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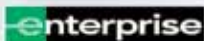


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EDITOR'S LETTER

Canada's skills mismatch

After attending a thought-provoking conference this past spring, I decided the theme of this issue of *Career Options* would be "The jobs are out there—here's how you find them." If you're a recent grad struggling to find work, you might find this hard to believe. Yes, it's true that some industries are oversaturated with job seekers, but it's also true that countless well-paying jobs are going unfilled.

One of the conference's themes was the skills mismatch currently affecting certain industries in Canada. Essentially, there are too many skilled positions to be filled, and not enough workers with the right skills to fill them. For example, some areas of Canada have a large number of unemployed teachers because there are not enough job openings, while other, often rural areas desperately need teaching staff. There are construction companies that can't start projects because there aren't enough qualified workers. The retiring Baby Boomer workforce also plays a big part in widening this labour gap, and many experts agree that students are adding to the problem—their education and training are not matched to what the job market needs. The gap is projected to grow exponentially in the future, which could equate to billions of dollars in lost economic activity and tax revenue.

Solving the problem will take effort from all sides. But students are in a prime position to help close the labour gap, if they are smart about planning their education and career paths. This issue includes in-depth features on some of the industries looking for workers right now—such as health care, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and information and communications technology—and what you need to do now to get ready for them.

Enjoy the issue! **CO**

PAUL D. SMITH is the Executive Director of the Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers and Editor-in-Chief of *Career Options* magazine. Email Paul at pauls@cacee.com

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THE JOBS ARE OUT THERE

STRATEGIES FOR CANADA'S SKILLS AND LABOUR SHORTAGE

By Danielle Klassen



T

he inevitable final year panic: after countless coffee-filled all-nighters, the stress of never-ending deadlines, and nightmares of missing exams, you hope it's all been worth it. You hope your education lands you a job.

You're not alone in your graduation anxiety. With today's high post-secondary admission rates, the supply of graduates each year seems to be outpacing the labour market's demand—no doubt you've heard tales of today's honours grads becoming masters of latte art.

Canada's post-recession unemployment rates are high, sitting around 7.1 percent, with a large portion of that number in the 15-to-24 age range. Young people have struggled to tap into the job market as older, more experienced employees moved into new jobs following the recession. Internships, often unpaid, have become almost a rite of passage into the job market—and there's never certainty that they'll result in employment.

Canada's unemployment rates can be cyclical, explains Gordon Betcherman, a University of Ottawa professor who specializes in labour market development. It's a recurring trend that happens when significant changes in the economy lessen the demand for workers.

"A country like Canada is not in the recession technically, but we still have a stagnant, slow-growing economy. As long as we don't get back to full economic potential, demand for workers is going to be low," says Betcherman.

These stories and statistics, however, overlook a huge problem in Canada's job market: there are countless fields and regions in Canada that desperately need new recruits.

Rural areas of Canada struggle to attract domestic employees. Jobs in the oil sands in Fort McMurray offer lucrative wages and often don't require substantial experience. Waterloo's technology sector loses employees to American-based high-tech giants.

The areas currently identified by the government for employee shortages are occupations in sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics; information and communications technology; health care; and skilled trades. All these fields require specialized knowledge beyond a general degree.

There are jobs out there—you just need to re-evaluate how you search for them.

THE NEW ECONOMY

Starting in the 1950s, Canada entered a sort of "Golden Age" for employment, with a very stable national economy built on low-skill, high-wage labour. After leaving high school,

regardless of whether you finished your diploma, you could typically secure a steady job in a given industry—construction, mining, forestry, manufacturing—earn a decent wage, and provide a life for your family. It was the blissful "old economy," now just a myth satirized in memes.

Today, Canada's role in the global economy has changed. The manufacturing industry has shrunk due to overseas competition. The development of, and in turn our dependence on, technology has exploded—and it's become a "great job killer," making any number of human services obsolete.

Beyond this, minimum requisites for employment have grown. What used to set a job candidate apart is now simply standard. The master's degree is the new bachelor's, so to speak.

These changes happened so quickly that nobody anticipated the extent to which they affected our economy. Society as a whole overlooked the transition and is now playing catch-up.

EDUCATING ABOUT EDUCATION

"The economy has shifted and changed and the workforce hasn't, and our training system hasn't," says Ken Coates, the Canada Research Chair in Regional Innovation at the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy.



Part of the problem lies in how people are being educated. “Universities, from a purely economic point of view, are educating too many people in general fields and not educating them very well,” says Betcherman.

Universities are admitting more students than ever before, and students are specializing in subjects that are not well matched to current job trends. Certified teachers have to head overseas to teach or wait five years before landing a full-time job in urban Canada. Law school graduates can’t find articling positions to secure their status as a certified lawyer. Graduates with arts degrees are heading to college to build the specific technical skills they need to become more employable.

“We live in a specialized economy where people need to have the niche skills available for niche economies. We need to stop talking about universities as a privileged place, as though they’re the only places that generate good incomes,” says Coates.

A redirection of people within the education system, and in turn the workforce, to better reflect job demand would be ideal, says Betcherman: “That happens by individuals making decisions based on what’s going on in the world.”

Educators—starting at the secondary level—need to put greater emphasis on informing students about the fields and industries that have growing demand, says Betcherman. Young people need to be aware of job market trends so that they can make informed decisions about their career path.

For Coates, this means telling students to “get over your fear of blue-collar work.” Students and parents fantasize over jobs at big technology firms like Google or BlackBerry, he says, while overlooking opportunities that are much more attainable in other fields.

TRAINING FOR THE NEW ECONOMY

Universities offer the broadest educations and are known for providing a challenging academic curriculum. Program and class sizes are often large, and learning is typically based on theory, which means students don’t always get hands-on experience.

“Universities hold to the idea that their job is to educate, not train,” says Coates. “They aren’t comfortable with the idea that they’re there to train people into the workforce.”

Colleges sit on the opposite side of the spectrum. While also academic, colleges focus on applied learning. Their programs are highly specific so that graduates are presumably career-ready upon graduation. In Coates’ view, colleges excel at quickly adjusting their programs to changes and demands in the job market.

