

OCCUPATIONAL

INFORMATION

OVERVIEW

Richard S. Sharf

Occupational Information Overview

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≡ ***for Jane***

Preface

or

How to Use This Book

The purpose of this book is to provide an overview of occupational information. But first, it is important to understand how occupational information fits into the process of choosing a career. In a broad sense, the career choice process can be summarized in this way: first, individuals assess their interests, abilities, values, and personality; second, they learn about occupations; third, they make career decisions based on information about themselves and occupations; fourth, they learn about and initiate the job search process. This book is designed to assist with the second of the four phases—learning about occupations.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I introduces a number of occupational classification systems, along with their manuals and dictionaries; Part II presents summary information about a wide variety of occupations; Part III tells you how to get more detailed information about careers. This material can be approached in several ways, depending on whether it is used for a course, by an individual job seeker, or by a parent.

Career Exploration Course

This book can be used in high school, community college, or four-year college courses dealing with career exploration, career readiness, or vocational choice. It is designed to be used in conjunction with texts for career exploration courses or other self-assessment materials, such as tests or inventories. Recognizing that there are many excellent texts in career planning and career exploration, this book is designed to supplement them by providing information on occupations.

There are several ways of using this book, depending on the emphasis of the course. In general, instructors will select those chapters from Part I that they wish

to assign. For example, if the Strong Interest Inventory, Self-Directed Search, or Vocational Preference Inventory is used, then instructors will likely want to assign Chapter 2, Holland's Classification System. If instructors are using the California Occupational Preference System Interest Inventory or the Vocational Interest Inventory, they may wish to assign Chapter 3, Roe's Classification System. Assigning the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (Chapter 6) and/or the *Guide for Occupational Exploration* (Chapter 7) may be valuable not only in learning about these important classification systems, but also in learning about the types of information that it is useful to know about occupations.

In general, the Introduction and Chapter 1 are likely to prove good introductory material for all students, as they describe the place of occupational information in the career exploration process and the type of occupational information that is available in this book. At the end of each chapter in Part I is a series of questions and exercises. The questions are designed to help readers understand the classification systems; the exercises are intended to direct them toward the occupational information they will want to look at in Part II. Some instructors may wish to assign the introduction to each chapter in Part II, Summaries of Occupations; others may wish to let students choose the information to be used on the basis of their responses to tests, inventories, self-assessment exercises, or the exercises in Part I. Depending on the emphasis of the course, Part III may help students learn more about occupations and jobs.

Graduate Counseling Course

This book can be a useful supplement to texts in courses on career counseling, career testing, career development theory, and introduction to guidance. After 20 years of counseling clients with career issues, it is my view that counselors should know how to classify and organize occupational information and should have at least some basic information about a variety of careers. In particular, it is helpful to have some knowledge of careers found on occupational scales that are part of many interest inventories that counselors use. Clients often ask about, and expect counselors to have, information about specific occupations. Although it is difficult for counselors to be encyclopedic in their knowledge, it is not impossible for them to have an overview of career possibilities.

Because there are many ways to use this book with a variety of courses, the chapters are independent of one another. The possible exception is that it is helpful to read Chapter 6, *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*, before reading Chapter 7, *Guide for Occupational Exploration System*. You may wish to assign the Introduction and Chapter 1 because they provide an overview of classification systems and of the occupational information described in Part II. Chapters can be assigned along with specific tests and inventories. For example, if the Self-Directed Search is being

discussed in class, reading Chapter 2, Holland's Classification System, would be appropriate; if the California Occupational Preference System Interest Inventory is being explained, then it would be helpful to assign Chapter 3, Roe's Classification System. The book describes two common dictionaries that are somewhat complex: Chapter 6, Dictionary of Occupational Titles, and Chapter 7, Guide for Occupational Exploration System. Instructors will need to decide which classification systems are relevant to their other materials. The questions and exercises will help graduate students make sure that they understand the systems and their relevance to career choice by having them use the organizational systems to find careers they are considering. Part II contains information on occupations that can be assigned in several ways: having students read one chapter per week, read only the introductions to the chapters and limited career information, or select specific careers that they wish to learn more about.

