



# Communiqué

Spring 2005

The Communication Co-op  
Newsletter

## From Co-op to a Career

### ► Turning your co-op into a full-time job

By Felicia Granger

Landing a co-op job at Creo Inc., one of BC's largest high-tech companies, was very exciting since I would learn firsthand how a marketing communications department functions in the 'real world.' For four months I worked as a Junior Copywriter/Editor in Global Marketing Communications at Creo's headquarters in Burnaby, BC.

Working for Creo was a huge opportunity to get a taste of corporate life in a global firm. It also gave me a glimpse of what it could be like to work abroad in marketing, since many of the colleagues who I dealt with were stationed in our regional offices all over the world. As well, it was great working for a company with such a unique corporate culture—employees can bring their dogs in to work, dress casually and self-manage with flex time.

I also gained valuable experience writing and editing press releases, articles, customer testimonials and web copy for marketing communications and media relations. As well, I made a real effort to meet and get to know as many people as I could in the organization because it was a fantastic way to expand my network of people, and expand my knowledge of the global graphic arts and British Columbia high-tech industries.

I got to meet many people within the company by getting involved in the many social and volunteering activities organized by Creo. One of the most rewarding and fun experiences during my work term was joining Creo's CANstruction team. While participating in this annual fundraiser for the



The Creo PR team: Felicia Granger (left) and media relations manager Rochelle van Halm

Vancouver Food Bank, we built a lighthouse made completely of canned food.

After graduating from SFU with a Communication and Business degree in August 2004, I accepted a permanent position as a Marketing Coordinator at Creo, and so far it has been wonderful and exciting!

My advice for landing a full-time job out of co-op is to be as interested and active as possible, in your department, company, and industry. During my co-op term I took in as much new information of the graphic arts and high-tech industry as was possible. I also participated in a high-tech industry group, the High-Tech Communicators' Exchange, where I represented Creo and actively developed my networking skills.

As well, keep your supervisor informed of your future goals: do not be afraid to share your interest in staying if you have the opportunity and desire to work there full-time. Good luck—your co-op employer may just become your first employer in the 'real world!' ◀

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# So I'm finished. Now what?

## ► The benefits of the co-op program

By Curtis Harling

Lately I've been wondering about a few things regarding my career path. Most recently it has been: "I'd hate to see what my resume looked like after graduation without co-op!" Since I graduated last summer, I have turned my final co-op placement into a full-time job. This doesn't mean, however, that I have not been on the prowl applying elsewhere and trying to see what other positions out there may suit me. What I find the most striking when I am writing up yet another cover letter is how much space I would have to fill up with adorning pages of coffee barista/serving-it-right/video store clerk experience if it were not for co-op. Along with the obvious advantage of bolstering your resume with applied work experience, there are many other things that I think potential co-op students should know about the benefits of co-op . . .

### **Giving you an idea of what you *don't* want to do!**

I cannot stress this enough. Rather than find out years later that: "why am I trying to make it in the publishing industry?" or "who would have thought that working for a government agency would be so passionless or mundane?" it is much better to find out this information for yourself early on in your career.

### **Don't shy away from co-ops outside the Lower Mainland**

Step outside your comfort zone and embrace



them! They offer a much richer experience whether it's cultural, social, or personal. This is the same with part-time co-ops. There is a very good chance that they could turn into full-time opportunities or full-time employment upon graduation.

### **Easier access to employers**

It's a big market out there. From my experience job searching now as a grad, I can say with many assurances that having a mutual party between you and the employer is that much easier. We all know that more than half the time getting a job is based simply on who you know. That is why developing skills like how to network properly, conduct cold-calls/information interviews, and compile a list of associations to belong to play an integral part in your overall co-op experience.

### **A leg up**

A co-op student gives the employer many perks in terms of tax incentives, youthful energy, knowing they are training for the future, etc, etc, etc. It also gives the employer a competent database of potential employees that they know from past experiences are decent candidates already. This selection process helps the co-op student get his or her foot that much closer inside the door and a leg up on the competition.

Lastly, I know how hard it is to concentrate on career development when still in school but consider this: I managed to fulfill the full requirements and complete four co-op terms when I graduated even though I only spent three years at SFU (after spending two years at college)! I am not the only one either. I know lots of people who have taken co-op in between semesters and still managed to graduate within a 'reasonable' amount of time. So it is doable.

