

Creating Community

► My investigations into community practices

By DeNel Rehberg Sedo

This is what you get to read when you become a professor:

Thus, as Peter Hamilton put it in his perceptive introduction to Cohen's (1985) classic study (The Symbolic Construction of Community), community would have long ago been "discounted as grist to the scholarly mill were it not for the remarkable hold that the idea of community exerts over both the intellectual and popular mind" (p.7).

Boring and dense to you? That's okay; you don't have to think too deeply about it. Leave that to me. Rather, ask yourself this: Am I an integral part of Communication Co-op? Am I contributing to the larger co-op group? Do I mean anything to The School of Communication? To SFU? If you answered no to any of these questions, I now want to know what you plan to do about it.

I arrived at the Communication Co-op Program as a coordinator in 1996. This was a time when web pages were in their baby stages, we were just beginning to use e-mail, blogs were non-existent, and postings existed only on paper in the corridors outside of my office. Other than the few group meetings we had throughout the term, there was no real way to connect with one another.

In my humble opinion, the scholarly debates about what "community" is perceived as, is at the heart of living – feeling as if we are part



Previous co-op coordinator, and founder of Triple C-a student group who launched Communiqué 10 years ago, DeNel Rehberg Sedo is currently teaching at Mount St. Vincent University. All of our authors in this 10th anniversary edition join DeNel as past contributors to Communiqué.

of something. Ten years ago, I felt we needed to have a vehicle that would help create community. I wanted a communication tool that would make each one of my students feel as if they were part of something wonderful (because I think co-operative education is just that). I wanted to provide opportunities for those same students to practice writing and interviewing, and to see their own by-lines (because this is where it all begins). I wanted my students to take control of their own futures (because only you can do that).

I am thrilled this publication continues to do all of these things.

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Communiqué is a newsletter published every semester by SFU Communication Co-op. Check us out online at www.sfu.ca/communique

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Advancing Your Career

► How to get to where you want to go

By Sarah Gibson

Reflecting on what SFU Communication Co-op has provided me is beyond words. For years, my goal was simple – to advance in my career and ‘climb the corporate ladder’. Success for me was often determined by external factors – a balancing act between the prestige factor and following my true passion. It was during my fourth co-op work term that I became determined to only pursue jobs that were meaningful to me and that made a difference in the community. Since making that promise to myself, I have held positions in community events, community relations, public educational television, and the education sector. Now, as Manager, Marketing and Communications for BC’s newest University, I am intensely aware of the skills, wisdom, and options that co-op education has granted me.

Interestingly, as I turned my focus towards my ideal life rather than my ideal job, opportunities came to me more easily and swiftly. Here are some techniques that have worked for me:

Know what you want. Get inspired

Identify your dream job. Write down your vision on paper and look at it every day. Perhaps it is not specific to a job, but more about your ideal lifestyle, utilizing a special talent of yours, or working towards a specific cause. Decide what is truly important to you and build your goals around that.

Research. Get informed

Find out what types of jobs or companies are out there. Determine future market trends and where the jobs will be abundant. Think about what motivates you and then look for your dream job. Do some exploring outside of your comfort zone and remember that an SFU Communication Degree is very versatile and marketable – you have many options.



Sarah Gibson, BA '01 took her own advice and found a fulfilling job working for Thompson Rivers University.

Focus. Get a plan

Once you know what you want, you can make it happen. Develop concrete goals and an action plan. Create “mini-goals” that are small and measurable and will provide you with feedback on how you’re doing. This could be as simple as exploring a company website, talking to someone who works in your chosen industry, or volunteering in your community.

Attitude is everything.

Complaining about your current situation will only hold you back longer. Part of your plan should be to continue to gain positive experiences from your current role as you prepare for your next move.

Volunteer. Get involved.

You are not alone. Access your professional allies and freely help others along the way. There is so much to be gained from volunteering. It benefits you as much as the organization receiving your time and effort. One of the most powerful forces in my career advancement has been my continued involvement in professional associations, community work and meeting new peers and mentors. I openly give my time when someone asks me for advice or support.