Jo-Ann Aubut, dean of academic development at Algonquin College, has studied at both university and college and says there will always be tremendous value to a university education. But given the current economic climate, she feels the opportunities that result directly from a university education are fewer.

“One of the value-adds of a college education is that for years we’ve integrated experiential learning within our programing laboratory and through networking in the community to find real work placements,” she says. The college has diverse labs designed to simulate real-world experience and train students for their specific program. “Ensuring that we provide a working experience for a new graduate better prepares them for this climate that they’re having to compete in.”

Experts from all sides of the issue—economics, education and government—are beginning to realize the need to educate the emerging workforce on what academic institutions offer and where the jobs are.

“It’s just history: there’s always been that perception that if you want a ‘good job,’ and good jobs are typically perceived to be a lawyer, teacher, doctor, you go to university,” says Aubut.

“It’s a process of educating on what the colleges have to offer and I think we’re making headway in communicating that message,” Aubut says. “The majority of jobs are filled by college graduates, not university graduates.”

UNIVERSITIES ARE ADMITTING MORE STUDENTS THAN EVER BEFORE, AND STUDENTS ARE SPECIALIZING IN SUBJECTS THAT ARE NOT WELL MATCHED TO CURRENT JOB TRENDS.

There certainly isn’t a bank of employers specifically seeking graduates with nothing on their resumé aside from a general bachelor of arts degree and no relevant work experience. That said, the skills students hone in post-secondary are an indispensable asset to employers.

The abilities to problem-solve, network, communicate well, and other interpersonal skills are known as non-cognitive or soft skills. Economists have found that people with strong soft skills generally tend to do well in the workplace.

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ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR 2013

Joanne McDonald is the manager of Career Services and Student Activities at Algonquin College. She acts as a liaison for employers and students or alumni. She says she finds that “employers are looking for a well-rounded candidate who can demonstrate technical skills, ability and knowledge, but also soft skills.”

The workforce of tomorrow has a big part to play in addressing Canada’s skills mismatch. “Students should be responsible for identifying what it is they want to do and like to do, and making sure it’s something they’re going to usefully be able to be employed in the country,” says Betcherman.

By paying attention to broader trends in the market—the evolution of technology, the aging population, the need for entrepreneurs—young people can forge more secure career paths.

To understand how to fit into the new economy, Coates says, students need to explore the workforce, explore all their academic options, and explore the world. They can’t be “lazy” or *laissez-faire* when making decisions about their career.

“Take the blinkers off, check out the local schools, visit them, see what they’re like and what programs they have to offer. Try as a student to get summer and part-time job experience that gives you a chance to test your likes and dislikes,” he says.

For those passionate about a field lacking an abundance of jobs, the key may be to start expanding their search within Canada. “You want to have a passion, but if you have a passion and the opportunities are limited geographically where you live, you may have to move to find employment,” says Aubut.

There is hope for the overeducated urban baristas out there. “Young people have to understand that the demographics are working in their favour. In a few years they’re going to see the effect of a labour force switching,” says Betcherman. As the baby-boomers exit the workforce, the demand for workers will inevitably shift, he says.

Regardless of the demand in the market, education is a lifelong pursuit, says Betcherman: “It may take a while, but degrees pay off.” **CO**



DANIELLE KLASSEN is a graduate of Carleton University’s school of journalism, currently living and working in Toronto. With a background in business, Danielle writes to help readers to navigate the economic climate in practical ways. Connect with Danielle on Twitter @daniklassen.

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By Paul Rebar

PROGRAMMING A CAREER IN

ICT

A cutting-edge industry searching for high-tech talent

Information and communications technology (ICT) is one of the most extensive industry sectors in Canada, encompassing everything from video games to cars to renewable energy and much, much more. It is also facing one of the biggest skills shortages in the country.

Canadian employers will need to hire about 106,000 ICT workers between 2011 and 2016—around 17,700 people per year—according to a 2012 report by the Information and Communications Technology Council (ICTC). With Canadian youth unemployment at 14 percent as of summer 2013, this couldn't be a more ideal opportunity.

If you're interested in working with software and cutting-edge technology, now is the right time to look at which areas of the tech industry will face

shortages, and adapt your career plan accordingly. In such a far-reaching industry, there's something for everyone.

So what is ICT? ICT is the development of computers, software and electronics for applications in business, research and everyday life. More and more people and businesses rely on information technology as essential to their day-to-day activities. This opens up plenty of job opportunities for those with the right skills and qualifications.

WHERE TO BEGIN?

Here are some basic guidelines for finding work in ICT from Tracy Biernacki-Dusza, an ICTC employee and the national program manager for its Focus on Information Technology (FIT) youth program.

DIGITAL LITERACY

If you're reading this, chances are you know how to set preferences on Reddit or upload photos to Dropbox, but what about the software these applications run on? Learning programming languages and developing digital literacy is the first thing to consider.

Here are the fundamental scripting and markup languages used in web development:

- » HTML5 (basic text, links)
- » CSS (layouts, images, colour schemes)
- » PHP (dynamic content such as menu animations)
- » JavaScript (dynamic content, widgets)

These languages are typically taught in first- and second-year computer science programs,

since they offer an introduction to understanding programming languages used in software development.

Here are some of the most widely-used programming languages:

- » C
- » C++
- » Java
- » Ruby
- » Python
- » Perl

Keep in mind that these are general purpose languages. There are dozens of specialized programming languages for various types of software, although most are relatively easy to learn once you know the fundamentals.

Research which languages are most suited to your chosen career.

All of the programming languages can also be learned without a computer science degree—employers care more about talent and finished projects than where you went to school. That being said, self-motivated learning can be tough without the structure of set assignments and deadlines. Many computer science programs also

offer reliable job placement through co-ops and internships. It's up to you to decide whether these advantages are worth the price of tuition.

INDUSTRY CERTIFICATION

Programming knowledge is a given; what employers have started looking for on a resumé is industry certification. You'll need to study for and acquire certifications on your own, since they typically aren't included with a computer science degree. It takes effort, but it's also one of the best ways to show employers you know what you're doing.