Trust me, taking advantage of the co-op program is well worth your time if you don't want to become another BA graduate working at your local Starbucks. ◀

# Top Co-op Employer

## ► Producing relationships from cover to cover at *NUVO* magazine

By Elana Chan

Ever wonder how to be successful in the publishing industry? As communication students, you may think you know the answer already, but the following is an actual example. Claudia Cusano, Director of Circulation and Operations of *NUVO* magazine, talks about some of the key factors that shaped the magazine over the last seven years.

When the magazine *NUVO* was launched in 1998, the Cusanos had little experience in the publishing industry. What they knew was their target audience and how to cultivate a long-term relationship with them. The audience of *NUVO* is the top two percent income bracket of Canadians, a niche market in which advertisers are always interested in reaching. The Cusanos were jewellers before they became publishers—and *NUVO* targets the same demographic as the customers of Cusanos' Montecristo Jewellers. They interact with their clients on a daily basis, and know them better than just their jewellery taste.

The Cusanos understood the culture of their audience by building long-term relationships with them. These contacts were important to them, even as publishers. "Our subscribers are not addresses, they are real people," explained Ms. Cusano. The magazine keeps in contact with celebrities featured in the magazine, maintaining relationships that go beyond just one issue.

Published quarterly on glossy, oversized pages, the appearance of *NUVO* resembles a coffee table book that you can't just toss out. Full-page advertisements are blended seamlessly into editorials. The magazine avoids "current" content, so it would not feel dated even months after its publication. Studies showed that the average reader keeps a copy of *NUVO* for 7.6 months—further promoting the *NUVO* brand and providing an added incentive to advertisers, which is one factor that causes this magazine to have a 75% repeat advertiser rate. The international audience and the advertisers are brought together by the magazine that is published right here in Vancouver.



*Claudia Cusano, Director of Circulation and Operations at NUVO magazine with interviewer Elana Chan*

Ms. Cusano suggested that with a small publishing industry in Vancouver, students should try to intern for a publishing house to get hands-on experience and add to the theories learned in school. *NUVO* also offers opportunities for co-op students to gain hands-on experience in publishing. All steps in magazine preprinting are completed in an office of ten staff, giving the magazine identity a greater sense of unity. As an office assistant, co-op students can learn about the magazine from editing to marketing to distribution, gaining skills that are transferable to careers outside publishing.

Ms. Cusano's advice to students is that the relationships you create and keep are crucial, which is why knowing the audience well is important. The magazine has long-term readers and advertisers in Canada as well as internationally, thus getting involved with the industry is the best way to cultivate contacts. With this example of success in publishing, it is great opportunity for students who dream about publishing a magazine on their own. ◀

# Where Are They Now?

## ► Chris Villaruel is making the most of Co-op

By Sharon Roberts

For Chris Villaruel, the skills he gained through co-op and the support networks he built in the Communication and Business Administration Co-op departments, were pivotal in his successful transition from university to the job market.

Chris completed three co-op semesters: a four-month placement with the United States Consulate Commercial Service and an eight-month placement with Nintendo of Canada. In 2004, he graduated with a major in Communication, a minor in Business Administration, a Co-op Certificate, and a Certificate of Liberal Arts.

Here are a few of Chris's words of wisdom for current and future co-op students.

### **What is your current position and how long have you worked here?**

During my last semester at SFU, I completed a work-study for the Faculty of Business Administration Co-op office. In January, a former SFU Co-op student contacted the office looking for a recent graduate to fill a contract position at HireDesk, his growing software company. Within a week of my referral I was contracted as a recruiting administrator. When my contract was up this past April, I was given the opportunity to move into a permanent position as Corporate Projects Manager.

“ taking advantage of the co-op program is well worth your time ”

### **What skills did you learn through co-op that you use at your current position?**

I use the skills that I learned during my co-op terms on everything that I do. These skills form the foundation of my development as a professional. Whenever I begin a new project,

I rely on my communication and collaborative tools I learned during co-op. Everything from coordinating events for Nintendo Canada, to gaining experience in a traditional office environment with the US Commercial Service, have all been useful experiences that I have learned a lot from.

