

## **News of Interest to the Profession:**

A few years ago, the American Historical Association released a study entitled *The Education of the Historian in the Twenty-First Century* (University of Illinois Press, 2004). You can buy this via Amazon, Barnes and Noble or your local bookstore. Please send your comments on the study to the American Historical Association.

In recent years, there have been many studies which discuss the structure of American graduate education. The best of these is probably the 2001 study done by the Pew Charitable Trusts. If you want to obtain the study, contact the Pew at:

One Commerce Square  
2005 Market Street, Suite 1700  
Philadelphia, PA 19103-7077  
tel: 215.575.9050

In a recent article in *Perspectives*, the American Historical Association gave its most candid assessment of the academic job market for historians to date. The study attempts to ascertain the broader impact which the overproduction of history PhDs has had on the market by looking back at data from the past fifteen years. One of the most interesting comments in the study: "Almost two-thirds (63 percent) of the history PhDs reported to the Directory over the past 15 years had not found employment in a [history] department or organization."

Hopefully, this article will initiate some great discussions as universities and historical organizations are forced to acknowledge what happens to the majority of PhDs in history.

## **Beyond Academe in the News**

Since its launch, *Beyond Academe* has received attention in the mainstream press as well as in *Perspectives*, the journal of the American Historical Association.

The *Village Voice* did a story on adjuncts and the reality of academic life. *Beyond Academe* was highlighted in the article. The article, "Wanted: Really Smart Suckers, Grad School Provides Exciting New Road to Poverty" is available on line. I am proud to say that the *Village Voice* reporter used *Beyond Academe* as evidence that grad school need not necessarily lead to poverty!

The Brian Leher Show, an NPR show in New York City, interviewed me for a show on adjuncting and opportunities outside of the academy for PhDs. The show can be heard on line.

*Perspectives* did a story on *Beyond Academe*, which is available on line. In the same issue, I wrote an article about my experiences outside of academia and my thoughts on the many different ways in which graduate schools need to be reformed. The article is also available on line.

In the last few years, I have published some articles in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* about

my experiences outside of academia. These articles can be read on line:

"Outside, Over There," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 13, 2005.

"Conference Confidential," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 30, 2007.

"An Object Lesson," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 1, 2007.

"Plan B," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 13, 2009.

A few years ago, Anne Whisnant, one of the profiled historians on this site, kindly asked me to appear on a panel about careers which was hosted by Duke University. *The Duke Chronicle* ran an interesting piece about the panel and the difficulties facing PhDs seeking jobs outside of academia. Anne is featured in the article as am I. You can read the article on line. The article is titled "Humanities Alumni Struggle to Find Jobs."

*Adjunct Advocate* also did a story on non-academic jobs for PhDs. I was one of the many non-academic PhDs interviewed for the article. This article was posted as a pdf file and it can be located by a google search using the words "Adjunct Advocate" and "Non-Academic Jobs for Ph.D.s." The article appeared in March/April 2007.

In recent years, I have given career talks at Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania, Yale, Columbia, Duke University, Indiana University and Purdue University at Indianapolis, and a host of other universities and organizations. The career center at the University of Pennsylvania put the PowerPoint for my talk on the web. There is no direct link to this on the web but if you put the words "Paradise Lost and Found" and "Alexandra M. Lord" into Google, you will be directed to a PowerPoint version of the talk.

I still give talks on leaving academia.

A newly updated edition of *So What Are You Going to Do With That?* was recently released. Check it out at Amazon or Barnes and Noble or, better yet, ask your local bookstore to order it if they don't have it in stock. And just a sidenote: when I left academe, *So What Are You Going to Do With That?* was a lifeline. In the most recent edition, Sue Basalla asked me to be one of the profiles. So, who knows? Perhaps in the next edition, she will ask you to be one of her profiles!

### **Hindsight or An Historian Looks Back:**

It has been over eight years since I left academia. Leaving was one of the most difficult things I have ever done but it was also one of the best things I have ever done.

I spent almost a year searching for a job (eight very long and very unemployed months to be precise). I think, in retrospect, the hardest part of a job search is that you cannot see a clear end: a job search takes as long as it takes. This can be a very stressful and very difficult time so my advice is not to be too hard on yourself. Be prepared for some setbacks and be prepared for some difficult times.

Once you do make the transition, you will be amazed at the new doors which will open.

Since leaving, I have been stunned by the incredible number of PhDs I have found who work outside the academy. Many of these PhDs were right in front of me when I was in academia but I didn't see them because I was so focused on an academic career. Others are people I have met simply because I stepped out of the university and began working and living in a non-university town. The biggest lesson I have learned since leaving academia? The world really is full of successful and happily employed PhDs who work in a range of different occupations.

On a personal level, leaving academia led me to meet my husband, a non-academic. Although my husband is an attorney, his father and brother both possess PhDs and...yes...my father-in-law left his position as a tenure-track chemistry professor at Amherst College to pursue a career in industry and my brother-in-law who holds a PhD in the history of science left academia to work in the finance industry. All of this proves, I think, that you really will find PhDs everywhere you look...or marry.

On a professional level, leaving academia has opened new doors for me. Becoming a public historian has led me to acquire new skills, to see historical problems from a different perspective, and to understand more clearly why history really is important. Ironically, it has also led me to become a more active scholar as I have not only published more than I did as an academic, I have also become more actively engaged in the historical profession.

