

Hey, humanities PhD candidates, what if you don't get an academic job? Or decide you don't want one?

Anne Krook

PhD Cornell 1989 (English)

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# Agenda

Course mechanics

Why I am here

Why you are 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 via phone photos
  - step outside to take phone calls
  - 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 prepare to enter the non-academic job market, in case you want to or need to

# Why you are here

To learn what you can do now so seeking a non-academic job is easier

# 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 PhD training

What I fear about (some) job candidates with PhD training

What a PhD represents to a non-academic 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, 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 can learn many skills on the job, if you are willing to learn
- 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
- 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 PhD training

- 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 are collegial and value collegiality
- Most of us realize that explaining some things is hard and learning some things is hard
- Most of us are not in it only for the money

# What I fear about (some) job candidates with PhD training

- 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 program 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 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

# To prepare to seek a non-academic job

- Rethink and redefine what counts as your knowledge base and your skill-set
- Describe yourself from a non-academic employer's perspective
- Learn about the mechanics of a non-academic job-search

# 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 have successfully completed the required preliminary work in [field]
  - I am a doctoral student in [field and subject] with an expertise in [topic]
  - I am an experienced instructor, having taught [classes] for [levels]
  - I am in training to become an academic

# Augment your self-description

- You should also describe yourself like this (academic equivalent):
  - I complete large projects with minimal supervision ([papers, 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 a non-academic 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 narrowing your 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 exercise to help you recall and sort information]*
- *[template exercise to help you define your skillsets]*

# Focus on achievements and skills

- Describe what you were responsible for
- Describe outcomes, with measured results where possible
- Present information in reverse chronological order, newest first
- 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

Fill some common gaps

Identify other gaps

Start thinking

# Use LinkedIn

- LinkedIn is an online tool to post your résumé, seek jobs, seek employees, and make connections
- 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
- It is easily populated once you have created an up-to-date résumé
- 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 contacts / address book
- From people LinkedIn recommends, once you have added some contacts
- 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
- People you know who have non-academic jobs and will tell you about them
- A list of references who will eventually speak to your work and skills

# Some common gaps to start to fill

- A standard suite of office applications:  
Microsoft, Google (esp. a spreadsheet app)
- Website-hosting and blogging platforms
- A basic understanding of statistics
- A basic understanding of how software works  
(I do not mean you must learn to code!)

# How to identify other gaps

- Find out what other people do
  - what kinds of problems they solve
  - what tools they use at work
  - what they wish they had known about their job when they started
  - what they wish they could do at work that they can't

# Start thinking

- Ask yourself whether you will start and / or finish your dissertation
  - If you will, give yourself a rough deadline
  - If you do, prepare for the divided feeling of working hard to finish at the same time that you seek non-academic work
  - Prepare to explain why you did or did not finish it to a non-academic employer
  - Ask yourself: what would make you answer “No”?

# Part 4: Do this next

- Do the organizations exercise, then 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
- Clean up your contacts and keep them current
- Set a calendar reminder once a month to talk to a non-academic about his or her job

# 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](http://annekrook.com)

# Some reminders

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

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