

# HARPERCOLLINS VS PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE: A COMPARISON OF MAJOR COMPANIES IN THE BOOK PUBLISHING INDUSTRY OF THE UNITED STATES

ENG W231: FIRST PLACE

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## **Abstract**

There are countless employment options for those looking to enter the field of literary editing in America. This report compares the merits of the two biggest publishing houses, Penguin Random House and HarperCollins Publishing House, through the eyes of a prospective editing employee. The job opportunities, demographics, values, and employee feedback of each company are analyzed in an effort to identify the superior work environment. A heavy emphasis is placed on how these factors align with the personal goals of the researcher. Simultaneously, the data provided allows readers to draw their own conclusions as to which publishing company most closely aligns with their own goals. In this way the report works to provide data for the reader to conclude which publishing house, if either, would be the best fit for them as a place to seek employment as an editor.

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## **Introduction**

Those wishing to enter the field of book editing have several options of publishing houses to consider for employment. At first glance, many may seem extremely similar in their characteristics and functions. However, there are many factors which differentiate the

major companies and allow each individual to identify the qualities of highest importance to them when considering their career goals and whether or not select companies possess said qualities.

There are many options of large publishing houses with which I could potentially seek employment. The five largest across the world, in order, are, "Pearson Education, Penguin Random House, Hachette Group, HarperCollins, and John Wiley & Sons" (Mazur, 2023). However, Pearson Education and Hachette Group are not listed as American-based, as I would like my future employer to be, eliminating them from my consideration. Singling out top companies in the business, I decided that for my purposes I would like to work at the biggest and most successful company possible, as these types of companies will have the most job opportunities for me, particularly remote ones.

So, given the information about top publishing houses, I chose to narrow my research to the top two eligible ones. Thus, this analytical paper covers the merits of Penguin Random House and HarperCollins exclusively. By studying them, it has come to light which company will best serve my own career needs. This report can be utilized by extension for any person attempting to choose whether Penguin Random House or HarperCollins would be a better fit for them based on the determining qualities of their job opportunities, demographics, values, and employee insights.

### **My Career Goals**

For the purpose of this report to be fulfilled, I must first identify what it is I am looking for in a career. My aspiration is to edit books, likely starting at a lower position in a publishing house and working my way up to a higher ranking. In order to align with my intentions of working from home while raising a family, any jobs which I take with the company must be remote. Therefore, it is vital that I find a company which offers many opportunities for such positions. I am not highly concerned with pay; however, I do need a job that

would allow me to make more than my current position to justify the change. Therefore, I need a full-time job with a minimum annual salary of \$30,000. I analyzed both companies to see which lists job openings with suitable pay for the standards to which I hold myself.

I would not only like a company that is suitable for me, but one which thinks I am suitable for them. My personality type likes to blend in, so I would want a place where there are many others doing work in a similar manner. This includes both the remote aspects and demographic aspects of similarity. I have no desire to work in a male-dominated environment, so I should find a publishing house where that is not the case.

My personal values are another factor which I hold in high regard when contemplating my future career prospects. I intend never to compromise my beliefs and therefore need a publishing house that does not require I do so. I want to work for a place whose mission statement aligns with my own values. Working at a Christian publishing house would be great for this; however, they are much smaller and therefore more competitive. This also means that they are less likely to have remote positions, so I must pursue a job at a larger publishing house and simply carefully select one which will allow me to uphold my religious morals.

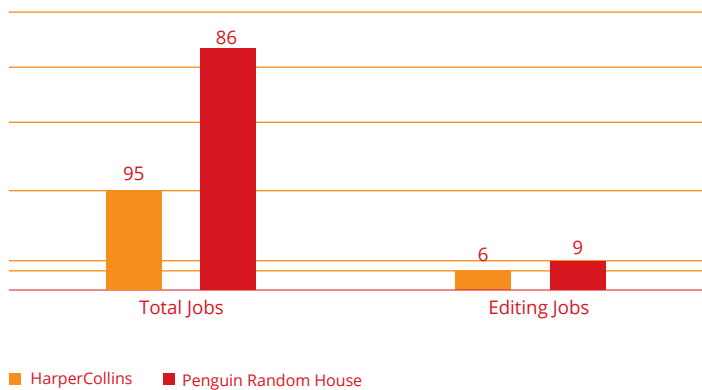
There are also values my personality which I would ideally like to see reflected in the company which I work for. If I am to be a representative of their brand, then I firmly believe that I should conform to the same core values as said company. The three qualities which I hold in highest esteem are honesty, a strong work ethic, and accountability. Identifying a company which holds similar values to these would be synonymous with finding a company with an environment in which I can be comfortable and successful.