Entry-level industry certification includes:

- » A+
- » Network +

Certification for specified fields includes:

- » PMP (Project Management Professional)
- » CISSP (Certified Information Systems Security Professional)
- » VCP (VMware Certified Professional)

Large companies like Microsoft, Apple and Cisco have their own certifications for working with their software in different areas of the industry, which are available after reaching entry-level. Priced exams for all certifications are available online.

CREATIVITY AND BUSINESS SKILLS

Tech companies nowadays are smaller and more nimble, relying on multi-talented employees skilled at not just programming, but also project management, marketing and entrepreneurship. Biernacki-Dusza stresses that the best way to get hired is to show off your ability to solve problems, engage with people and come up with innovative ideas.

KEEPING UP-TO-DATE WITH THE INDUSTRY

This is a big one. The ICT sector is expanding and evolving at a ridiculous pace. Hot new products hit the market every day, software updates are constantly being released, job descriptions are changing, and entirely new jobs are created by combining emerging skill sets with existing ones.

Here are Biernacki-Dusza's recommendations:



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» Check job posting sites like Monster and Glassdoor to get an idea of what skills are currently in demand. From there, work out which skill sets you need to learn or brush up on.

» Always be familiar with the latest software. Computer science programs only teach what's current at the moment, so you need to stay on top of new software throughout your career.

» Reach out to professors, career counsellors, peers and industry professionals for advice. Attend tech conferences and talk to people—this could lead to getting your foot in the door at a company you'd like to work for.

» Read labour market bulletins published by ICTC and other ICT industry think tanks.

MAPPING A CAREER PATH

Here is some advice for planning your career path both in and out of school from Diane Johnson, career planning and placement coordinator for the University of British Columbia's computer science department:

A lot of work in the tech industry is team-based. Companies look for candidates with solid communication and leadership skills in addition to technical skills. Join a co-op program at school, apply for internships, or take on leadership roles in clubs and organizations to develop your team-building.

Have work samples available to show to prospective employers. Develop an e-portfolio (online samples of your finished code, website designs, etc.). Contribute to open source projects, which are collaborative software programs that anyone can add to and improve. Consider doing fun personal projects on the side, both to build your skills and to prove you're passionate about your area of study.

Make a point to consider the business implications of your projects, instead of just whether they

work technically. Are these solutions user-friendly? Are they cost-effective? Do they solve a problem or make life easier? These are questions you should be able to answer, to show employers you can think on a practical and marketable level.

Take stock of your interests and consider enrolling in a combined degree program. Knowledge from outside the ICT industry, such as in biology or mechanical engineering, is always an asset, especially when applying to companies that develop products for specific areas and industries.

POSSIBLE CAREERS

Some areas where Canada's tech industry is hurting for talent the most, according to Biernacki-Dusza and Johnson, are web and software development, data security and business systems analysis. Smaller start-up companies are always looking for talent, provided you've built the right skill set and industry connections.

Here are a handful of Biernacki-Dusza and Johnson's most promising ICT careers at present, in terms of demand and projected growth for the next four or five years, with median annual salary data calculated through Salary Wizard Canada:

- » **Business Systems Analyst** (entry-level) C\$56,321
- » **Web Software Developer** (entry-level) C\$68,064
- » **Software Developer** (entry-level) C\$57,896
- » **Data Security Analyst** C\$65,757
- » **IT Project Coordinator** C\$79,154

Breaking into the ICT industry takes quite a bit of effort on your own time, but when the payoff is a dynamic, challenging and high-paying career, it's something to stop and consider. There's a whole industry looking for talent. **CO**



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PAUL REBAR is a third-year journalism student at the University of King's College in Halifax. He's big on writing, emerging technology and generally being in the thick of things.

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If you're thinking about a career in health care, you can rest easy, because the prognosis for aspiring health care professionals is excellent.

As a large cohort of the Canadian population—the “Baby Boom” generation—ages into their senior years, health services will be in extremely high demand. Lab tests, surgeries, long-term care: growing old asks a lot of our health care professionals. Fields ranging from medical laboratory science to dietetics to nursing are all facing the retirement of many current workers. The country will struggle to meet the vital needs of all Canadians if there is a lack of human resources to fill positions.

This is not a minor problem. The Canadian Nurses Association says the industry is already short 11,000 full-time nurses. Without swift action from government, schools and industry leaders, that number could balloon to 60,000 nurses in less than 10 years. Experts are calling for additional

funding to help educate new nurses, as well as greater efforts to mentor young professionals and help retain more experienced nurses.

Nursing is not the only area of concern. “Our challenge is—like most health care providers—we will experience a significant downturn when the Baby Boomers retire,” says Christine Nielsen, chief executive officer of the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science. Medical laboratory professionals perform tests and procedures to provide diagnostic information to help diagnose or treat a patient’s condition.

While labour shortages put a strain on current workers within the health care industry—fewer workers mean longer hours, a challenging work environment, and the potential for inadequate care—they also open up opportunities for university and college students. If you’ve ever considered a career in one of the many fields of health care (or even if you haven’t!), now is the time to begin planning your journey.

WHAT TYPES OF JOBS ARE AVAILABLE?

The health care industry encompasses a broad spectrum of professions. Try to recall every ailment you’ve ever suffered, and then think of the

By Megan Stacey

CHECKING UP ON CAREERS IN HEALTH CARE

myriad of health professionals who helped, counselled, calmed or treated you. All of these individuals represent a career within the health care industry, each with its own specializations and applications.

It may seem like a complicated industry to explain, but there is a way to navigate the health care “umbrella,” says Christine Fader, career counsellor at Queen’s University Career Services.

“Roles in this field can often be grouped into two main types: clinical and non-clinical. Examples of clinical roles would include licensed practitioners such as nurses, doctors, therapists and more,” she says. You can think of non-clinical positions as those that don’t directly provide treatment.

WHAT DO I NEED?

Proper knowledge is critical to all professions in the health care industry. It’s good to start by investigating the different sectors of health care through books, online resources and articles.

Fader also suggests meeting with as many current professionals as possible. It’s a great way to get an honest and authentic perspective on what health care jobs entail.

