Hey, humanities PhDs, what if you don’t get an academic job? Or decide you don’t want one?

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Agenda

Course mechanics
Why I am here
1. Thinking about the non-academic job market
2. Moving from CV to résumé
3. Engaging the non-academic job market
4. Do this next
5. Suggested reading
Some reminders
Course mechanics

• We have three hours, which includes ample time for questions. Don’t be shy.
• Please do this:
  – Feel free to take notes with phone photos
  – step outside to take phone calls or text actively
  – sign in with your email address to get the course evaluation
• I will do this:
  – send the course evaluation to you afterwards. I don’t use your e-mail addresses for anything else
  – send the presentation and templates to be posted here: http://uofa.ualberta.ca/arts/programs/graduate-programs/graduate-student-resources
Why I am here

To teach you how to present yourself to non-academic hiring managers, in case you want or need to seek a non-academic job.
Part 1: Thinking about the non-academic job market

My career “path” so far
How I made the big changes
Lessons from my transitions
What I value about (most) job candidates with PhDs
What I fear about (some) job candidates with PhDs
What a PhD represents to a nonacademic employer
Reasons to be confident
What my grad students, advisees, and fellow former academics are doing now
If you don’t get - or want - an academic job
My career “path” so far

• Native of Ithaca, NY, Cornell faculty brat, college, grad school
• University of Michigan asst. prof. C17 and C18 English lit, classical and Biblical influences on literature, satire, detective fiction
• Bartender
• Amazon.com: many roles over 13 years
• Mindbloom: VP operations at a small start-up
• Synapse: VP operations at a medium-sized product design engineering firm
• Board of directors, Lambda Legal (nonprofit), ongoing
• Consultant, speaker, author
How I made the big changes

• Faculty member => bartender
  – Denied tenure: needed a job! @#$%!
  – Moved from Ann Arbor to Seattle
  – Got a bartender’s license

• Bartender => Amazon
  – Chatted with fellow former member of grad student softball team, an early adopter of the internet, who told me about Amazon (1996)
  – Interviewed with them and discussed my skills (not much about my previous jobs)
  – Got new skills on the job and used them to take on new roles

• Board of Directors, Lambda Legal
  – Involved as a donor
  – Hated their web properties and complained about them
  – Consulted with them about improving their web properties
  – Invited to join Board of Directors
Lessons from my transitions

• You don’t always know what you could be doing
• You may spend part of your career in fields that don’t exist now
• You don’t always know who will be able to help you
• You can learn many things on the job, if you are willing to learn
• Your interests can lead you to a job or become your job
• If you care enough to complain about it, ask yourself if you’re willing and able to help fix it
What I like about (most) job candidates with PhDs

• Most of us look at old problems in new ways
• Most of us are patient with topics others ignore
• Most of us believe others have things to teach us
• Most of us realize that explaining some things is hard and learning some things is hard
• Most of us are collegial and value collegiality
• Most of us are not in it only for the money
What I fear about (some) job candidates with PhDs

- Some have a narrow view of intelligence
- Some think taking other kinds of work means “not using” their degrees, and resent it
- Some believe rewarding work must be related to academic work (editors, publishers, research)
What a PhD represents to a non-academic employer

• To someone in a related field
  – it indicates your commitment to advanced training
  – it may be an advantage

• To someone in a non-related field
  – it is neither an advantage nor a disadvantage
  – it is an aspect of your abilities
  – it is a choice you made about how to spend your time that you will need to explain, including why you did not finish (if you don’t) or why you did (if you do)
Reasons to be confident

• What makes a good grad student and faculty member can also make a good non-academic employee
• Everything you read helps everything you read, and you have read a lot
• Employers need what you are doing here
• The job market is interesting
• (US citizens) Health insurance is now available independently of employment
What my former grad students, advisees, and fellow former academics are doing

• Faculty members
  – Faculty member and director of Study Abroad
• Editor, scholarly journal
• Attorney
• Director, regional art institute
• Producer, online games
• Head of Humanities division of online high school
• Ordained clergy
• Consultant, healthcare industry
If you don’t get an academic job

• Rethink and redefine what counts as your knowledge base and your skill-set
• Describe yourself from a non-academic employer’s perspective
• Adopt the mechanics of a non-academic job-search
• Get a job that gets you going: almost any job will do
Part 2: Moving from CV to résumé

Articulate your knowledge base and skill-set
Augment your self-description
Turn your CV into a résumé
Articulate your knowledge base and skill-set

• You may think this:
  – Your knowledge base is your subject, its scholarship, and your approach
  – Your skill-set is scholarly research, writing, teaching

• You should start also thinking this:
  – Your knowledge base is all the aggregated knowledge from your *previous and current* jobs and organizations
  – Your skill-set from your *current* job includes your ability to add to your knowledge base quickly, identify problems, re-think solutions, and persuade others to adopt them
Augment your self-description

• Your self-description may look like this:

  – I am a doctoral candidate / PhD in [field and subject] with an expertise in [topic]
  – I have presented [this scholarly work]
  – I have published [this scholarly work]
  – I am an experienced instructor, having taught [classes] for [levels]
Augment your self-description

• You should also describe yourself like this (academic equivalent):

