the full number of cases is used for inferences. For example, some of the data are based solely on persons working full-time when surveyed. In these cases, error is greater than 2.1%, depending on the actual number of persons for whom data are reported.

In addition, many comparisons between subgroups in the sample and between the 1996 and earlier samples are made. Standard statistical tests have been used to evaluate the observed differences, or trends. Only those differences likely to hold if a census of all graduates were undertaken are discussed in the text.

Women made up 67.2% of respondents. Members of racial or ethnic minorities made up 17.9% of those returning a questionnaire. These sample characteristics are very similar to those in recent years and generally match the projections for total enrollments at the 449 schools from which the sample was drawn.

Funding for the 1996 graduate survey was provided by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication, the Council of Affiliates of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, The Freedom Forum, the National Association of Broadcasters, the Newsletter Publishers Foundation, the Newspaper Association of America Foundation, the Public Relations Society of America Foundation, the Radio-Television News Directors Association, the Scripps Howard Foundation, and the School of Journalism at The Ohio State University.

Curricular Activities

One of the key indicators of student interests at the undergraduate level is the specialization they select within the journalism and mass communication major. Most universities offer choices to the students. Even where there are no formal sequences or specialized programs, students often fashion one for themselves, creating what they see as a special preparation for the various careers in mass communication. The *Annual Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Graduates* asks students to indicate the specialization they have chosen. The students can select from the list presented on the survey instrument or name their own specialization.

In recent years, we have seen a return on the part of students to the historical core of journalism education--news-editorial or print journalism--and a turning away from some of the other, perhaps more trendy, areas. The 1996 graduates continued this pattern, as Figure 1 shows. Just less than two in 10 of the graduates indicated that they had specialized in news editorial journalism in 1996, as has been true the last four years. The percentage of students specializing in public relations and advertising also is now stable. Advertising, in fact, seems to have reversed the slight declines experienced in recent years. The percentage of students who had specialized in telecommunications/broadcasting declined in 1996 from a year ago, but the 1995 figure seems to be the aberration. Telecommunications/broadcasting has increased in popularity in comparison with the figures in 1993 and 1994.

Students who did not pick one of these "Big Four" areas of specialization are labeled "Other" in Figure 1. This includes those in magazine, agricultural journalism, mass media studies, theater, speech, and the like. The percentage picking such a major is up slightly from a year ago, representing, it seems likely, sample fluctuation. The overall trend, Figure 1 suggests, is downward, meaning that the "Big Four" not only still are dominant but also are not cumulatively losing the interest of students.

Further indication of the interests of the 1996 journalism and mass communication bachelor's degree recipients comes from an examination of their participation in campus media activities. Further evidence that basic journalism continues to be a core interest of journalism and mass communication students is found in Figure 2. A third of all of the 1996 bachelor's degree recipients report that they worked for their campus newspaper while doing their studies. That number has held steady since the beginning of this decade. The percentages of graduates who worked for radio and television stations are down just slightly from last year, but the percentage of graduates who specialized in broadcasting/telecommunications was down slightly as well, and these are the media of most interest to such students. The yearbook continues to be a small, but across time consistent part, of the media experience of journalism and mass communication graduates. Not shown in Figure 2 are responses to a new item for 1996 on campus magazines and college world wide web sites. Of the 1996 bachelor's degree recipients, 6.4% reported working for a campus magazine, but only 30 graduates (1.3%) worked for a college web site. A media internship continues to be something eight of 10 journalism and mass

communication undergraduates complete before graduation (Figure 2).

Graduates of the journalism and mass communication programs are a very able lot, and they are becoming increasingly so--if grade point average of the graduates is treated as an indicant of ability. More than a third of the bachelor's degree recipients in 1996 completed their studies with a grade point average of A, and nearly all of the remaining students had a B average. Only 3% of the graduates in 1996 had a C grade--which, in theory, indicates "average" work. The percentage of graduates who earned an A average has increased dramatically in recent years, as Figure 3 shows clearly. Are grades inflating--that is, increasing with increased worth--or are students getting better? The data don't provide an answer. Advertising, public relations and broadcasting students were a bit less likely in 1996 to have an A average than are print journalism students (Figure 4).

