

Communiqué

A Newsletter by and for Communication Co-op Students

Making Airwaves

By Jim Jeang

Bruce Springsteen once said, “fifty-seven channels and nothin’ on.” He must have been a Communication major. Quotes like this belong in texts with the likes of Marx, Innis, and McLuhan. In today’s 200-channel universe, people are surfing with a tenacity like never before, trying to satisfy their hunger for quality programming. Forget swords, axes, and heavy artillery; the weapon of choice in the battle for the right to representation in the information age has become the remote control. Today, the epic struggle for cultural representation is won through the media, and the long-time underdogs in this struggle have been ethnic communities.

I had the fortune to work for a television station that promises to break new ground for ethnic broadcasting. Following in the footsteps of the highly acclaimed CFMT (Canada’s First Multicultural Television), Rogers Media Inc. is applying to launch LMtv (Local Multilingual Television) in Greater Vancouver and Victoria. LMtv is one of two stations applying for what is forecasted to be the last license for a free station in the next several decades. The new station promises to bring Greater Vancouver’s ethnic media out of their dark age of basement studios and niche markets into the brilliant world of mass audiences and mainstream broadcasting.

It was a unique experience witnessing the birth of a television station, especially one that sets a new precedent for Vancouver. I had a role in moulding and remoulding LMtv in response to Vancouver’s diverse communities. We were constantly contending with issues of cultural sensitivity and equal representation with a seemingly infinite number of cultures, many with conflicting ideologies. The delicate balancing act was

further complicated by the heavy hand of the CRTC. These forces sculpted LMtv’s mandate, a piece that evolved from CFMT’s template into an array of social initiatives and service objectives specific to the Lower Mainland. My knowledge was fully utilized in identifying the needs of the student community and the development of future ethnic producers. I had an integral role in designing the proposed scholarships for BC’s major post-secondary institutions, including SFU’s prestigious School of Communication. I must admit that I had qualms about working with the proverbial “Big Bad Wolf” of Vancouver’s broadcasting sector, but I was pleasantly surprised at the control that Rogers gave the LMtv team. The station’s key social roles were developed by an advisory board consisting of community leaders held accountable to Lower Mainland residents. Further, LMtv has been committed to serving ethnic communities by consistently applying for a license for eight years. At the risk of being drummed out of the Communication faculty, I dare to say that with LMtv, Rogers is proving its worth to a resistant community. Also noteworthy is our department’s own Catherine Murray and SFU Chancellor Milton Wong’s firm support of LMtv.

It will be interesting to see what will happen in the coming months with the CRTC’s pending decision. Either way, a new station will be making airwaves for Vancouver’s ethnic communities. ▲

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Co-op opens doors

By Taigita Biln

I have no idea what I want to be when I grow up. However, I know what I do not want to be. I do not want to feel trapped, and I certainly do not want to be bored. I have always considered myself a fairly intelligent, capable person, yet I questioned my ability to take my long, expensive university education and turn it into something useful.

So what does co-op have to do with this? Everything. It has given me a chance to test the waters of the job market, as well as assess my own skills. It has helped me clarify my personal career goals and has even had an effect on how I choose my classes. And the best part about co-op is that it is safe. While the learning curve may be steep, I have been hired with the understanding that I am a student and the emphasis is that I am learning. This is a lot less pressure than one will find in any job after graduation.

I am in the last two months of an eight-month placement at The Vancouver Playhouse, where I have been the Group Sales intern. I handle all group bookings and promotions, as well as provide general support for the Marketing and Communication departments. I do not plan on being in marketing per se. And sales? Forget it. But this has been an invaluable experience nonetheless.

I went into the job basically looking for a break from the books and some kind of work that would be more compatible with my Communication degree than my numerous years in the service industry. Enter the Playhouse. The first couple of months slipped by as I learned the ropes and tried to figure out the job. During this time, however, there was a thought constantly rattling around in the back of my brain – “what am I really learning here?” And it slowly dawned on me as I answered phones, updated the database, drafted letters, and participated in the frenetic pace of live theatre that I am learning how to think, organize and react.

