

Maria Burns

Graphic designer

Environmental Resource Management



I'm a graphic designer, and I recently worked at an environmental consulting firm called ERM (Environmental Resource Management). While I was there, I designed sustainability reports for ERM's clients, which were big-name companies like Zillow. Each client project had a small team of ERM people that included a project manager, one or two consultants (who did most of the research and writing of the report), an art director (who I reported to), and a designer (me!). This team worked closely with each other and with a small group of people from the client company. For each project, I received a Word document of the report that was written by other people who work at ERM, and then I turned that plain text into the final report that gets published, either digitally or in print. I used the client company's brand identity (which includes things like fonts, colors, and photography) to make sure that the report looked like their other branded materials, and I often created custom illustrations, infographics, charts, and graphs.



Skills used: The most important skills at this job were the ability to use the Adobe Suite (especially InDesign, Illustrator, and Photoshop) and the understanding of page design. Page design includes things like fonts and colors, as well knowing how people absorb information. It's also important to know how to use a company's brand standards to create something new that still looks like it's part of that company. Being a graphic designer at any company also requires organization, to manage several project schedules at the same time; communication, to discuss project requirements and present concepts; and attention to detail, to ensure the final design is consistent and error-free.



Recommendations to youth: If you're interested in ecology and the environment, but you don't really like your science or math classes, know that there are other ways to be involved in the industry. Designers and illustrators work in all business sectors, including environmental ones. You'll find designers at scientific publications like the Nature magazine, government agencies like the EPA, and non-profits like the National Audubon Society.

To learn more about a few of the many careers that connect with climate and climate change, visit go.osu.edu/climate-careers/.



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