Further evidence of the quality of the graduates of journalism and mass communication programs comes from a question included for the first time in the 1996 graduate survey. The graduates were asked to report the ACT and SAT college entrance exam scores they had achieved prior to entering the university. Not all students remembered their scores--or were willing to report them. Of the 2,241 bachelor's degree recipients, 739 (a third) did report an ACT score--the less frequently used of the two tests--and 1030 of them (just under a half) reported an SAT score. The scores reported, in both cases, were related to reported grade point average (with higher grades and higher test scores going together), and there was a slight tendency for students with B grades to "forget" their entrance test scores at a higher rate than did A students. Nonetheless, the ACT mean score of the bachelor's degree recipients of 25.1 on a scale of 11 to 36 (Figure 5) is higher than the average of the ACT means of high school graduating classes for the last five years (20.8). The journalism and mass communication graduates' mean for the combined verbal and math SAT scores of 1,090.5 (Figure 6) is higher than the SAT means for these scores (1,006) for college bound seniors for the last five years. At least, it would seem, the journalism and mass communication programs are not graduating students weaker than the national norm of entering students. (Weak students in all fields probably are less likely to graduate than are strong students.) Consistent with the finding for grades, print journalism students report higher entrance exam scores for both the ACT (Figure 5) and SAT (Figure 6) examinations.

Job Seeking Strategies

Graduates of journalism and mass communication programs continue to look for work in traditional places--with newspapers, with broadcasters, in public relations and in advertising. More than two in 10 of the bachelor's degree recipients in the spring of 1996 looked for work with a daily newspaper, and more than one in 10 looked for work with a weekly (Figure 7). Both figures are just above the levels of a year ago. Just under one in 10 looked for work at a consumer magazine, with the trade press, in book publishing, and in the newsletter industry. Smaller, but still significant numbers of graduates sought employment with wire services.

About a quarter of the graduates in 1996 sought work at a television station (Figure 8). A similar number sought work in television a year ago. The figures for radio (15.7% of the bachelor's degree recipients sought work there) and cable (12.5% sought employment in that industry) also were nearly the same in 1996 as in 1995. This is noteworthy given that the number of broadcasting graduates was off slightly from a year earlier (Figure 1). The electronic media continue to have great appeal to graduates of journalism and mass communication programs.

The percentages of bachelor's degree recipients seeking work in public relations and advertising (Figure 9) increased in 1996 over a year earlier. This is true both for agency and corporate positions in public relations and advertising and took place despite the fact that the percentages of graduates who specialized in those areas were not up appreciably from a year earlier (Figure 1).

Newspapers, broadcasting, public relations and advertising are, as noted, the traditional employers of graduates of journalism and mass communication programs. That doesn't mean, however, what the students do on those jobs is exactly the same as was true in the past. Communication industries are, quite clearly, changing.

The 1996 survey instrument asked students specifically if they had sought a job in online or Internet publishing. Among the bachelor's degree recipients, 147, or 6.6%, had. We don't know how many of these employment opportunities were with subunits of traditional media companies. What is clear is that the graduates have begun to include electronic publishing opportunities in their job seeking strategies.

Employment

One concrete indicator of the employment experiences of the graduates of journalism and mass communications programs comes from responses to a question asking about the number of “job offers or solid job opportunities” available to the respondent upon graduation. Figure 10 plots this trend for the bachelor’s degree recipients since this question was first used in 1988. Figure 11 plots the trend for the master’s degree recipients.

The percentage of graduates reporting they had at least one job offer or solid prospect went up in 1996 over a year ago, as did the mean number of such jobs available. The plot of the percentage of graduates with a job offer shows the general improvement of the job market for the graduates from 1991. In fact, the job market, based on this indicator, has never looked better.

A second indicant of the job market for graduates of journalism and mass communications programs is reported employment six to eight months after graduation--when the respondents return the questionnaire. Figure 12 plots these data over time for the bachelor’s degree recipients; Figure 13 does the same for the master’s degree recipients.

The employment data for the bachelor’s degree recipients show evidence of the continued recovery in the journalism and mass communication labor market. The percentage of graduates (68.4) who reported holding a full-time job six to eight months after graduation in 1996 was near the level of full-time employment in 1988 and 1989--the peak for this measure in recent years. The percentage of graduates with part-time work, which experience has shown to be an indicant of underemployment, also has continued to decline. The actual percentage of unemployed students is nearly the same as a year earlier.

For master’s degree recipients, the situation is a bit more complex. It also, because of the smaller number of respondents involved, is more difficult to interpret. There is no evidence that the job market improved for master’s degree recipients and some evidence it declined. The actual percentage of master’s degree recipients with full-time work was lower in 1996 than in 1995 (though within the expected range of fluctuation due to sampling), and the actual percentage of those with part-time work increased (again within expected fluctuation). The data, combined with those in Figure 11, suggest that the graduate student job market has improved from the early 1990s, but the improvement this last year has been marginal at best.

