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Digital Media Jobs Report for Writers and Authors

Writers and authors with digital media skills can use them to 1) successfully promote their own original work; and 2) find employment with, or do freelance work for, companies and organizations that use digital and social media.

The relationship between writing and digital media is a symbiotic and complementary one. Authors can use digital media, including social media, to promote their work, build a brand and connect with readers. The face of the publishing industry is changing and, more and more, authors who want to succeed need to be able to promote themselves and their work effectively.

In her blog post, “How the Pros Promote Books: An Interview with Hay House Digital Marketing/PR Specialist Wioleta Gramek”, Gramek reveals that having a website, FaceBook fan page and newsletter can help authors connect with their audience (Tener 1). According to Gramek, “Authors are now asked to build an audience/community early on in the publishing process” (Tener 2) Social media is a must. Wioleta advises authors to converse with their audiences via video, FaceBook, newsletters, Twitter, etc. to build themselves “as a credible brand” (Tener 2).

As employers increasingly seek to use digital and social media to promote their businesses, opportunities abound for writers with these skills. Rather than try to provide an exhaustive list of these seemingly endless opportunities, suffice it to say that writers with digital media skills have an advantage over their competitors who can’t claim expertise in both areas. In short, any job that involves writing and the use of digital media can be a potential source of employment or income.

In her eHow article, “Careers in Digital Media,” Jazmin Espinal states that “thousands of digital media positions are being filled each year” (Espinal 1) and suggests five in particular that are thriving: 1) website designer; 2) blogger; 3) SEO (search engine optimization) marketing strategist; 4) content

writer; and 5) copywriter (Espinal 1-2).

According to Yuwanda Black's blog post, "10 Types of Digital Freelance Writing Jobs: They're 'Hot' and They Pay Well – Here's What They Are", the top freelance writing opportunities for the digital age involve: 1) SEO; 2) content writing; 3) e-book editing; 4) SEO press releases; 5) social media writing; 6) landing pages¹; 7) content marketing; 8) PPC (pay-per-click) ads; 9) writing for mobile devices; and 10) blog posts and web articles (Black 1-3).

While some digital media careers may involve additional, specialized skills – in film, audio and video production, interactive media, design, editing, graphics and scriptwriting – it is interesting to note that many of these fields also include a fair amount of writing. A writer with education and experience in digital media has the advantage of being able to work in a wide variety of positions involving writing and one or more of the above skills. Therefore, the relationship between writing for digital media and other forms of media is becoming more and more integrated.

The "Occupational Outlook Handbook", published by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics states that the employment outlook for writers and authors "is projected to grow 6 percent from 2010 to 2020." Despite that fact that growth in this field is slower-than-average, the Bureau indicated that "online publications and services are growing in number and sophistication, spurring demand for writers and authors with Web and multimedia experience. Some experienced writers should find work in the public relations departments of corporations and nonprofit organizations. Others will likely find freelance work for newspaper, magazine, or journal publishers, and some will write books" (Occupational Outlook Handbook).

The Bureau of Labor Statistics also addresses job prospects for writers and authors as follows: "Writers and authors who have adapted to online media and are comfortable writing for and working with a variety of electronic and digital tools should have an advantage in finding work. The declining costs of

¹ A "landing page," also known as a "lead capture page", a single web page that appears in response to clicking on a search engine optimized search result or an online advertisement.

self-publishing, the growing popularity of electronic books, and the increasing number of readers of electronic books will allow many freelancer writers to get their work published” (Occupational Outlook Handbook).

Writers that wish to capitalize on the opportunities that digital media affords need specialized training and skills. In her blog, “Digital Media Skill Every Young Journalist Needs,” Jennifer Peebles touches on these skills, which are largely applicable to other styles of writing as well. Peebles recommends that students be taught a wide variety of practical media skills to allow them to produce writing on multiple platforms (Peebles 1). These are: 1) writing in the inverted pyramid; 2) interviewing people; 3) recording, editing and uploading audio to the Web; 4) taking a decent photograph; 5) being able to make and edit a short video story; 6) using data; 7) understanding how HTML and CSS are used to make Web pages; 8) deciding the best platform for a story (e.g. video, slideshow, prose); 9) understanding libel, defamation, privacy & copyright issues; and 10) understanding the concepts of the First Amendment (Peebles 1-2).

In their essay, “Traditional Media Skills and Digital Media Skills: Much of a Difference?” Jan A.G.M. van Dijk & Alexander J.A.M. van Deursen discuss the similarities and differences between traditional and digital media skills. Although these skills are very similar, they found that “digital media literacy increases the differences observed in traditional literacy...computers and the internet make things easier as they enable systematic information retrieval from innumerable sources simultaneously” but they also “make information seeking and improving literacy more difficult as they assume a number of new operational and formal skills” that can be a barrier beyond reading and writing skills (Dijk and Deursen 13). “Additionally, they require particular information and strategic skills” that are different from traditional media. The authors believe this disparity creates a bigger gap between people with different educational, occupational and age backgrounds than traditional media (Dijk and Deursen 13).

There are many reasons to become a writer or author in digital media: to promote your work,

increased job opportunities, above average pay², a love of writing, an interest in multi-media, and (in some cases) flexible work hours and locations.

Challenges for digital media writers include: juggling multiple priorities and deadlines, learning specialized skills, keeping up with technological changes. Freelancers have the added challenges of working nights and weekends to meet deadlines and continually searching for new work (Occupational Outlook Handbook).

² The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported median annual wages as of 2010 were \$49,060 for media & communication workers and \$55,420 for writers and authors.

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