Many of the PhDs I know who have left the academy have said similar things about their own experiences outside the academy.

So, best wishes on your job search and may you soon find a job which suits you and enables you to grow both personally and professionally!

## **A Plug for Wrk4Us**

Wrk4US is a fantastic resource. Created by Paula Foster Chambers, this is a list-serve which brings together non-academics and academics to discuss career options outside of academia. I cannot recommend it highly enough.

Many of the participants on Wrk4Us are career counselors; still others are PhDs who have successfully made the transition out of academia. These people provide some of the best career advice out there simply because they have been in your situation.

In addition to being a list serve where posters can ask questions, Wrk4Us hosts guest discussions which highlight different types of careers. Many of the people profiled on Beyond Academe have appeared as guest speakers on Wrk4US. Click on this website to find Wrk4Us guest speaker discussions.

Along with all this great advice, posters on Wrk4Us often submit job postings which are especially suited for PhDs in the humanities. Since many of the posters are affiliated with or know the institutions which are advertising these jobs, you may also be able to get great advice

on the best approach to take when applying for a specific job.

Discussion levels on Wrk4Us vary. Some weeks it is extremely active but at other times, it may be very quiet. Check out this site to learn more about how Wrk4Us.

## **How You Can Change History**

If our profession is to adopt a broader and deeper understanding of what it means to be an historian and how historians use their skills and knowledge in a range of careers, we must participate in ongoing discussions about the future of the historical profession.

Please ensure that your voice is heard by attending historical conferences and participating on committees associated with the leading historical organizations whenever possible. Volunteer to speak at your alma mater.

The National Council on Public History is one of the most welcoming organizations for historians who have followed a non-traditional path. Their annual conference brings together people in an incredible range of professions. Conference organizers have also worked hard to ensure that historians in different professions communicate with one another through a range of innovative networking programs.

## **A Final Thank You**

Since creating Beyond Academe, I have had the great fortune to meet many people who share my belief that a graduate education can be used in myriad careers. I cannot thank everyone personally but I do want to say thank you to everyone who has helped, directly or indirectly, to make Beyond Academe a better site.

First, I have learned a tremendous amount from the many, many people who have written us here at Beyond Academe. In updating the site, I have tried to draw upon and address the many suggestions and questions we have received.

Participating on Wrk4Us has taught me an extraordinary amount about the wide range of opportunities out there and I just want to thank some of the regular posters there who have really opened my eyes to all these opportunities. These are (and if I leave anyone out, I apologize): Paula Foster Chambers, Wendy Waters, Hadass Sheffer, Darryl Stevens, Anne Whisnant, Kate Duttro, Jennifer Furlong, Rebecca Bryant, Julie Vick, Brenda Drezler, Maureen Olmstead, and Leo Simonetta.

At conferences, universities, and just out on the street, I have learned an extraordinary amount from the many people who have shared their stories of leaving academia. Some of these people are historians and some are not. All of them, however, have shared my passion for life "outside the box" and hearing their stories has been one of the best parts of leaving academia.

These people work in places ranging from museums and non-profit organizations to scientific societies and educational consulting firms to the federal government and university

administration. Some of these people are even self-employed!

To assist those of you who are not in history and/or those of you who may be curious about what is happening to people outside of history, I've included, with my thank yous, the fields which these people study.

Thank you to: Jeff Reznick (History), Sarah Leavitt (American Studies), Robert Ehrenreich (Archaeology), Paul Baxter (Religion), Amy Paschane (Psychology), Mel Buchwald (Chemistry), Walter Hickel (History), Sue Basalla (English), Erika Martin Seibert (Archaeology), Liz Fee (History), Richard Kurtz (Economics), Robert Sutton (History), James Jacobs (Architectural History), Jill Egeth (Psychology), Kathie Olsen (Biology), Sarah Younker-Koeppel (Anthropology), Leo Slater (History), John Roberts (History), Mark Parascandola (Philosophy), David Cantor (History), Kevin Walzer (English), and Mike Sappol (History).

I have also been inspired by the stories of my in-laws and relatives who are non-academic PhDs: Charles M. Apt (Chemistry), Adam J. Apt (History), and Cynthia L. Ogden (Urban Planning). My cousin, Donald Smith (Biology), also demonstrates that one can earn a PhD, move out of academia for several years and then return to academia.

### **Best Job Sites for Historians:**

Several organizations regularly post jobs which are especially suited for historians. Many of these places also provide information about internships (paid and unpaid). Below are some of the best job sites for historians.

American Association for Museums

American Association for State and Local History

Association of Midwest Museums

The Council on Foundations

E Cultural Resources

The Foundation Center

Idealist.org

Museums Jobs.com (also lists jobs outside of the United States)

National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers

National Trust for Historic Preservation

Preserve Net

The Southeast Museum Conference

Western Museums Association

The United States Government

Beyond Academe was endorsed by The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation in 2004. The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation increased awareness of the value of humanities training and education to society at large, and in so doing, expanded career opportunities for PhDs both inside and outside the academy. We are pleased to receive this endorsement.

This site has been commended by the Organization of American Historians.

Beyond Academe was last updated in September 2009; it was designed by James Bagley.

**Please note: Beyond Academe was created and developed as a service to the historical profession. If you would like to copy and/or post excerpts from this site elsewhere, please contact Alexandra M. Lord at [beyondacademe@yahoo.com](mailto:beyondacademe@yahoo.com) for permission.**