A further cautionary note about the job market faced by the 1996 graduates appears in Figure 14, which looks at the percentage of full-time and part-time jobs taken by the graduates that was in a permanent as opposed to a temporary position, such as an internship or a temporary replacement slot. There clearly was no improvement on this score versus a year earlier. About one in 10 of full-time jobs was not permanent in 1996, as was true a year earlier. About half of the part-time jobs are not permanent.

It is difficult to come up with identical employment and unemployment data nationally to compare with those for the journalism and mass communication graduates. The Bureau of Labor Statistics, which monitors employment, does not report data on the job seeking experiences of those recently completing college studies. What it does report is the unemployment rate for those between the ages of 20 and 24 who are in the labor force. This is, roughly speaking, the age cohort of the journalism and mass communication bachelor's degree recipients. Figure 15 reports the national unemployment rates for those 20-24 years of age, the overall unemployment rate, and the unemployment rate for journalism and mass communication graduates. The latter has been adjusted to eliminate those who have continued their studies to make the measure more comparable with the national data. In general, there the unemployment rate for journalism and mass communication bachelor's degree recipients mirrors the national figures, though at a higher level. The slight increase in the unemployment rate in 1996 versus 1995 is actually in evidence in the 20-24 year-old unemployment data as well. (Though unemployment for the journalism graduates went up, so did full-time employment, as part-time employment declined.) At this point, it isn't possible to know if the national unemployment data for the first half of 1997 (shown in Figure 15) showing a continued decline in unemployment will be matched by the experiences of the 1997 graduates.

Graduates who had specialized in news editorial journalism as part of their undergraduate studies had a higher level of employment (72.1%) than was true of bachelor's degree recipients overall (Figure 16). The level of employment for the news editorial students is up from a year ago. Broadcasting students didn't fare as well. Not only was their level of employment considerably lower than the overall figure, but it also was a decline from a year earlier (Figure 17). Advertising (Figure 18) and public relations (Figure 19) graduates had higher employment rates than the overall figures. In both cases, there is evidence of improvement in employment over as recently as two years ago.

Not all of the jobs taken by journalism and mass communications graduates are in communications. In fact, not all of them even seek such work. Most do, however, and another indication of the journalism and mass communication job market is the percentage of students who actually found work in communications. Figure 20 shows those data. Consistent with the trend since 1991, the percentage of graduates with work in some aspect of communication was up again in 1996, though only very slightly from a year ago. The upward trend is strong, however, adding additional evidence that the market is quite healthy.

The best descriptor of the work taken the 1996 journalism and mass communication graduates is "editorial," as has been true in the past. In 1996, 7.5% of the bachelor's degree recipients said "writing and/or reporting" best described the work they were doing (Figure 21). Another 3.9% said their work was "editing and page layout," and an additional 5.4% said it was a combination of writing, reporting, editing, and page layout. Smaller, though consistent percentages (across time) said they worked "producing, selling and placing advertisements" (Figure 22). Relatively large (and consistent) number said they

worked in “promoting or marketing” or “corporate communication” (Figure 23).

Daily newspapers (Figure 24), television (Figure 25), advertising and public relations agencies (Figure 26) continue to be the major employers of journalism and mass communications bachelor’s degree recipients. In 1996, 5.7% of the bachelor’s degree recipients went to work for a daily newspaper, up a bit from a year earlier but consistent overall with figures from the past. The figure is higher (8.3%) if calculated as a percent of unemployed bachelor’s degree recipients and higher still (9.8%) if calculated as a percent of those employed in communications. Television employed 9.1% of the bachelor’s degree recipients with a job and 10.7% of those with a communication job. Less prominent, but still important, employers of the bachelor’s degree recipients are weekly newspapers (Figure 24), radio and cable (Figure 25), public relations and advertising departments of companies (Figure 26), and the magazine, newsletter and trade publication industries (Figure 27).

The 1996 graduate survey included, for the first time, listed “online or Internet” publishing as a possible employer. In previous years, graduates would have been expected to list such a job in the “Other” category. In 1996, 20, or just under 1%, of the bachelor’s degree recipients took a job in online publishing. Though still small, the figure is up from a total of five individuals a year ago.

