

PW IN THE JOB MARKET

The career pathways available to professional writers are very diverse in nature. From the survey, it was found that many alumni chose to pursue web authoring and technical writing associated careers (web developer, interactive designer, Google account coordinator). Others have moved on to one of a variety of editing positions (client editor, Grand Traverse Insider writer), and still more have become involved with communications (communications coordinator), public relations (PR Contactor), and even education (7th Grade English, assistant language teacher).

Those who took the survey represented each of the three PW tracks: 57% graduated with Editing and Publishing degrees, 31% with Digital and Technical Writing, and 17% with Communities and Cultures (two had dual degrees). However, not all graduates are working in a track-correlated field. Digital and Technical Writing graduates seemed to work in a correlating field most often, and they were joined by some of those with Editing and Publishing degrees.

THE FUTURE OF MICHIGAN

So, how will Michigan appeal to professional writers in the future? Right now, the state's major city is Detroit and the thriving metropolis surrounding it. However, cities like Grand Rapids and the Lansing/East


Lansing area have a lot of potential as well. A choice has to be made: should policy makers focus on Detroit and bring potential PW jobs to the Motor City? Or should efforts be directed towards smaller, but equally successful cities that are less well-known?

Once officials decide in which direction the state should be taken, steps can be made to develop an area and carve out a specific niche here in Michigan specifically for professional writing jobs.

professional writing @msu

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11/11/2008

Where Are MSU PW Alumni Now?

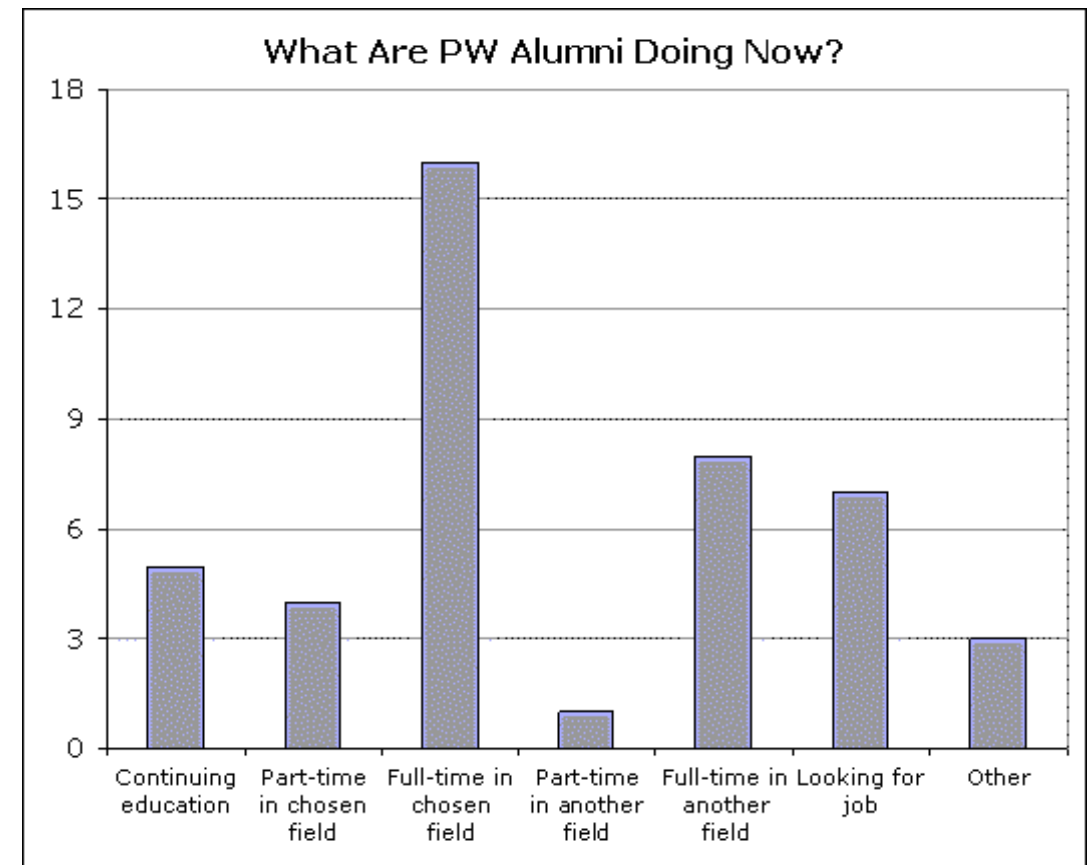
Sarah Aldrich
Kathleen Dobruse
Laura Dzik
Maxwell Pickering