It is so different from school learning; it diffuses into your brain as opposed to being forced, crammed, and pummeled. Previously daunting tasks are suddenly manageable, and my confidence in my abilities has increased greatly.

These are not the days of getting a job and sticking with a company until you retire and are awarded the coveted gold watch. The key words of this generation are innovation, change, and progress. Co-op can get you there by opening the door to a friendly learning environment! ▲

Benefits of co-op workshops

By Gillian Tweedie

The first time I heard about the co-op workshops was at the orientation held in September. I signed up for *Skills Transfer*, *Writing Resounding Resumes*, and *Killer Cover Letters* on the Communication co-op website. I found the workshops to be well organized, not too time-consuming, and generally interesting; however, it was not until I sat down to actually write my resume and cover letters that I realized how pertinent the workshops truly are.

The knowledge I gained at the *Skills Transfer* workshop became extremely useful when I was writing my resume. This workshop taught me how to relate all of my past

experiences, whether they were work, school or socially acquired, to the position that I was applying for. *Skills Transfer* gave me the confidence to identify my most transferable skills and impress each employer with my experience. At this workshop I received a handout that outlined the differences between “skills” and “tasks,” and “knowledge” and “abilities,” and this became a great resource for me.

The second workshop I attended, *Writing Resounding Resumes*, taught me how to organize my transferable

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...Benefits of workshops, continued from page 2

skills, work, school, and life experiences into an eye-catching, effective resume. *Writing Resounding Resumes* enabled me to create an impressive document that could still attract an employer who may have already seen 50+ resumes. I was also provided with three handouts: a resume format guide, a list of employability skills, and a list of essential “action words” for me to draw on. These handouts were really helpful for the creation of both my resume and cover letters.

Killer Cover Letters was the last workshop I attended. Here, I learned how to customize my cover letter to each position I was applying for. The cover letter workshop taught me the appropriate language to use, how to represent myself without getting too personal, and how to match the skills the employer was looking for with

the skills I already had. I also received a helpful handout that outlined common mistakes and gave a sample format to consider. Examples of both effective and ineffective cover letters were available as a resource after the workshop was over.

Overall, these workshops showed me how to select and present my best skills and effectively communicate them to a potential employer. The handouts, hands-on activities, examples, and advice available at these workshops are essential to any new or returning co-op student. I highly recommend these workshops to anyone creating their first resume or cover letter, or just updating the one they already have. The knowledge I gained in these workshops helped me land four interviews in Round 1, as well as secure my first choice work term position! ▲

Where are they now?

By Elisa Coelho

Tom Petryshen, graduated 1993

1. Where are you currently working? What are your duties?

I currently operate MediaKraft Communications, a Marketing and Communications company which I founded five years ago. As the sole proprietor, I advise companies in Canada, UK, US and Australia on how to incorporate their online and offline businesses. I also help these companies manage and promote their corporate web sites from my home base in Sydney, Australia.

In addition, I'm a minority partner in Pinnacle Athletic Mats, a one-year-old athletic mat company located in Chilliwack, BC.

2. Where did you complete your co-op terms? What were you required to do for each job?

My first and second co-op terms were completed at The Power Tour. I helped promote a public-speaking program created to educate BC elementary students about the dangers of substance abuse. My duties included writing news releases and contacting media in local communities to announce the tour's arrival and arrange media conferences for the program's speaker.

My third co-op term was at the Coaches Association of British Columbia. As a brand new organization, I had the opportunity to help develop the organization's brand, including logo, letterhead, business cards, newsletter, and other marketing material.

My fourth and final co-op position was at INETCO Systems Limited. As a technical writer, I worked closely with engineers to write online software documentation for the company's line of networking software. In addition, I designed network diagrams and presentations for the sales team and developed an online multimedia demo for a major software trade show.

