



Communiqué

The Communication Co-op
Newsletter | Fall 2008

WORTHY CAUSE, GREAT EXPERIENCE

Co-op with Sportability, by Andrew Sakamoto



Ironically, being blindfolded for four hours as part of a series of empathy exercises while on my work term at SportAbility stands as one of the most eye-opening experiences of my life. SportAbility is a non-profit, volunteer-driven association whose goal is to provide physical recreation and sporting opportunities for athletes with cerebral palsy, head injury and stroke. The association caters to people of all ages

with a wide range of disabilities and provides them with multiple sports from which to choose, the most popular being Sledge Hockey, 7 A-Side Soccer, Power Soccer and Boccia. For the last few months, I have had the privilege of working for SportAbility as a Marketing and Promotions Assistant and, I must say, the experience so far has been valuable, enjoyable and rewarding. I was hired along with two other SFU Co-op students and we were thrown right into things; the association was preparing for its inaugural 7 A-Side Soccer Invitational and time was of the essence.

Looking at the list of things to do made it abundantly clear that we were not about to ease into our new positions. From organizing lunch and breakfast for everyone involved, to making a game and practice schedule, to sending press releases to local newspapers, to emailing various mayors regarding their possible participation in our opening ceremonies and closing banquet, and asking corporations such as Wal-Mart and Costco if they could subsidize some of our costs, the planning process ahead of us

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Check us out online at
www.sfu.ca/communique

OFFICE SURVIVAL GUIDE 101

Keys to office survival,
by Kamil Karamali

Let us begin with an obvious but forgotten fact: Co-op is an extraordinary opportunity for undergraduates to gain experience and knowledge of the

working world and for many, learn what specific career path they would like to follow. However, I believe that some of the knowledge that one gains in a Co-op position can be prematurely learned through some friendly advice, which is why I am writing this article, to give you, a possible first-time or inexperienced co-op student, some advice as to what is required of you to not only survive, but flourish in an office environment. Welcome to Office Life 101.

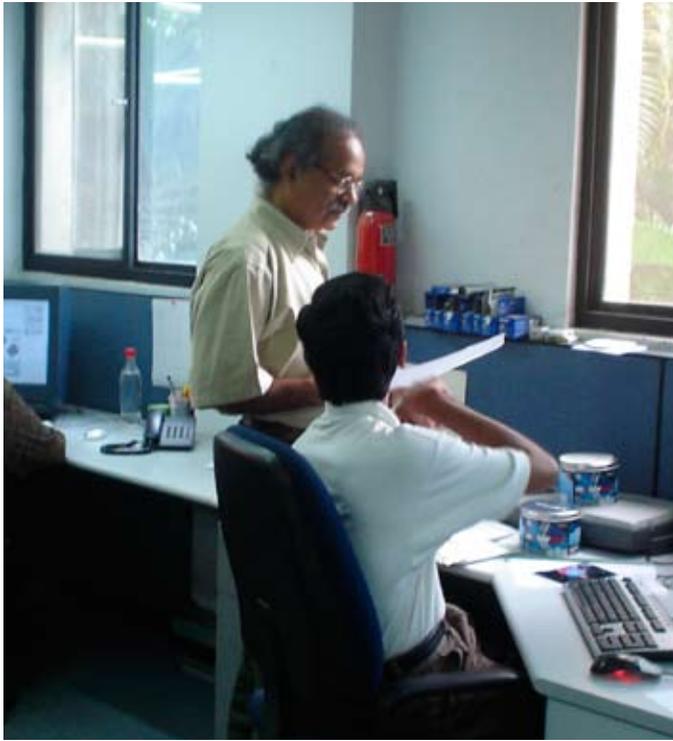
One of the most basic, yet most important pieces of advice is: get plenty of sleep the night before a day of work. A Co-op job allows you to experience working in an environment where each worker receives plenty of privacy and individual responsibilities. In my initial Co-op experience, I was thrilled that there would be enough freedom for me to create my own "job-completion schedule" and not have people constantly checking up on me to see if I was working. However, this freedom comes with a price for the person who lacks



sleep. A tired individual will have trouble keeping on schedule and will find privacy and freedom to be adversaries. Since it was strictly my responsibility to ensure that certain projects would be accomplished, I had to pay the price for avoiding tasks due to tiredness. I ended up having to complete these assignments in haste due to a fast approaching deadline. It didn't take me long to learn the essential benefits of a good night's rest. I was able to work diligently and with focus throughout the day and enjoy the perks of a job that allows some freedom and privacy.