### **Briefly describe each co-op placement.**

At Nintendo of Canada I was Supervisor on the Summer Sampling Tour and later Game Promoter. Some of the responsibilities included events coordination, venue management and leadership. I also supervised a team of 11 samplers during game and brand promotions. As a result, I have become confident in my communication, leadership and marketing skills.

During my four-month term as a Trade Assistant with the US Commercial Service I had the opportunity to explore some different aspects of the business world. I wrote press releases as well as a comprehensive Industry Sector Analysis Report that appeared on the US Government web site. I also developed my research skills by sourcing US manufactured goods for Canadian distributors and acted as a mediator between US manufacturers and potential Canadian distributors.

### **What was your most valuable co-op experience and why?**

That would have to have been when I was applying for my first co-op work term. I was contacted by one of the co-op coordinators who informed me that my application package would not be sent out because it was evident that I had not put much effort into my cover letter. Thankfully, she not only pushed me to take the program more seriously, but she actually took the time to help me craft my next cover letter (which was for a position with Nintendo). Needless to say, the extra effort proved to be worthwhile. From then onwards, whenever I put together an application form, I look back at that experience!

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# Meet the Co-op Staff

## ► Interviews with Sangita Mudaliar, Marcia Shimizu and Erika Wah

By Cindy Woo

Sangita Mudaliar, Marcia Shimizu, and Erika Wah are the permanent staff members of SFU's Communication Co-op program. A critical part of every student's co-op experience, they assist students with creating resumes and cover letters and prepare for interviews. In addition, they have brought different skills and experiences with them to co-op.

Sangita Mudaliar is the CC Program Assistant. Sangita is originally from Fiji but has been a Canadian citizen for nearly 30 years. She has a strong background in administrative work and previously worked for VanCity's Retirement Financing Department. Having worked for Communication Co-op for five years, she enjoys the work she does for students and is happy about the change she made from the financial to education industry.

Marcia Shimizu is a Coordinator and has worked at SFU for nine years. Marcia was born in Malaysia but raised in Coquitlam. Before she graduated from SFU with a Bachelor of Arts in History, she worked for a temp agency. As a result, she became familiar with resume and cover letter formats. After graduation, she worked within the university as a temporary staff member, eventually taking on the role of temporary Program Assistant for a year. From this position, she was able to become a Coordinator, a position she has held for the last five years.

Erika Wah started working as a Coordinator in 2000. She has lived in Vancouver for the last 11 years but grew up in the West Kootenays. Before her current position, she worked for Vancouver General Hospital in Public Affairs. Erika graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Calgary with a Communications major and English minor. She loves working as a part of Communication Co-op because it bridges academic learning with the world of work.

Sangita, Marcia, and Erika have different experiences, skills and interests to share with students and each other. They each contribute, in their different roles, to making Communication Co-op a unique and successful program.



*Sangita, Marcia and Erika: the three amigos of Communication Co-op*

### What kind of professional development activities are you involved in?

**Marcia** has recently taken some editing courses through Harbour Centre's Writing and Publishing program.

**Erika** spent the last 11 years since she moved to Vancouver as an active member of IABC/BC (International Association for Business Communicators, BC Chapter) as a volunteer leader, including serving as president in 2001/02.

### What are some interests or hobbies you like to do on your spare time?

**Sangita** loves to travel. Her most recent trip was in 2003 to the South Pacific (New Zealand, Australia and Fiji). She enjoys short day hikes and her favorite sport is hockey. She also enjoys spending time with her family and friends.

**Marcia** enjoys traveling and tries to go on a major trip overseas every two years. She also enjoys dragon boating, and hopes to do this sport again this year.

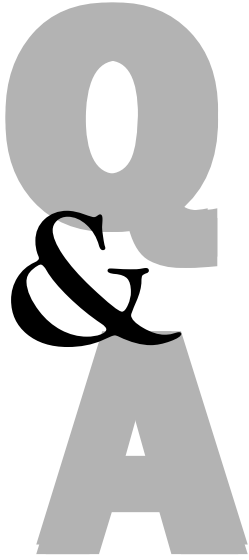
**Erika's** favourite active activities are hiking and skiing. In addition, she likes to spend time with her family and friends doing "Vancouver" things, such as walking up Main, Cambie, and Granville streets, rollerblading and wandering around Granville Island, eating out, buying books, and kayaking. Recently she enjoys prenatal yoga because she is expecting her second baby due in April.