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...Where are they now? continued from page 3

3. Why did you get involved in co-op?

I got involved in co-op to expand my practical skills and make connections in the industry. It also gave me a great opportunity to develop a portfolio of work.

4. What did you gain from your co-op work terms?

I gained a great network of friends and colleagues with whom I was able to seek feedback and exchange ideas. I still keep in touch with many of these same people today.

5. Do you have any words of wisdom or advice for current or future co-op students?

Learn as much as you can and always keep an open mind, especially to change. Also, join a professional group such as the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) or the American Marketers Association (AMA) to meet others and network in your profession.

Larina Dyck, graduated 1996

1. Where are you currently working? What are your duties?

I am working at Labatt Breweries as the Manager of Communications for the Western Canadian region. I am involved in PR initiatives and internal communications.

2. Where did you complete your co-op terms? What were you required to do for each job?

I held positions with the Ministry of Forests, the Department of Indian Affairs (Federal Treaty Negotiation Office) and Sport BC. My position with Sport BC turned into a contract after I graduated. Since then I have worked as the Director of Communication & Development at the Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society (three years); as a Public Affairs Specialist at VanCity (one year); as the Manager of Communications and Public Affairs at Vancouver Hospital & Health

Sciences Centre (one year); and I joined Labatt about eight months ago.

3. Why did you get involved in co-op?

I am not an academic – I consider myself a realist, with a high work ethic but low interest in theory. By my second year I realized that I would need to start doing something to keep me focused on my studies. I also needed mentors . . . people to learn from and turn to as I developed professionally and personally.

4. What did you gain from your co-op work terms?

Exactly what I wanted: a greater sense of focus, and mentors, three in particular who I still keep in close contact with today. I also learned how valuable it is to have co-op students working with you. I have had the opportunity to hire co-op students to work with me through employers who had not hired students before.

5. Do you have any words of wisdom or advice for current or future co-op students?

Use every experience as a learning experience – observe, observe, observe! It is important to learn from others how you would handle a situation or person, or how you would handle it differently. Co-op also allows you to become aware of what interests you and what does not . . . you don't realize how valuable this is until you are faced with a couple of job offers and have to pick one! ▲

Communiqué is written and edited by Communication co-op students. We need volunteers to write articles for the upcoming summer issue. Contact editors Elisa Coelho [ecoelho@sfu.ca] or Brandy Shymanski [bvs@sfu.ca] for more information.

Hälsningar från Sverige! (Greetings from Sweden!)

By Samantha Ali

I am writing to you all from Sweden as an exchange student here. I arrived in Lund, in southern Sweden, on August 20, 2001 – unsure of what to expect, who I would meet and how the experience would impact me personally and professionally. But all of this is completely normal – it is what went through my head every time I started a new work term. I just needed to calm the fears down and soak up the experience. Having a little faith in the situation never hurt anybody, and this was no exception. I have classes with people from all over the world, from varied cultures and educational disciplines, all of us eager to share our stories with each other. To learn with them – to celebrate as well as critique our different cultural backgrounds – is absolutely fascinating. Thus far, it has been one of the most enriching experiences of my entire life, and the community of Lund has allowed all the international students to feel very at home here. I never expected to learn so much so fast, and seeing how my co-op experiences have complemented this experience and vice versa has made it all the more rewarding.

Being here in these seemingly unusual circumstances does not feel so unusual. In fact, I genuinely feel that I was really well prepared for diversity in the classroom, in social settings, and in customs that are completely new to me – not only those exclusively Swedish, but also differences in other cultures represented in the international student population, like Lithuania, Costa Rica, Columbia, France, Germany, Italy, England, and Poland. Adapting has felt quite natural.

