Angie Millgate
ART 1150 Foundation Seminar
July 14, 2012
Career Research

As I look forward to going into the world of Graphic Design and Illustration, I have done a lot of research, interviewing and studying to see what I am getting into. Of all of the definitions for "graphic design" that I have read, the one found on the website for the American Institute for Graphic Arts is my favorite:

"Graphic design is a creative process that combines art and technology to communicate ideas. The designer works with a variety of communication tools in order to convey a message from a client to a particular audience. The main tools are image and typography." (AIGA, 1993)

I have done graphic design and layout since the early 90's when computers became cost-effective enough to place upon desktops. Innately, I have known what to do and have taught myself the different software programs available in the process, but never had any formal training. When I discovered that Salt Lake Community College had a visual arts degree, I hopped on it right away and went for it, feeling myself lighten up and become more joyful than I ever remember being.

Although the job outlook looks bleak across the board for most of the nation in pretty much every field, the future does not bother me. I have learned that I *can* do this because I love it and I am "a natural" at it. I find joy in the process of bringing someone's ideas to fruition – of helping them bring their babies into the world.

Jim Hayes of Ha-Yes Design, spoke to much the same thing in a job shadowing interview I had the privilege of doing with him. He shared about how grateful he is to be able to be in the creative flow and how that influences his whole world. He mentioned that he got his start, after school, by gaining experience in redoing signs for businesses. He said he was always on the alert, watching for signs that needed to be redesigned and then would approach the business and offer them a proposal for the makeover. Graduating with an AAS in Graphic Design gave Jim a quick educational background in the principles and elements of design, but that is as far as he went with his education and has done remarkably well for himself in the design industry.

In contrast to that, the Bureau of Labor Statistics states that a bachelor's degree is usually required for this field. (United States Dept. of Labor, 2012) Interestingly enough, many of my professors have stated that *no* degree is ever really required for a designer, but that it is ability and experience that makes the difference. "It's all in the portfolio. You *must* have an excellent portfolio," many of them say.

Also according to the Bureau of Labor Statistic, the following statistics are listed for graphic design professionals:

- 2010 Median pay - $43,500/year; $20.92/hour

- Number of jobs in 2010 – 279,200

- Job outlook for 2010-2020 – 13% increase

- Employment change for 2010-2020 – 37,300

- In 2010, approximately 29% of designers were self-employed

I have heard from many sources, including Jim, that in the design industry it is necessary to "pay your dues" by working at the bottom of the totem pole, so to speak, for a

few years. Even the Bureau of Labor Statistics states, "Beginning graphic designers usually need 1 to 3 years of work experience before they can advance to higher positions." Much of the design industry is a learn-as-you-go situation, once you have the basic fundamentals and understanding of some of the principles, elements and the design software programs under your belt to build upon.

In reference to one of his first jobs, Jim states, "[I worked for] Ted Negata, he is retired now, but at the time he was one of the premier designers in the valley, so just being around that, even though I was basically just the boy who slept in the corner and shoveled coal and I just did the grunt work. But, I was around design work all the time. And a lot of the grunt work was very valuable." (Hayes, 2012) He went on to explain how that work became the foundation for moving forward in his freelance career. Even though he has freelanced his entire career, he said that working for design companies in the beginning while freelancing on the side was the most beneficial tool he gave himself.

As a designer, you will be working with other people – sometimes in teams – because this is a people-driven field. In every instance, there is someone for whom you are creating the design – whether it is your own client or your company's client. Therefore, teamwork ability and relational, communication and time management skills are a necessity. (United States Dept. of Labor, 2012)

Additionally, a trait that will save you in this industry is a "thick skin." As quoted from the movie, *Ad-Infinitum: The Many Paths into Advertising*, "You have to learn how to kill your babies. I know you're saying you like it, but it's bad… do better. Go back and do more. If you want to do this, go back and do it right." (Films Media Group, 2006) In essence,

if you are so emotionally invested in what you have produced and are unable to take feedback, you will be miserable and unable to produce satisfactory work.

An internet search today lists many openings in graphic design across the nation. On careerbuilder.com, there are 1,085 jobs available ranging from multimedia graphic designer to web designers to graphic design sales to HTML developers to web book design to graphic design. (Career Builder, 2012) If you go through simplyhired.com for Utah only, 19 pages of design-specific job positions available right now. (Simply Hired, 2012) And, on monster.com, there are over 1,000 job listings under the keyword search "graphic design." (Monster, 2012)

Everywhere I searched, the photos going along with the information showed people in "artsy" environments – exposed beams, brick walls, warehouse-like buildings – surrounded by paper, pens, pencils, rulers and gadgets for drawing. They were casually dressed, many with t-shirts and jeans and ruffled hair. And, while they were photographs that were *designed* to look like the people were relaxed, happy and in love with their work, my experience has shown me that photographically representing designers and artists in such a way is fairly true to their actual, real life experiences.

Because I have been around this industry for awhile, I was not surprised by anything I uncovered in research, other than the seemingly low number of actual jobs in this field in 2010. Across the nation, only 279,200 graphic designers in the *whole* nation seems far too small of a number than what I assumed there were. I look forward to going out into the design field and making a name for myself in this industry. Having the privilege of being in the creative flow every day of my life sounds like a perfect fit for me.

Bibliography

AIGA. (1993). *What is Graphic Design?* (S. H. Poggenpohl, Editor) Retrieved 07 14, 2012, from www.aiga.org: http://www.aiga.org/guide-whatisgraphicdesign/

Career Builder. (2012, 07 14). *Graphic Designer Jobs.* Retrieved 07 14, 2012, from careerbuilder.com: http://www.careerbuilder.com/jobs/keyword/graphic%20designer/

Cambridge Educational (Producer). (2006). *Ad-Infinitum: The Many Paths into Advertising* [Motion Picture].

Hayes, J. (2012, 06 25). Owner of Ha-Yes Design. (A. Millgate, R. Johnson, & S. Beus, Interviewers)

Monster. (2012, 07 14). *Graphic Design Jobs.* Retrieved 07 14, 2012, from www.monster.com: http://jobsearch.monster.com/search/?q=graphic-design

Simply Hired. (2012, 07 14). *Graphic Design Jobs - Salt Lake City, Utah.* Retrieved 07 14, 2912, from www.simplyhired.com: http://www.simplyhired.com/a/jobs/list/q-graphic+design/l-salt+lake+city,+ut

United States Dept. of Labor. (2012, 03 29). *Graphic Designers.* Retrieved 07 14, 2012, from www.bls.gov: http://www.bls.gov/ooh/arts-and-design/graphic-designers.htm