Privacy comes in the form of an office or a cubicle, in which you will have to spend long periods of time. After discussing working experiences with other Co-op students, I discovered that a large majority of Co-op jobs, including mine, provide the student with the benefits of a large enough workload to keep them busy. I found this to be a major advantage in my experience because

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Office Survival cont.

it made me feel like I was a strong and important contributor to the team. However, it also meant long periods of time in my cubicle.

My second piece of advice is aimed at those who are susceptible to spending long hours working in an office or cubicle. First, I would advise you to drink plenty of water. Research has repeatedly shown that staying hydrated is necessary for the human brain to function at an optimal level. Water will help you stay energized and alert. Second, make sure to get out of your seat and stretch every once in a while to avoid writer's cramp and also leg cramps. Third, if you feel that your schedule allows it, take a quick break just to recharge. Taking a minute to breathe will keep you relaxed, recharged, and focused. Finding creative ways to relax and avoid stress is my third piece of advice: space out your workload. As university students, we are used to completing assignments at the last minute, and I am sure a lots of us have had to pull "all-nighters." However, I highly advise that you teach yourself to divide

your office workload into smaller portions, and attempt to finish a certain piece of the assignment each day until the deadline. This way I would not experience a stressful last minute battle to finish the assignment on time and it also resulted in a better finished product.

Co-workers and supervisors play a crucial role in the Co-op student's experience, not only as mentors and figures of guidance, but also as teammates.

“Being friendly and making sure I was on good terms with the workers and supervisors in my office was one of the best decisions I made during my Co-op semester.”

My last piece of advice is to take the time to befriend and get to know your colleagues during your Co-op term. Being friendly and making sure I was on good terms with the workers and supervisors in my office was one of the best decisions I made during my Co-op semester.

Co-op is an excellent opportunity to apply your university-gained knowledge into the working world. However, what is not necessarily taught is what to expect in an office environment. It took me several months to learn and practice these methods to excel in an office environment, and it is my hope that what I have learned can benefit you, as you master the art of working in an office. 

EDITOR'S NOTE: *If you are interested in more resources on transitioning to the workplace, check out our Transition workshops at www.sfu.ca/coop/symplicity on the events calendar. You can also read profiles of other students and their work experiences on the Online Learning Community at www.sfu.ca/olc*



Part of the empathy exercises at camp, Andrew was bound to this wheelchair for 4 hours.

Co-op with Sportability, con't.

was certainly daunting. And yet, amid the initial shock of the first few days was a sense of relief, for I realized that these tasks at hand were what I had hoped for when I accepted the position. After three years of theory-laden classes within the confines of SFU, I was more than ready to gain some hands-on experience in the so-called 'real' world.

While planning for the tournament was certainly an arduous process, actually executing this plan proved to be equally, if not more, challenging. Facing limited funding, language barriers, and other unforeseeable troubles, we were constantly forced to problem solve while balancing cost-efficiency and time-efficiency. We needed to think on our feet, and do so in a timely manner. Part of my duties included shuttling the teams to and

from the airport and their hotel (at times at unspeakable hours), providing a tour of downtown Vancouver, paying for their breakfasts and lunches, and giving them gift bags and awards at our closing banquet – all the while remaining cognizant of our tight budget. Ultimately, we managed to more or less break even and have since received extremely positive feedback from everyone involved. The bags under my eyes were huge, but so was the success of the tournament. In the month of July, I was in Squamish running activities at an Easter Seal's camp for disabled kids using modified Sledge Hockey sleds, Boccia supplies and Sports Wheelchairs. My fellow SFU

“I was tar-and-feathered by the more-than-willing campers”

Co-op co-workers and I sang songs, danced and played games with the campers and councilors. The theme for the week was “Olympics” and the goal was to defeat the Fun Police who, as you may have guessed, were trying to prevent the campers from having a good time. The week culminated with these police imposters being punished as part of the hilarious spectacle that is “Kangaroo Kourt.” My laughter, however, quickly subsided when my own charges were announced! I guess having a “faux hawk” is strictly forbidden at camp because for this very reason, I was tar-and-feathered (covered with black goop and grass) by the more-than-willing campers. I left the camp with a wonderful appreciation and better understanding of children with disabilities. Hands down, the best part of the camp experience was completing a series of empathy exercises. To help us view the existing campers with an empathetic rather