I think that part of the reason that it felt this way was because of my experiences within the Communication co-op program. Without a doubt, I see the value of what I learned, especially in cross-cultural group settings. Co-op provides countless unique opportunities to develop useful and practical skills that transfer to many other situations in life. In this setting as an exchange student, I feel that my interpersonal skills are most necessary and even sharpened in this environment. Without any work term supervisors or communication



Samantha stands in front of the main building of the University of Lund.

peers to turn to, I am putting into practice the knowledge that I acquired from being a co-op student. I feel that I can now gauge whether my approach to these circumstances is appropriate and helpful. Sometimes it is and sometimes it's not, but what's important is that I am trying, and learning and challenging myself still. Having completed my work terms, I was glad to know that the new

challenge that I was seeking in an exchange abroad is directly related to what I have been doing all along.

On a personal note, I have been very lucky and have met many great people here. I almost did not think it would be possible for me to be here. There is support out there in the form of grants and scholarships for exchange programs. I express heartfelt thanks to the Canadian Bureau of International Exchange (CBIE) and the Canadian-Scandinavian Foundation (CSF) for their support funds in making this financially possible. And being here would not be any fun without great people. Skål (cheers) to the friends I have made who have showed me the ropes. ▲

Co-op pays off!

By Tracy Pellizzari

While the skills we learn on our work terms are obvious to us, a lot of students wonder whether their co-op education will actually increase their chances of landing a job after graduation. A recent survey of Communication co-op alumni in Spring 2001 makes it clear that the benefits of the program can be seen in a tangible way.

The survey was sent to all Communication co-op alumni who graduated between 1995 and 2001. Of the 42% who responded, 87% of alumni who were seeking full-time employment found work within three months of graduation. Sixty-three percent of respondents reported that their employment came as a direct result of their co-op experience, as they found jobs with former co-op employers or contacts. This fact stresses the importance of keeping in touch with your contacts, and always being on the lookout for new opportunities to expand your network. One way to build professional relationships is to join organizations such as the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS), or the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC).

It is also evident that a degree in Communication, combined with the valuable work experience found in co-op, can provide students with a variety of career choices. According to the survey, alumni are working in a variety of different fields, in a variety of different ways: 88% are employed full-time; 9% are employed part-time; 34% are employed on a contract basis; 52%

are working in the private sector; 20% are working for non-profit organizations; 11% are working for the government and public sector; and only 3% are looking for work. The top three fields of employment for Communication Co-op alumni are marketing, internal communications, and public relations. Thus, the evidence is clear: whether you are working for a large public relations firm, making a difference in a non-profit organization, or starting your own business and taking on contract clients, ours is a flexible field! The skills

we learn in co-op are easily transferable to a great number of careers. This is a key attribute in today's evolving labour market, where the importance of flexibility is high, and changing careers five times in our working life now seems a reality. An education in Communication co-op gives us freedom to roam.

Co-op also "pays off" in other ways. The average gross salary for SFU Communication co-op alumni was \$41,985.57.

The alumni survey provides many indications that co-op is a valuable program that ensures students a wide variety of options after graduation. A convincing 85% of alumni indicated that they would hire a co-op student if they had the opportunity. This affirms the value of an education that combines academic learning with real-world experience. ▲

Of the Communication co-op alumni who belong to professional associations, 71% belong to the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC).

Did you know?

The Faculty of Applied Sciences SFU co-op has created its own Communication co-op posting (currently filled for this semester). As Project Assistant, responsibilities include facilitating and organizing co-op workshops, providing marketing and promotional support for the program, acting as a student representative for co-op, conducting student and employer surveys, and maintaining the co-op alumni database. Check the offline Communication postings for a more detailed job description and watch for more opportunities to work with SFU's co-op programs each term.

Chilling in China - Literally

By Lena Zordan

Co-op in China? That's where I am for the next eight months! I had one month to tell my friends, family and strangers; quit my job; un-insure my car; get a visa; get a ton of shots; and prepare and pack for this crazy experience. So, what am I doing here? I am one of a group of students who accepted a co-op job with ALTEC, and I am loving it!