Of course, the major preparation for a job in health care is education and training. Each field and position has its own educational requirements and certification process.

“In most regions of Canada the baccalaureate degree (BScN or BN) is needed for entry to practice nursing,” says Dr. Anita Molzahn, dean of the faculty of nursing at the University of Alberta. “The degree prepares nurses as generalists; some nurses go on to take courses to specialize in specific clinical areas.”

This progression describes the educational process for more than just nursing. Many fields require a basic university degree—usually there are prerequisites focusing on health sciences and other related courses—with the potential for a specialized degree or training process after the initial degree. Some professions, like medical laboratory science and medical imaging, can begin with a college diploma and move on to degree level completion.

Dentistry, for example, requires several years of post-secondary education before enrolling in dental school. Dental specializations such as orthodontics and endodontics require even more training after the four years of dental school are complete.

There are also college programs available for a variety of health care careers, such as paramedicine. This field encompasses

the work of skilled emergency professionals in ambulances, helicopters and airplanes, who respond at emergency scenes and deal with the care and transport of patients.

“Primary care paramedics are the entry level, so you would enroll in a college somewhere to take your primary care paramedic course. The typical thing is you graduate, work for a little while, and then you would go back to college for your advanced care paramedic program,” explains Dwayne Forsman, secretary treasurer of the Paramedic Association of Canada.

Paramedicine isn’t the only health care career option available at colleges. You can also find many programs in allied health, which includes respiratory therapy, ultrasound and medical radiation technology, among others.

“All allied health programs include three major components: theory in the classroom; simulated practice in the laboratory; and ‘real-world’ experience in the clinical environment,” says Dr. Jane Gamberg, president of the Canadian Association of Allied Health Programs. Classroom learning aside, there’s more that you can do to get your start in the industry. Nielsen says it is crucial to gain real-life experience and knowledge. While some health care programs, such as medical laboratory science, offer “real-world” experience through clinical placements, there are other ways to get an idea of what different careers might be like, including simulation and laboratory practice.

Interviewing current workers, volunteering, or becoming involved in community service learning related to your chosen field will help you develop a sense of what a career in health care might entail. Many agree that this type of learning—where you see a career in practice—is equally, if not more, important than learning from your textbooks and professors.

“Seeking out experiential opportunities to test the fit,” is how Fader describes this process. She suggests students search out job ads for positions in their chosen field, and review the qualifications and skills they are looking for in order to get an idea of the education and training that is required.

“It’s very important to talk to people doing recent hiring because desired qualifications are often evolving,” she notes.

Experiential learning could also include volunteer positions, internships or summer employment. This type of learning also benefits health care professionals by developing their interpersonal skills, says Dr. Gamberg. These skills are essential for interacting with colleagues, patients and their families, which is a daily occurrence for those working in health care. >>

CLINICAL POSITIONS

- » Doctors
- » Nurses (BSN, LPN)
- » Therapists (respiratory, occupational, physiotherapy)
- » Technologists and technicians (medical laboratory, x-ray, radiation therapy, cardiology, MRI, ultrasound/sonography)
- » Social workers
- » Dietitians
- » Dentists
- » Pharmacists
- » Primary and advanced care paramedics
- » Personal support workers, health care aides

NON-CLINICAL POSITIONS

- » Health research (e.g. with human subjects in clinical trials)
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PLANNING TIPS

FROM CHRISTINE FADER, CAREER COUNSELLOR AT QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY

- Meet with people from a wide variety of career paths in the health care industry to see what you like.
- Check out books such as *Top 100 Health-Care Careers* by Dr. Saul Wischnitzer and Edith Wischnitzer, and *Careers for Health Nuts & Others Who Like to Stay Fit* by Blythe Camenson.
- Get involved in volunteering or community service within your field.
- Check program prerequisites carefully to ensure you are taking the necessary (or recommended) courses, reaching the required grade levels, and gaining enough experience.
- Take advantage of the many programs and services available through your school's career services department.

WHERE ARE THESE JOBS?

Health care services are needed across the country, and demand shows no sign of slowing down—the aging population will require more and more lab tests, radiation treatment and ambulance transportation.

This means students pursuing health care careers can be secure in their chosen profession. As Dr. Gamberg says, “education equals jobs in these cases.” Experts seem to agree that there is a stable demand across all provinces and territories.

Since health care is a provincial responsibility, the data do not tend to show the breadth of national shortages. Instead, each province determines their needs and works with education and training facilities to increase enrollment as necessary, the president of CAAHP says.

Of course, each profession has an idea of where needs are the greatest. Nielsen, for instance, says that rural areas are often in need of medical laboratory technicians. The Canadian Dental Association's president, Dr. Peter Doig, highlights Newfoundland as an area that struggles to provide enough dentists.

“You could not say there is a national shortage in dentistry,” says Dr. Doig. “But for instance, in Newfoundland there is about half the dentist to population ratio that we see in British Columbia.”

These “pockets” of need can even provide opportunities in fields without widespread shortages. If your desired health care career doesn't have many positions available in your area, there's the possibility that other places in Canada are facing a labour shortage—it's just a matter of discovering who needs workers, and adjusting your plan accordingly (though it's important to keep in mind that provinces can have different criteria for health care professions—do your research first).

Shortages can also exist in sectors within a health care field, such as education. For instance, Dr. Doig and Nielsen agree that there is a great demand for teaching professionals in their respective fields (dentistry and medical laboratory science).

»

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WHERE CAN I GO FROM HERE?

Fields within the health care industry provide many pathways for advancement. Almost all professions require teachers, instructors or professors in their educational programs, as well as managers, directors and association leaders.

Of course, where and how you progress depends on the job, environment and employer, and your level of education and training.

Dr. Doig says that most dentists follow a common path. After graduating from dental school, most go to work as private practice, fee-for-service dentists. From there, most dentists hope to progress towards becoming an owner or the principal at a dental practice.

Meanwhile, Dr. Molzahn says that nursing can be a stepping stone to an incredible variety of future positions.