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW: DAINI XU

From Shanghai to SFU Co-op and back
by Christine Lee

When Daini immigrated to Canada from Shanghai at age 16, she never imagined she would be returning to her hometown years later with the wealth of experiences and accomplishments she had overseas. With Co-op playing a significant part of her journey in Canada, Daini's story is a great example of how determination and hard work can take us beyond our own expectations.

Despite having been in Canada for only two years, when the time came to apply for university, Daini was undaunted by the language barrier and chose SFU's Communication program to pursue her dream of writing and working for the media. Overcoming the challenges of the English language, Daini maintained a 3.7GPA throughout university and was actively involved with SFU's bilingual UVoice magazine, writing articles in both Chinese and English. It was here where she began developing her passion for writing and publishing.

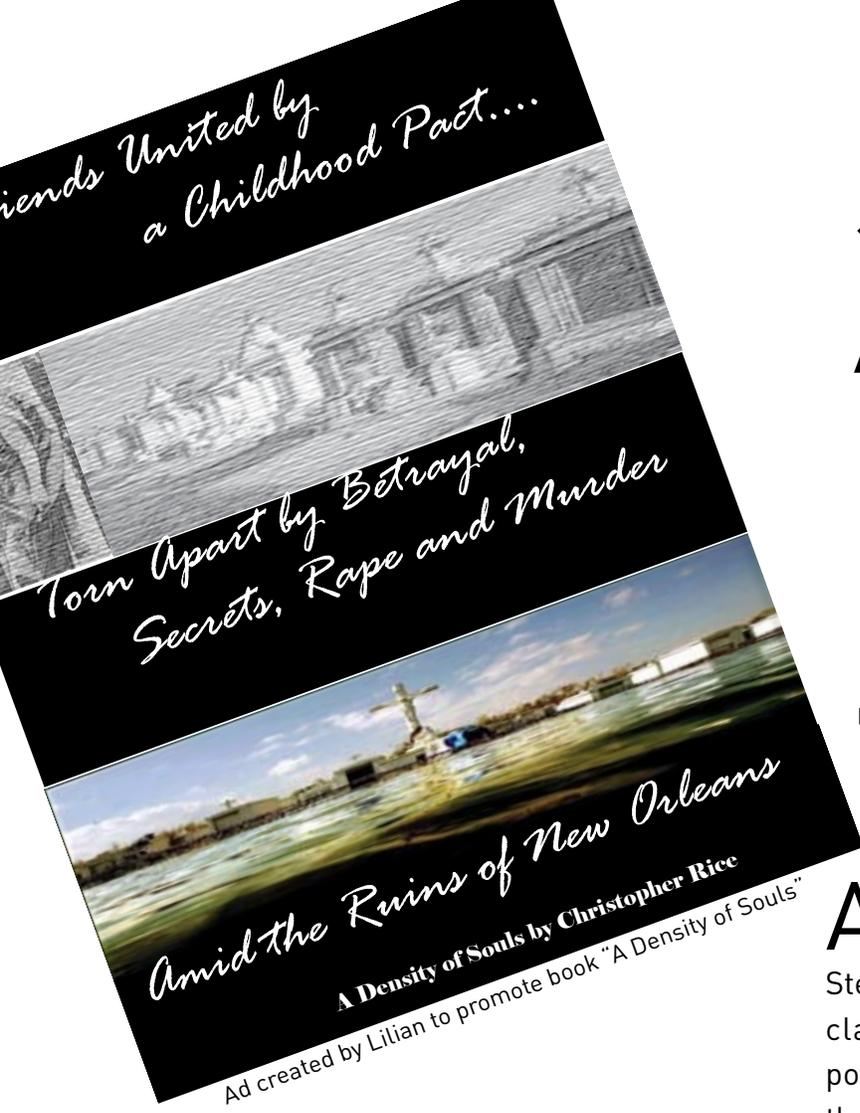
Realizing that the job market was unfavorable for new graduates with no relevant work experience, Daini took advantage of the Co-op program and was a successful applicant for Transport Canada's Finance and Administrative branch. During her second consecutive term at Transport Canada, Daini was able to take on more responsibilities due to an unexpected staffing turnover.