  – I complete large projects with minimal supervision (thesis, research projects)
  – I have worked in large enterprises (your institution) and medium-sized organizations within the enterprise (your department)
  – I have participated in / led small teams within the enterprise (reading groups, course instructor groups)
  – I use research and analytical skills to identify and solve problems (proposals)
  – I manage contentious discussions toward productive conclusions (any seminar, any level)
  – I persuade reluctant adopters to accept and deploy standards (first-year composition 😊)

Your message to an employer: **This is how my collection of skills can help solve the challenges you have**
Turn your CV into a résumé

- A CV is written in academic shorthand for people who understand what your CV means about you.
- A résumé is written for people who may not know that and may not care: they do need to know what you can do to help solve their problems.
- A CV is evaluated by skilled readers.
- A résumé is (initially) evaluated by entry-level employees, or software.
- To convert your CV to a résumé, you
  - gather information from your *whole* work history and skill-sets.
  - describe your jobs, achievements, and skills.
Gather information for your résumé

• Graduate work requires a narrowing of focus; the nonacademic job search rewards broadening it

• Remember and record
  – where you lived
  – what you did

• This process will remind you
  – what you know, which is more than you think
  – whom you know, who are more than you think
Template exercises

[template exercise to help you recall and sort information]

[template exercise to help you define your skillsets]

• You should now look at non-academic job descriptions and in some cases be able to say “I have skills that apply to that job.”
Focus on achievements and skills

• Describe what you were responsible for
• Describe outcomes, with measured results where possible
• Present information in reverse chronological order
• Highlight critical information, rather than list everything
• Provide all necessary contact details
• [review Anne’s résumé]
Part 3: Engaging the non-academic job market

Use LinkedIn
Find people you know
Find people who can help you initially
Help people help you
Start thinking
Start working
Use LinkedIn

• LinkedIn is an online tool to post your résumé, seek jobs, seek employees, and make connections
• It is easily populated once you have created an up-to-date résumé
• It is a useful way to ask for introductions
• It is a useful way to engage with interest groups
• Recruiters and HR professionals use it extensively
• You should not add people you don’t know or whom you do not respect (see above: introductions)
Find people you know on LinkedIn

• From your own address book / contacts
• From people LinkedIn recommends, once you get your contacts in
• From groups to which you have belonged
  – Join relevant alumni groups
  – Join relevant professional groups
  – Join relevant interest groups
• From people with whom you have interacted
Find people who can help you initially

• Someone in the non-academic working world whom you know well enough to ask to review your résumé
• Someone in the non-academic working world who has used LinkedIn
• Someone in the non-academic working world whom you know well enough to ask to give you a practice interview for a specific job
• References who can speak to your work and skills
Help people help you

• Keep your résumé and CV up to date in e- and hard copy
• Keep e-copy of all job listings to which you apply
• *In advance of your need*, provide your referees with an up-to-date résumé, the job description, and a summary of your relevant experience: key questions, and key points you want your referee to make. Ask if they want ecopy, hardcopy, or both.
• Tell them when to expect the call and who the caller will be, or by when they need to submit the form or online information
Start thinking

• Decide when you will be willing to move to and start a non-academic job
• Prepare to choose between an academic position and a non-academic position, or perhaps to take both if one is part-time
• Decide how you will approach your job search
  – In a particular locale
  – In a particular field or job type
  – Through a particular group of people
  – Randomly (tempting; possibly unwise)
Start thinking

• Decide whether you will finish your dissertation
  – If you will, give yourself a rough deadline
  – Prepare to explain why you did or did not finish it
  – Prepare for the psychological strain of working very hard to finish at the same time that you actively seek work outside academics
  – Ask yourself what would make you answer “No”
Start working

• Find a job, either here or in the place to which you will move
  – Having a job helps you sleep at night
  – Having a job helps you present yourself well in interviews for other jobs
  – Having a job teaches you about a company and a job
  – Employers prefer to hire the employed
  – It is easy to explain that you are working temporarily while you search for the job you really want

• Starting with temp or contract work is a good idea
  – You learn about a company and an industry
  – You learn about a particular boss
  – It is possible to do contract work successfully long-term
Part 4: Do this next

• Do the organizations exercise, then do the job => role => skill exercise
• Join LinkedIn
  – Add the people you know well right away
  – Review LinkedIn’s “you may also know...” suggestions
  – After the organizations etc. exercise, add the people it brings to mind
  – Create a calendar reminder to add two people a week
  – Don’t add your résumé until you have someone review it
• Create a non-academic email address if you don’t have one
• Start cleaning up your contacts
• Start compiling the list of people who can help you initially
Part 5: Suggested reading

Anderson and Raynor, *The Innovator’s Dilemma*
Bolles, *What Color is Your Parachute?*
Gawande, *The Checklist Manifesto*
Sutton, *The No Asshole Rule*
Silver, *The Signal and the Noise*
Thaler and Sunstein, *Nudge*
Wizenberg, *A Homemade Life, Delancey*

More recommendations on annekrook.com
Some reminders

• Careers are long, and rarely follow predictable pathways
• The non-academic working world is varied, interesting, and big
• Things not invented now will drive new jobs over time
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