

focus on urban development, Michigan will increase its appeal, and attract the people and commerce that forms the backbone of the Creative Class.

¹ Michigan Economic Development Corporation (<http://www.themedc.org/>)

² Hyatt, Michael S. "The Top Ten Publishers In America" (http://www.michaelhyatt.com/fromwhereisit/2006/12/the_top_ten_pub.html). "From Where I Sit," 20 December 2005.

³ "Top 100 US Newspapers By Circulation," (<http://www.thepaperboy.com/usa-top-100-newspapers.cfm>). The Paperbooy.com.

⁴ Robert Fogel, *The Fourth Great Awakening and the Future of Egalitarianism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000, p. 191.

⁵ U.S. Bureau of Labor (<http://www.bls.gov/>)

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Creating Opportunities for Michigan Writers

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Who? What?

Why?

When?

Where?

For nearly a century, Michigan stood a shining Mecca of manufacturing. So long as business was booming, blue-collar opportunity was plentiful. In recent decades however, many of the old jobs have been eliminated; and Michigan must shift towards a greater demand for creative jobs. Michigan must now be more reliant on imagination than elbow grease. Trends show increasing numbers of college graduates leave Michigan in order to find work. Their argument? There's just not enough opportunity to go around.

And yet, one cannot help but wonder how different the professional landscape might be here in Michigan if more of us were inclined to stick around and create our own opportunities...

Who benefits from job creation?

Who?

2005 statistics show that 0.5% of businesses in the Lansing and Metro Detroit areas and 0.4% around Grand Rapids are classified in publishing industries¹. This means that, as professional writers, there are only a small percentage of companies here in Michigan specifically tailored to our skills. However, we know that our skill set is applicable in so many other ways: professional writing jobs connect companies and groups to the general public; not just through advertising, but websites, newsletters, and other innovative media. Say the auto industry comes up with a great but complicated way of reducing vehicular emissions – we are the ones who make that easy to understand for the non-engineers of the world and more than likely add to its success. We also create a demand and much-needed support for local culture: nightlife, live music, museums, restaurants, etc. Companies need to be more aware of what we can do for them so as to create incentive for them to make said jobs. It goes full circle: they help us, we help them.

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What type of writing is most lacking in Michigan?

What?

With an abundance of professional writers in Michigan and lack of available jobs, now is the time to appeal to graduates by expanding on the writing sectors all around Michigan that it lacks in. Michigan's publishing sector is quite lacking, taking nowhere near advantage of this growing

sector. Of the top 10 publishing companies in the nation, not one is based in Michigan². As it stands, the publishing companies Michigan has aren't well known either. Michigan doesn't place much emphasis on news writing either, as evidenced through the fact that the state's most prominent newspaper ranks 23rd nationally³. Additionally, Michigan lacks a real emphasis in

technical writing, a field that has experienced a significant increase in demand since 2006. To put it bluntly, Michigan is lacking in nearly every writing field. Is it any wonder then that a recent poll of Professional Writing majors revealed that just 9% planned on remaining in-state after graduation? By helping to foster the growth of the Creative sector, Michigan

promises to keep more writers in state post-graduation. This would in turn lend itself to a cultivation of the rich urban diversity that has proven to be essential in attracting members of the Creative Class.

Why should writers view job creation as essential?

Why?

Author Robert Fogel⁴ says it best by explaining that: 'growing segments of the population work for challenge, enjoyment, to do good, to make a contribution, and to learn. Such motivations will eventually eclipse compensation.' And isn't that the point? We (writers) are striving to obtain a higher education because we want to be engaged in projects that are meaningful. Involved with jobs that at the end of the day leave us with a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. The only

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problem is that our ideal jobs, in many cases, have yet to be created! With programs like MSU's Professional Writing major, it's clear that academia has identified this need, and adapted their course offerings accordingly. All that remains is for this creative need to be translated into something the public sector views as not only positive, but essential.

When is it appropriate for writers to create their own opportunity?

When?

There has never been a more appropriate time for Michigan to shift its rebuilding efforts towards the development of creative jobs.

Between Jan. 2000 and Oct. 2008, the State of Michigan lost over 13,000 information related jobs⁵. This trend cannot be allowed to continue if Michigan hopes to regain its competitive footing in the decades to come. Michigan is at a turning point. We need something different. By creating our own

opportunities, as writers, we can contribute to Michigan's future in a way that helps to jump-start our economy and fuels Michigan's reemergence as a national player. Instead of waiting, hoping that the right opportunity comes along, we ought to consider creating our own opportunities! Florida explains in his book *The Rise of the Creative Class*; that in the absence of opportunity it becomes our responsibility (as members of the "creative class") to address our needs by carving out our own niche. Or, as Bob Younce, author of the blog *The Writing*

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Journey puts it: "opportunities aren't discovered, they are created. It's nothing new, but it is revolutionary." Younce seizes upon a notion that is steadily gaining momentum within the creative community: where creation of opportunity is concerned, the time is now!

Where in Michigan is the greatest potential for job creation?

Where?

While a thirteen percent projected growth of jobs in Detroit in the information sector seems dismal, on the optimistic side it is a growth. The areas presenting job growth for professional writers in Michigan are urban areas and suburbia, including Detroit.

According to a report from Michigan Future Inc., building up and revamping Michigan's central cities are key to advancing the economy in Michigan. Urban cities not only provide economic growth, but they foster the creative individual by featuring a cultural tapestry as diverse as the beautiful

architecture that frames it. With such a mixture of cultures and lifestyles, there are unique opportunities to nurture the creative soul and inspire them as well. Richard Florida states in his book *Rise of the Creative Class*, "An attractive place doesn't have to be a big city, but it has to be cosmopolitan – a place where anyone can find a peer group to be comfortable with, and also find other groups to be stimulated by; a place seething with the interplay of cultures and ideas; a place where outsiders can quickly become insiders." The urban landscape offers many means through which it's creative inhabitants acquire inspiration. By increasing the