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# Exploring Digital Media

## ► An interview with Corin Browne

By Curtis Harling



The world of digital arts and media is a highly competitive yet satisfying field to carve out a career in. The industry relies heavily on your ability to demonstrate practical communication skills and be fearless in your attempt to create new methods of understanding.

Former co-op student and current SFU Masters in Communication student Corin Browne has designed and taught numerous educational video productions for youth over the last six years with the Sights and Sounds Program at Pacific Cinémathèque. In this interview, Corin talks about her overall co-op experience and what she's found working as a media educator in this industry.

### **What does your position entail and what are some of the challenges?**

My job is very specialized—I develop and teach media education and digital media programmes. Getting the right combination of experience and academic background is the first hurdle. You need to love working with young people so much that you ignore or are willing to challenge apathy and indifference. You need to feel that what you are doing is important and meaningful. You need to believe that there are solutions to the world problems. You need to trust that everyone has an important story to tell and knowledge to impart. But above all, you need to accept and embrace that as an educator, you always learn more than you teach.

### **What areas of work can students studying digital media expect to go into once they enter the co-op work force and continue on after graduation?**

When I was in co-op ten years ago there were very few options to apply my video skills as opposed to now. The federal and provincial governments are good places to start out as every department has a communication area. The arts and non-profit world is always an option as at times the Pacific Cinémathèque has had six out of 12 full-time employees with a Communication degree. After graduation,

there is always the film industry. My partner edits a TV show and most of my friends are in the IT or visual-effects industries. Typically the film industry is not very open to co-op students, but that seems to be changing in some areas, particularly with local production companies. There is also the independent or domestic film and TV industry scene.

### **Why do communication students make good co-op placements?**

Communication students learn to think critically and collaborate (thanks to group projects like CMNS 425 for example!). I think that because communication is such a blend of schools of theory, students tend to be able to make connections and draw links between concepts and ideas better. In my area, communication and co-op students tend to have a greater understating of the larger role of media, beyond historical film theory, for example. Most are engaged with what they are learning, and hopefully they see their academic time as being one of exploration and discovery, not just a ticket to employment.

### **How does co-op train students for future opportunities in the workforce?**

I think co-op gives students the confidence to look for work. You learn how to write a killer cover letter and how to appropriately bug people for work. And, if nothing else, you discover the industries or types of jobs you will NOT pursue in the future. Plus, you graduate with experience. I don't know too many people who graduated with a co-op degree that went through that awful post-degree "What do I do now?" phase.

### **What qualities do you think employers look for when hiring co-op students for project work?**

I know I look for willingness to learn, flexibility, good communication skills, the ability to think critically, write well and popularize or apply academic knowledge.

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**Who were some of the influential people in your co-op experience and why?**

During my second co-op term, I organized a conference on employment for Arts grads with Janis Horne who now works with the SFU Alumni. She taught me so much about the importance of finding work that you can be passionate about—a vocation rather than an *occupation*. Also, for the past six years I have worked very closely with Stuart Poyntz who teaches a media-ed course during the summer at SFU, and started the education department at the Pacific Cinémathèque. He has very much been a mentor to me, both professionally and academically, and we continue to collaborate on projects. I met Stuart at the end of my work term at Cineworks filmmakers co-op. I was trying to do a series of information interviews—to be honest, more to make DeNel (the co-op coordinator at the time) happy. At the time, I didn't see the relevance but Stuart and I met, and he happened to need someone with my weird mix of skills and interests. So I volunteered my time for a few workshops to see if it was a good fit for me, then I started doing short contracts, which eventually turned in to full-time work. I guess I feel this is very important to mention in this context, because my work with Cinémathèque was directly related to my co-op job down the hall—right place at the right time, but also I had the skills to investigate possible future employment.