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I recently had the good fortune to hear Barrie Dunn speak. Dunn is a graduate of the program where I now teach. He is also a co-producer and screenwriter for *Trailer Park Boys*. The gist of his story about the smash hit and his struggle to get it onto the airwaves is something I would like to leave you with: work against sameness. That may seem counterintuitive to how we think about community. But community doesn't necessarily mean same. It means communal. It means we can try new things within the space we collectively work, live and play in.

I challenge each one of you to work this year to celebrate the community of SFU Communication Co-op. Work to make it work for you and repay it by doing the same for it.

Congratulations Communiqué! I am honoured to *still* be part of you. ◀

► **Advancing Your Career...Continued from Page 2**

Lifelong learning. Gain education.

Whether it's through formal credentials at a post-secondary institution, or attending professional development seminars, conferences, or workshops - never stop growing, learning, and challenging yourself. I have always sought out opportunities that were in addition to my defined role.

Embrace change. Go with the flow.

Change is constant, and with it brings new opportunities. Read the classic parable, "Who Moved My Cheese" and proudly emulate the character "Haw".

By taking calculated risks and always looking for the next adventure, I have been able to achieve more than I thought was possible. As for embracing change, I am already preparing for my ultimate dream job. ◀



Communication Co-op Alumni

“Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

If You Have A Dream, Follow It

► My international path to discovering communications

By Lubna Ekramoddoullah

Do people look at you blankly when you say you're in communications? Do you ever wonder how you fell into your career path? Do you realize that the most interesting career anecdotes are told by communications graduates? Never limiting, the communications field boasts a wealth of knowledge, skills, and experiences—in every aspect of life. And just when you think you've learned all there is, there's more.

My co-op experience was enriching—"back in the day", co-op terms outside Vancouver were few and coveted. With an appetite for travelling, I was always among the first to rise to the challenge of living in another city. So it only seemed natural to set my goals on living overseas after I graduated. I signed up with AIESEC, an international, student-run organization coordinating work exchange programs. (The more enlightened version of its mission is at www.aiesec.ca.) They matched me with a job teaching English in...Milano, Italia!

How glamorous, you say? I'm afraid not. Industrial locations, long hours, minimal compensation, unsupportive management, and bad work ethic all contributed to my eventual downfall three months later; I couldn't have escaped to Cambridge, England soon enough. I continued teaching English to foreign teenagers but soon learned that this vocation was not my passion. Seeking out London, I secured an office position with a management firm. The company I worked for was remarkable. Excellent compensation, a trip to Australia, flexible work...what more could I ask for? How about an actual communications position that allowed me to apply the degree that took five years to obtain? After a few months overseas, I missed the budding career I had left behind. Visa restrictions discouraged employers from considering me for any of the 20 communication jobs in my sights.

I was feeling extremely frustrated that my career path was getting stale.



Lubna Ekramoddoullah, BA '98 is currently finishing off her contract as fundraiser for Muscular Dystrophy Canada...and then she'll continue searching for her dream job in communications.

However, despite the difficulties I encountered, I soon realized that my communications degree and co-op education actually helped me in my work and life overseas. I learned to be creative in making each position a "communications" one, regardless of whether it was an executive assistant role or a temp position. And over the three years I worked in Europe and Australia, I developed many skills that complemented communications: project management, office management, IT, marketing, global knowledge.

The true benefit of being a communications grad? The field is so incredibly broad that every job requires some level of communications skill. How and where you apply it is what counts! From government, private, and non-profit, I have been Executive Assistant, Office Manager, IT Manager, Temp Extraordinaire, Communications Assistant, and Fundraiser. My reality these days is that I'm still searching for my dream job in communications, but I would never trade my overseas adventures and knowledge for anything! So, if you have a dream, follow it...because your communications degree will follow you. ◀

So, You Thought School Was Over?

► Furthering your education after SFU

By Liesl Jurock

When I graduated on that cold, foggy day in June of 1999, I swore I was never coming back to school. While I loved every minute of the five years at SFU in Communication and Co-op, I had scored a job with my co-op employer and could see absolutely no reason to ever come back. Funnily enough, I somehow found my way back to the AQ taking a policy class this past summer. And it's not the first time I've been back in school since I graduated. I have actually found real need and a true desire for continued learning following my BA. There have been three areas in which I have pursued further education that I can suggest to current Communication students and graduates.

