

From Salwar to 3-Piece Suits

► Working in Port Alberni, India and Vancouver

By Diana Leung

I remember describing in my journal during my first few hours in India that nothing looked “different,” yet nothing looked familiar. After arriving at Sahar International Airport in the hustle and bustle of Mumbai (formerly Bombay), it would be a 30-hour train ride before I would reach my host community atop the Nilgiris Mountains.



Diana (left) gets a “snap” taken with an Indian dancer and friend Anju

For my first two co-op terms, I joined Canada World Youth on a 7-month adventure to Port Alberni, BC and Coonoor, Tamil Nadu (India). On my third and fourth work terms, I traded in my salwar suit for desk space at Industry Canada.

During my first two co-op terms, my focus was to learn about and work in sustainable economic and social development projects. I took part in medical camps, replanted native Shola trees and created a brochure of women’s health resources, among other projects. There were, of course, less glamorous, more humbling tasks like cleaning bathrooms at Port Alberni’s Fall Fair to fund the local crisis line, or doing laundry manually by the vat for a seniors’ home.

Living in Port Alberni was much like living in most Canadian small cities: neighbourhoods

of young families and recently retired couples with a handful of locally owned shops and a Sears Catalogue Outlet. Occasionally there would be children playing street hockey on paved and otherwise desolate streets. This is a stark contrast to the narrow dirt roads and skilled bus drivers who can dodge oncoming traffic and animals in Coonoor.

During my first weeks in Coonoor, everything was spectacular. I remember the two-storey high, plywood cutout of a Tamil movie star who seemed to watch over me in the open market on my way to work. The novelty never went away. Even after I settled into a routine life, I would be reminded of my “foreignness” when strangers took *snap*s (photos) with me or when locals approached

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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.

Co-op Learning Community

► Introducing a new Co-op resource for students

By Willow Johnson, Student Community Host, *Our Co-op Learning Community*

Imagine this familiar scenario: you have been short-listed with a co-op employer and it is the night before your big interview. In the past, you may have consulted your BOL guidebooks or reviewed handouts you received in your “Interviews” workshop to brush up on some of your general interviewing skills.

Now, however, in addition to these resources, you are able to access an online repository of interview questions browseable by discipline, skill-specific requirements, and type of interview. If you are interviewing for a communication position in public relations, for example, you can now call up an extensive listing of relevant, skill-specific questions you may encounter and access tips on answering,

or generate a random sampling of questions to simulate a practice interview. In addition, you are able to link to on-demand learning modules about interviewing skills and search a database of student profiles to view other students’ experiences in the organization or position you are interested in. You can even contact that specific co-op student online and gain the inside scoop on how to impress that employer and land your dream job.

Sound too good to be true? Well, imagine no longer. In the fall of 2004, Co-operative Education will be launching *Our Co-op Learning Community* for co-op students, alumni, employers and staff. For co-op students, the value of an online community will lie in its ability to create a sense of

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“this dynamic new community will . . .

. . . serve as an important resource for students”

► **Co-op Learning Community** continued from page 2

affiliation with the broader co-op community, beyond a series of required workshops and work terms. This dynamic new community will also serve as an important resource for students, providing help with work search and interview preparation and presenting excellent networking opportunities.

In addition to the Interview Database and Community Profiles described above, some of the exciting features include community news on co-op and career-related topics; discussion forums in which you will be able to share experiences with fellow students, get advice from experts, and rub e-shoulders with employers and alumni; a calendar full of co-op workshops, events, and other career-related activities offered on and off campus; a portfolio gallery in which you can view students' work; as well as learning modules on interviewing, career development, work world trends, and job searching. And all of this is just the beginning! The number of interactive resources will just continue to grow and expand as the community develops and its members actively help to shape its future direction.

If you are interested in contributing to the community, prior to its launch, there are a number of volunteer opportunities currently available. Some of the areas for contribution include researching and writing articles on co-op and career-related topics, conducting interviews (employers and alumni), assisting with event coordination, developing promotional materials and contests, participating in pilot testing for the community, joining our student advisory team, or building and showcasing your portfolio. Volunteering for *Our Co-op Learning Community* is an excellent way to expand your e-learning and online skills, to build your portfolio, and to directly influence the initial growth and development of the community.

To learn more about the community and to discover unique ways to become involved prior to the launch, please visit the most recent edition of our community newsletter available through Co-op's main website at www.sfu.ca/coop or register to volunteer by contacting Quentin at qbeck@sfu.ca or Willow at wmj@sfu.ca. ◀

► **From Salwar to 3-Piece Suits** continued from page 1

me for medical attention assuming that I'm some sort of foreign doctor.

It is sometimes difficult to explain how much I am indebted to these communities for sharing their wisdom and disclosing their dilemmas, all the while, it is also challenging to transfer all this understanding into my life in Vancouver.



