

# Position Classification Flysheet for Visual Information Series, GS-1084

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## SERIES DEFINITION

This series includes positions which supervise or perform work involved in communicating information through visual means. Work in this series includes the design and display of such visual materials as photographs, illustrations, diagrams, graphs, objects, models, slides, and charts used in books, magazines, pamphlets, exhibits, live or video recorded speeches or lectures, and other means of communicating. The work requires knowledge of and ability to apply the principles of visual design; knowledge of the technical characteristics associated with various methods of visual display; and the ability to present subject matter information in a visual form that will convey the intended message to, or have the desired effect on, the intended audience.

This series coverage standard supersedes the position classification standard for this series, issued in April 1962.

## EXCLUSIONS

1. Classify in the [Office Automation Clerical and Assistance Series, GS-0326](#), positions that involve the use of computer graphics software packages to produce illustrations, charts, or graphs, or to lay out printed material, where established formats and ready-made images in the software offer little opportunity for the exercise of artistic judgment or skill beyond deciding the proportions and placement of ready-made visual elements on the page, poster, or transparency. Work of this kind is often performed in conjunction with typing and word processing duties.
2. Classify in the [Illustrating Series, GS-1020](#), positions that involve primarily laying out or executing illustrations or supervising illustration work only.
3. Classify in the [Photography Series, GS-1060](#), positions that involve primarily still, video, or motion picture camera work.
4. Classify in the [Public Affairs Series, GS-1035](#), positions that involve disseminating information about Government policies and activities through print and broadcast media, and advising management on potential public reaction to proposed policy.
5. Classify in the [Exhibits Specialist Series, GS-1010](#), positions that involve translating exhibit plans and designs into physical form, as opposed to planning and designing the overall appearance of exhibits up to the stage of production.
6. Classify in the [Audio-Visual Production Series, GS-1071](#), positions that involve the production of videotape, radio, motion picture, or other audiovisual presentations. Such positions involve planning, organizing, and directing the work of writers, actors, narrators, set designers, camera operators, sound technicians, and other audiovisual production personnel.

## OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION

This series covers positions whose incumbents select visual materials such as photographs, illustrations, models, and specimens to be used in the communication of information; design the placement and appearance of visual materials; design the placement of text in relation to art; decide type styles and typographical effects; and plan effective use of color schemes, textures, and shapes considering the technical constraints of a particular method of communication (i.e., printed publication, exhibit, or oral presentation).

Some positions combine visual information work as described above with personal production of finished illustrations, exhibits, and other visual products. This is particularly the case at small agencies utilizing a "generalist" approach in their visual arts organizations. These mixed positions are classified in this series when the work involves the design, production, and display of a variety of visual materials requiring a broader knowledge of the principles and techniques of visual design than is associated with the more specialized fields of illustrating, photography, or exhibits construction.

Some kinds of exhibits design assignments in this series involve the incorporation of sound effects, movies, video productions, and music into the total design. For positions involving the production of audio or video presentations that are complete products in their own right, see Exclusion 5. Other positions in this series involve the performance of typographical design and layout almost exclusively, often with the aid of specialized "desk top publishing" computer software programs. Also included in this series are positions whose incumbents are responsible for planning, organizing, and carrying out the visual information aspects of a public affairs program. Such positions involve long-range planning, participating in the development of the program with management officials, selecting the means of communication to be used, and determining where emphasis should be placed and resources should be used.

### *Means of Communicating Visual Information*

Visual information is most commonly communicated by means of printed material, exhibits, and oral presentations.

- Printed material includes books, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, posters, and other similar material which is reproduced by one of the printing processes.
- Exhibits may be either two- or three-dimensional and, in addition to printed material, make use of models, artifacts, specimens, dioramas, murals, audiovisual presentations, and electronic devices that permit viewers to access desired information or activate a display.
- Presentations generally consist of formal speeches, briefings, or training lectures using visual materials presented to the audience in the form of photographic slides, overhead transparencies, flip charts, and posters.

Regardless of the means of communication used, visual information specialists do not determine the subject matter content of the material, nor do they decide the audience to which the information is to be presented. However, they must be familiar with audience characteristics such as attitudes, age, and educational and interest level to select those visuals that are best suited to the intended audience. When suitable visual material is not available, they decide its basic content and form and arrange to have it produced by an illustrator, photographer, model maker, or other type of craftsman, or they may produce it themselves.

