

The n Things I wish I knew before the Job Search



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Agenda

- Start by Finishing, meaning get the Dissertation done
- The job search
- Starting the new job

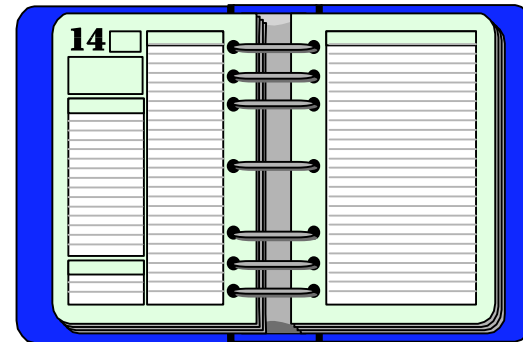


We invite questions, and want this to be interactive



The Overall Schedule

- **Finish the dissertation**
- Teaching positions start in September
 - The academic calendar drives the industrial research process too
- Job Search
 - Send out applications
 - Interview
 - Decision
- Take a break
- Start the new job
- Plan from the Right (backwards)
 - You are already behind



The Dissertation



- Strive to develop a **thesis sentence** for your dissertation
 - See <http://www.ai.mit.edu/people/shivers/diss-advice.html>
- Get help in writing dissertation through colleagues/family/books
- Form a dissertation support group of colleagues trying to finish
 - There is strength in numbers.
- Books to help you write your book:
 - A book on the Ph.D. process
 - "Getting What You Came For" by Robert L. Peters
 - "The Little Book" on minimalist writing
 - "Elements of Style" by William Strunk Jr. et al
 - A book on dissertation writing
 - "Bugs in Writing" by Lyn Dupre



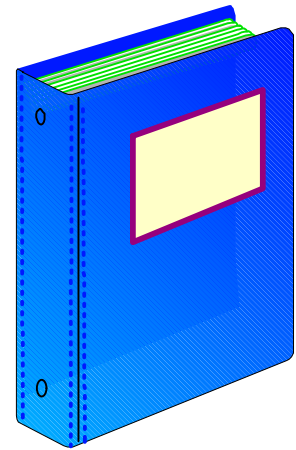
Dissertation (More)

- Nobody ever underestimated the time to complete a dissertation
- Write text for your dissertation **every day**
 - Inertia builds up when not writing that is hard to overcome.
- Give your committee many weeks to read it
 - If they have not read it they can only be embarrassed
- Getting your advisor's time may be hard
 - I could only get Sat/Sun afternoons on his dining room table
- Get it done before the job search
 - That means your final draft in February
- NEVER finish the dissertation on the job
 - I know too many ABD already



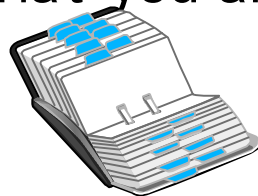
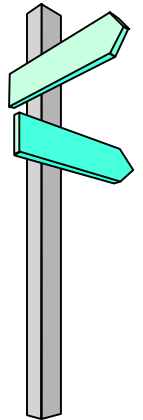
Dissertation (Still More)

- Don't try to interleave interviewing with writing the first draft
 - Your brain will be so fried from the interviews and travel that you will hardly be able to concentrate on the in-flight magazine
- Allow for discovery in the writing process
- Consider a post doc where you are if
 - You are changing research areas
 - You are not finishing at the right time of year



The Job Search

- Driven by the academic calendar
 - Industry too, though jobs are available all year
- Keep good notes on the phone calls
 - There will be many preliminary calls and phone interviews
- Keep good notes through the whole process!
- The first place will be kind of a dry run
 - Don't make it the place you most want to go to
- Have your "elevator talk ready"
 - People will miss your talk and you will use it
 - Have several variations
- Remember - part of what you are doing is building your professional network



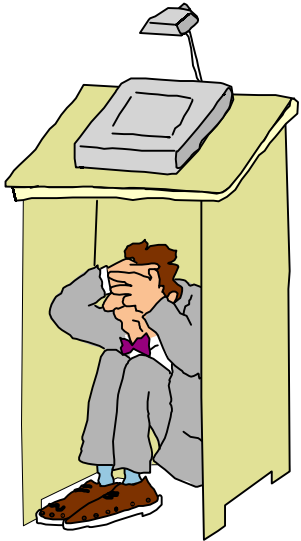
Travel and Logistics

- They will want to wine and dine you
 - It is part of the interview process
 - Allow for it
- Don't cut it too close on flights
 - It snows at O'Hare in the Winter
 - If you take the last flight in there is no backup
 - If you expect to be in at 10:00 PM and you have a three hour delay you will be tired the next morning
 - Carry-on luggage won't get lost
 - No guarantees for checked luggage...
- When will you get your interview clothes cleaned?
- Consider time zones and jet lag