The newspaper industry (dailies, weeklies, the wire services) continued in 1996 to be the primary employer of those bachelor’s degree recipients who had specialized in news editorial journalism at the university (Figure 28). The broadcasting industry (television, radio and cable) remains the dominant employer of the bachelor’s degree recipients who specialized in that area at the university (Figure 29). The same pattern holds true for the advertising (Figure 30) and public relations (Figure 31) fields, though for the latter, traditional employers (public relations agencies and departments) play a somewhat smaller role. There is little evidence of change for any of these patterns over recent years.

The 1996 survey contained a new item designed to find out what kinds of techniques communication employers used in hiring the graduates and what kinds of evidence of accomplishment were more sought out. Figure 32 (which contains data only from those graduates working in communications) shows that, at least as far as the graduates could report, references played the key role. Four in 10 of the graduates reported that the employer who actually gave them a job had asked for clips, tapes or portfolios. Writing tests, grammar tests and current events tests were used, but somewhat less frequently than might have been expected. Faculty members are unlikely to be pleased to learn that their point of view (represented by references and grades) as well as the actual classes taken (represented by transcripts) are seen as important by so few employers. The graduates may be unaware of the actual reference contacts, but it is unlikely they would not know if an employer used a transcript or grades in the evaluation, since only the applicant can release that information.

Salaries and Benefits

The employment rate is one important indicant of the vitality of a labor market. Salaries and benefits received by participants in that market are others. Salaries received by journalism and mass communication graduates with full-time jobs in 1996 were higher than those received by graduates in 1995 (Figure 33). The increase, in the case of bachelor's degree recipients, was just enough to keep up with inflation. In the case of master's degree recipients, the increase was below what was needed to overcome the adverse effects of inflation. In real dollars, graduates still have not achieved the level of financial success that the graduates experienced in 1989, before the economic downturn at the beginning of this decade.

The median income of the 1996 bachelor's degree recipient six to eight months after graduation was \$21,500 in 1996 dollars, or \$14,381 in 1985 dollars. The median income of the 1996 master's degree recipient was a significantly higher \$28,800 in 1996 dollars, or \$19,264 in 1985 dollars. The 1985 dollar base allows for a comparison of the salaries adjusted for inflation across the years shown in Figure 33.

The median salary received by bachelor's degree recipients who went to work for the daily newspaper industry in 1996 was considerably lower in 1996 dollars than was the case in 1995 (Figure 34). In 1995 the daily newspaper paid salaries above the national median; the salary was considerably below it in 1996. The weekly newspaper industry, while still paying salaries much below the national median for journalism and mass communication bachelor's degree recipients, paid considerably more in 1996 than a year earlier--even enough more to provide some gain against inflation (Figure 35). The same can be said for the radio industry (Figure 36), though not for the television industry (Figure 37). Bachelor's degree recipients who found work in advertising (Figure 38) and in public relations (Figure 39) got paid at levels above the median for all bachelor's degree recipients and at levels that offered some gain against inflation. Those employed in public relations received the highest level of salary compensation among the graduates going to work for the major communication employers.

Just above public relations in salaries paid, based on the reports of the 1996 bachelor's degree recipients, is the consumer magazine industry and the newsletter and trade publications industries (Figure 40). Cable television also is offering salaries that are competitive in comparison with the overall media and are considerably above those offered in the sister industries of radio and television. (Table 1 details the computation that lies behind Figures 33 to 40.)

In terms of availability, at least, the 1996 graduates made gains in the area of benefits (Figures 41 and 42). Eight of 10 of the bachelor's degree recipients with a full-time job reported having major medical insurance available. A third of them report that the employer paid for all of the costs of the benefit. The pattern is for gains in both of these regards. Other benefits are less universally offered. For example, only six in 10 of the graduates report that disability insurance is available to them. Even here, however, there has been a gain from a year earlier. Child care continues to be a benefit infrequently

offered to graduates of journalism and mass communication programs.

Fully a quarter of the graduates reports that they are expected to work more than 40 hours a week in their job and are not reimbursed for that work (Figure 43). The figure has not increased from a year earlier; it also has not dropped as other benefits have increased. One in 10 of the graduates reports needing to have a car for work and not being reimbursed for expenses. There has been no change in this requirement either.

It should come as no surprise that relatively small percentages of graduates indicate that they have selected the job they have taken because of either salary or benefits (Figure 44). There has been some increase in this reason in recent years, but it is small at best. The good news is that the most commonly listed reason for selecting a job is because it is what the graduate wanted to do. The percentage of graduates selecting a job because it was the only one available seems to be on the decline, consistent with the evidence reported earlier that many graduates have more than one job choice upon graduation. The level of job satisfaction for full-time graduates was down slightly in 1996 versus a year ago, perhaps reflecting the lack of salary growth (Figure 45). Overall, this measure seems to mirror the basic economic indicators for the journalism and mass communication labor market.