Work with the various means of visual communication requires knowledge of their technical characteristics and requirements. Although these are described separately below, in actual practice many covered positions work in all three areas.

### *Printed Material*

Employees working with printed material start with the text to be published. In some projects, the author may designate the passages to be illustrated, or the subject matter of the text may determine very specifically the kind and nature of illustrations needed. In other situations, however, employees must study the text to determine how it can best be visualized, or may work in concert with the author to develop the visual approach to the text. They recommend the passages to be illustrated, select the illustrative material to be used, and plan the appearance of each page.

Employees working with printed material must consider the information objectives of the assigned project and the purpose of the visualization. For example, illustrative material may be planned primarily to attract or retain reader attention, explain passages in the text by means of diagrams and illustrations, or emphasize and summarize important ideas and concepts expressed in the text. In photojournalism, the visual material serves as the major vehicle for communicating information.

Employees who design publications must be familiar with the technical characteristics of reproduction processes such as letterpress, gravure, offset, and screen printing. They must be able to judge the reproduction quality of illustrations, know the mechanics of cropping and scaling photos and illustrations, and know how art and copy are prepared for the printer. They must understand the advantages and limitations of the various printing processes, including reproduction costs, which is always a significant consideration in visual design.

### *Exhibits*

Employees in this series who work with exhibits perform functions similar to those connected with printed material, but the design considerations differ. While both the exhibits designer and the publications designer think and conceptualize in visual terms, the exhibits designer usually plans to communicate with a minimum of verbal material. Exhibits must be presented in a way that attracts the audience's attention and imparts information visually in a relatively short span of time. They may be designed to communicate simple ideas to a general audience, or may embody complex technical information and be aimed at a specialized, knowledgeable audience. Some,

principally museum exhibits, are designed to communicate at both levels at the same time. Still other exhibits may be designed to generate sales of Government-produced merchandise, such as coins or books.

Exhibits vary widely. Some are purely two-dimensional, consisting of murals or photo-montages plus captions mounted on a panel. Others include three-dimensional effects in the mounting of photographs or illustrations, or they include artifacts, specimens, or specially fabricated models. Some exhibits use moving models or create special effects by the use of special lighting, ripple tanks, slide projections, or video displays, or incorporate narration, music, and sound effects.

Employees designing exhibits must have a knowledge of the kinds of material and equipment used and an understanding of their capabilities and limitations. They use this knowledge and understanding to judge the information value of the materials or equipment in relation to such factors as durability, ease of fabrication, and cost.

### *Presentations*

Presentation visuals are two-dimensional and usually include captions and short texts in addition to illustrations, photographs, diagrams, charts, or reproductions on transparencies. The visuals used are viewed only once and must convey the intended information in the relatively short period of time they are displayed. These visuals are almost always accompanied by explanations presented by the speaker, and are rarely expected to convey the information on their own.

Like other means of visual information, presentations make use of visual materials that are adapted to the information to be communicated and the target audience. The subject matter of the visual material and the way it is presented must be considered against costs for the preparation of the visual material, the availability of display equipment, and the ease with which it can be used. Since many presentations are used only once, the costs of preparing and using visual materials must be carefully balanced against the information objectives.

## TITLES

Title nonsupervisory positions covered by this series as *Visual Information Specialist*. Agencies may add parenthetical titles of their choosing where further distinctions in the work are necessary for personnel management. (See the [Introduction to the Position Classification Standards](#) for more complete guidance on parenthetical titles.)

Use the title *Supervisory Visual Information Specialist* for positions that meet the definition of supervisor in the appropriate [general schedule supervisory guide](#).

## GRADING OF POSITIONS

Evaluate nonsupervisory positions by reference to the [Grade-Evaluation Guide for Visual Arts Work](#).

Evaluate supervisory positions by reference to the appropriate [general schedule supervisory guide](#).

Evaluate positions that involve overall planning and management of visual information programs by reference to the [Grade-Evaluation Guide for Visual Arts Work](#) and the position classification standard for the [Public Affairs Series, GS-1035](#).