

Q: How did you conduct your job search? (i.e., responded to postings, attended conferences, networked)

- Official sources of information – Professional Society, [CHE/UA](#),... e.g. Physics Today, magazine of [APS](#) (note: market international).
- In my field, all done online with [Rumor Mill](#) ! – posts all job ads, shortlists and finally offers and acceptances. Print advertising is kind of “just for show” (*not* true in all fields).
- Real answer for how to *get* a job, not just *apply*, is **networking**. Being smart and doing good research is necessary, but not sufficient. Need to be plugged-in to inner circle of people in discipline. PhD, postdoc advisors crucial to this. Also:
- Need to go to meetings, give talks! (e.g. 2 research seminars at universities & 2 main conferences in the field as grad student; dozens more seminars & conferences & workshops as postdoc). Aim: make contact with potential future employers.
- As became interested in faculty jobs, gave more general talks at conferences in related areas, to showcase teaching ability too. Impressing people out of your narrow area can help greatly in a job search – directly, and generally via word-of-mouth.

About conferencing and workshopping

- Many junior people think the main point of attending a conference is to learn science, and/or impart knowledge. But this is only the *secondary* goal 😊. The main goal is **Scientific Schmoozing!**
- Improve your S.Q. (Schmooze Quotient) at coffee breaks, lunches, dinners, and – yes – even sometimes at bars.
- The point of Schmoozing is to make a *connection*. Gossip on
 - What are the hottest new ideas and your thoughts on them;
 - Your own new ideas and why they are important;
 - People: who got headhunted, who got what postdoc/faculty jobs, smart up-and-coming youngsters, etc.
- Mostly your advisor should cough up the money. Consider also
 - Asking/begging for money (“I am a poor young scientist”);
 - Applying for small grants from several/unlikely sources;
 - Even spending your own money (worthwhile investment?).

Q: When did you start looking for academic work? How long did it take you to prepare your dossier?

- Started in earnest the Fall before I needed my next job.
- The reality is that I was looking **all the time!**
- Interact with people at other places. Ask what they're working on, what they plan to work on in future. Find out who is there now, and what kinds of people they plan to hire in the future. Do your homework on their faculty complement before visiting.
- The **www** is usually the best place to find up-to-date information.
- Dossier: began as grad student. Pretty small then, but took few weeks. In my field we do *not* get faculty jobs straight from PhD; typically we do a couple of postdocs first (I know 1-8 year e.g.s). I built it progressively every quarter or so since then, and still do.
- Preparing job applications is much more than preparing dossier! Find job ads, do research on places. Two main approaches: **Shotgun** and **Rifle**. Mine was combo. During last 2 years as postdoc, applied for most of ~15/year on market in US/Canada.
- Get better at interviewing with practice. (I also refused some interviews from lack of interest in University/location...)

Q: What did your dossier consist of? Do you have any tips for CV's, application letters, etc.? How does one stand out?

- Dossier: Cover letter (hello), CV (past), research plan (future).
- CV:
 - Personal info: mostly *contact* info (= very important)
 - Academic and employment history (degrees and jobs)
 - Awards and honours (if recent and relevant)
 - Professional activities (journal refereeing, conference/workshop organisation)
 - List of publications (separate refereed from non)
 - List of invited (and contributed) research talks (conferences, workshops, seminars, colloquia)
 - Small section on teaching interests and service (public lectures, involvement of students in research, teaching experience, education conference, relevant committees)
 - Professional organisation memberships
- [Primary authorship, invited talks, leadership, innovation, fit with group, classroom teaching, supervision, service to community.]

Tips for cover letter. How to stand out.

- Advice varies regarding cover letter. Some say it should be carefully tailored to each institution, carefully written as précis of academic life, make reader want to read dossier. Mine was *short*.
- I've served on *four* professorial search committees here. I found cover letters to be essentially irrelevant, and any horn-tooting pretty annoying. Perhaps this is Physics/Math-specific? Just don't make errors or typos: do get the name of the University, the specific name of the Department, and the Chair's name correct!
- To stand out:
 - Good research dossier, e.g. good number of well-cited papers.
 - Good statement of research interests (like dry run for grant applications). Short- & medium- term plans, long-term goals.
 - List all activities which give evidence of peer regard.
 - Show that you have a clue what it is to be a faculty member. (I read *way* too many postdoc i.e. research-only applications!) Teaching experience? Service to professional community?

Tips for dossier. Recommendation letters.

- Be certain that you want a part of your history to be an integral part of your professional identity – that’s what it becomes if you include it in a job application.
- Important to leave some things out!
 - High school grades (yes, I saw these...eek!)
 - Anything likely to be controversial – unless it would be deceptive or involve a loss of integrity to leave it out.
 - Information on hobbies, marital and/or family status. These are none of the search committee’s business (IMHO).
- Re: recommendation letters. Most applicants think they are more important than they really are - dossier is *at least* as important. Always ask for one from your PhD advisor. Best to get letters from people who are famous and know you well. If can’t get both, get some of each (more from people who know you well). Perfectly acceptable to ask person politely if doing self favour by asking – if do this, always provide alternate names of referees. Bad letter is *almost always* worse than no letter.

Q: Describe the interview process (i.e. length, who did you meet with, questions you asked the committee, what should you prepare to talk about).

