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Development of "Creative WNY": An Informative Website About Creative Places in Western New York

Marisa Watkins
Buffalo State College

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Development of "Creative WNY": An Informative Website
About Creative Places in Western New York

by

Marisa Watkins

An Abstract of a Project
in
Creative Studies

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Science

May 2006

Buffalo State College
State University of New York
Department of Creative Studies

ABSTRACT OF PROJECT

Development of "Creative WNY": An Informative Website
About Creative Places in Western New York

This project is about identifying places in Western New York that are creative and brining that information to the public. The project contains an explanation of why this topic is important and relevant to the topic of creativity. It also contains lists of relevant literature and how it impacted the author.

The definition of "creative place" is established. The project describes the process that was undertaken to research creative places, visit them, and collect data on them. The process of organizing the data into a website is presented and evaluated. The final product of the project is presented in the form of a website.

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Date of Approval:

_____   _____
                                          Dr. Mary Murdock
                                          Project Adviser

_____   _____
                                          Marisa Watkins
                                          Student

ACKOWLEGEMENTS

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BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

Purpose

As lifelong resident of Erie County, I know that this area has a lot to offer. Even though the statistics about a declining population (www.census.gov) and rising taxes seem to be against us, I know that Western New York is a creative place and deserves recognition as being so. I have lived a life of trying to convince others to see the proverbial glass as half full. This project was created to test my own beliefs about Western New York. Where are the creative places in Western New York? How do I define "creative place?" How might I tell other people about the creative places? These topics and more were tackled to develop a convincing case that Western New York is full of creative places.

Description

This project was a collaborative project that I developed with fellow Creative Studies student, Brian Tabak. Throughout the duration of the project Brian and I served as sounding board partners, co-planners and co-visitors to many sites. Although we wrote separate projects and created different websites, many of the ideas that are discussed are the result of our cooperative work. Throughout the months of February, March and April of 2006, Brian and I visited, together and separately, over 30 places that we consider to be creative places. Many of these places reside within the city limits of Buffalo. After visiting each place, we critically analyzed each place by looking at it through a "creative lens." We developed a working definition of a "creative place" and discussed how each place fits out definition. I took pictures that were then used in the website to

publicize these creative places. The website includes attractive pictures of the layout and landscape of these places along with descriptions and information so that others may experience them through the creative lens.

Rationale for selection

It is not simple to define creativity so that it satisfies everyone. Many scholars can agree on the working definition of anything that is "novel and useful" (Gryskiewicz, 1980). This definition is accepted because it combines the divergent and convergent thinking processes that should occur when problem solving. Richard Florida, the author of *The Rise of the Creative Class…and Ho It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (2002), uses an economic model to define creativity. He states that "human creativity is the ultimate economic resource" (2002, xiii). Florida goes on to define creative cities in America based on the three "T's." The three "T's" are Technology, Talent and Tolerance (2002, xix). Through his research, Florida consistently ranks Buffalo in the lower 45 – 50 cities, drawing the conclusion that Buffalo is not a creative place. I, of course, beg to differ. While I agree with Florida's idea of the three T's, I do not think that he considered all of Western New York in his findings. This project attempts to prove to Richard Florida that Buffalo and Western New York is a creative place.

What this project adds creatively to me and to others

There are many ways to define creativity. I hope that through this project, I can instill a sense of optimism in others that the inspiration to create is all around us, especially right here in Western New York. I want to show others the

way to give creative credit where creative credit is due. I fear that we, as a

population, have an "inferiority complex" about the potential that this area has.

By completing this project and sharing it with others, I have discovered pockets of

people and places, both large and small, which are inspiring creativity. This

project will educate others about these places and encourage people to act on their

potential by visiting these creative places.

PERTINENT LITERATURE

Narrative Introduction

The idea for this project was spawned from three major pieces of literature that

Brian and I were exposed to in the Fall of 2005. The first book, *Rise of the*

Creative Class, by Richard Florida (2002), was presented to us in a class about

current issues in creativity. The conclusions that Florida drew about Buffalo were

troubling. The second book, *Why Are You Creative?* by Hermann Vaske, (2002)

is a collection of answers to this question from many successful artists. A

collection of articles from Robert Sternberg (1999) also influenced the

development of this project. Sternberg offers a specific and scientific view of

measuring creativity which was an interesting contrast with Vaske's collection.