Daini highly recommends the Co-op program and credits Communication Co-op advisors for providing excellent advice throughout the entire



process. Daini believes her Co-op experience taught her valuable interpersonal skills - knowing how to interact with various types of coworkers and learning to say "no" when necessary. Due to her connections at Transport Canada, Daini managed to find a full-time job with them as an Administrative Assistant for the Manager of the Programs branch. However, she graduated this past summer and plans to move back to Shanghai with her husband in October.

As for why she decided to move back to Shanghai, Daini recalls: "Someone said to me once that when you have nailed something that used to be a challenge, it is time for you to move on." Although Daini does not know what awaits her in Shanghai, she sees huge opportunities and hopes to still be working in the field of communication further down the road; I wish this passionate and determined co-op alumnus the best of luck in Shanghai! 



So You Love Advertising, But Don't Know How to Get in the Door

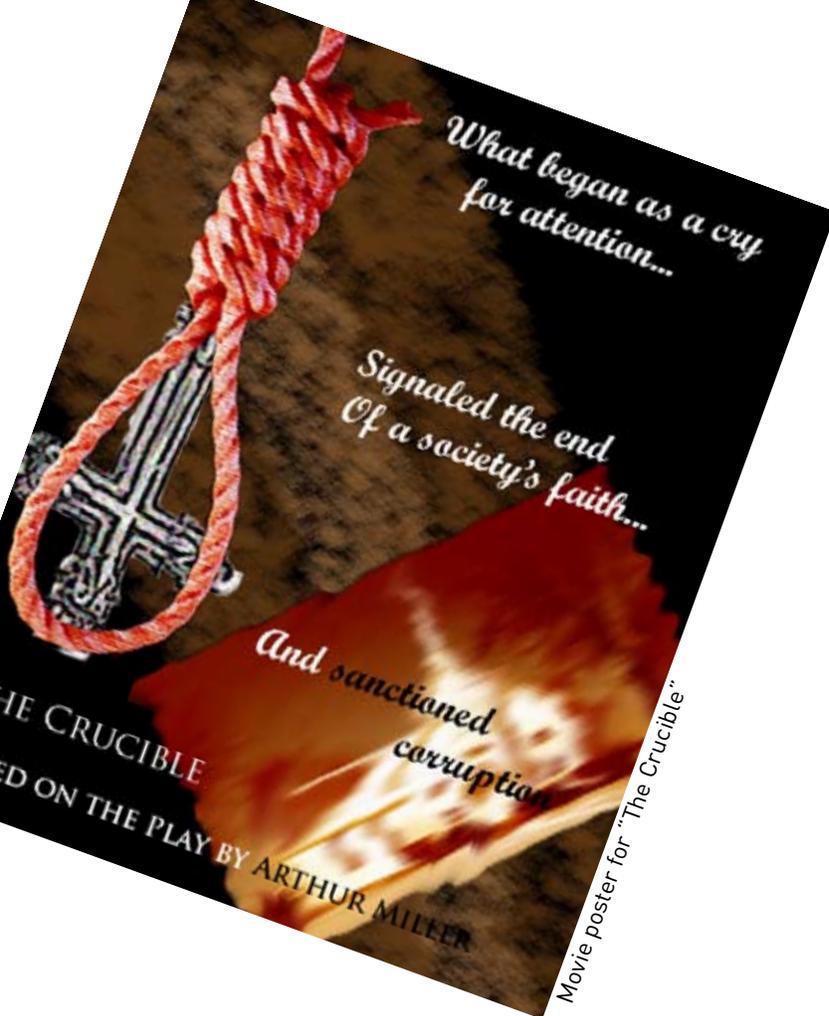
Advertising Career Resources, by Lilian Sue

As a Communication student, I had a love for marketing and advertising for several years. Stemming back to a secondary school marketing class, I learned all about why retail stores positioned their counters, their merchandise, their lighting and even their paint to suit a certain purpose. It was through a project designing my own yoga studio that I fell in love with the idea of creating something on a creative scale to entice people and get them to believe in you.