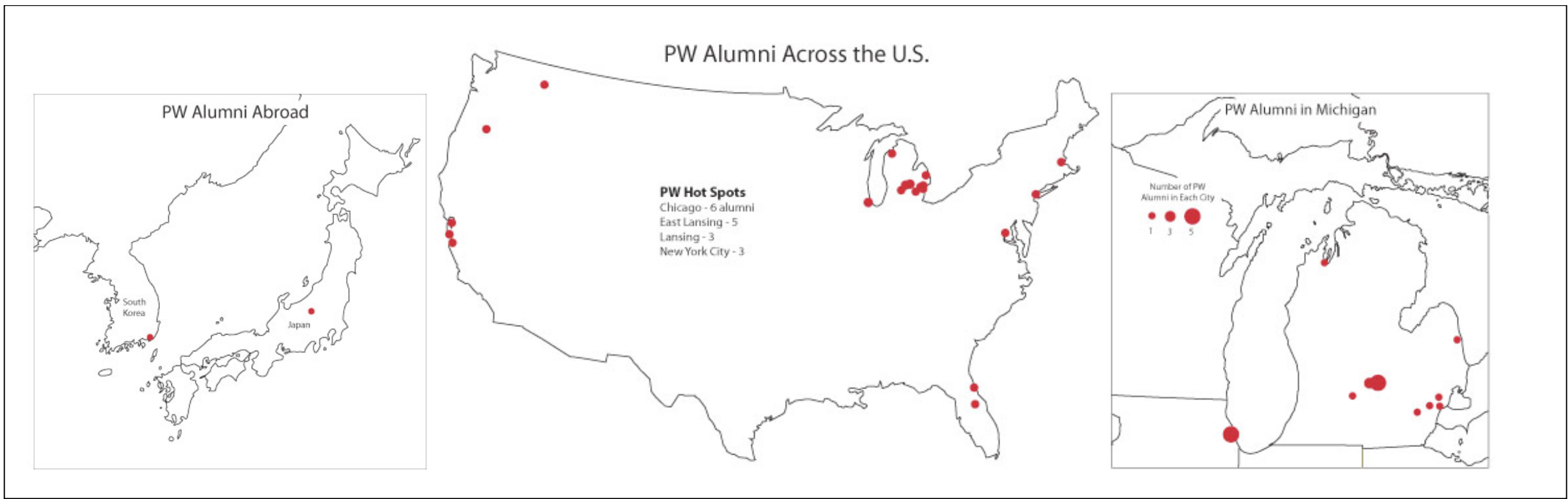
November 2008

INTRODUCTION

Professional writing is a field that requires passion, creativity, flexibility, and

dedication. It can literally take you wherever you want to go. Our survey of 35 PW alumni shows current students and where the field has taken them, both physically and within the arena of the creative class market. The results exemplify jobs held in the market and directions that can be taken with different degrees and areas of study. The research gives students a better idea of what kind of jobs exist for those with PW degrees and where they are by locating PW alumni geographically. Visually, policymakers and professional writers alike can see where the creative class is concentrated.





PW ALUMNI IN MICHIGAN

Thirty-four of the thirty-five PW alumni respondents said that they had grown up in Michigan. From the data collected, roughly 44% of PW alumni stayed in Michigan after graduating. When these current Michigan residents were asked why they chose to live here, most provided several reasons. The biggest single factor was family. Of those who stayed in-state, 40% cited family as a factor, compared to just 25% of those who moved out-of-state. One-third said they remained in state because of a specific job. Only 20% of these respondents cited the current job market as having influenced their decision.

Approximately half of these graduates are working either full- or part-time in their chosen

field, while one-third are still looking for employment related to their degree.

PW ALUMNI ACROSS THE U.S.

Those who left the state fell into two categories: those who stayed close, living in Chicago (30%), and those who went far, moving either to the coasts (60%), or overseas (10%). Most alumni listed multiple factors as having influenced their decision to relocate. Of those who left the state, half said that the current job market was a factor in their decision. More than half also said they were attracted to a specific location. Finally, almost a third reported that they moved, in part, because of a job offer.

Motivating these graduates to return to Michigan might prove difficult. A number of them listed inherent qualities of the state that

they disliked, such as weather. As one respondent said, Michigan is "nowhere near as fun or beautiful as other places in the United States or abroad that I'd rather live." Others equated their departure with "escape," indicating that chances of their return are slim to none.

Alumni living in Chicago were more likely to consider moving back to Michigan at some point than those who moved farther away. Not surprisingly, none of these individuals listed weather as having been a factor in their decision to leave Michigan. Current Chicago residents seem to be the alumni with the best chance of returning.

Some PW alumni have successful careers because they took risks and moved out of

Michigan blindly to more geographically-appealing areas with better job markets. One individual gives proof of the courage, flexibility, and passion necessary in the PW field: "Don't be afraid to take a chance and move to a city without a plan. I moved to Chicago without a paying job and found an unpaid internship right away, then worked part time at Macy's to make ends meet! Within 3 months, I found the [Assistant Editor] job I've held for the last 16 months."

INTERNATIONAL

Professional Writing can also prepare students for opportunities abroad. Two of MSU's PW alumni have taken advantage of what their degree offers and moved to Japan and South Korea. The flexibility of the degree has given them the chance to teach English.