“Those can be in practice, in management, in education, and in a wide range of settings. I have had other health professionals ask me how they can acquire a nursing degree because they see the many leadership opportunities that are available to nurses,” she says.

Nielsen sees management positions in a different light. “Some people want to manage others, and some people don’t,” she says. “Many laboratory technologists want to do the science; they want to stay in the lab.” There are many opportunities to advance in medical laboratory science, but it has to be the right fit for the individual, Nielsen says.

Ultimately, progression through the health care industry is very specific to a chosen profession. Dr. Gamberg describes this model for allied health professions in particular.

“For each allied health profession, a ‘career ladder’ identifies pathways for advancement. These pathways may lead to specialization, to research-based activities, or to leadership or supervisory roles,” she says.

The health care industry is so diverse that jobs can cater to a variety of personalities and career goals. Health care professionals play a key role in keeping Canada healthy, and it’s a role that can’t be underestimated.

Students are in a prime position to step up and fill these jobs. From dietitians to doctors to lab technicians, there’s a career for everyone in health care. **CO**



MEGAN STACEY is a fourth-year journalism student at Carleton University. She enjoys writing about lifestyle topics such as food and fitness, or profiling inspiring people and places. Megan loves dessert, travelling, and old-school group exercise classes.

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By William Johnson

SHOULD YOU RELOCATE FOR A JOB?

FACTORS TO CONSIDER BEFORE MAKING A BIG CAREER MOVE

As a student or recent graduate, you've been getting mixed messages: last year you probably read that well-paying, entry-level jobs for graduates are hard to come by; now you're reading that there's a labour shortage and companies are struggling to fill positions. What the heck gives?

It turns out that Canada is actually experiencing what many economists describe as a skills mismatch—a discrepancy between what employers want and what job seekers can provide. The issue, however, is more nuanced. One key element of this growing gap relates specifically to geography; there are many well-paying jobs, but they are increasingly located in remote areas, such as Western Canadian oil sands and rural hospitals. With the growing availability of these positions, new graduates may want to consider a move to start their careers as they realize their pool of opportunities expands along with their geographic boundaries. This prompts the question: what are the key factors to consider when pondering a big move for your career?

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Money: it's an issue we can't avoid, so we might as well address it head on. With average student debt hovering around \$20,000, it's no surprise that financial matters are paramount in graduates' early career considerations. You might be a budding technical worker considering a job opportunity in an area of the country where entry-level wages are significantly higher than the national average; or maybe you're a prospective health care worker who will have your debt forgiven if you accept a job in a remote area. Those are both valid reasons to move, so long as you have thought about how increased income may be negated by increased expenses.

Before you make a decision based on possible salary increases or other financial benefits, you need to answer some questions:

- » What is the cost of living in this new place?
- » Are housing costs reasonable?
- » What will you need to pay for in terms of gas, utilities and other household bills?
- » Is the cost of gas higher or lower in this part

of the country (if you have a car)?

- » What will your start-up costs be? As in, will you have to purchase home furnishings, a public transportation pass, new cell phone or, if not provided by your employer, health or medical insurance?

These are all questions you must know the answer to before you can effectively weigh the financial pros and cons of moving for a job. Ultimately, the projected pay benefits must at least match your (potentially higher) living costs for the move to make sense.

COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL LIFE

Now let's say that the arithmetic does make sense. Remind yourself that although you may be moving for a job, wherever you are, you're hopefully going to be doing more than just work. And that's where the topic of community and social life comes in. What will you be doing once you clock out every day?

WITH AVERAGE STUDENT DEBT HOVERING AROUND \$20,000, IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT FINANCIAL MATTERS ARE PARAMOUNT IN GRADUATES' EARLY CAREER CONSIDERATIONS.

More specifically, you need to reflect on whether there's anything to do—anything you like to do—in this new place besides work. If you're a community-minded volunteer and there are no local community groups or non-profits for you to put your energy and support behind, you won't be satisfied. Likewise, if you're someone who is typically immersed in the nightlife or culture of your city, and the place you're considering has a very limited cultural or social scene, you may find yourself very disappointed, unfulfilled or even lonely. Try to imagine where you might find yourself outside working hours—if this is difficult, it's a sign that something might be missing from the overall picture.

FUTURE PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Once you have taken the financial and personal aspects into account, it's important to look to the future. It is crucial to consider where this job will lead you in the next three to five and even 10 years. Reflect on where you want to be—in terms of salary,

organizational status and/or responsibilities—and ask yourself if you can get there at this company, in this industry, in this specific location. The opportunity may be an optimal choice right now, but it may not be of ultimate long-term value to your career.

As with all previously mentioned considerations, there are many questions to be answered:

- » If you see yourself staying at this company, is there room for growth?
- » Will you get additional skills training?
- » How will your income change over time?
- » If you are using the remote location job to gain experience and then return back to a major city, is a seamless transition really feasible?
- » Will the skills you learn be comparable to the ones that people are learning and using in major cities? How can you remain competitive in the overall job market?

The future is never fixed, and your five-year plan can undoubtedly change. These are details directly related to your job that you need to consider before you sign a contract.

ALTERNATIVE INDUSTRIES

In the end, you can research the opportunity as much as possible, you can create lengthy lists of pros and cons, but you cannot avoid curveballs. You could end up in a remote location and realize that the career, location or both are just not for you. Given the fact that the Millennial generation will average a higher number of jobs (by choice) than earlier generations, it isn't unrealistic to picture yourself switching careers multiple times in your working lifetime.

So let's say it doesn't work out; you hate what you've gotten yourself into. But you're locked into a lease, and you've invested a lot in your home, community and social network. However, you want out of your industry entirely. Will there be other types of jobs for you? What is the local industry like outside your field? Will you be able to find work in other areas, or will a change in passion and career require another big move? Essentially, you need to gauge your alternative options, so that if current prospects don't work out, you have a Plan B that doesn't require another immediate life-changing move.