First-Time Job Seeker or Experienced Job Seeker Changing Fields

If you have a fairly good idea of the types of occupations that you want to learn more about, this book can be helpful; if not, it may prove frustrating because the amount of occupational information may be overwhelming. To use this book, it may be best first to read the Introduction and Chapter 1 and then to select chapters to examine in Part II. Once you have read information about some occupations, it will be useful to return to Part I to learn more about the organization of occupations. The end-of-chapter exercises in Part I will help you select careers to examine. Then you can return to Part II for more occupational information. Part III will explain what to do next to learn more about specific occupations, job information, and resources.

Experienced Job Seeker Staying in the Same Field

In general, this book offers little help for experienced job seekers, because it is an overview of occupational information. Experienced job seekers often know a considerable amount about their current field. However, there are types of situations in which this book may be of assistance. First, for certain jobs it is helpful to have an overview of the occupational area when looking for employment. For example, someone who is looking for a job as a health administrator may wish to review the information on health careers, their salaries, and employment prospects. Second, some job seekers may find it useful to develop an overall sense of the labor market to see how their field compares with others. If either of these reasons applies, it may be worthwhile to read the Introduction and Chapter 1 and then read about selected occupations in Part II. Also, Chapter 5, Standard Industrial Classification System, and Chapter 23, Job Information, may assist experienced job seekers in locating job possibilities.

Parents

Parents often want to advise their children so that they will be successful in their career choices. Because occupational information is not always readily available and is often sensationalized or distorted by newspapers, television, or radio, the task can be a difficult one. This book can be of help by providing an overview of occupations commonly found in the United States. Comparing careers may be quite useful. The Introduction and Chapter 1 would be particularly important to read. The Introduction briefly discusses the biggest mistake that some students and parents make when considering careers: ignoring the student's interests, abilities, personality, and values and focusing exclusively on occupational information. After reading the Introduction and Chapter 1, you may want to select those chapters in Part II that seem most appropriate for you to learn about. After that, you may want to return to other chapters in Part I to get a more detailed overview of the occupational organization of the United States. Also, learning how to use the occupational dictionaries will give you information about important resources and illustrate the kind of information it is important to know about occupations (Chapters 6 and 7). Finally, Part III shows where to get more information about occupations and jobs.

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Richard S. Sharf

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Introduction

Before discussing how this book provides occupational information, it will be helpful to explain how the search for occupational information fits into the career choice process. Almost all theories of career choice (Sharf, 1992) follow the same general approach, including these four phases: self-assessment, occupational information acquisition, decision making, and job seeking.

Self-assessment refers to the process of examining one's interests, abilities, values, and personality. This assessment usually involves the use of ability and aptitude tests, as well as interest and personality inventories. Many helpful self-assessment books and exercises are also available. After some progress has been made in self-assessment, it is then helpful to find occupational information appropriate to the individual's interests, ability, values, and personality. If people approach the career choice process directly, bypassing the self-assessment phase, they are likely to be overwhelmed by the vast amount of occupational information available. Trying to absorb hundreds of facts about different occupations can be too confusing. The use of this book, then, assumes some prior self-assessment.

When self-assessment is used to guide the acquisition of occupational information, it then becomes easier to make a temporary or partial career decision. When people read career information (in this or another book) after self-assessment, they can ask themselves, "Does this occupation fit my own needs (interests, abilities, personality, and values)?" In many ways, this career decision process never ends. People often ask themselves, "Is the work that I'm doing, or the activities I have chosen for retirement, appropriate for me now, or do I want to find something else?" Finally, the person who is ready to look for a job must use job search strategies, which may include résumé writing, networking, and interviewing. Many excellent books deal with this final phase of job seeking.

This book consists of three parts, all of which concern occupational information. Part I, Organizing Occupations, explains classification systems and their use in finding and understanding occupational information. Part II, Summaries of Occupations, provides summaries of 509 specific occupations (234, broadly defined), organized into 13 occupational groups. The information is presented in brief form so that readers can learn the basics about many occupations. Part III, More Information, describes where and how readers can obtain more information about occupations and jobs.