Selection of a Major, Media Use, Evaluation of the Field

One indicant of the visibility and perceived viability and utility of a major is how easily those who enroll come to a decision to select it. By this yardstick, the journalism and mass communication major has experienced slight improvements in recent years. In 1996, 55.6% of the graduates said they selected the major before entering the university (Figure 46). Nearly an identical percentage reported the same time of decision a year ago. What is perhaps more important, the percentage of graduates who say they would select the same major again were they remaking the decision has been high (Figure 47). In 1996, in excess of three quarters of the graduates reported that sentiment. The figure is up slightly from a year ago and more impressively from 1991, when it was at its low point in the years since the question has been asked.

The 1996 bachelor's degree recipients are more likely to be convinced of the viability of the newspaper industry than were their counterparts a year earlier (Figure 48). Two-third of the 1996 graduates agreed with the statement: "There will be newspapers in 20 years." Only half of the 1995 bachelor's degree recipients felt this way. A higher percentage of the 1996 graduates than the 1995 graduates said they would recommend journalism or communication to people entering college today. The 1996 graduates also were more likely to say they planned to stay in the communication field until they retired than were the 1995 graduates. Just under half of the 1996 graduates--about the same as a year earlier--said their "studied prepared me well for today's job market."

The 1996 graduate survey instrument included six statements that allowed the respondents to describe some of their likes and dislikes (Figure 49). The 1996 bachelor's degree recipients were very likely to say they were "good at working with people," but not so likely to say they were "good at math." Six in 10 of the graduates described themselves as "avid readers." About the same number said they enjoyed "working with technology." Three out of four said they enjoyed writing, and just under that ratio said they enjoyed "working with visuals."

Three out of four of the 1996 bachelor's degree recipients report having read a newspaper "yesterday," a decline from the figure in 1994, when the question was last included in the graduate survey (Figure 50). A slightly lower percentage in 1996 also read a magazine or a book "yesterday." Television news and general viewing held steady. Just over half of the 1996 bachelor's degree recipients reported listening to radio news "yesterday," while nearly nine of 10 reported listening to music and other entertainment on radio the day before completing the survey. These items had not been included in the 1994 instrument. Just more than four in 10 of the bachelor's degree recipients reported using an online information service the day before they completed the interview.

Concluding Comments

For the most part, the news about the journalism and mass communication job market in late 1996 and early 1997 was good. Graduates of the nation's journalism and mass communication programs reported more job prospects on graduation than a year earlier. The percentage of bachelor's degree recipients with a full-time job six to eight months after graduation was up from a year earlier.

There were some signs, however, that all was not rosy, and these signs suggest caution about the future. Master's degree recipients did not report higher levels of full-time employment in 1996 than a year earlier. There was no increase in the percentage full- and part-time jobs that were, in fact, permanent ones. Salaries for bachelor degree recipients went up, but only enough to keep up with inflation. Salaries for master's degree recipients did not increase enough to offset the erosion of inflation. Benefits did improve, offsetting to some extent the negative news on salary. In sum, the graduates of journalism and mass communications programs are experiencing positive employment situation in evidence elsewhere in the economy without the salary benefits usually associated with low unemployment.

The improvement in the full-time employment rate for bachelor's degree recipients, to be sure, was modest at best, and there was even some increase in the rate of unemployment. (Part-time employment declined.) The changes, in fact, can easily be attributable to sampling error, rather than real movement in the job market. As such, the 1996 employment data raise an important question: Does the employment rate of just under 68.4% represent something like full employment for journalism and mass communication graduates six to eight months out of college? Employment was higher at the end of the 1980s, though only slightly so. It may well be that something 70% is the real "full-employment rate," suggesting that the situation in 1996 is close to what may be reasonably viewed as "achievable." Some of the graduates may not be employable, and some may not even be willing to take jobs in the communication industries if they were available.

It would be hard to conclude that the 1996 bachelor's degree recipients are anything but an impressive lot, if their own reports of their grade point averages are to be taken as evidence. Grades are high, and they are getting higher. The 1996 bachelor's degree recipients also seem to have scored pretty well on the college entrance tests.

For the most part, the 1996 graduates did pretty much what graduates before them did. They had similar interests in the various specialities within journalism. They participated in the activities of the campus media. They took internships.