Whether or not to move for a job is a decision that students and young professionals shouldn't take lightly. There are countless points to contemplate

related to finances and cultural fit, future growth and alternative employment options. Additionally, there's the simple matter of weighing a fresh start against losing touch with friends and family. Ultimately, before you make any decisions, you must have a clear sense of what you are leaving behind and what you are leaving for, and you must be comfortable with those facts, however indefinite they may be. **CO**

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By Adrienne Martin

GROWING STEM

CAREERS ABOUND IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS

As Canada's knowledge-based economy continues to grow and the aging workforce retires, opportunities in nearly every industry for students studying science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) are growing. For those looking to land one of these jobs, the key is to acquire the right skills and apply them to the industries looking for highly specialized, STEM-educated workers.

The importance of the future STEM workforce to Canada's economy shouldn't be overlooked, as it is the talent pool providing essential skills and knowledge to a whole range of industries. But with some STEM sectors projected to face a shortage of workers, the pace of economic growth could slow dramatically. According to a 2012 House of Commons report, "Labour and Skills Shortages in Canada: Addressing Current and Future Challenges," industries that employ large numbers of STEM workers will be hard hit by the shortage. For example, the environmental sector alone expects at least 100,000 job vacancies in the next 10 years.

TOP ENVIRONMENTAL JOBS EMPLOYERS ARE HAVING DIFFICULTY FILLING

Environmental Technicians/Technologists (1,156 vacancies from March to December, 2012)

Environmental Project Managers (1,098 openings)

Environmental Coordinators (969 job vacancies)

Environmental Engineers (911 job vacancies)

Source: ECO Canada, 2013 Environmental Professional Services Report (coming soon)



Five sectors that experts say are likely to need new STEM workers are mining, biotechnology, oil and gas, electricity and the environment. Jobs within these sectors are virtually limitless, leading to well-paid, rewarding careers as bioengineers, physicists, chemists, geologists, engineering technicians—to name just a few.

A LACK OF SKILLS

One of the fastest-growing industries in need of STEM skills is the environmental sector, which encompasses a diverse range of activities in environmental protection, resource conservation and sustainability. According to a recent ECO Canada study, established environmental industries are driving most of the new job growth in Canada's green economy.

As a result of this growth, the industry has significant trouble finding the right workers. "For the environment sector, the key issue is not so much about a labour shortage," says Grant Trump, president and CEO of ECO Canada. "It's about a skills shortage." While plenty of people are out looking for jobs, they don't have the skills that green employers are looking for, and positions are going unfilled. ECO Canada found that one out of three employers has struggled to find staff with the necessary skill sets. In particular, the environmental protection and resource sectors are seeing the most vacancies.

This same trend can be seen in the mining sector, which includes careers related to the development, extraction, processing and reclamation of minerals. Although the industry anticipates that it will need to hire tens of thousands of workers in the next few years in response to labour shortages, employers will be looking for workers with key skills and requirements. Positions will include underground production and development miners, welders and equipment operators, according to the Mining

Industry Human Resources Council. The industry estimates it will need to hire 3,990 STEM professionals by 2021 to fill vacant positions.

Employers in the biotechnology field, too, are on the search for skilled STEM workers. BioTalent Canada, the biotechnology sector council, reports that 34.4 percent of biotechnology companies are currently facing a skills shortage. In a sector dominated by research development, technology and pharmaceutical companies, students need to be equipped with the necessary skill sets, such as previous hands-on experience and training.

It's not something that can be prepared for through online courses, says Catherine Burns, director of the Centre for Bioengineering and Biotechnology at the University of Waterloo. "It's a highly skilled workforce," she adds.

But Burns says it's also a small workforce. "What I see in Canada is that the field is relatively small, but it's likely to have one of the highest growth rates," she explains. "So it will be growing quite quickly over the next few years."

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Despite the rapidly growing skills shortage, students and employers are having trouble connecting. Many students don't know exactly what education, training and skills are needed for a STEM career. They need to recognize what today's employers want, and which post-secondary programs and courses will help them get into a high-demand STEM career.

For example, biology students should look into completing a master's degree in order to secure a job in the biotechnology field, which Burns says is typically required because of the hands-on

experience involved. "This is probably not a field that you can build your skills adequately through things like online courses," she says.

The same can be said for other STEM careers. While education is definitely important in landing many environmental jobs, real-world experience is also crucial. For example, ECO Canada says 48 percent of job vacancies in the green sector currently require employees to have a minimum of five years of experience. Getting "hands-on" through co-ops and internships would give students an advantage when entering STEM industries.

Regardless of the job being pursued, the best way to secure it is to prepare. Students should first research which industries are facing skills shortages and in what areas. For example, in light of the overall shortage of labour and skilled workers in the engineering sector, it's important to know that there's a higher demand for civil engineers than for chemical and IT engineers.

Second, students should know where and how to best position themselves to enter the workforce.

Most post-secondary institutions have information on internship and apprenticeship programs that would provide this vital hands-on experience. You can also look beyond your school for these kinds of programs, like ECO Canada's International Environmental Youth Corps (IEYC). The organization says that following the end of their internship term last year, 94 percent of interns secured full-time jobs in their field.

There are other qualities employers look for beyond hands-on experience. In a survey conducted last year, ECO Canada found that on top of the necessary skills and training, environmental employers were looking for "business savvy" workers with good communication skills, critical thinking abilities and customer service skills—in other words, well-rounded candidates with lots to offer besides hard technical skills.

Whether it's in the field or the office, most vacancies involve independent work, so employers need candidates with key personal attributes such as confidence, responsibility and interpersonal skills. "Employers need to know that a prospective employee is going to fit in well with their current

staff and workplace culture," says Trump.

With proper STEM education and training, today's students are poised to turn Canada's labour and skills shortage to their advantage, and to take the first steps in securing their futures. Equipped with the necessary skills and strategies to land the job they want, they'll have the chance to be a part of an ever-growing and changing industry in which they'll be highly prized. **CO**

ADRIENNE MARTIN is a fourth-year journalism student at Carleton University. After graduation, she hopes to travel the world while pursuing a career in either print or television news. When she's not writing, you can usually find her watching "Law & Order" re-runs.