Taking a ride in India

My subsequent work terms with Industry Canada provided opportunities to see where sustainable development fits into the Canadian context. Although most of my duties were to do with internal communications, my supervisors often granted me access to attend conferences and meetings that were relevant to my interests, such as the Vancouver Agreement meetings, Hydrogen Fuel Cells Conference and Aboriginal Business Conference. Usually over coffee, my co-workers would also share their stories about working abroad and in rural Canada. My manager always had advice or anecdotes to offer, if not from personal experience, then through the eyes of his acquaintances. To this day, everyone is still unabashed to share their wisdom on the subject of my latest career and academic plans!

“ it has given me a
great head start ”

So from working in trenches of development projects in India and Port Alberni, to observing planning and decision processes at the government level, these work terms are snapshots of the breadth of what sustainable development involves. This will definitely not be the end of my involvement with sustainable development but it has given me a great head start. ◀

Embracing the Awkward Times

► The transition from school to work

By Cynthia Leung

Being in transition upon completing your post-secondary education can be a daunting experience. Back in high school, I was under the false impression that jobs would be waiting for me after completing my degree and that university was just a step you had to take to get to the jobs.

My first year at university was an eye-opening adventure filled with numerous challenges and uncertainties as I soon realized that the jobs would not be waiting for me at the end of the road. But not only that, statistics were showing that I would be making a career change an average of seven times in the future and that job security was a thing of the past. As you can imagine, these tidbits of information did little to ease my anxiety, since I was still trying to decide what to major in, let alone figure out what I wanted to do in the working world. My utopian view of the path to the “real world” was crushed; things were going to be a lot tougher than I had anticipated.

The first two years of university were unpleasant as I felt overwhelmingly confused with no sense of direction. After taking a course in almost every faculty, I finally figured out my passion—communication.

To make the story short, I survived university. Ask me what I have learned academically and I would have to think really hard before naming a few term papers I have written during my academic career. Ask me the life lessons I’ve learned and I could talk for hours on end. You see, everything works

out in the end—I’m almost positive.

So once you have your major picked out, you are set academically. Career wise, that’s a whole different story. Below is my advice for those people in transition or nearing the transition from university to the “real world.” I must admit, I haven’t found my career or dream job yet, but, by taking the initiative to do everything and anything possible that might potentially lead to a career, things eventually should pay off in the end.

The big transition into the working world to me is similar to the awkward dating stage. It’s a strange feeling; your stomach is filled with butterflies to the point where you almost feel like passing out, but you won’t because you are extremely excited. This phase is filled with stress, uncertainties, and anxiety; but in some aspects it is also very refreshing and invigorating. I tell my girlfriends all the time to just embrace this phase as it too will pass with time. The best part is, once it’s all over you can reminisce and laugh about it together. So here are a few things you can do during the transition from university to the “real world” (a.k.a. the awkward stage in life) to ease the process and embrace the uncertainties.

1. Research

Yes, we have all done this before. But read every website, book, magazine, newspaper and pamphlet on anything that is career-related. Check out the career centre and go out on those informational interviews. If you are currently on a co-op term, talk to your co-

“ everything works out in the end ”

workers and supervisors or ask them to refer you to someone else in their network. As one of my mentors once told me: “Even if you learned one thing, you are still better off than you were before.” So put away some of that cynicism and research away!

2. Set goals

Write your goals down on paper (personal and career). Be honest with yourself and re-evaluate regularly. By setting goals and re-evaluating, you can track your progress and record your key learnings. You will discover many things about yourself this way. Also, if you let your supervisors know what your goals are, chances are they will make the extra effort to ensure that you achieve them. Remember, the short term co-op goals you identified are essentially stepping stones towards your future career goals.

3. Experience

Without experience you can't get a job and without a job you can't get experience. Break this cycle as soon as possible. Co-op, volunteer work, summer jobs and internships are all great ways to obtain a wide variety of experience. The opportunities are out there!

4. Network

A great way to build relationships and obtain more knowledge about different industries and professions. Join a club, a professional organization or your local chamber of commerce. Keep in touch with those people

you work with during co-op as they may hold the key to one of your potential dream jobs. Similarly, you may be able to help them out by exchanging knowledge and introducing them to contacts in your network.

