

Preparing for the Academic Job Market: An interactive panel for doctoral students [a panel proposal]

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ABSTRACT

The transition from doctoral student to assistant professor can be a challenging one for many students. The process is unfamiliar for many and presents unanticipated challenges and opportunities. The function of this panel is to provide an interactive platform for faculty members at all stages of their careers to provide advice and input for doctoral students nearing the completion of their doctoral work. This panel will provide valuable insight on finishing the dissertation, going on the job market, and beginning an academic career. The format will allow for participants to ask questions anonymously, questions that may be embarrassing to ask. The seven panelists represent all stages of the academic career: two assistant professors, three associate professors (including two associate deans), and two full professors (including one interim dean and one dean). The participants come from seven different institutions, representing two countries (U.S. and Canada). The panel will be of greatest use to those doctoral students at the end of their doctoral program, but may also be of interest to doctoral students beginning their doctoral work and new assistant professors.

Keywords

Academe, doctoral students, job searching, academic life

INTRODUCTION

Faculty members in the United States report working, on average, 53 hours a week (Axtell, 1998). At a research institution, these hours are typically divided unevenly between research (29% of time, on average), teaching (43%) and other service and administrative duties (Axtell, 1998). These averages, however, mask the complexity of institutional type and particular requirements for tenure. Within the information disciplines, there is a full range of

institutional types and requirements: a teaching load for an academic year ranges from 2-8 courses, depending on the institution. For some institutions, grants are mandatory—a successful tenure portfolio must contain at least one large research contract. For others, grants represent an element of service and younger faculty members are discouraged from engaging in proposals. The requirements for service also vary—with some schools emphasizing connections to practice, some focusing on school committees and others promoting national organization experience.

For newly minted doctoral students, this transition from doctoral education to academic life can be quite jarring. While it is likely that students engaged in elements of academic life during their doctoral program (teaching a course, conducting research, and serving on committees), the increase in each of these areas may be daunting for some and learning how to balance these, along with other areas of their life, can be quite difficult. In addition, new faculty members are often unaware how seemingly small activities (e.g., meetings with advisees, emails from students) can somehow take so much of their time.

The function of this panel is to help provide students with a platform to ask questions about this critical transition period in academe: finishing the dissertation, going on the job market, and working towards tenure. This interactive panel should provide an informative platform for the exchange of ideas between doctoral students and those at various stages of academic life. This panel is sponsored by SIG ED.

FORMAT

The event will take place during a single ASIS&T paper session time slot. If possible, the panel will be assembled in a u-shape at the front of the room, allowing for better interaction among the panelists. The students will be in concentric u-shapes mirroring the panel. As much informality in room set-up will be sought, in order to provide the greatest comfort level and to induce conversation.

As students enter the room, they will be given index cards and instructed to write a question of interest to them. They will take a seat and work on their questions as others enter. At the start of the session, the panelists will be asked to give a brief introduction (less than 1 minute) to give their

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ASIST 2011, October 9–13, 2011, New Orleans, LA, USA.
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name, position, and current and former places of employment. While these introductions are happening, the moderators (Sugimoto and Christopherson) will collect index cards and begin sorting these into similar question types. The moderators will then ask the panel the questions, continually gathering more index cards while the panel is answering. We will continue to distribute and collect index cards throughout the panel, but will also encourage students to ask questions directly, if they would like.

When there are 10 minutes left in the session, we will stop collecting questions and ask each of the panelists to give one final piece of advice for the audience, something they feel is important to share but may not have been asked of them.

BENEFITS

This event will provide an informal opportunity for doctoral students to interact with faculty members at all stages of their academic careers (assistant, associate and full professors as well as those who have taken administrative positions). This interaction provides a sense of continuity for the student—seeing ASIS&T members at later stages in their careers implicitly highlights the continued value of ASIS&T membership for career development and networking. Explicitly, the content is something that is much desired by doctoral students—answering questions not only about obtaining a job, but what to keep in mind as they engage in academic life. The anonymity of the question-asking allows people to ask “high-risk” questions—those that may seem embarrassing to ask in a group setting. This also acts as a way to build community among the doctoral students—providing a platform for doctoral students to network and socialize.