**Any parting words of advice or wisdom for current/future co-op students?**

Do information interviews with people in your field of interest! And take courses that are out of your comfort zone. I, like many people, discovered a passion early on for media education and video production. Although I've never taken an interpersonal communication course, I do know I've gained the ability to articulate myself in an effective manner. I think I've made genuine and important connections with people I met

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› **Meet the Co-op Staff** continued from page 5

**How has the co-op program evolved since you started working for it?**

During the last five years, **Sangita** has seen an increase in the number of staff, work placements and employers, as well as a higher quality of service (provided through Bridging Online and free workshops), and an increased unity amongst the different faculties.

**Marcia:** The co-op program has challenged the 'traditional' way of thinking for many people—having to complete their education and then find a job. Co-op has come a long way and, as a result, the co-op program has grown in size and increased placement numbers by 40%.

**If you were a university student again, would you complete co-op?**

**Sangita:** If I were a university student, I would definitely do co-op, not only for the experience, but for the networking and the opportunities that would not be readily available otherwise.

**Marcia:** Yes, I would definitely take co-op! When I graduated from university, I had no idea as to what I wanted to do with my History degree. Therefore, completing co-op would have helped me narrow my search for jobs and provided me with the opportunity to gain contacts in industry for when I graduated.

**Erika:** If I were a student today at SFU, I would complete co-op. Co-op would help me understand the value of networking, and the critical elements of presenting myself through my resume, cover letters and interviews.

All in all, Sangita Mudaliar, Marcia Shimizu, and Erika Wah enjoy working with each other and the co-op program. They are always there helping students with one-on-one sessions, preparing their cover letters and resumes, and providing them with resources for interviews. Most importantly they keep close connection with students in regards to job placements and by work place visits. ◀

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# Co-op Week

Forget about papers, projects, and assignments, even if it's only for a few hours. For the first time in 15 years, SFU is celebrating **National Co-op Week**. Mark **March 22 to 24** on your calendars as the week of fun and excitement on campus approaches.

Take a stroll down the co-op hallway of opportunities on Tuesday, March 22 to learn about how co-op can help you with your future career goals. Find out what jobs and resources are available for you to take advantage of. Co-op staff from every department on campus will be chatting it up with everyone and displaying what they have to offer.

The Olympics come to campus on Wednesday, March 23. Check out Convo Mall and partake in the big BBQ lunch and competitive, yet fun co-op 'Olympic' challenges. Have you ever felt like Sumo wrestling? You won't want to miss this one! And if you're down at Harbour Centre, you might want to sign up for Careers in Communication.

The week finishes before the long weekend with a professional development presentation on campus surrounding networking effectively to land that job of your dreams. In addition, Science & Environment Co-op student Jan Verspoor will receive SFU's Co-op Student of the Year award and describe how to make the most of your university education. And last, but certainly not least, join fellow students in the SFU Pub for the last Pub night before the Easter long weekend!

Keep your eyes open and ears tuned for more information around campus! ◀

▶ **Exploring Digital Media** continued from page 6

through my education and co-op. I know it has shaped the way I look at the world, and because I'm an educator, my background greatly influences how I teach and design programs. I also can't underestimate how important it is to try to take some courses with Dave Murphy and Steve Kline. They have created a place that allows students to experiment with not only creative digital media technologies, but learn in a very different, very important, collaborative, action-oriented way. ◀

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# Statistics Corner

**04-3    03-3**

**Who we are**

New admits	34	25
Returning students	62	58
Total students enrolled	96	83

**Matching**

Students matched	64	65
Self-directed co-ops	5	10

**Who's doing what**

Eight-month term	17	13
First co-op	20	22
Second co-op	25	12
Third co-op	9	21
Fourth co-op	6	10
Fifth co-op	4	0
Part-time co-op	1	1

**Where we're working**

Greater Vancouver	57	56
Out-of-town	4	6
Overseas	3	3

**Who we're working for**

Federal government	20	10
Provincial government	2	2
Municipal government	0	1
Government agencies	13	5
Not-for-profit	6	17
Private	23	30

**What other programs we're placed with**

Arts Co-op	2	n/a
Business Co-op	3	n/a

▶ **Where Are They Now?** continued from page 4

**Anything you would like to add or any parting words of wisdom?**

Co-op equipped me with the tools I needed to start my job search after graduation and it gave my resume the extra boost to get my foot in the door. Co-op formed the foundation of my business network. In all, the information and guidance students need can be received from participating in the co-op program, but it's up to the student to take advantage of it. ◀