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By Rachel Aiello

CONTINUING EDUCATION

A CONDUIT TO A NEW CAREER

How enhancing your skill set can help connect you to different job markets

The average Canadian will work in approximately three different career fields and eight jobs in their lifetime, according to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. Depending on what they studied in post-secondary, that could entail two fields and six jobs they have not received training for.

So what is the key to unlocking access to these alternative employment opportunities that are awaiting you? Some would argue it is continuing education.

Whether you are currently in a successful position but want to develop your skills further, or in an industry where recent layoffs have made your job security questionable, or new to the job market—as a fresh-faced graduate or perhaps a newcomer to Canada—retraining can put you on course toward a new career.

Through education and career experience, you attain an arsenal of transferable skills (e.g. communication, time management) that can help make any career transition smoother. But these transferable, “soft” skills may not be enough considering the current demand for specific, “hard” skills in a crowded job market.

With many Canadians switching fields throughout their careers, there is understandably a perceived skills gap between what job seekers bring to the table from previous experience and the current demands of the given industry.

Perhaps for this reason, an increasing number of people looking to make a career change are returning to the classroom to help bridge the gap to a new career path. Both universities and colleges have options for continuing education that provide the necessary skills for entering a specific field.

The choice between university and college depends on what you are looking to get out of the experience: if you’re not looking to move up, but rather make the change into a new field, those who have done it would recommend enrolling in a college program as the way to go.

“Some may see it as taking a step backwards, but I think that it’s absolutely a step forward. You’re just learning new things that you can

apply to everything, whether it be your next job or an interview,” says Meaghan Green, communication and events coordinator of varsity sports for Algonquin College’s Students’ Association, a position she was able to obtain with the knowledge and skills she gained from continuing education.

After completing a university degree, Green was unsatisfied with the job prospects in her chosen field. She decided to continue her education in a college classroom—a path that a growing number of post-grads and job-seekers are choosing. Driven by the current job market and the desire to acquire advanced skills that will lead to employment, Canadian colleges have seen a rise in enrolment among students who already have degrees. The percentage of college students who are university graduates increased by 10 percent in 2009–2010, according to the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario’s 2010-2011 Annual Report.

Those who go back to school are finding that the time spent retraining in a hands-on environment helps to connect them to the workforce. They leave well aware of the skills they possess and have a better understanding of the job market, according to Green.

Of course, there are benefits and risks that go along with the decision to go back to school. *Career Options* spoke with continuing education experts Carolyn Young, director of Continuing Studies at Western University, and Angelo Di Giorgio, career coach at Humber College and principal and managing director of careerdynamics.ca, as well as a group of continuing studies students attending various colleges throughout Ontario.

In discussing the pros and cons, everyone seemed to agree there are three main benefits as well as three areas of risk when it comes to retraining.

BENEFITS

NETWORKING: Classmates are a great base for networking. Your coordinators, professors and fellow students may end up becoming leads for job opportunities, your colleagues or even your boss.

PERSPECTIVE: “Retraining gives you a new outlook. It offers a fresh start and allows you to experience other interest areas that you haven’t explored yet, because of time constraints or work commitments,” says Di Giorgio.

EXPERIENCE: CO spoke to Algonquin College students Rose Hack and Aimee Savard, who both emphasized that the co-ops and internships available within college programs were what attracted them, because many of their previous job interviews stressed work experience. Both of them landed summer jobs in their fields of study before completing their diploma, thanks to the connections they made through their placements.

RISKS

TIME: If your circumstances don’t offer you the luxury of free time, taking on a full course load may not be possible. Night or online classes may also be challenging to work into a schedule.

MONEY: If you don’t have the means to pay for the program up front, taking on an additional tuition loan can be a burden. Adding to your student debt



IF YOU ARE CONSIDERING MAKING THE MOVE TOWARD RETRAINING, THERE ARE FOUR STEPS YOU SHOULD TAKE:

1 / SELF-ASSESS

Start by considering who you are, where you are in life, your interests and aptitudes. Look at your current role, your strengths and your values. Consider what you would like to do more of and what transferable skills you can carry forward.

2 / IDENTIFY GAPS

Recognizing the gaps in your resumé can give you an idea of the training that would make you a well-rounded candidate in the current market. Understanding which skills you lack can be a challenge, but it will be rewarding when you use that knowledge to fit into a role tailored for you.

3 / DO SOME LEGWORK

Go further than reading job descriptions or program outlines. Fully research the job options that are available, and talk to people in the industry by conducting information interviews. Find out which skills employers are looking for and ask which educational programs they recommend.

4 / GET ASSISTANCE

If you’re currently employed, evaluate your employer’s options for educational assistance funding for professional development. Alternatively, look into government grants or accelerated programs available for those with pre-existing education or qualifications.

Transferable Skills Checklist

Some skills are relevant to all careers, and it’s important to mention these areas of strength when interviewing for a position. Try to relate your experience back to a group project, a previous exercise or time in your career when you applied these skills, to demonstrate to the interviewer your awareness of your own capabilities.

- » Communication
- » Problem solving
- » Time management
- » Leadership
- » Flexibility
- » Creativity
- » Organization
- » Determination

must be carefully considered—will your continuing education studies lead to a job that will help you pay it off?

ENERGY: Going back to school means readjusting your routine, and sometimes taking on more commitments. Make sure that you have the energy to handle the extra work and time you'll have to put in.

However, in the end, it seems the biggest risk is standing still.

Accessing all the advantages that come with getting back into the classroom is enough motivation to do more with your education and skill sets, says Young. "One of the things we notice about all of our students is they know that learning doesn't stop at graduation anymore."

Retraining is great as long as you've done your homework. You can research and recognize the demand for a job, but if it's not

the right job for you, making the switch may not be to your advantage.

"Education is never lost, but if you are interested in landing a meaningful job, based on your fit, do your research and make sure that you are attending the right program," says Di Giorgio.

Although going back to school does not guarantee employment, if your new skills are aligned with what the market needs and you are able to effectively communicate that to a potential employer, then employment is likely

to happen sooner rather than later.

"Retraining can work—and I'm a proponent of lifelong learning—but at the same time there's got to be a return on educational investment," says Di Giorgio.