ALTEC is an American company that provides Business English classes to employees of various companies. We train staff in various aspects of business and western culture. Some of the topics we cover include presentation skills, negotiations, cross-cultural communication, travelling abroad, personal coaching, marketing, global awareness, and time management. The work is great because I am meeting a lot of great people and learning as I train. I stand in front of a class four days a week and discuss these topics, improving my presentation skills and gaining a greater knowledge of all the areas that we cover. Of particular interest to me is time management – I am hoping to apply the concepts I teach to what I practice when I return back to school!

Not only do I like my job, but I love Tianjin, where I am located. It is a huge city of approximately 10 million people, but few foreigners, so we students all know each other and often hang out together. If you are looking for company there are about three places that you are sure to find students: Alibaba's, Broadway or NYC. So we

have great friends and good times, but we also have the most incredible experiences here – like camping on the Great Wall of China! Two weeks ago a group of twenty of us rented a bus and drove to the Wild Wall, the wall “au naturel” that hasn't been rebuilt. Huang Hua Chang Cheng (Yellow Flower Fortress) is overgrown and crumbling but totally awesome because you know that it is “real” and not rebuilt, and it is just you out there, not thousands of tourists. It took us about two hours to hike up to the tower where we wanted to sleep. It was hard work! I would compare it to the Grouse Grind, but harder because of the heavy backpacks and the longer hike. The wall is literally falling apart, so in some places it is just dirt, and in others the stones are loose, and in others you have to climb off, walk around it, and climb back up. And carrying a backpack full of food, lots of clothes (because it is absolutely freezing) and a sleeping bag at the same time is no easy feat.

We had a fabulous time. We sat on the top of the tower and sang songs, and lay on the ground staring at the stars. Can you imagine being on the Great Wall and just hanging out with your friends, while experiencing the awe of being on one of the wonders of the world that is over 2000 years old? We did it, and still could not believe that we were there. And all the better was that we were together to share it and appreciate it. It was an awesome experience and something that we will never forget. ▲

Thinking of applying to an out-of-town or out-of-country position? Ask Sangita for access to work term projects submitted by previous students. These reports are a great resource; often they'll help you get a better idea of what the work and living experience will be like.

The Communication Co-op Committee is a group of volunteer students who help promote SFU Communication co-op using tools like this newsletter.

Editor: Tracy Pellizzari

Design & Layout: Shelley Jung

**What can you do with your Communication degree?
Find out at:**



**February 11, 2002
2:30 – 5:30pm
Segal Centre, SFU Harbour Centre, Room 1400**

Come listen to a variety of industry speakers as they chat in roundtable format on a number of communication-related careers! Gain valuable information about the field that's right for you!

If you haven't bought tickets yet, buy them soon before they sell out. Admission is \$3.00 at the door, or \$2.00 if bought in advance through the SFU Communication co-op department at the Burnaby campus.

For more information, contact Brianne Roe at broe@sfu.ca.

Statistics Corner

Who we are	00/3	01/3	Who we work for	00/3	01/3
New admits	20	34	Federal government	19	19
Returning students	63	51	Provincial government	3	4
Total students enrolled	83	85	Municipal government	2	3
			Government agencies	11	14
Matching			Private	28	22
Students matched	75	75	Non-profit	12	13
Round one matches	7	19			
Self-directed co-ops	6	7	What we do		
Unmatched	6	n/a	Promotions	1	5
(matching still in progress at printing)			Media relations	0	2
Who's doing what			Employee relations	8	7
Eight-month term	25	18	Information technology	12	5
First co-op	19	33	Special event planning	13	7
Second co-op	19	16	Marketing	13	7
Third co-op	19	11	Public relations	5	11
Fourth co-op	14	12	Research and policy	4	5
Fifth co-op	4	3	Publishing	4	2
Part-time co-op	1	0	Project co-ordination	1	2
			Education and training	2	5
Where we work			Office administration	9	2
Greater Vancouver	55	47	Writing	9	13
Out of town	20	28	Other	6	2