

## Go East!

### ► Co-op opportunities in Ottawa

By Amy Mullis

Have you ever thought about doing a co-op term in Ottawa? Don't just think about it, do it! Take it from me, it is an amazing experience that should not be missed. Here are just a few of the benefits of heading out to the capital region.

#### Experience a true Canadian winter

Cold temperatures and snow may sound a little scary, but the cold weather turns Ottawa into a winter playground. Every February Ottawa hosts Winterlude, an amazing month of winter fun that includes ice and snow sculptures, concerts and more. And don't forget to take your skates; when the temperature drops the Rideau Canal turns into the world's longest skating rink.

#### Canada Day

The people take to the streets to celebrate and the outpouring of Canadian pride will make you wonder why you ever discussed a lack of Canadian identity in your Communication classes. The day ends with a party/concert with 75,000 of your fellow Canadians on Parliament Hill; you have never experienced anything like it.

#### Lasting friendships

Ottawa is a great chance to meet people who you didn't even know you were going to school with, from different departments as well as your own. You will also meet co-op students from UVIC to Memorial and everywhere in between, and the friendships that you form will last a lifetime.



*The Peace Tower on Parliament Hill*

#### Working for the government can be fun. Really

I learned so much working for the Canada Research Chairs Program and had a great time doing it. I gained experience in external and internal relations, media relations and Web sites. It was amazing, but if you don't believe me, you will just have to try it for yourself.

#### There is so much to do in Ottawa

Living in the National capital has its perks. Visit the National Gallery, tour the Parliament Buildings, roam through the Glebe, and discover the Byward Market. Or grab your roommates and friends from work for a night on the town.

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*Triple C, also known as the Communication Co-op Committee, is a volunteer student group that connects co-op students and promotes SFU Co-op.*

# The Wonders of Co-op

## ► There's more to co-op than finding a job

By Gibril Koroma

Co-op is like the soccer team that plays a series of friendly matches with other teams before going into a fierce competition. Securing gainful employment is a challenge, a competition for which you should receive “coaching lessons” (university courses) and play “friendly matches” (co-op) in order to clinch the “cup” (job). As a person new to the co-op program, here are some of the benefits I have encountered so far:

The co-op program is full of workshops to help you through every aspect of co-op, from cover letters and resumes, to interviews and self-directed job searches. This is a learning ground for the job market that I think every student should fully utilize. The skills and knowledge dispensed by the SFU Co-op program at such minimal financial cost are very expensive outside the walls of the university. Take advantage of it!

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► **Go West!** *continued from page 1*



the  
Ottawa  
experience

### Or get out of the city

From camping, hiking and river rafting to cross country skiing, sleigh rides and snowshoeing, you don't have to go very far to have an amazing outdoor adventure any time of the year.

### See our country (or a different one)

Montreal is only a hop, skip and a jump away, and Toronto is a little bit further—perfect for a weekend getaway. Take advantage of your location and go on a true adventure to eastern Canada, or even New York City!

### French lessons

In this bilingual city, you will get to practice your French, or at least learn some!

### Unfortunately there isn't an all-you-can-eat sushi bar...

...But there are plenty more tasty treats to be found in Ottawa. Visit a sugar shack to see how they make maple syrup, or wander the Byward Market with a Beaver Tail in hand. Definitely don't forget to try poutine sold from a chip truck. Mmmmm.

### Find out what you are truly made of

It takes a lot of courage to leave your friends and family, get on a plane, and start a new job (and life!) somewhere else, but the benefits are worth it. Completing an out-of-town co-op gives you the feeling that you can do anything—it's definitely worth the risk. ◀

# China—The Untouched

## ► Charting unfamiliar territory and learning along the way

By Erin Fea

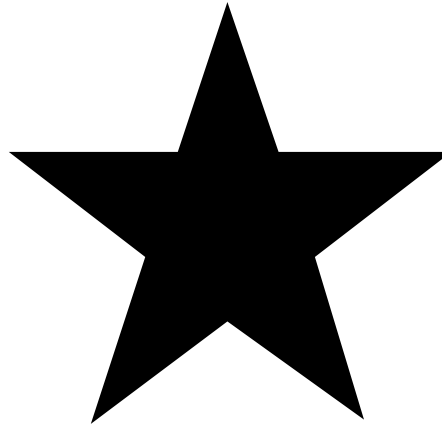
A year and a half ago, I found myself puzzling over the biggest dilemma I had ever come across. I desperately wanted to travel, but I had no money. I don't mean that I didn't have enough money to buy a plane ticket—oh no, I was so poor that I was regularly eating porridge without any brown sugar or milk. There is only so much tasteless overcooked oatmeal that a person can take. And I was teetering on the breaking point. I began to feel incredibly sorry for myself. Uh oh. Here comes that oatmeal-induced breakdown. Well at least it wasn't a rice-induced breakdown. I hate rice. RICE!!

