Sabbatical Leave Report

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My sabbatical project was to publish an anthology for *The Michigan Poet*, a poetry publication of which I am the co-editor. My project was successful: the book was published on January 1, 2016.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF SABBATICAL PROJECT

The project involved creating a book using work published by *The Michigan Poet* in its first five years of existence which included work by 50 different poets. The work involved the following steps. First, I had to secure the publication permission from all fifty poets (or, in two cases, from the next of kin). Next I obtained updated biographies, photos, and publication credits from all of the poets.

At the same time as the above work began, I also started a funding campaign to cover the costs of the project: the biggest cost being that each poet receives 2 contributor's copies in exchange for their work. We used Gofundme in conjunction with our existing Facebook and Wordpress accounts to conduct a fundraiser, which exceeded our goal of $1,000 for a total of $1,120.

After all of the adminstrative work was underway I began the layout of the book. I used InDesign and we published our book through Amazon's CreateSpace print-on-demand service. The photos had to be cropped and edited to match our publication style. After creating a layout template including the font style sheet, the content of the poems and biographies were inserted.

After a round of proofreading, galley copies were sent to all poets for corrections and updates. My co-editor and I began to work on artwork and text for the cover. After several tries, we contacted a freelance graphic designer who graciously designed our cover. We were fortunate to have four of our poets agree to write cover blurbs for the back cover.

We also began planning work for our book launch parties, one of which was hosted by the Great Lake Commonwealth of Letters in Grand Rapids and another at Great Lakes Books in Big Rapids.

After all of the above work was done, the book was submitted for CreateSpace's review process. I wrote the copy for the web site and set up our ISBN information and distribution channels and the book became available for purchase on January 1st of 2016.

POST-SABBATICAL WORK

We hosted our launch parties in early January. Over 100 people and 40 poets attended the two events in Grand Rapids and Big Rapids. We disributed contributor copies and sold several more copies. As of this writing, we've distributed more than 200 copies of our book, summarized in the table below:

Copies Distributed

Donor & Contributor Copies: 124

Cash Sales: 11

Online Sales: 29

Bookstore Sales: 19

Personal & Gift Copies: 20

Total   203

We've continued our core mission, which is to publish Michigan poets on broadside (posters) for Michigan communities and on our website, theMichiganPoet.com. We also promote Michigan poets and events on our Facebook page.

One further outcome of this project is that we met a tax lawyer at one of our events who has helped us file the paperwork so that *The Michigan Poet* can become a non-profit corporation. That will help us in the future when applying for grants and will allow us to take donations that are tax-deductible.

We also submitted our book to the Michigan Notable Books competition sponsored by the Library of Michigan.

IMPACT ON PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

I currently teach ENGL 222: Creative Writing and often teach ENGL 311: Advanced Technical Writing.

My work on this project helps with creative writing in that I can talk about creative writing as an industry in addition to an artistic endeavor. How people talk about creative writing in an idealized way is often much different than the practice of creative writers and editors, and having that experience is often very useful in having students think about audience.

Many students think of creative writing only in an expressivistic manner, that creative writing is merely articulating the self. Self-expression is very important for creative writing, but it's not the only thing that matters. We receive historical writers' work through the medium of publishing and so that work is always in part dependent on the material conditions. We would not have the work of Franz Kafka, for example, if his friend and editor Max Brod had not saved and championed Kafka's work after his death.

My co-editor and I are highly conscious of our audience because the work we publish has to be both immediately accessible for the casual viewer of our poster, and rewarding for the close reader. I've found that encouraging creative writing students to think in terms of audience helps them sharpen their self-expression. Also, students are interested in publishing their work

and I can credibly talk about how the submission and review process works in the creative writing field.

When it comes to technical writing, my work both managing this project and being in charge of its overall design are essential skills for the technical communicator. When I teach ENGL 311 I begin with visual communication choices because, to me, that's what separates technical writing from academic writing. A writer in an academic writing context has few design choices to make. In fact, standardized academic layouts such as MLA and APA remove nearly all design choices such as typography, page size, use of headers and footers, etc. I designed the Michigan Poet anthology to be aesthetic, of course, but never at the expense of being *usable*. And usability is a key concept in technical communication.

I'm also working with Professor Jody Ollenquist to create an independent study for a student interested in editing and publishing as it relates to creative writing. This student is planning to work both with the PRISM contest and *The Michigan Poet* during the summer of 2017.

Finally, my work on this anthology has strengthened my connection to the poetry community of Michigan. Most of the major poets residing in Michigan have been published in our anthology and many of those poets gathered at our launch parties. I have gotten to know all of them through our email correspondence. The poetry communities in the United States tend to be small and networking is of key importance. As I continue to pursue my professional development in publishing my own work and as an editor, these connections will prove quite valuable.