1. Work Place-Related Professional Development

While Co-op provides excellent on-the-job experience that gives grads an edge, I did find I needed some direction managing full-time permanent work. Topics like time management, stress management, work-life balance, and, would you believe it, effective communication, suddenly became important as a young, new staff person eager to prove myself but not necessarily wanting to burn out. As I progressed in my career, I sought out workshops related to middle management and supervision, building relationships and teams, and conflict resolution.

Where do you find this kind of PD? I've taken seminars at UBC's Life & Career Centre (www.lifeandcareer.ubc.ca), and in the popular Franklin Covey series (www.franklincovey.ca).

2. Industry-Related Professional Development

As a student, I remember my sole focus was on getting a job after I graduated. I saw professional associations like IABC and CPRS

as vehicles for networking for job opportunities. While that is absolutely true, networking becomes much more than that when you are a working professional. It's about developing collegial relationships with other professionals in your industry who can be resources, sounding boards, and mentors. You may be the only communications person in your organization, and these colleagues may be your lifeline. One of the most valuable personal, career and leadership experiences I had was in volunteering for IABC/BC, first as a student on a committee and later when I found myself on the executive of the board. Beyond being a member and volunteer, take advantage of the depth of PD available from these associations in the form of the latest research, workshops, and conferences. You can then become a resource yourself for other professionals and increase your network in that way.

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*International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) - www.iabc.bc.ca

*Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS)-
www.cprsvancouver.com

Liesl Jurock, BA '99 is currently working right here, at SFU.



Ten Great Reasons To Work For The Government

► Why so many students head to Ottawa

By Jitka Licenik

Working for the Government of Canada today is dynamic, challenging and even fun. I knew from my first co-op term, back in 1999, that I would stick around for a while. I'd recommend that all students try working for the government at least once. Here's why:

1) The pay. I knew that would get your attention! What can I say? The pay is great. The starting pay for most junior positions is \$48,252. The next two levels start at \$56,496 and \$67,446, with yearly increments for the following two years.

2) The opportunities to move up and around. Once you're in the government, it's easy to move up fast. Becoming a manager within five years is definitely possible, with some hard work. You can also move around to different departments. The next few years will only bring more opportunities. Those baby boomers have to retire sometime!

3) The benefits. This is a very big deal for most government employees, and for good reason. Who can resist good health and pension plans? After roughly 30-35 years with the government, you are entitled to retire with 70 per cent of your pay from your five highest-paid years.

4) The stability. This one is also a big deal. Once you get indeterminate status, your job is safe. Even with massive employment cuts, indeterminate employees are the last to be touched. Even then, most employees find new jobs, rather than be let go.

5) The variety of work. Because teams are usually small, most communications jobs offer a little bit of everything. Varied experience looks great on a resume and makes it easier to move up. Plus, there are various ways to volunteer your time within a department to try

different things. My experience on our Green Team and our Sustainable Development Team has been very good for my career so far.

6) Learning and training. Most departments have established "learning" budgets for all employees, meaning you can have useful courses paid for, including language courses. Full-time language training is a reality for many government employees who need to reach a certain level. My two months of full-time language training were extremely productive, useful and rewarding.



Jitka Licenik, BA '01 is a Communications Advisor with Western Economic Diversification Canada in Ottawa.

7) Working for Canadians. I have always loved the idea that I work for a non-profit organization. I do not sell products to make money. I promote services to help Canadians. The work is always meaningful.

8) Travel. Many jobs, even junior jobs, call for occasional travel. Whether you're going to a funding announcement event or an all-staff meeting, business travel is sometimes necessary.

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Can't Get A Co-op Job? Then Change Your Strategy

► **Advice from a grad who's been there**

By Kiyoshi Yamamoto

I completed my degree in 1998, was named IABC's Student Communicator of the Year, and eight months before graduation, had already begun my dream job with my former Co-op employer. Not bad for someone who started out as a lost cause.

I chose to study Communications because it looked interesting, not because I already had experience in the industry or because I thought telecommunication policy would be the "It" job of the new millennium; I just wanted something that would hold my interest for 120 credits. And Co-op would be an easy way to get experience, right? Not exactly.