That was it! They eat rice in China. No one I knew had ever even been to China. How cool would it be to go there. I ran to the computer, brought up the ever-so-trusty Google, and typed in 'cheap travel in China'. I got hundreds of hits. Each site that came up said the same thing, "Teach English in China." "Make great money." "Immerse yourself in the Chinese culture." "See the wonders that others only dream of." I knew instantly that this was for me.

Within two months I was in Guangzhou, China. I had a well-paying English teaching job and a great apartment. What more could I have asked for? Answer: a phrase book. The Chinese invented writing thousands of years ago, and I thought it would take me that long to learn how to read and write this mysterious language. How would I ever survive a year?

Somehow I managed, and am now able to say that I enjoyed the best year of my life while in China. During the 11 months I spent living in China, I never experienced a dull moment. Everything about the country—the people, the food, and the language were completely foreign to me. And yet, now that I sit here reflecting on this past year, I am beginning to realise that the differences are not all that striking.

When I first arrived, I was shocked to learn that Chinese kids are just like any others. Please forgive my ignorance. I was under the impression that the children in



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then China is for you

Chinese classrooms were perfectly disciplined. How wrong I was! I used to think that there is only one kind of Chinese food—how ridiculous. With a country so vast and a culture so great how could there ever be just one kind of 'Chinese food'? I was also under the impression that many Chinese people speak English. Wrong again. I found traveling and living in China can often be incredibly frustrating as a result of my inability to communicate. But China can also be amazingly rewarding, as so much of it is untouched by large amounts of the English language and its Western biases.

If you are looking to travel and experience a friendly welcome from a country, then China is for you. Don't put it off. I promise that you will learn more during one year in China than you will learn in four years of university. And even if I'm wrong, what have you got to lose? ◀

# Networking: The Basics

## ► Advice from a Communication Co-op grad

By Tara Knight

There is nothing like being out of a job to ensure your next lesson is a crash course in networking. Networking is a difficult beast, but one that can be tamed and ridden to success. Here are some general rules of networking that I learned the hard way.

**Networking is not about you, it is about making connections with other people and doing something for them**—“paying it forward” if you like. I once stopped an interview because I could see the job wasn’t for me, but I knew a contractor who could handle their problem perfectly. That company is now a significant longtime client of that contractor, and the contractor has helped me in job searches, supplied references, and still tells everyone how wonderful I am, two years later. Can you ask for better marketing?

**N**etworking happens everywhere

**You don’t have to go to every networking session, and you don’t have to be at a networking session to network.** I got my job at a public relations agency because my best friend traded business cards at a Friday night wine & cheese party (the power of random connections!). Networking happens everywhere; do not be afraid to hand your card out at social events, BBQ’s, sporting events, etc.

I believe networking works best when you are among people from a variety of professions, rather than just communication.

Try getting out of your regular IABC/CPRS sessions and mingle with other professional groups like the Board of Trade, the Cascadian Prosperity Forum, and the Professional Women’s Network, where professionals of all stripes and colours attend.

**You don’t need a business card, just a card, and use it.** OK—so you aren’t working (or your job doesn’t provide a card, or yours is out of date) my advice is: make it up. Cards are awesome and you never have to embark on mission impossible to find a pen again. I often use two, my business card for networking and a calling card for my personal contact information. The publishing labs at Harbour Centre have the software, and you can have them printed downstairs or at Kinko’s down the street. No job? Make up a title that explains what you do (or want to do): writer, event organisation, media relations, communicator extraordinaire. Then hand it out to *everyone*.

**If you say you will follow up, for heaven’s sake, follow up.** When you promise a contact something, follow through—they will see it as a microcosm of how you behave in a job. If you are slow about returning calls/e-mails or promise something you cannot deliver, it reflects on how you might behave in a job. If you overextend yourself, it reflects poorly on your performance—you are not superhuman.

**Patience Grasshopper.** I think one of the most frustrating lessons I learned about networking is: it takes time. Build your network, and do not expect an instant return. The more you do for other people in your network, the more that will come back to you.

*Tara Knight left her public relations agency in August for the Vancouver Board of Trade, where she coordinates the Leaders of Tomorrow student mentorship program. ◀*

# Alumni Event A Success

## ► Catching up with Communication Co-op Alumni

By Jennifer Simpson

I know there are a lot of reasons why people participate in co-op. Some of those reasons are why I am here. The experience, the portfolio building, the references—everything you hope will put you that extra step ahead after graduation. What most people don't see when they join the co-op program are the unexpected benefits—the intangibles—like the confidence you build, but more importantly, the friendships you make that will last long after you graduate. This was made clear to me when I volunteered at the Communication Co-op Alumni event in January.