All three references are seen as important contributions to this project.

Expanded CBIR Abstracts

Florida, Richard L. (2002). *The rise of the creative class: and how its transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life* . New York: Basic Books.

Type of Resource: Book
(ISBN: 0-465-02476-9) Library of Congress (LC) or Dewey
Decimal Classification (DDC) Call Number:
LC: HD53 .F58 2002

In the context of creativity and community in the current age, this book explores the influence of creativity on society as a class phenomenon. He defines class within the parameters of creative practitioners and intent, and charts the impact of this class in terms of economics, "the experiential lifestyle," applied technology and "the creative ethos." Within this combined realm, Florida portrays evolving norms that affect the creative person-- both in individual and organizational pursuits. His academic investigation considers "management" as a key defining force in the "rise" of the "creative class" and in the advent of what he

calls "the creative age." Lastly, he considers the "power of place" in terms of workers and, in a much wider sense, location and community in which members of the "creative class" dwell and function.

Administration / Managers / Business / Corporate culture / Climate / Communications / Creativity / Culture / Socioculture (CBIR)

Sternberg, Robert J. (Ed.). (1999). *Handbook of creativity* . Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Type of Resource: Book
(ISBN: 0521572851)Libary of Congress (LC) or Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) Call Number:
LC: BF408.H285 1999; DDC: 153.3'5

The editor has compiled these resources as a way of providing a comprehensive, definitive, and authoritative single-volume review of the field of creativity. The 22 chapters cover issues and topics such as psychometric approached, creative people at work, historiometric perspective, creative cognition, organizational creativity, and creativity across cultures.

Creativity / research / founders / research and development / person / process / product / press (CBIR)

Vaske, Hermann. (2002). *Why are you creative?* . Maplewood, NY: Fivedegreesbelowzero Press.

Type of Resource: Book
(ISBN: 970877927) Library of Congress (LC) or Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) Call Number:
LC: BF408; DDC: 153.35

The author asked famous actors, artists, musicians, filmmakers, writers, politicians, and others 'why are you creative?' to provide a snap-shot of individual creativity.

person / motivation / arts / artists / creativity

This item is part of the Special Collection of Creativity and Innovation resources at the Hong Kong City Hall Public Library.   (CBIR)

Selected Bibliography

The following list is a list of suggested readings on the topic of creative places

and Western New York.

A Creative Buffalo. (2006). http//:acreativebuffalo.org

Amabile, T.M., Conti, R., Coon, H. Lazenby, J., Herron, M. (1996). Assessing the
    work environment for creativity. *Academy of Management Journal, 39* (5),
    1154-1184.

Buffalo Place. (2006). http//:www.buffaloplace.com

Buffalo Rising. (2006). http:www.buffalorising.com

Creative WNY. (2006). http//:www.creativewny.smugmug.com

Ekvall, G. (1971). *Creativity at the work place*. Stockholm, Sweden: Swedish
    Council for Personnel Administration.

Gibans, N.F. (2005). Creative essence: Cleveland's sense of place. Kent, OH:
    Kent State University Press.

Hall, P. (2000). Creative cities and economic development. *Urban Studies, 37* (4),
    639-649.

Miller, J. (Ed.), Kenedi, A. (Ed.) (2003). Where inspiration lives: Writers, artists
    and their creative places. Novato, CA: New World Library

PROCESS PLAN

Introduction

The process of meeting our goals began in late January, 2006. Brian Tabak and I had a plan to create a product about the creative places in Buffalo and Western New York. We were both exposed to the book *Rise of the Creative Class*, by Richard Florida (2002), and had familiarized ourselves with it's content. We had also read the book *Why Are You Creative?* by Hermann Vaske (2002) which is a collection of various artists' responses to this question. Our initial plan was to interview various leaders and artists from the Western New York area to research how people are creative in Western New York. The research collected from the interviews would be compiled in a book. Through discussions with our adviser, Dr. Mary Murdock and classmates, this idea evolved into researching creative places in Western New York and creating a website to publish our findings. The process of researching these places was simple. Together, we discussed the many different definitions of creativity and how we could apply them to physical places and locations. We looked for literature on this topic in creativity journals, required class readings, and Creative Studies database (CBIR). Surprisingly, we did not find anything on creative places so we turned to our fellow classmates in our Master's Project course. Within 3 minutes we had a list

of 30 places. Brian and I then planned our semester by discussing what to do and when. The following timeline is a list of what actually happened during the spring semester, not just our plan. In early April, Brian and I decided to each create our own individual website to reflect our personal styles and strengths.