Although the initial exposure I had to marketing and advertising was through retail, I wanted to combine my love of writing with my interest in marketing. My brother suggested copywriting, not only because the money was lucrative, but because it would give me an opportunity to be creative with my writing as well.

By now, I was two years into my university career, and had just joined High Altitude Poetry in a bid to get my poetry published and find like-minded poets. I had done some work on marketing plans, press releases and articles for various people I knew but I didn't have a clue how to get into the advertising industry for copywriting. I finally

Flyer designed by Lilian for The Tyee



received some help after stumbling upon the website of one Steve Denvir, a copywriter out of Toronto, on Google. After e-mailing Mr. Denvir and explaining to him what actions I was taking to grow my portfolio of writing samples, he suggested that I check out a certain website, ihaveanidea.org. It is run by a group of communication professionals out of Toronto, and is by far the best resource I've ever seen when it comes to getting information on the advertising industry.

ihaveanidea.org is divided into several sections. There is a job bank for you to look for employment within advertising. There is a section for you to ask a creative professional, known as Jancy, for answers to your most pressing questions, and a comprehensive listing (though still being updated) of advertising agencies and marketing firms around the world. On top of that, there are interviews with creative professionals, how-to articles and showcases of professional and student projects. However, the collection of

resources is what makes ihaveanidea.org the most detailed database I've ever come across for information on advertising

The collection of resources is listed alphabetically and sectioned off by organization, place and activity. I immediately connected with the resources for copywriting and it was there that I stumbled upon two very valuable links, Connected Thesaurus and OneWord.com. Connected

“Now that I have this resource, it has taught me a different way to start the brainstorming process prior to writing an ad”

Thesaurus would not only help me find synonyms for each word I typed in, but also the relationship between two words, the intersection between them and words that rhyme with either of them. OneWord.com was my ultimate favorite, throwing out one word for me to type as many related words as possible within a time limit.

Prior to finding ihaveanidea.org, I had been relying on my memory and visits to Thesaurus.com in order to find related words for my poetry. Now that I have this resource, it has taught me a different way to start the brainstorming process prior to writing an ad, and because of that, my experiences as a budding copywriter have become much richer, and the ads I create have more flow.

So all you fellow marketers, budding advertising executives and poets, check out ihaveanidea.org; you never know what you may find useful. 

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Co-op with Sportability cont.

than sympathetic perspective, the coordinators recommended that we simulate the experience of being visually impaired, non-verbal and paralyzed from the waist down – each for four hours. Not for a long time, if ever, had I felt so uncomfortable, awkward and even terrified. Stripped of these taken-for-granted abilities, suddenly everything had changed: parts of my surroundings were inaccessible, my thoughts became muted, and a world of uncertainty lurked in the darkness. It was awful, yet amazing.

What this job has done for me is highlight how the hands-on work experience gained through Co-op can complement the theory learned in a Communication course. Three months ago I feared my impending graduation because I did not feel anywhere near ready for the 'real' world. And although I may not be brimming with confidence now, I still feel infinitely more prepared to tackle whatever awaits me in life after SFU. 

Add me on
Facebook!

**WHO IS THIS GUY?**

That's Wil Fraser and he represents **Work Integrated Learning (WIL)**, a new area of SFU that encompasses Career Services, Co-operative Education, Volunteer and Service Learning. For more information about how WIL can help you, visit:
www.sfu.ca/wil

STATISTICS CORNER

Who we are:	Fall 08	Fall 07
New admits	29	37
Total Participating	90	115
Total placements	74	92

Who's doing what

Eight-month term	14	32
First co-op	20	26
Second co-op	23	30
Third co-op	18	23
Fourth co-op	10	10
Fifth co-op	3	4
Self-directed co-op	8	20

Where we're working

Greater Vancouver	67	79
Out-of-town	5	9
Overseas	2	3

Who we're working for

Federal government	11	17
Provincial government	6	4
Municipal government	1	1
Government agencies	20	22
Not-for-profit	16	13
Private	20	35

Where else we're placed

Arts	12	11
Business	2	13
Computing Science	1	3
Science	1	0
Kinesiology	1	0

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Communication Student Union

Get involved in student events and gain valuable experience for your resume at the same time!

www.sfu.ca/cmnsu