PROMOTION

This panel will be heavily promoted using ASIS&T listservs, Facebook, and Twitter accounts. In addition, a list of all student members will be obtained from Dick Hill and these students will be emailed individually with an invitation to attend the event. Although there is the possibility for error in this mailing (some of the students may not be doctoral students and there may be members classified in other categories who are doctoral students), this should provide a fairly inclusive individual mailing list.

PARTICIPANTS

Seven panelists will serve on this panel, representing all stages of the academic career: two assistant professors, three associate professors, and two full professors. In addition, a range of administrative careers are represented here: two associate deans, one interim dean, and one dean. The participants come from seven different institutions, representing two countries (U.S. and Canada).

Dr. Naresh Agarwal

Naresh Kumar Agarwal is an Assistant Professor at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science,

Simmons College, Boston. Naresh earned his PhD from the National University of Singapore’s Department of Information Systems, School of Computing. His research interests are information behavior (information seeking, context, source choice), theories/models/frameworks/synthesis, information systems (knowledge management, health informatics, human-computer interaction, IT adoption), identity and happiness. He has published in many of these areas. His teaching interests are evaluation of information services, technology for information professionals and knowledge management.

Dr. Agarwal will provide a valuable perspective from someone who has recently been on the job market and has received an academic position in an LIS program in the United States.

Dr. Ingrid Hsieh-Yee

Ingrid Hsieh-Yee is Interim Dean and Professor of the School of Library and Information Science at The Catholic University of America. Her specialty is information organization and she has taught many courses at CUA, such as Cataloging and Classification, Internet Searches and Web Design, and Metadata and Project Management. Dr. Hsieh-Yee won research awards from the American Society for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T) and the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE). She has published numerous articles and two editions of *Organizing Audiovisual and Electronic Resources for Access* and won best paper awards for her works in JASIST and OCLC Systems and Services. With several metadata experts she co-authored two highly regarded editions of the National Information Standards Organization (NISO) document, “Framework of Guidance for Building Good Digital Collections”.

Dr. Hsieh-Yee served on the Education Committee of ASIST and worked with Barbara Wildemuth to coordinate doctoral seminars at ASIST conferences. She is an active member of ALISE and chaired an award committee on faculty innovation in the last two years. She has much experience with faculty searches at CUA and will draw on her experience to discuss strategies for early academic career development.

Dr. Michelle M. Kazmer

Michelle M. Kazmer is an Associate Professor in the School of Library and Information Studies within the College of Communication & Information at Florida State University. She also holds a courtesy faculty appointment at the Florida State University College of Medicine in the Department of Medical Humanities and Social Sciences. She is the co-editor, with Dr. Kathleen Burnett, of the *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*.

Her Ph.D. is from the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her MLS is from the School of Information Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh. She holds a B.S. in

Mechanical Engineering from Columbia University. She has worked as a rare book cataloger, as an academic engineering librarian, and as a technical information specialist for an American automotive manufacturer.

Her research focuses on participants in distributed social worlds, and in particular the processes of knowledge creation and sharing that those participants enact. One stream of her research explores how people disengage when they are preparing to depart from those worlds. She is especially interested in how knowledge is transferred between people who have left a social world and whatever parts of that world they left behind. She is also interested in the interaction between online and local settings for participants in distributed social worlds. Dr. Kazmer teaches in the areas of information organization, information needs, information sources and services, and theory development.

As a recently tenured faculty member, Dr. Kazmer will be able to speak to the experience of going through this process.