OUTCOMES

Introduction

When I began the project, I developed a list of criteria that would guide me through the development and implementation of the plan. I have modified the questions so that I can now answer them as the project has been completed (Watkins, 2006, p. 24).

1. Did the project allow me to research creative places in Western New York?

Yes. I was able to visit, tour and experience over 30 places in Western New York that are considered creative places.

2. Did the project allow me to evaluate places in Western New York based on my knowledge of creativity?

Yes. By evaluating each place based on the definitions of a creative place, I was able to assess the creative value of many places throughout Western New York.

3. Did the project allow me to work with a partner?

Yes. I collaborated with Brian Tabak to create and implement the project. Although we created two different websites as a final product, we remained in contact throughout the semester and visited many places together. We had a healthy exchange of divergent and convergent thinking sessions and respected each other's problem solving styles.

4. Did the project give me the opportunity to create a website?

Yes. I am the designer of www.CreativeWNY.smugmug.com.

5. Did the project give me the opportunity to stretch my innovative (non-preference) creativity style?

Yes, but not as much as I had hoped. The website consists of pictures and captions that are straightforward and informative. By making myself the photographer of the photos, I took myself on a few artist's dates (Cameron, 2002, p. 5) in which I deliberately attempted to take photos that were more innovative than adaptive.

6. Did I create something that will lead to future opportunities?

Yes. The website is mine for a year for uploading and sharing photographs. I have discovered that I really enjoy taking photographs with a digital camera and plan on taking classes to become a better photographer.

As a graduate student I have established contacts in the field of creativity and I am becoming aware of more opportunities and organizations that exist to extend this project. An example of this is my adviser, Dr. Mary Murdock and her involvement with the American Creativity Association. We are currently exploring the idea of presenting this project at an upcoming conference.

7. Did I use Creative Problem Solving tools throughout the project?

Yes. Brian and I met frequently throughout the semester to explore the challenges, generate ideas and strengthen our solutions. By checking in with each other and our classmates, we were also encouraged to use the Torrance Incubation Model.

PRODUCT OF PROJECT

http://www.CreativeWNY.smugmug.com

The above pictures are just four of the hundreds that I took to create the website. After taking the pictures, I uploaded them to a "smugmug" account. Smugmug is a photo-sharing website that allows subscribers to upload digital photographs, organize them into galleries and add comments and captions to each picture. I was able to choose the user name of the website to easily communicate

to the viewer the content of the site. The name "Creative WNY" is simple and easy to remember. The first thing the viewers see when they log on to this website is an explanation of the website, why it was created and the definitions of "creative place." In this section, there are links to the Creative Studies website so the viewer can access the project paper in the future as well as a link to Brian Tabak's website. The viewer is asked to scroll down to visit seven galleries of pictures that hold 90 pictures. Each gallery has a name that identifies the pictures that are in it along with a description of what the place is and how or why it is considered creative. The website also has the "map it!" feature. I entered the postal addresses of the creative places into this feature. When a viewer clicks on this feature, the website displays a Google map with a marker that identifies the exact location of the creative place. Next to most of the pictures, I have described and commented on each place. Many of the places have their own websites, and I included links to those websites with the pictures.

The website is a work-in-progress. I plan to continue to add to the existing galleries and create more as I experience more creative places throughout the year. Initially, I have set up seven galleries. They are: Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Delaware Park, Forest Lawn Cemetery; Theatre District; Downtown; International Center for Studies in Creativity; East Aurora; Hamburg; and Any School. In the descriptions of the photographs I was able to provide a link to the websites of the places. A full printout of the website is in the appendixes.

KEY LEARNINGS

Introduction

      The Master's Project option of the Creative Studies program has allowed me to combine the science of creativity with the experience of increasing my own creativity and education. Throughout this project I focused on the various creativity models and how they apply to the creativity of Western New York and how they apply to my own creative process.