- VERY arduous, mentally and physically. ~1.5 days. First appointment 9am or earlier, whisked from A to B to C, talk to huge variety of people, not finished until after dinner (wine: no). Barely have time to pee – don't take coffee every time offered!
- Come prepared to talk about everything. Examples:
 - Research (what are you doing, and why should they care?)
 - Teaching interests (what courses would you want to teach?)
 - How would you fit in with the existing research Group (whom would you talk to the most, how can you complement them?)
- **Show interest** in the place, every way you can think of. Do *not* appear snobby, aloof, disinterested – these are some of the quickest ways to drop off the bottom of the shortlist.
- In NZ, whole committee grilled me alone for over 1hr. In Canada/US, met with various committee members for 0.5-1hr each. Met with Chairs, Deans/Vice-Deans, tenured faculty, untenured faculty, faculty on search committee, faculty not on search committee, postdocs, grad students, and undergrads!

Job talk tips.

- Job-talk is Very Big Deal. People are busy and can only perceive what is put in front of them (they aren't telepathic)!
- Show off research prowess *and* teaching ability simultaneously.
- Can sink job chances by messing up job-talk (e.g. going overtime) Equally, if knock committee's socks off, can nail job offer.
- Usually asked to give colloquium (or colloquium + technical talk). One mistake is to pitch talk to too-general audience. You need to *distinguish yourself* by (a) unique way you introduce your subject (b) your presentation of your own specialised new research.
- For 60-min talk, 45-50 talking period and 15-10 question period. Take questions during talk if brief and relevant – use opportunity to show off. Beware peacocking from audience though – you can politely, firmly ask to discuss privately if questioner oppressive.
- Minutes 0-10 for undergrad, 10-20 for grad student, 20-30 for general postdoc/faculty, 30-40 to colleagues, 40-50 full throttle.

Lifesaving tips. Airline tips.

- Practice job-talk at least 3 times from start-to-finish, to fight nervousness. Think up questions they might ask, and practice answering them in talk. Blank wall is good practice “audience” 😊. PowerPoint is a *risk* – their LCD projector may be allergic to your laptop. Computer-generated transparencies good (e.g. Kinko’s).
- If get caught off guard, can use local resources. E.g. in NZ, was asked to give teaching presentation next a.m. on how to present a particular topic to a PHYS101 class. Physics Library was saviour!
- Take in **carryon** luggage (a) talk (b) interview prep notes (c) ingredients for smart set of clothes in combo with what wearing on plane (d) clean underwear and essential toiletries (e) pills.
- Dress up. Wear what your profs wear when they go see the Dean. If need to buy, take friend and *don’t* leave till last minute.
- Saturday night stay often required for reasonable airfare – will be appreciated by hosts. Use opportunity to check out city/town: you’ll want to be comfortable living there if you get the offer.

Q: How did you prepare for the interview?

- Practise spiels about your research: 15-second version, 1-minute version, 5-minute version, 15-minute version. You will meet people briefly in elevator/hallway, briefly in group situation. In office, you will have attention of non-expert for ~5 minutes, and of colleague for about 15 minutes. Practise on your housemate, grandma, sibling, fellow grad students, advisor.
- **WWW** Look up people you're likely to talk to (e.g. the Chair), memorise their interests and what they look like (and/or print the info). Look up the faculty complement, the grad and undergrad courses. Peek at the CV's of prof's who post them on their webpages. Advance knowledge makes you look impressive – both for answering their questions and coming up with your own.
- Prepare a detailed list of questions that (a) make them look good (b) make you look interested in them (c) make you look good.
- Ask your network colleagues. Often they will tell you stuff about X university or Y department that you can't get any other way. Especially useful if any problems. Do *not* expect local candour.

Q: What are some of the things you negotiated when you received the offer? What questions did you ask?

- Negotiated:
 - Salary (used other offer as leverage);
 - Startup grant;
 - Initial teaching relief.
- Asked: Everything! Probably drove the Chair nuts, but asked everything. Rules for promotion and tenure. Typical tenure rates. Time to tenure. Department's five-year strategic plan. Teaching load. Whether could get bought out of fraction of teaching if won prestigious research award. Competitiveness of federal research grant proposals, whether group/individual, typical award size. Plans for hiring other professors. Graduate and undergraduate programs. All aspects of academic life as a tenure-stream prof.
- Retirement/pension, health care, other benefits. Taxes.
- Nonwork life aspects. Livability of the city. Affordability of housing. Cultural opportunities. Outdoors opportunities.

Q: Any special book/website recommendations?

- **Tomorrow's Professor**, by Richard Reis. IEEE Press, May 1997. ISBN 0-7803-1136-1 (paper). Associated website: <http://sll.stanford.edu/projects/tomprof/>
- The **Chronicle of Higher Education** <http://chronicle.com/>, especially the "Landing your first job" section
<http://chronicle.com/jobs/archive/firstjob.htm>
Buy an online CHE subscription, it is well worth the money (IMHO)
- **Who Succeeds in Science? The Gender Dimension**, by Gerhard Sonnert and Gerald Holton. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 1995. ISBN 0-8135-2220-x (paper).
- **Ms Mentor** <http://chronicle.com/jobs/archive/advice/mentor.htm>