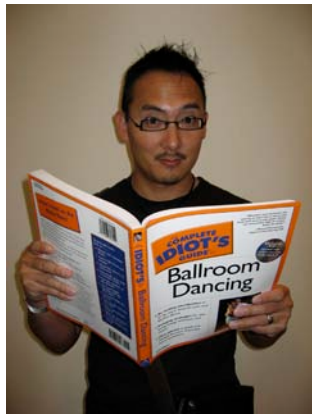
My first semester applying for jobs resulted in a single interview that was so pathetic the interviewers used our remaining time to discuss scheduling issues and forgot I was in the room. It was humiliating and I quit Co-op the next day, but not for that reason; if it was this hard in the sheltered world of Co-op, the real world would eat me alive. I needed to get what employers were looking for and ensure I offered them more than my competitors, i.e., the hundreds of students just like you. SFU wouldn't offer that—we were all taking the same courses! So I searched elsewhere.

At Douglas College, I found an intensive program that taught me many practical skills like how to plan, write and produce a brochure. I decided to follow my passion and volunteer for environmental groups where I could apply my new talents. After all, what non-profit doesn't need a brochure?

That consumed two years full-time. I continued at SFU in the summers and did all the volunteer work I could handle. It was incredibly rewarding and it gave me confidence that I could succeed in this field. Graduation was delayed, but I rejoined Co-op with a

portfolio, project experience, and an attitude that made employers snap to attention. I landed the interviews and jobs I wanted.

There have been more dream jobs since that first one: working in marketing for an international industrial software company; managing publications at a major university; and, now, applying my skills in the unlikely world of ballroom dancing, organizing prestigious competitions in Italy and the U.S. Hard work, but it's exciting, challenging, and the globetrotting is a perk; and it's all because of that first lousy interview that spurred me to action.



Kiyoshi Yamamoto, BA '98, catching up on some ballroom dancing techniques.

If you're having trouble landing interviews or job offers, you've realized by now that Co-op is no cakewalk. I can relate. Now what are you doing about it? How are you distinguishing yourself from the crowd? Be creative and take risks. The world is more forgiving of students than of unemployed adults, so if you're going to do something about your career, now's the time. Get the education you need: it probably isn't on campus. Conduct information interviews. Volunteer. Network. Do everything your Co-op Coordinators tell you to do and more. And don't complain that you don't have time; you'll have more time than you can bear when you graduate and can't find a decent job. ◀

► **Ten Great Reasons To Work For The Government...**Continued from Page 6

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9) Mobility. New human resources policies make it easier to get jobs in other regions. If you've ever wanted to work in Ottawa or, say, Halifax, you just may get that chance.

10) Leave. Indeterminate employees can take up to one year of unpaid leave and still keep their jobs. This is good for people who want to travel or try different jobs, without giving up their current positions. Longer unpaid leaves are also available, with help in finding a position when you return. ◀

“Varied experience looks great on a resume and makes it easier to move up.”

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3. Formal education

Around the five year mark (post graduation), I and other Communications alumni I've kept in touch with, started to feel the itch to do more formal education. This desire for more can relate to a number of opportunities such as more money, promotions to management, shifting career goals, or a desire for in-depth study. For me, working in post-secondary education, a masters degree was the next necessary step to gain further credibility across the institution, and the next challenge for my own personal and professional development. For others, it may be more appropriate to do a specialized certificate program or even one or two courses in a specific field such as graphic design or fundraising. You'll need to find a course or program that will fit with your work and life priorities and budget!

I often hate to break the news to the students I work with that they won't actually know it all after they get their degree. Really, I think you never know it all, and that is the fun of it. You get to keep on learning and challenging yourself, both on the job and off it. ◀

Statistics Corner

Who we are:

	06-2	05-2
New admits	52	54
Total Participating	132	151
Total placements	96	106

Who's doing what:

Eight-month term	29	27
First co-op	38	41
Second co-op	30	24
Third co-op	16	32
Fourth co-op	9	7
Fifth co-op	3	1
Part-time co-op	1	-
Self-directed co-op	20	16

Where we're working:

Greater Vancouver	79	91
Out-of-town	11	9
Overseas	6	6

Who we're working for:

Federal government	19	22
Provincial government	4	4
Municipal government	3	1
Government agencies	15	14
Not-for-profit	20	32
Private	35	33

Where else we're placed:

Arts	7	16
Business	14	15
Computing Science	1	-
Science	1	-
Kinesiology	1	-