Content

      The content of this project has two distinct areas. The first area is defined as my ability to research, visit, and evaluate creative places. A product of this work is the definition of a creative place. The second content area is recognized as my ability to take photographs, upload them to a website, and organize the information to communicate to others what I learned. The product of this is the completed website.

      Brian Tabak and I broke down the definition of a "creative place" into six areas. The definitions are as follows:

1. The place has creative architecture and/or structure.

2. The place houses creative products.

3. The place studies creativity as an academic field of study.

4. The place allows its participants to demonstrate creative behavior.

5. The place offers an environment that facilitates creative thought.

6. A place that inspires creative thought and action.

The place has creative architecture and/or structure.	The place that houses of creative products.

• Darwin D. Martin Home (Frank Lloyd Wright design) • Graycliff home (Frank Lloyd Wright design) • Buffalo City Hall • Artwork and sculptures on Main Street, Buffalo • Goldome Bank, Main Street, Buffalo	• Albright-Knox Art Gallery • Burchfield-Penney Art Center • Theaters – Shea's Performing Arts Center, Studio Arena, Allendale Theatre • Off-the-Wall restaurant, Buffalo • Buffalo Street Grille, Hamburg • Taste Coffee Shop, East Aurora • Any Library • Mark Twain Room in the Central Branch of Erie County Library
The place studies creativity as an academic field.	The place allows its participants to demonstrate creative behavior.
• International Center for Studies in Creativity, Buffalo State College, Buffalo	• Studio Arena • Allendale Theatre • Roycroft Campus, East Aurora • Lafayette Square, Buffalo • Buffalo Museum of Science • Any art classroom • Any music classroom • Any school stage
The place offers an environment that facilitates creative thought.	A place that inspires creative thought and action.
• Fisher-Price Toys headquarters, East Aurora • Vidler's Five-and-Dime store, East Aurora • Jo-Ann's etc. stores • Home-Depot stores	• Sunsets along Lake Erie • Delaware Park • Forest Lawn Cemetery artwork and sculptures • Any place that displays art sculptures for the public

Chart 5.1 Creative Nature of 30 places in Western New York.

Things that worked

By creating this project, I was able to research and visit 30 places around Western New York during the Winter and Spring of 2006. This is an accomplishment in itself because as much as I enjoy living in Western New York, this was the first time I made an effort to get out of the house and do something during the bleak winter months. It is a very powerful change I see within myself that has changed the paradigm in which I live my life.

Through my research, I was able to discover an organization called Buffalo Rising. This organization's magazine and website publicize and inform people about the cultural activities that are occurring in Buffalo and Western New York. I used the organization's website on a daily basis to stay informed about all that was happening in Buffalo that is considered creative. This includes art shows, musical performances, and community organization meetings.

By creating a website, I was able to use a digital camera to take pictures, upload them to a database and create attractive and informative pages about creative places in Western New York. By choosing to use a "Smugmug" account, I saved time and frustration because the account is does not require the user to be an expert at designing a website.

Things to change or do differently

In order to improve the amount of key learnings, I would have like to have budgeted my time more efficiently. As the project grew, I discovered more places to visit. However, due to time constraints because of working full-time, there was not enough time to visit every place.

I would have also liked to begin building the website earlier. In order to take visually attractive photographs, I started taking photographs in early April when the spring weather was more accommodating. If I would have began to create the website earlier, even without pictures, I would have had more time to develop the descriptions of the creative places.

Process

Things that worked

By working with a partner, Brian and I were able to receive feedback from one another about the process of the project. From the beginning, I had a person with whom I could practice divergent and convergent thinking to develop our ideas into a project. Brian and I knew of each other's strengths and weaknesses from previous projects and respected what we each brought to the project. When it was time to develop our own website, we were able to amicably decide to go in two directions based on our own unique personal preferences. Both websites that were created reflect those personal preferences and both are creative products.

It was also very helpful to have monthly check-ins with my adviser, Dr. Mary Murdock, and the students in the Master's Project class. Once the project plan was finalized, I benefited from the opportunity to exchange ideas and feedback about the process of completing the project. Because of these exchanged, I was challenged to continue to implement and integrate thinking tools into my planning and execution of the project.