Three words will be used frequently in this book: job, occupation, and career. *Job* refers to work done for an employer for pay. *Occupation* refers to the type of work that an individual does. *Career* refers to a commitment to an occupation, or a series of related occupations, for a good portion of one's life. For example, if someone works in the XYZ Restaurant as a restaurant manager, that person is said to have a *job* with the XYZ Restaurant. His or her *occupation* is restaurant manager. The same individual may have also been a cook, assistant manager, or dishwasher. These are occupations within his or her *career* of food service. The person may further advance in his or her career to become a regional manager of several restaurants. The emphasis in this book will be on occupations rather than jobs or careers, but all will be discussed.

Because there are more than 17,000 occupations in the United States, it is important to be able to classify them into categories. Part I of this book describes seven different occupational classification systems. There are three advantages in learning about classification systems. First, occupational classification systems provide a way of grouping similar occupations into a manageable number of categories. This means that if you know how one occupation is classified, you can find similar ones that you didn't know existed.

Second, occupational classification systems provide different views of occupations. In some ways, looking at occupations is like looking at a whale. If you look at the whale from the top, you have one view of the whole; if you look at it from the back, you have another view of it; and if you look at it from the side, you have yet another view. Occupational classification systems give you the feeling that you have looked at all parts of the whale, not just at one portion. In turn, this dispels the concern that there may be some occupations you have not considered. Furthermore, grouping occupations into manageable categories helps you find out which groups of occupations you are interested in and which ones you are not.

Third, occupational classification systems provide an indirect method of self-assessment. Selecting careers of interest within a category, or selecting occupations within a narrow group of careers, implies that the selection is based on a combination of one's interests, abilities, personality, and/or values. This book provides an opportunity to use this form of self-assessment in Part I and then find relevant career information in Part II. As noted earlier, however, prior self-assessment through books, counseling, or self-reflection is helpful before making use of this book.

Part II, Summaries of Occupations, provides an overview of about 500 of the most popular occupations. The information is intended to be very brief and should not be considered sufficient for making career choices. However, it does provide an overview of a number of occupations and can give you an idea of which ones may be of interest to you. The introduction to each of the 13 occupational groups discusses the common characteristics of occupations within that group, providing information on occupational advancement, working conditions, and certification and licensure. The occupations within each of the 13 groups are classified using an observational method that is described in more detail in Chapter 1. The information provided on each occupation includes a description of the occupation, educational requirements, salary overview, the number of people employed in the field, anticipated changes in employment, and comments about employment prospects in that occupation.

Part III describes where and how to obtain more information about occupations, including material that expands upon the information in Part II as well as new material. Written sources of information about specific jobs and strategies for getting a job, writing a résumé, and interviewing for a job are discussed briefly in Part III, and important human resources are also described.

In summary, this book will help you develop a broad, yet manageable, view of occupations available in the United States. It will also make the occupational search process clearer by helping you eliminate occupations that you are not interested in exploring. Finally, it will help in career exploration by offering suggestions for finding detailed occupational and job information in other sources.

P A R T

I

ORGANIZING OCCUPATIONS

In this part of the book, seven different occupational classification systems are described. Each system has advantages and disadvantages for organizing and learning about occupations. Chapter 1, An Observational Classification System, explains how occupations are classified in this book. The advantage of the system is that, by grouping similar occupations, it facilitates the process of learning basic information about many occupations. Chapter 2, Holland's Classification System, describes a widely used and accepted method of classifying people and work environments using combinations of six different types of work environments. Chapter 3, Roe's Classification System, outlines a system with eight groups and six levels of occupations. The three systems explained in Chapters 1, 2, and 3 are relatively easy to understand but do not offer as detailed a classification system as do the others that are described next. Chapter 4 explains the Standard Occupational Classification System, which classifies occupations into divisions, major groups, minor groups, and unit groups. In Chapter 5, the Standard Industrial Classification System is discussed. Rather than categorize occupations, it categorizes industries—where people work, rather than what they do. Chapter 6, Dictionary of Occupational Titles, describes one of the most widely used classification systems. Because of this source's wide use, the chapter describes many features of the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*, so that you can learn the meaning of the codes and of the abbreviated information that follows each occupational description. Chapter 7 describes the Guide for Occupational Exploration System, a detailed classification system based on interest factors related to occupations. This system is often used along with the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*. The chapter also discusses the *Guide for Occupational Exploration* and the *Enhanced Guide for Occupational Exploration*, which provide detailed information about 2500 careers, and explains a method for using the *Enhanced Guide for Occupational Exploration*.