From my vantage point, things went off without a hitch. Seventy-three alumni attended this exclusive event at the Oland Specialty Beer Institute to learn more about beer, catch up with old friends and network with others in the communication field. The night was filled with a mixture of presentations about beer by the Oland Institute staff and interactive games to facilitate mingling (not that the alumni needed any help), with many staying until the very end of the evening.

There was an overwhelmingly positive response to the event. "It was great to reconnect with people who I graduated with, and discover the many, many career paths we've taken," said one grad, while another enjoyed the chance to "meet so many co-op alumni from so many different years in a friendly atmosphere."

Marcia Shimizu agrees wholeheartedly, and hopes it will be the first of many more alumni events to come. "This was a great opportunity to reach out to our alumni and catch up, but also put them in touch with each other to build up their network of contacts in the Vancouver communication industry. An added benefit was that the event gave us a chance to say thank you to all of the grads who have played a role in supporting the program by taking on co-op students in their workplace."

I walked away from the event excited for my turn to attend one of these events as a

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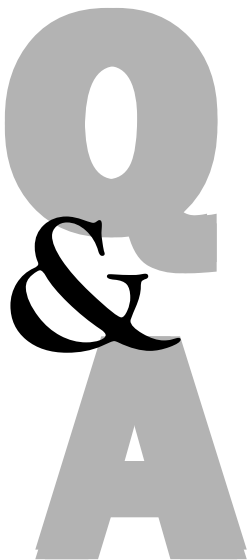
alumni  
attended  
this  
exclusive  
event



guest. Yes, on the practical side, you can see these people as future contacts in your field, an important aspect of what the co-op program attempts to provide. It is also important though not to forget that these people can be great friends who can help you through the process of co-op, the struggles of coming back to school or applying for that job during midterms. Remember to take the time to meet others in your program while you are here, if only so that you know your competition! ◀

# Where Are They Now?

## ► Checking in with Communication Co-op grad Kim Mathewes



**Where do you presently work? What is your title and what duties does your job entail?**

I work at Crystal Decisions, a software company with about 1,000 employees in Vancouver and another 1,000 worldwide. As part of the Internal Communications team, we manage everything, including executive communications, promotions and incentives for our sales teams (we gave away six Mercedes in one quarter!), employee events for thousands of people and our corporate intranet with daily articles. It's a role where the priorities and the projects change daily. Right now, our company is being acquired by a Paris-based software company, so we are getting ready for a high profile communications rollout with everything from packages for all employees, to celebration parties around the world, to a new intranet.

**Do you feel co-op prepared you for that position, or made it easier to get?**

Definitely! Co-op helped me to think big, find a company ripe with opportunity to learn and grow, and an industry I love to work in—software! I am a big believer in co-op, because it helped me figure out where I wanted to go, and then make a plan to get there.

**Where did you do your co-ops? What duties did you perform at each position?**

My first two co-op jobs, one working as a PR Assistant with Industry Canada in Ottawa, and another working with Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines in operations, were both great experiences in the field of communications, but definitely not where I wanted to end up! I put in my time compiling PR kits, sitting in on meetings, and learning what goes into communications, which positioned me well for the real work world.

My first 'real' job was my third co-op, actually a business job in the software industry I applied for despite their request for a Master's student. It's always a good reminder for me that sometimes employers post 'nice to haves' on their list of requirements. Even if you don't have those skills, the job

still may be a good fit for you! I stayed with Infowave Software for three years, starting with that co-op, and worked in marketing and communications, and eventually managed their public relations group.

**What is the most valuable thing you learned from your co-op experiences?**

There are some great mentors in the Communication Co-op program, and they taught me to how to think about my career as a series of steps, at each one learning something new that you take into your next role. Five years after my last co-op job, I still rely on them for support and help!

These wise co-op coordinators also predicted that I would really appreciate all my fellow co-op students down the road, despite the fact that I knew very few of them at the time. And they were right! I know more people in the work force now from SFU Communication Co-op than I did as I was going through! It's a great network of talented and motivated people, and probably the most tangible aspect of the co-op program I've taken with me.

**Any advice for current co-ops?**

Keep an open mind, and don't be afraid to try something new and different! After three years in high-tech PR and analyst relations, I was concerned about getting too specialized with a move to Internal Communications. After a year on the job, however, it's the best move I could have made!