Throughout the project, I was aware of activities and processes that were within my problem solving style preferences. By taking courses in Creative

Studies, I have become aware of my strengths and weaknesses and have learned to prepare accordingly. I know that I have a strong preference for implementing ideas and not developing them. This did not make the developing process of the project any easier. Instead, it helped me to understand that I needed to put more energy into the development process. I also am aware of the fact that I have a KAI score of 81, which means that I prefer an adaptive creativity style. I knew that my partner Brian prefers an innovative creative style. This knowledge allowed us to recognize and respect each others differences and work together accordingly.

Things to do differently

Despite my knowledge about my style preferences and weaknesses, I could have done a more efficient job of deliberately planning to overcome them. I would have benefited from keeping a weekly journal or record of activities, insights and concerns.

In regards to the writing of the Master's Project paper, I would have benefited from becoming more of a clarifier and asking more probing questions about the specifics of writing a culminating project paper.

Conclusion

As a result of planning, developing and implementing this project, my own ability to be creative has changed. By using problem solving tools, I was able to create a project that resulted in a product that I am proud of. As a student of the program, I believe that creativity can be learned and improved, and for me, the website www.creativewny.smugmug.com is proof of that.

What I see myself doing now is continuing to maintain the website. I have developed a keen interest in taking digital photographs of scenes and places in Western New York that are creative. Other people, both students of the program and family members have seen the website and I have received positive feedback. I would like to continue to publicize the website by working with the Center for Creative Studies and the Distance Program. I would also like to utilize publications about Buffalo, such as Buffalo Rising, to communicate to others about the website. I will also be a Buffalo Ambassador for the Creative Studies Distance program and have the ability to network with people from all over the world and I can share my knowledge about Western New York with them.

References

Florida, Richard L. (2002). *The rise of the creative class: and how its transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life* . New York: Basic Books.

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Vaske, Hermann. (2002). *Why are you creative?* Maplewood, NY: Fivedegreesbelowzero Press.

Watkins, M. (2006). *Development of "Creative WNY": An Informative Website about Creative Places in Western New York.* Unpublished masters project, State University of New York College at Buffalo; Center for Studies in Creativity, Buffalo, NY.

Appendix A: Concept Paper

Where Are You Creative?: Answers for Western New York

Marisa A. Watkins   February 13, 2006

Project type:

Use skill and talent to improve the quality of life for others

What Is This Project About?

This project is about identifying places in Western New York that are creative and bringing that information to the public. My skill or talent for being passionate about the benefits of living in Western New York is the driving force behind this idea. By completing this project, I want to prove to others that Western New York is a creative place to live and work and that it is a place the residents should be proud of. Recent developments in the City of Buffalo and its surrounding areas seem to have given residents cautious hope about the future. In order to do complete this project, Brian Tabak and I will need to define how or what a creative place is. We will define a "creative place," identifying 20 to 30, visit those places, research each place and create a website.

Rationale for Choice:

For the past year and a half, I have been gathering information on possible Master's projects. I chose this idea because I feel that this is worthy of my time and knowledge about Creative Studies. The opportunity to create a website about creative places in Western New Yorkers is very exciting to me. My other project ideas are still things that I hope to accomplish, but I do not need the premise of a Master's project in order to do so. This idea is a compilation of many things that I am very passionate about: writing (on the website), creativity, and living in Western New York.

What Will be the Tangible Product or Outcome?

The information that is collected will be organized into a website. This website will be a user-friendly, informative compilation of information about Western New York and creativity. The information will also be published in the form of a Masters Project and will be available in the Butler Library at Buffalo State College and the Reading Room of the International Center for Creative Studies at Buffalo State College.

What Criteria Will You Use To Measure the Effectiveness of Your Achievement?

I will know that I am successful when I can answer the following questions in the affirmative:
- Will the project allow me to research creative places in Western New York?
- Will the project allow me to evaluate places in Western New York based on my knowledge of creativity?
- Will the project allow me to work with a partner?
- Will the project give me the opportunity to create a website?
- Will the project give me the opportunity to stretch my innovative (non-preference) creativity style?
- Will I create something that will lead to future opportunities?
- Will I use Creative Problem Solving tools throughout the project?