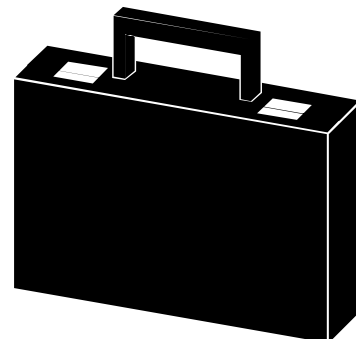
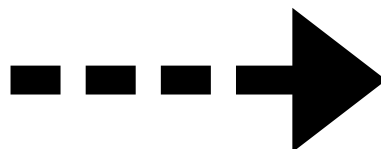
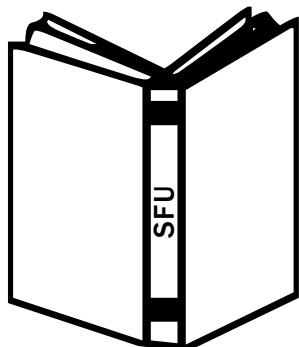
5. Actively participate

Workshops, luncheons and presentations happen every day and offer both learning and networking opportunities. Find out when they are happening and go to them (take a friend for moral support if needed). Luncheons often feature speakers who are influential in their community (these are the people who you want to absorb information from). While on co-op, actively engage in any opportunities available such as representing your organization at community events, participating in educational seminars, attending special events, or coordinating an office fundraiser/campaign.

6. Stay in the loop

In the process of this chaos, don't forget about your friends and family. Your brother may call you an eager-beaver and your parents may have a permanently-concerned look on their face, but still, keep them updated.

Don't worry if you don't have your dream job lined up right after graduation - the majority of us don't. I wish you good luck, and, when everything has settled, don't forget to laugh and reminisce about the awkwardness that preceded it, because that's the best part of the journey. ◀



Where Are They Now?

► Erin McInnis scores big with co-op

By Mandeep Sidhu

What is Erin McInnis's most urgent advice to current SFU students? "Do co-op!" The Communication major and English minor graduated in May of 2003 with six work terms under her belt and credits the co-op program with getting her to where she is today.

"If it wasn't for co-op, I would not be where I am today. Not just the work experience, but the whole co-op process contributed to my success," says McInnis.

McInnis began her co-op experience with BC Advanced Systems Institution as an Event Planning Assistant. At that time, she was set on a career in publishing and adamant about being an editor someday.

"I was hesitant at first when offered the job, but took it because half the time I would be doing some book editing," she says. At the end of the eight-month term, she realized that becoming an editor was no longer her goal and notes, "That is what is good about co-op

—it not only shows you what you want to do, but also what you do not want to do."

Her next position was at Electronic Arts Canada, which she credits getting because she met an EA employee while working at ASI. "Networking is key in any job, but especially in the communications field," says McInnis. She completed a year-long term at EA and went back to school thinking about graduation but still wanting to complete another work term.

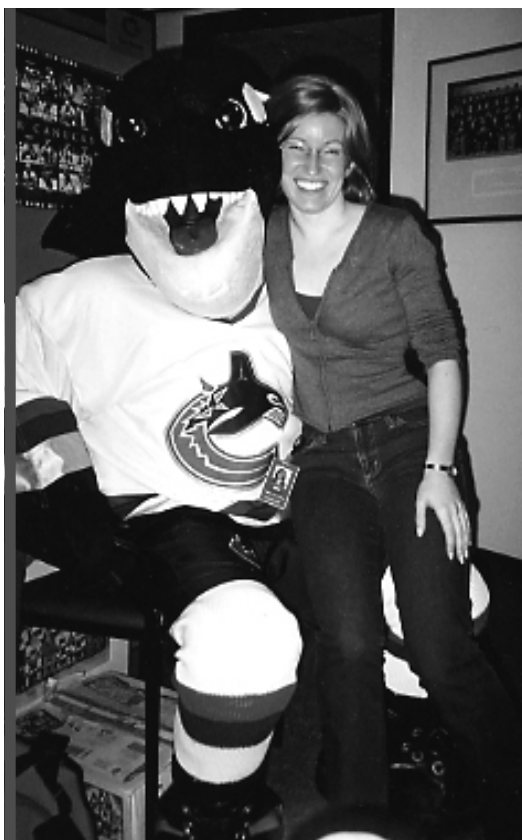
McInnis applied for the recurrent position of Community Relations assistant with Orca Bay and was turned down not once, but twice. After inquiring about what she could improve on in order to get the job next time around, she learned that Orca Bay was worried that the position would not be challenging enough for someone with so much work experience. As an enthusiastic Vancouver Canucks fan, McInnis assured them that would not be a problem and was offered the job the following semester without even applying.

After finishing co-op and graduating, McInnis worked for Canuck Place Hospice and eventually took over her former supervisor's position at Orca Bay in August of 2003. With the NHL lockout fast approaching, she left Orca Bay and began working with the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Committee in July of 2004.

As a former co-op student who has also been involved in the hiring process, McInnis offers some advice: "Let your personality shine through in your resume and cover letter. Present yourself at your interview well, with no slouching and no looking at the ceiling! And sending a thank-you note shows you are interested in the position."