Dr. Howard Rosenbaum

Dr. Howard Rosenbaum is the Associate Dean and Associate Professor of Information Science in the School of Library and Information Science at Indiana University where he has been on the faculty since 1993. He is the Director of the Master of Information Science program and a co-director of the Graduate Certificate in Information Architecture program in SLIS. He is currently interested in social informatics, ebusiness, and online communities. He has led seminars on ebusiness at Napier University in Edinburgh, Scotland, the University of Bath, and the University of Greenwich, in the UK. He has also spoken widely on information architecture in the midwest.

Dr. Rosenbaum has presented his work at the American Society for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T), the Association for Information Systems, the Association of Internet Researchers, HCI International, and other organizations. He is a Fellow the Rob Kling Center for Social Informatics at Indiana University and current chair of SIG-SI at ASIS&T. Rosenbaum teaches classes on digital entrepreneurship, information systems design, information architecture for the web, intellectual freedom, and information organizations and workshops for information professionals in XML, CSS, and web page design. He has been recognized often for excellence in teaching and for the innovative use of technology in education. He received the Frederic Bachman Lieber Memorial Award for Teaching Excellence, Indiana University in 2005, a state-wide MIRA Award for Technological Innovation in Education from Techpoint in 2003, the Indiana Partnership for Statewide Education Award for Innovation in Teaching with Technology in 2002, and was named one of the first SBC Fellows at Indiana University in 2000.

As associate dean, Dr. Rosenbaum has chaired the search committee for new faculty posts for numerous years. He will therefore be able to speak from the hiring perspective.

Dr. Barbara Wildemuth

Barbara Wildemuth is a Professor and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has been on the faculty at UNC since 1989, when she completed her PhD at Drexel University. She has served on the SILS search/personnel committee several times, participating in the search and tenure review deliberations in each case. In addition, she has been the organizer of the ASIST Doctoral Seminar for many of the years since its inception in the early 1990's.

Dr. Wildemuth will bring her knowledge from these experiences, particularly those on the tenure/promotion committee, to shed a light on some of these mysteries of academe.

Dr. Carolyn Hank

Carolyn Hank is an Assistant Professor at the School of Information Studies at McGill University. She received her Ph.D. from the School of Information and Library Science (SILS) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH). She is a 2010 recipient of a Eugene Garfield Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship from Beta Phi Mu. She served as project manager for the DigCCurr I project (2007-2009), an IMLS-funded project to develop graduate-level curricular framework, course modules, and experiential and enrichment components and exemplars necessary to prepare students to work in the 21st century environment of trusted digital and data repositories. She is currently an instructor in the DigCCurr Professional Institute: Curation Practices for the Digital Object Lifecycle, a component of the DigCCurr II project (2008-2012). She teaches in the areas of digital preservation and access, digital curation, human information interactions, and research methods.

As a recent doctoral graduate and new hire, Dr. Hank will be able to discuss finishing the Ph.D. and going on the job market. In particular, she will be able to describe her experience of accepting a post at a non-U.S. institution.

Dr. Elizabeth Liddy

Elizabeth D. Liddy is Dean of the School of Information Studies at Syracuse University. Prior to being named Dean in February, 2008, Liddy was founding director of the Center for Natural Language Processing (CNLP) whose focus is the development of human-like language understanding software capabilities for government, commercial and consumer applications.

Liddy has led 70+ research projects with funding from various government agencies, foundations, and corporate enterprises. She has authored more than 110 research papers and given hundreds of conference presentations on her research. Prior to CNLP, Liddy was the founding

president of TextWise LLC, which she led from 1994 to 1999 in the development of an NLP-based search engine which was used by the U. S. and European Patent Offices. In addition, she is inventor or co-inventor on 7 patents in the area of NLP. Liddy has taught in the areas of Natural Language Processing, Information Retrieval, and Data Mining. Liddy was Chair of ACM-SIGIR for the 2007-2010 term and is Chair-elect of the international iSchool Caucus.

As a Dean, Dr. Liddy serves in the capacity to hire, tenure, and promote faculty members. This position provides a unique lens on the panel and valuable insight for the doctoral students.

REFERENCES

Axtell, J. (1989). *The pleasures of academe: A celebration & defense of high education*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.