Who Will Be Involved or Influenced: What Will Your Role Be?

My partner, Brian Tabak, and I will collaborate to explore the concept of creativity in Western New York. My role in the partnership will be determined through open discussions with my partner about what needs to be accomplished. In addition to working with Brian, we will also work with our classmates by receiving feedback through discussion of ideas. We will be operating under the guidance of Dr. Mary Murdock and the guidelines of a Master's Project as set by the Creative Studies Department.

When Will This Project Take Place?

The Master's Project class began in January 2006. The concept paper was developed and approved in early February. The activities of the project will take place during the months of February and March. The project will be submitted for approval in late April.

Where Will This Project Occur?

We will conduct our research throughout the 20 to 30 places that we identify as being creative in Western New York. Most of our meetings will take place at the International Center for Creative Studies in Buffalo, New York, USA.

Why Is It So Important to do this?

Buffalo and the Western New York area offer so much to the people that live here. However, Richard Florida, the author of *The Rise of the Creative Class…And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, & Everyday Life,* finds that Buffalo ranks almost last in many areas of creativity. There has been a

recent turnover in leadership in the area, as well as concrete action in improving the economic and cultural outlets. We hope to add to this momentum.

Personal Learning Goals:

- I will use CPS tools to develop and implement ideas
- I will identify and research creative places in Western New York
- I will learn how to create and maintain a website
- I will stretch my innovative side

How do you plan to achieve your goals and outcomes?

I will use Creative Problem Solving tools to diverge and converge with my partner about how to make this project a reality. Specific tools and strategies include: PPCo, brainstorming, incubation, card sort, and Six Thinking Hats. My partner, Brian, and I will need to remain in contact with each other throughout this semester. We will need to set a clear timeline with specific objectives. We will need to dedicate ourselves to completing this project and be honest about our expectations for ourselves, each other and the project.

Evaluation:

Our first line of evaluation will be with one another. As stated previously, we will need to be in contact with each other throughout the project. By asking each other "How is the project going?" and being honest with one another, we will keep the essence of the project in the forefront. We will also receive feedback from our classmates and advisor throughout the semester. Informal conversations with family, friends and co-workers will also be used to evaluate our progress and final outcome. Lastly, we will be posting information to the website and receive feedback from visitors.

Project timeline:

Estimated average time spent on project each week: 12 hours

February
Week 1: Finish and submit concept paper draft
       Use CPS diverging and converging techniques to select creative places
       Research creative places and related creativity topics

Week 2: Refine creative places list
       Continue research
       Contact website creators and research how to create our own

Week 3: Continue visiting sites

Continue research

Week 4: Begin data analysis
Continue visiting sites and research

March
Week 1: Develop the "look" of the website – potential layouts, links, and other
media to add to the site, determine the name of the site
Continue visiting sites, research, and data analysis

Week 2: Determine website format
Continue visiting sites, research, and data analysis

Week 3: Complete visits
Begin to upload information to the website
Continue research and data analysis

Week 4: Begin project writing
Continue to add information to the site

April
Week 1: Complete the website
Refine written project material for submission to Buffalo State Creative
Studies Department

Week 2: Complete Project writing draft and submit to instructor

Week 3: Await approval from advisor

Week 4: Receive feedback and make necessary changes and modifications

May
Week 1: Present completed project to class
Bind project and submit to necessary outlets

Identify Pertinent Literature and Resources

Charlotte, S. (1993). *Creativity: Conversations with 28 who excel*. Troy, MI: Momentum Books, LLC.

Florida, R. L. (2002). *The rise of the creative class: and how its transforming   work, leisure, community and everyday life*. New York: Basic Books.

Mokyr, J. (1990). *The lever of riches: Technological creativity and economic   progress*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Petzinger, T. (1999). *The new pioneers: The men and women who are   transforming the workplace and marketplace* . New York: Simon & Schuster.

Vaske, H. (2002). *Why are you creative?*. Maplewood, NY: Fivedegreesbelowzero Press.

www.make-a-web-site.com

www.2createawebsite.com

www.ipowerweb.com

www.smugmug.com

Appendix B: http//:www.CreativeWNY.com