The n Things I wish I knew before the Job Search

Maria Ebling
Guerney Hunt
Lily Mummert
Bill Tetzlaff
John Davis
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 Stunk 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