The Seminar Talk

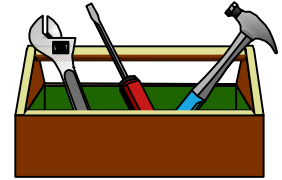
- Your Seminar Talk establishes your first impression
 - There will be no second chance
 - Recovery is not possible after a bad talk
 - Partly the advisor's fault
 - Keep to the allotted time (probably 50 min)
 - You are being evaluated as a teacher too
 - Know the related and prior work at the place you are interviewing - do your homework
 - Manage the audience
 - Treat questions carefully, don't patronize
 - Good visuals, videos and pictures
 - Bring foils just in case



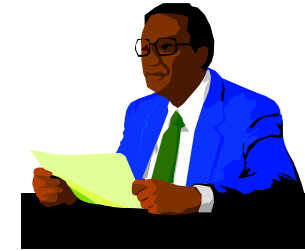
More on the talk



- Make it abundantly clear what you did and what your skills are
 - A general talk on a group project is a terrible thing to do.
- Dress a little better than the audience you expect
 - Don't overdress and become awkward in a suit you will not wear until the next funeral or wedding



Interviews



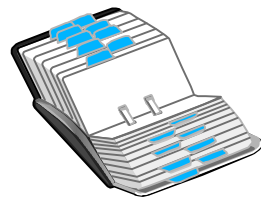
- Probably two days (less talk) of interviews lasting 30 to 60 minutes.
 - Exhausting - that's why you won't work on your dissertation on the airplane - you will hardly be able to read the in-flight magazine
- Have your elevator talk ready to start it
- They will be looking for evidence of teamwork
- Take notes - you will talk to so many people
- Different interviewers should have particular goals
 - Evaluate you, sell the place, inform, all will not have jobs
- They will all write up their interview
 - Don't risk a single bad one. It may be one too many!



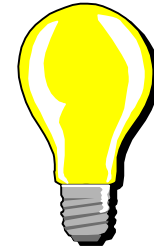
Interviews (More)



- They will be looking for evidence of flexibility
 - No one wants to hire someone who just wants to redo the dissertation, but really right this time
 - Brian Kernighan once told me that there was a striking difference in success between the people who branched off into something new after graduating
 - Projects change over time
 - New research areas are good for you
 - They are after your research and teaching skills
 - Things may change before you get there
- Make everyone part of your network, and become part of theirs



Possible questions



- The questions are to draw you out and see how you think on your feet. If you are giving yes/no answers, something is wrong
 - Some of my most painful, and long, interviews were of people who had nothing to say. I fear these most.
- How would you feel about working for a man/woman?
- Give an example of how you dealt with conflict on a project?
- What was your most exciting project?
- What was your worst bug?
- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What is your research agenda?
- What research problem would you like to work on next?



Interview Do's and Don'ts

- Be positive, outgoing, and articulate
- Firm handshake
 - Check each other out
- Don't self deprecate
- Don't weaken your answers or statements by raising your voice at the end, turning it into a question
 - ▶ Sounds like you are not sure of your self
- Women tend to destroy compliments - just say "thank you"





Exit Interview

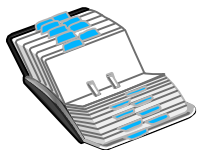
- Be prepared to rank the projects that you would be interested in
 - It is unbelievable, and useless, if you say you like them all
 - One or Several managers need to know they have a good chance in order to take the time to do the paper work and shepherd the offer through
- Be prepared to talk about your other offers and interviews
 - Be forthcoming, let them know where you are
 - Withhold salary until later
- Let them know what you need in the offer
 - Spouse house hunting, Bonus is important because you have no money and need to buy a bed, etc.



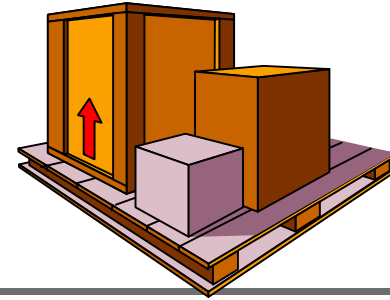
Deciding



- Don't negotiate the terms and conditions until all of the offers are in
 - Consider this in doing the overall scheduling
 - Companies will negotiate only once (approval process)
 - They made an offer, and now they really want to get you, in fact they love you, and will sweeten the offer!
 - ▶ The first offer is not the final offer
 - ▶ They will match other offers - ONCE
- Only negotiate with the place you really want to go
 - Don't waste your and their time
 - Elements: Salary, signing bonus, title, moving expenses, lab, project
- Be prepared to say why you turned offers down.
 - Remember, they may be a good contact later, keep in touch
 - ▶ Make them part of your network. You never know.
 - ▶ I have given grants to people who turned me down



The New Job



- Give your self some time off - vacation will not come for a while
- Set a sensible start date
- Moving is hard, and takes more time than you think
- This will be stressful, and a new opportunity for a first impression
- **Never** start before the dissertation is done. **Never** accept an offer from someone who suggests that it would be OK
- Companies take harassment very seriously
 - More so than universities in my observation
- Keep a file on your accomplishments
 - Talks, papers, classes taught, patents etc.
- Industry has periodic, usually yearly, evaluations
 - They start with self evaluation - don't be humble
- You may have a first year review (something like a defense)
- Avoid being a kid in the candy store



Finish