And what is this seasoned co-op student's favourite co-op memory? "Standing on the catwalk at General Motors Place and dumping confetti over the crowd after the Canucks advanced to the second round during the 2002-2003 playoff season." ◀

*Erin McInnis
cozies up with
Fin,
the
Canucks
mascot*



Meet the Faculty

► An interview with Dr. Zoë Druick

By Elana Chan

In the movie *Mona Lisa Smile*, an art history teacher used an advertisement to illustrate the social roles expected of women. Sound familiar? It should. Using ads and documentaries to study social changes is a well-known interest of communication professor Zoë Druick.

Although the topic of *Mona Lisa Smile* may have made for a decent movie, what is of interest for those of us in the co-op program is what the study of the history of advertisement has to do with advertising and marketing today. To Dr. Druick, the past helps put the present in perspective. As she puts it, “Historical advertisements seem odd to our eyes, so that makes them a great tool for denaturalizing advertising today.”

The history of advertising gives us clues as to what consumers needed and dreamt of in the past. This is essentially what students in marketing and communication do today: getting to know the audience and delivering advertising messages accordingly.

Dr. Druick also has an interest in documentaries. She believes advertising and documentaries reflect the rapid changes in society and act as effective media of communication.

“Modern advertising developed in the 1920s when mass consumption was on the rise. Documentary film developed in the same period also reflected many similar issues, and informed people about the speedy changes in society.”

Today, documentary films such as Michael Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11*, can have as much impact on their audience as advertisements. Understanding the roles played by these media are important to using them effectively.

Some students may already have the opportunity to influence and work with these media in co-op jobs and elsewhere. Aside from bringing unique perspectives into the classroom, Dr. Druick thinks that “co-op seems to make students more confident about their ability to function in the workplace.



Dr. Zoë
Druick,
Assistant
Professor,
School of
Communication

Sometimes, it makes students appreciate their classes more, because they see what it will be like after graduation—no time for reading!”

Have the
courage to
follow your
interests

She advises students to “have the courage to follow your interests, both in school and at the workplace.” Following her own advice, Dr. Druick continues her research on the history and politics of documentary films. She is currently completing a book on the history and social impact of the National Film Board of Canada, in an international perspective. ◀

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Survey Says

► **Write for Communiqué!**

By Jessica Hume, Co-Editor

The results are in from last issue's reader survey, and it's a tall order for *Communiqué*. Not that any of the 15 respondents (please tell me that we have more than 15 readers!) had any truly negative comments, unless you consider "I think you are doing a great job" negative. However, they did put in a large order for what they want to see from the *Communiqué* in the future:

- 59% would like to see more career advice
- 24% would like to see more networking tips
- Another 24% would like to see more interview tips
- 59% would like to see more career advice
- 24% would like to see more networking tips
- 29% would like to see more job search tips
- 47% would like to read more student's stories
- 65% voted the "Where are they now" feature their favourite, with one respondent wanting to see more of these
- 2 readers called for more humour and fun in the newsletter (hey I'm trying!)
- 47% provided suggestions for other stories including portfolio tips, a comparison with other university co-op programs, meet the co-op staff, and how to adjust to moving back from an out-of-town co-op

First, I want to say congratulations to Danielle Jang for winning the much-coveted co-op mug. As well, I want to send a big thank you out to all those who responded. I really appreciate your comments and I hope to see many of your suggestions in future issues. But the neat thing about *Communiqué* is that not only is it read by students, it is written by students. So here is my portfolio tip of the day: **WRITE FOR COMMUNIQUÉ!**

One of the most thoughtful comments from the survey was from someone who wanted to see not only the shiny face of co-op but also the difficulties co-op students face and overcome. In particular, this reader wanted to see "brave writers addressing the challenges of being a communication co-op student." You are those brave writers! If you have something you want to see in

Statistics Corner

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Who we are

New admits	29	52
Returning students	65	73
Total students enrolled	94	125

Matching

Students matched	60	94
Self-directed co-ops	10	19

Who's doing what

Eight-month term	18	23
First co-op	20	27
Second co-op	20	23
Third co-op	7	33
Fourth co-op	6	7
Fifth co-op	7	4
Part-time co-op	1	0

Where we're working

Greater Vancouver	49	76
Out-of-town	5	15
Overseas	6	2

Who we're working for

Federal government	8	16
Provincial government	2	4
Municipal government	0	0
Government agencies	17	9
Not-for-profit	6	17
Private	27	41

What other programs we're placed with

Arts Co-op	8	n/a
Business Co-op	9	n/a

Communiqué, take the initiative (most employers love initiative), and write the story. Not only will you learn more if you research and write about career tips than you would just reading an article, but you'll have one more activity to put on your resume and one more piece to go in your portfolio.

So get your name in print and next time you get an email calling for writers, write back; you won't regret it! ◀

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