These are the matters most important to me with which to deduce the publishing house that would be the best fit for me personally.

### Job Opportunities

I went to both the LinkedIn and Indeed pages of both Penguin Random House and HarperCollins to estimate the quantity of such jobs available. Of course, this is not directly reflective of the positions which will be open when I begin applying for such jobs in a few years. However, they can be used as reference points with which to infer the types of jobs offered, and the relative percentage of which are remote.

**Figure 1** - Editing Job Availability

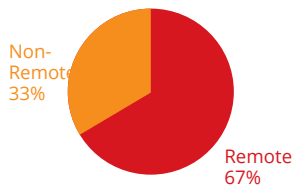


**Figure 1.** Data from “Penguin Random House,” “HarperCollins Publishers,” “Penguin Jobs and Careers,” “HarperCollins Careers and Employment,” all from Indeed, 2023.

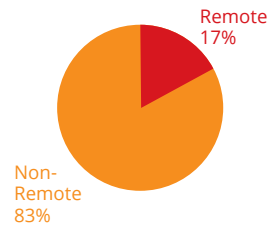
A summary of each company is provided on LinkedIn. This gave me the information that HarperCollins currently has roughly 4,070 employees and 31 open jobs there (“HarperCollins Publishers,” 2023). Meanwhile, Penguin Random House is listed as having 7,875 employees and 46 open positions on LinkedIn (“Penguin Random House,” 2023). Indeed lists 86 jobs under Penguin Random House, significantly more than the amount advertised on LinkedIn (“Penguin Jobs and Careers,” 2023). There are more job listings for HarperCollins as well, though by a less drastic margin as only 35 are registered (“HarperCollins Careers and Employment,” 2023). Given that there are

many duplicate postings on the two sites, I will be referencing the data of the site with more listings, being Indeed, as the basis of my analysis. From there, I compiled the number of jobs which were specifically listed as editing positions and how many of those editing positions were open to remote workers on both sites. The percentages of such positions, being those applicable to my own interests, are presented in the charts below.

**Figure 2** - HarperCollins Remote Editing Jobs



**Figure 3** - Penguin Random House Remote Editing Jobs



**Figure 2.** Data from "HarperCollins Careers and Employment."

**Figure 3.** Data from "Penguin Jobs and Careers." Both from Indeed, 2023.

This data reflects the fact that Penguin Random House has far more job opportunities than HarperCollins, nearly double in fact. Given the data points of six total editing jobs at HarperCollins in comparison to nine editing jobs at Penguin Random House, there are relatively more editing jobs offered through HarperCollins ("Penguin Jobs and Careers," Indeed, 2023; "HarperCollins Careers and Employment," Indeed, 2023). Editing positions take up roughly 17.14% of their listings while only 10.47% of Penguin Random House's job postings are referring to an editing job. This is certainly something to consider, rather than singularly focusing on the quantity of jobs. Further, the pie charts depict the percentage of editing jobs within each company that offer remote options, not including those described as hybrid

positions. Only one of the six HarperCollins jobs could be remote (“HarperCollins Careers and Employment,” Indeed, 2023). Of the nine Penguin Random House editing jobs, six were remote, and they had far more overall remote positions as well (32 of 86) (“Penguin Jobs and Careers,” Indeed, 2023). This means that the company as a whole likely offers more remote jobs, making it a better fit for someone like me. The jobs currently available are not the same ones that will be when I am applying, but they are indicative of the options I will presumably have and currently suggest that I will have far more luck finding a remote job with Penguin Random House.

In studying these job listings, it also became clear that pay would not be an issue as all editing jobs, with the exception of internships, paid over my minimum threshold. Further, I am more than open to starting at a lower paying position and growing within the company. So, the biggest factor in deciding the appropriate company for me remains centered on the availability of remote editing jobs with little consideration needed for salary at this time.