In one way, however, the 1996 graduates seem to be a bit different from earlier graduates--though not so different as many may expect. It may be that the 1996 class was the first that took seriously the possibilities of the Internet and web publishing as an employment option. While only about 30 of the bachelor's degree recipients--representing a single percentage point--worked for a college web site, just

under 150 of them (nearly 7%) looked for jobs in online publishing (Figure 51). Just under a half of those bachelor's degree recipients reported actually being offered a job in online publishing, and 20 of the graduates actually reporting working in such a job six to eight months after graduation. A year earlier the number of bachelor's degree recipients working in such an enterprise was only five. The median salary for those who were working full-time (19 of the 20) was \$26,000. That is far above the median for all graduates (\$21,500), and should increase the number of people looking for such jobs in the future. The percentage of bachelor's degree recipients who reported using an online information source yesterday is about the same as the percentage that reported reading a book.

The master's degree recipients--a much small group overall--also were attracted to the web. Fully 17 of them looked for work there (11.9%), and nine (6.3%) reported being offered a job. Five actually took such a job, and the median salary for the group--small as it was--was \$31,000. The median salary for all master's degree recipients with full-time work was \$28,800.

It is important not to overestimate the importance of the figures. Many more students looked for work in the traditional places--such as at a daily newspaper or a television station. But it is important not to ignore them either. A year ago it was easier to be skeptical about the influence of the web on the journalism and mass communication job market. The experience of the 1996 graduates suggests theirs was the year the web started to make a difference--if only, at that time, a small one.

Participating Schools

The following schools participated in the 1996 Annual Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Graduates:

Alabama State University (AL)	Northwestern State U. of Louisiana (LA)
University of South Alabama (AL)	McNeese State University (LA)
Arizona State University (AZ)	University of Maryland (MD)
Arkansas State University (AR)	Emerson College (MA)
California State University (CA)	University of Massachusetts (MA)
California State University (CA)	Michigan State University (MI)
Humboldt State University (CA)	Oakland University (MI)
San Jose State University (CA)	University of St. Thomas (MN)
Santa Clara University (CA)	University of Minnesota (MN)
Azusa Pacific University (CA)	Rust College (MS)
University of Northern Colorado (CO)	University of Mississippi (MS)
University of Bridgeport (CT)	Central Missouri State University (MO)
University of Delaware (DE)	Lincoln University (MO)
Florida A & M University (FL)	Maryville University of Saint. Louis (MO)
University of Florida (FL)	University of Missouri--Kansas City (MO)
Clark Atlanta University (GA)	University of Montana (MT)
Berry College (GA)	Hastings College (NE)
Chaminade University of Honolulu (HI)	University of New Hampshire (NH)
University of Idaho (ID)	Rider University (NJ)
Columbia College Chicago (IL)	University of New Mexico (NM)
Northern Illinois University (IL)	Long Island University Brooklyn Campus (NY)
Northwestern University (IL)	New York University (NY)
Southern Illinois University (IL)	St. Bonaventure University (NY)
Purdue University (IN)	Syracuse University (NY)
University of Southern Indiana (IN)	Ithaca College (NY)
University of Iowa (IA)	Elon College (NC)
Wichita State University (KS)	Lenoir-Rhyne College (NC)
Eastern Kentucky University (KY)	University of North Carolina at Pembroke (NC)
University of Kentucky (KY)	Ohio State University (OH)
Union College (KY)	Ohio University (OH)
Northeast Louisiana University (LA)	Youngstown State University (OH)

Franciscan University of Steubenville (OH)

Oklahoma State University (OK)

Oral Roberts University (OK)

Southern Oregon State College (OR)

University of Oregon (OR)

Indiana University of Pennsylvania (PA)

Elizabethtown College (PA)

LaSalle University (PA)

University of Scranton (PA)

Tennessee Technological University (TN)

University of Tennessee--Martin (TN)

Stephen F. Austin State University (TX)

Texas A & M University (TX)

Texas Wesleyan University (TX)

University of Texas--Permian Basin (TX)

University of Texas--Tyler (TX)

Lamar University--Beaumont (TX)

Brigham Young University (UT)

Castleton State College (VT)

Virginia Union University (VA)

Regent University (VA)

Eastern Washington University (WA)

University of Washington (WA)

Bethany College (WV)

West Virginia State College (WV)

Marquette University (WI)

University of Wisconsin--Milwaukee (WI)

University of Wisconsin (WI)

University of Wyoming (WY)

Howard University (DC)

University of Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico)