

# Where Do We Go From Here?

## The Journey of the Michigan Writer

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**November 2008**



### ABSTRACT

This report explores the three different tracks, or concentrations, offered in the Professional Writing major at Michigan State University and then focuses on opportunities for students upon graduation through an overview of the skillsets students learn within those concentrations. With the skills of each concentration explained, we move on to providing the percentage of jobs for professional writers in Michigan through researching several job search engines (monster.com, myspartancareer.com, and poewar.com). Finally, we take the information gathered about jobs in Michigan

and compare those stats to Illinois, which is a major competitor in terms of workforce.

### KNOWING OURSELVES

Before a student can enter the workforce, it is imperative they understand just what they are capable of doing and what kinds of positions they should look for. In order for Professional Writing students to do this, they must first know about the track that they are in, if they haven't learned precisely this in their courses.

In Professional Writing at Michigan State University, there are three different tracks that students can choose. They are as follows: Editing and Publishing; Digital and Technical Writing; and Communities and Cultures.

### THE JOURNEY

Once students graduate, they must figure out what types of jobs they need to seek out. Then, they have to try to find positions they can fill.

In the past, people would scrounge through newspapers every week in order to find job openings. Today, however, the internet has revolutionized job searching. By going to a single website, such as [Monster.com](http://Monster.com) or [PoeWar.com](http://PoeWar.com), people can access ads for hundreds of jobs in a matter of seconds. This has given an enormous amount of power to truly look around for the best job opportunity.

## Professional Writing Tracks

Track	Roles/Tasks	Job Titles
Editing and Publishing	<p><b>Editing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ proofreads, reviews, and prepares documents for a variety of publications</li> </ul> <p><b>Publishing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Combines text and visual information for publishing</li> <li>❖ Produce materials in a variety of media</li> </ul> <p><b>Translating</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Converts written material from one language to another</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Copyeditor</li> <li>❖ Acquisitions Editor</li> <li>❖ Desktop Publisher</li> <li>❖ Print Production Coordinator</li> <li>❖ In-house Translator</li> </ul>
Digital and Technical Writing	<p><b>Communication Coordinator</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Identify users and what/how to communicate to them</li> <li>❖ compose, edit, design, record, produce publications such as newsletters, leaflets and brochures</li> </ul> <p><b>Technical Writer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Puts technical information into understandable language</li> <li>❖ Composes manuals, technical reports, brochures, web materials, online documentation and helps systems, training materials</li> </ul> <p><b>Information Architect</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Create wireframes, site maps, mockups, visual specification, working prototypes to describe the intended user experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Public Relations Officer</li> <li>❖ Information Designer</li> <li>❖ Technical Editor</li> <li>❖ Publications Specialist</li> <li>❖ Policy and Procedure Writer</li> <li>❖ User Experience Designer</li> <li>❖ Interaction Designer</li> <li>❖ Information Security Architect</li> </ul>
Communities and Cultures	<p><b>Grant Writing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Writing grant proposals,</li> </ul> <p><b>Specialization Writing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Specialized field writing, such as medical, nutrition, anthropology, or any other science- or social-science-based genre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Grant Writer</li> <li>❖ Specialization Writer</li> </ul>

Unfortunately for the less romanticized areas of the United States, the internet has allowed new students to look for jobs and apartments in the big cities so often talked about, making the out of state transition much easier than in the past. For states like Michigan, this has proved detrimental.

Rather than enticing the youths, whom they had taught, to stay in state and help local businesses, Michigan has been stuck on the sidelines watching its best recruits slipping beyond its borders.

## WHAT DO WE HAVE?

In order to see what upcoming Professional Writing students are facing in the job market, we explored three major job search websites:

[www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com)

[www.myspartancareer.com](http://www.myspartancareer.com)

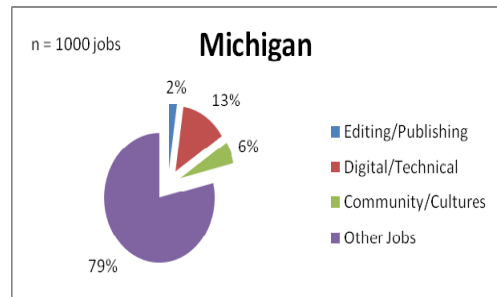
[www.poewar.com](http://www.poewar.com)

These are the websites that Michigan State Students are most likely to use. Between the three websites, we took a sampling of 1000 job listings, and from that sample, we took the jobs that were open for students of Professional Writing.

For the competition, we chose to explore the jobs in Illinois. This is due to the fact that, not only is Illinois home of Chicago, a city renowned for its creative core, but also because it is the closest to Michigan, thereby being more desirable to those students wishing to experience the big city without being so far from home.

## MICHIGAN

With Michigan having been an automotive and industrial powerhouse for so long, it didn't come as a big surprise that most of the jobs posted were for factory or sales positions.



### Percentage of Professional Writing jobs in Michigan.

It was surprising, however, that out of the thousand job posts, only 21% of them are likely to be filled by Professional Writing students. Even more surprising, however, was the fact that out of that 21%, the jobs for students in the Editing and Publishing track made up only 2% of the jobs.

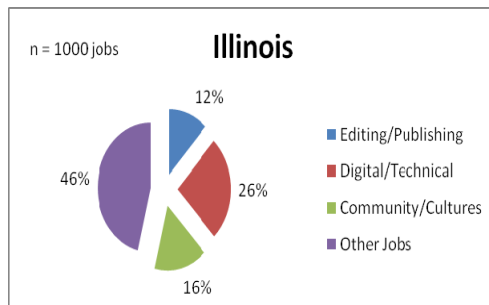
The fact that that number was tripled by Communities and Cultures positions makes one wonder whether employers of the editors and publishers are truly utilizing their Web options when it comes to advertising their open positions.

Out of the three tracks, it didn't come as a surprise that the Digital and Technical track had the most positions available. As many of the job listings were for positions centered

on the Web and technology, it made sense that those employers would try to post on multiple websites.

## ILLINOIS

Since Chicago is a major hub of creative influence, it only makes sense that Illinois would have more job opportunities in Professional Writing. The part that struck us as a bit shocking was that over 50% of the jobs listed could be filled by professional writers.



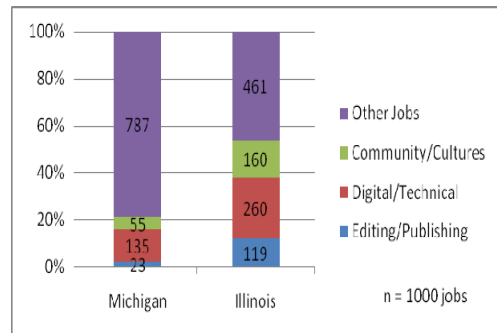
Percentage of Professional Writing Jobs in Illinois.

This is more than twice the number of Professional Writing jobs posted for Michigan. In Illinois, Digital and Technical Writing jobs alone outnumbered Michigan's total job listings 2:1

## SIDE BY SIDE

Despite the fact that Illinois had twice the number of Professional Writing jobs, there were some similarities. The most apparent is the large number of Digital and Technical Writing positions. It would appear that because of the expansion into digital environments, the need for employees

capable of writing for and working with digital environments has increased as well.



Side by side comparison between jobs in Michigan to jobs in Illinois

Although this may be true, the numbers that we saw for Editing and Publishing jobs makes us believe that many employers have yet to start posting widely enough online. This begs the question: are employers advancing as fast as the industries, themselves?



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<http://kairos.wide.msu.edu/~sue/townhall/town.html>



11/11/2008