### Demographics

**Figure 4** - HarperCollins Demographics

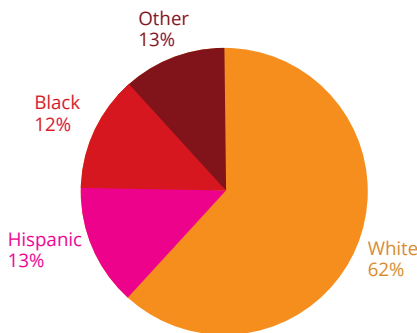


Figure 4. Data from “HarperCollins Demographics and Statistics,” Zippia, 2023.

**Figure 5 - Penguin Random House Demographics**

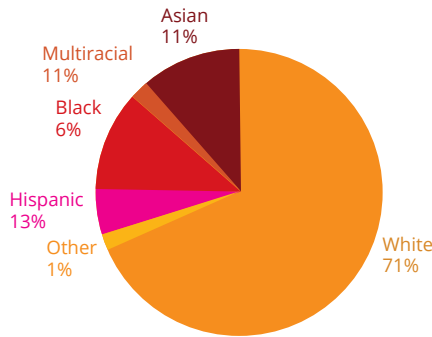


Figure 5. Data from *“Our People,” Penguin Random House, 2023.*

It was previously mentioned that I desire a work environment where I will fit in. This may be less necessary working remotely, but it is still something I strive for. The demographics of each company were therefore a keystone of my research. It was found that, “57% of HarperCollins employees are women, while 43% are men. (*“HarperCollins Demographics,” 2023, para. 1.*) At Penguin Random House, it was found that roughly 73.5% of employees were female, 24.94% were male, and 1.32% were listed as nonbinary (*“Our People,” 2023*). The racial demographics of the two companies were fairly similar as well.

Looking at the two data sets side by side, the racial demographics seem relatively similar. I am a proponent of diversity, particularly in a creative field like editing. HarperCollins is slightly more diverse, with 38% of employees being non-white, while only 29.95% of Penguin Random House employees are reported as non-white. This diversity would promote the expression of multiple cultural perspectives to produce the most effectively edited books. So, HarperCollins’ diversity is advantage, but not necessarily a major consideration for me personally as I would be a member of the

majority working at either publishing house.

The gender statistics are of greater importance to me. I want to be in a work environment which is supportive of women and both companies appear to do that. At Penguin Random House, however, women hold a far greater majority than they do at HarperCollins. Based on these numbers I feel that I could be comfortable with the demographics and inclusion at either company, but Penguin Random House may statistically fit me a little better as a white woman.

### **Company Values**

All these factors will play a significant role in my ultimate decision. As both companies have the potential abilities to meet my functionality needs, the determining factor will be my alignment with the individual values of each company. Said values are identifiable by the analysis of the mission statements of each company and the opinions of employees themselves.

The mission statement of Penguin Random House was positive, but fairly vague. It is clear, however, that their main intent is to “ignite a universal passion for reading by creating books for everyone. We believe that books, and the stories and ideas they hold, have the unique capacity to connect us, change us, and carry us toward a better future...” (“Our Story,” 2023). This is an inspirational sentiment which I support. I agree with the acknowledgement of the power which books hold. The page later states that they, “fiercely protect our authors’ intellectual property and champion freedom of expression” (“Our Story,” 2023). This embodies my values of honesty and integrity. The fact that they chose to include such language indicates that such qualities are of high importance to the company, which is encouraging. I am also a strong proponent of free speech and feel that these words reflect my own beliefs, meaning Penguin Random House’s values are similar to my own.

As for HarperCollins, their mission statement was similarly

vague, reading, "We strive to be the best possible partner for our authors, our employees, our community, and our planet. We are constantly seeking ways to make the world a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable place" ("Our Values," 2023). These are important efforts, however they are not a top priority for me personally. It reflects the fact that HarperCollins cares about the world around them, but not in the same way I do. Their philanthropy efforts, promoting world literacy, are a great program which I would love to support as an employee and certainly align with my beliefs about helping others. Freedom of expression is also highlighted, setting them on a near even bar with Penguin Random House. Their dedication to sustainability and inclusivity is also compatible with my core value of accountability. They are seeing solutions through a strong work ethic. Though environmental sustainability is not a main priority for me, the values which such an investment represents are similar to all three of my own core values, making HarperCollins morally a good place for me to seek employment.