It has turned out to be an incredibly fast-paced and rewarding role. Through this transition, I've learned that as long as you have a great team to work with and an audience you're interested in communicating to, your core communications skills can be applied to any group and all of the same communication principles apply. From writing and presenting, to communications strategy and analysis, to project management and creative conceiving, it's all there. So get out there and try something new! ◀

# Meet the Faculty

## ► An interview with Pat Howard

By Jen Chan

Anyone who has taken Cmns 342 - Science and Public Policy: Risk Communication or Cmns 454 - Computer Mediated Work and Workplace Communication, is familiar with Pat Howard's work. Having been at SFU since 1979—first as a graduate student, and then as a professor beginning in 1985—Pat is a bit of a fixture in the School of Communication. She also has familial ties to the department: her husband Roger is also a faculty member.

“The SFU Communication Program is extremely innovative,” she says proudly, “and in many ways, is quite unique. We have a lot of things that we do that don't exist anywhere else, and there is such richness in the faculty.”

This richness is reflected in the diversity of Pat's own research. Originally entering the department as a China scholar concentrating on rural economic and industrial management reforms, she has expanded her interests to include communication and development, and government policy issues. As the courses that she has created suggest, she has also taken a keen interest in biotechnology, risk communication, and computer-mediated and workplace communication.

While Pat reads *Communiqué* and hears about co-op at faculty meetings, she believes that her biggest source on what co-op is all about comes from the projects in her 454 class, where students reflect on work experiences. “I think I get a window into co-op that most faculty don't get, because they actually talk about their co-op experiences. I can see that is incredibly enriching for some students, which is wonderful.”

She also thinks that working at co-op jobs is greatly beneficial to the school experience, particularly the workplace communication course. “It creates a greater diversity in the classroom in terms of the range of jobs, because people are swapping job experiences.” That said, Pat also believes that the companies co-op students are placed with can learn a few things from us, particularly our new and innovative ideas. “It's tricky though,” she says, “because some managers feel threatened by



*Communication Professor Pat Howard's research topics range from workplace communication to government policy. For a comprehensive list of Pat's work, go to [www.sfu.ca/communication/faculty/howardp/](http://www.sfu.ca/communication/faculty/howardp/)*

workers who come in and start doing what is really considered management work, but it also shows that you're serious, and it is a sign of commitment.”

Pat also encourages students to get as many job experiences as possible, because “Working in as many atmospheres as possible is important. Not only does it give students confidence,” Pat asserts, “but it also allows you to think more objectively.”

“There is a real advantage to co-op,” she says, “because you have the university helping you to find jobs that are not necessarily accessible to other students. But don't just think that your employers are doing you a favor, because they will also greatly benefit by having you there.” ◀

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Along with the practical side of co-op is the travel and adventure component available to students. There are numerous co-op students living and working in many exotic places around the world, from China to Japan to Brazil. Co-op opens doors not only to employment in a strange land, but also the opportunity to meet and experience different people and different cultures.

Co-op is never static but changes day-by-day as industry and technology change in the world. Because the coordinators are constantly in touch with the movers and shakers of industry, they know what the employers need, the kind of skills and attitudes they want and it is precisely that kind of knowledge they pass on to students.

Many people feel at a loss, or just apprehensive when they graduate. They fear the world out there and are worried about the future. I feel any student who has successfully completed the co-op program while in school will be better equipped to face the world after school because they have already been there and know or have an idea of what makes such a world tick. They have also built relationships and made contacts which they can turn to for assistance when they leave school.

Co-op is not only about finding jobs while you go through university, it prepares you for the job market, making you aware of the skills you need to fit into the work environment, and makes you realize your weaknesses and helps you to overcome them. In short, it helps you to know yourself. ◀

## Contacts

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# Statistics Corner

**03-2    02-2**

**Who we are**

New admits	52	57
Returning students	73	78
Total students enrolled	125	135

**Matching**

Students matched	94	97
Round One matches	10	16
Self-directed co-ops	19	15

**Who's doing what**

Eight-month term	23	22
First co-op	27	40
Second co-op	23	28
Third co-op	33	12
Fourth co-op	7	11
Fifth co-op	4	6
Part-time co-op	0	1

**Where we're working**

Greater Vancouver	76	66
Out-of-town	15	31
Overseas	2	9

**Who we're working for**

Federal government	16	23
Provincial government	4	2
Municipal government	0	4
Government agencies	9	13
Not-for-profit	17	18
Private	41	36

**What we're doing**

Promotions and design	5	8
Media relations	4	5
Employee relations	2	5
Information technology	3	5
Special event planning	10	12
Marketing	10	7
Public relations	7	7
Research and policy	5	7
Publishing	4	3
Project coordination	12	6
Education and training	3	8
Office Administration	9	5
Writing	10	12
Other	10	6