### **Employee Insights**

Another benefit of the Indeed website is that it provides survey feedback from employees of each company. The overall workplace well-being of Penguin Random Houses was rated as a 69 and average ("Penguin Random House: Work Wellbeing," 2023). This was right on the line as HarperCollins received a rating of below average for a score of 68. So, the two are very similar in overall opinion.

The site also provides a breakdown of individual categories. Most were ranked "average" for both companies. There were a few outliers to this rule, however, as Penguin Random House received a "below average" in the levels of appreciation, support, and energy felt in the workplace, as well as the quality of management ("Penguin Random House: Work Wellbeing," 2023). It is worth noting that they also received an "above average" in pay compensation, a category in

which HarperCollins earned a score of “below average.” HarperCollins also scored a “below average” in support, inclusion, management, trust, and sense of belonging. They received a complete “low” in terms of how stress-free the work environment is (“HarperCollins Careers and Employment: Work Wellbeing,” 2023). The happiness, sense of purpose, job satisfaction, sense of achievement, flexibility, and learning opportunities at both companies was consistently described as “average” (“Penguin Random House: Work Wellbeing,” 2023; “HarperCollins Careers and Employment: Work Wellbeing, 2023).

Taking all of this into consideration, I must determine which of these factors are most important to me. The dramatic difference in compensation between the two businesses certainly stands out, as does the seemingly stressful environment which HarperCollins allegedly provides. Lack of appreciation, support, and energy at Penguin Random House may be emotionally taxing, but it is preferable to not trusting the company which you work for and not feeling as though you belong.

Another survey done by Zippia compiled data points for both companies. The one most applicable to me was the retention rates of each company. It was found that the average employee stayed with Penguin Random House for 6.2 years (“Penguin Demographics,” 2023). Meanwhile, “employees at HarperCollins stay with the company for 5.1 years on average,” (“HarperCollins Demographics,” 2023). This is not an extreme discrepancy, but it does prove that Penguin Random House employees stay with the company nearly 20% longer than HarperCollins employees do. Being willing to stay with the company longer suggests that employees are happier and more satisfied with working at Penguin Random House.

These survey results show both the pros and cons of each company from the reliable source of former employees. It is life advice with which to make my own future decisions. Gaining this knowledge about the environment of HarperCollins and Penguin Random House

is the final piece of information which allows me to make a logical decision as to which publishing house would be the best place for me to work.

## **Conclusion**

Taking all of this into consideration, there is a clear winner. In terms of job opportunities there are certainly more editing positions to be offered at Penguin Random House, thus making it easier for me to find not only a remote job there, but a job I am interested in. The internships listed on Indeed would be a great start for gaining experience even before graduating. This is an opportunity not provided by HarperCollins. The feedback on Indeed also allowed me to see the high quality of the pay at Penguin Random House in comparison to the “below average” pay at HarperCollins.

Both of the companies offered diversity in demographics. However, the number of female employees at Penguin Random House impressed me far more than that of HarperCollins. Though it is not a huge difference, it does mean that I would be slightly more comfortable at Penguin Random House in terms of fitting in demographically.

As far as values go, both companies appear to present themselves in a positive way. Deeper analysis saw HarperCollins emulating the factors of accountability and a strong work ethic. Penguin Random House more closely reflected my core value of honesty, and a strong work ethic as well. A major focus of HarperCollins was sustainability, which is not a priority for me, but does not subtract from my opinion of the company. Both companies seem to equally reflect my personal values.

After this research I have concluded that I could be happy at either publishing house if I were able to find a remote editing position there. The morals of both companies were closely aligned with my own. Penguin Random House possess slightly better demographic prospects. The biggest point of all for me was finding remote positions

specifically and, as displayed in the charts, Penguin Random House by far has the most remote options to offer. All of these things in combination are what make Penguin Random House the best place for me to work one day. ■

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