That return comes in the form of job satisfaction, he says: "Your rewards are limitless. The sense of fulfillment is there. If you align your personality, your interests, your skills and abilities and marry that with the labour market demand, the rewards are there." **CO**



RACHEL AIELLO is a freelance journalist working her way into the industry. She is in the fourth year of her joint honours bachelor of journalism from the University of Ottawa and Algonquin College.

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ARTICLE LAYOUT BY STUDENT
DESIGNER NATASHA BROUSSEAU

BRAND YOURSELF, CONNECT AND ENGAGE

By Megan Rudson



HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA
EFFECTIVELY IN YOUR JOB SEARCH

Everyone partakes in the job hunt at some point in their lives, but students and recent grads are especially familiar with this scary, yet exciting process. Luckily, they have access to a recruitment tool that keeps expanding and growing more popular: social media. Because they allow users to communicate, connect and share information with a large audience, social networks are an asset for both job seekers and employers prowling for new talent.

"It's a tool that students can use in addition to other job search strategies," says Tang Choy, an employability support counsellor at Ryerson University. "It's where employers are going due to its low cost... to use social media to recruit and raise brand awareness."

WHY RECRUITERS USE SOCIAL MEDIA

Employers use social media to gather more diverse information about candidates than might be addressed in their resumé or cover letter.

Through social networks like LinkedIn, employers have access to your previous job roles and descriptions of each position. They can see your volunteer experience and whether you are engaging with others in your field. They gain insight into your industry knowledge, work ethic and personality.

Social media also allow employers to share news efficiently. Choy says by sharing job opportunities and updates with their networks, companies gain access to a broader range of talent. "There's a pool of candidates they have access to... it can be very time saving," she says. Another benefit is that a company's social media followers are likely to be more passionate about working for the company as opposed to other job seekers because by following, they have already shown an interest in the company.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN YOUR JOB SEARCH

When it comes to using social media effectively, Choy suggests an 80/20 rule: 80 percent of your posts should be beneficial to your community, and 20 percent can be self-promotional.

To target a specific community, think about useful articles or videos you've seen that relate to your field and could help others learn about the industry. This shows that you understand what type of content is valuable to your industry, and that you are actively keeping up with the latest news and trends. Choy emphasizes sharing content in an array of media: "Your audience will have different learning styles; different content will appeal to them."

To ensure that your self-promotional posts don't come off as bragging, keep your messages simple. Gently remind your network that you're seeking opportunities. Post an update once you've completed a course or received a certification in your field. Casually let your network know about your most valuable skills and achievements.

To help show the importance of these techniques, Ryerson hosted Job Searching 2.0: Social Media Week. Over the course of seven days, students were taught how to use social media strategically in their job search. However, on a more regular basis, Ryerson also offers two workshops to help students establish themselves professionally online: Networking On and Offline, as well as LinkedIn: Building Career Connections and Effective Profiles.

Similarly, to help students learn the ways social media can advance their careers, York University provides an E-Networking with Social Media workshop. A large portion of it is dedicated to emphasizing company research—becoming familiar with the organization’s personality before reaching out to them about job opportunities, says Mayolyn Dagsi, who helps administer the workshop. Using the example of Molson Coors, she asks students, “What comes to mind when you first think about the company?” Many respond with words like summer, fun and partying. But when they look at Molson Coors’ website and social media profiles, they learn about the company’s emphasis on corporate social responsibility.

“When you learn about an organization, when you do the research, you realize that it’s not necessarily what you think first,” says Dagsi.

Solid background research helps you stand out during an interview. This is why company social media profiles are so beneficial. By knowing the company’s vision, initiatives, social media presence and past projects, you show employers that you’re passionate about their brand and dedicated to supporting it.

■ **BRANDING YOURSELF**

As it is up to a company to provide you with information about an available position, you too need to provide them with information about who you are and what you’ve done. A great way to do this is through personal branding.

Your brand is the way you package yourself, says Dagsi. It is a combination of your online presence, cover letter and resumé, which need to be consistent with one another. For example, if your cover letter says you are interested in human rights, then your Pinterest page should show books and infographics related to human rights.

If your social media presence doesn’t support your resumé, then there’s a disconnect in your brand. This can be troublesome for employers who are looking for reliable workers to keep their company’s reputation intact, says Dagsi.

Trying to create your personal brand can be a daunting task. One way to start defining your brand is to consider how your friends and family might describe you, says Dagsi. “Everybody’s different, so there’s got to be a personality about you,” she says. “You don’t have to win the Nobel Prize... but it has to be something unique.”

“What do you want others to know you for? What skills or experiences do you have that set you apart from other candidates?” explains Choy. In other words, it’s defining your niche or area of expertise.

■ **RED FLAGS**

When looking through social media profiles, employers tend to react negatively towards poor grammar and spelling. They may think, “What if our clients were looking at this profile? What kind of impression would it give?” This is why Choy says spelling and punctuation are so important. Your profile is a reflection of your work, so when it’s written poorly, employers think your work will be presented poorly as well.

Students should also be wary of sharing questionable posts or photos through social media. On sites like Facebook and

Twitter it’s easy to get carried away with personal updates. But unlike your friends, employers will not be impressed by that photo of your keg stand. In fact, such pictures could be the reason you are no longer considered a candidate for a certain position. Employers look to social media for signs of professionalism and maturity, so don’t let posts with swearing, alcohol, illegal drug use or sexual references overshadow your engagement in the field.

■ **LINKEDIN**

Social media recruitment has gone from a trend to a necessity, according to a press release published by Jobvite, which outlines the results of their 2012 recruitment survey. Two out of three

recruiters use Facebook to find new talent, and more than half use Twitter in search of people who have communicated an interest in the related field. LinkedIn, however, remains the dominant social network when it comes to finding new talent.

“[It’s] not a site where people will be promoting that they just watched ‘Wheel of Fortune,’” says Choy. “People know that this is a platform where you’re putting on your professional face.”

LinkedIn uses “Connections” to help users communicate with others in their field. But to ensure you make quality connections, you need to be professional. For Choy, this starts with your LinkedIn invitation. When asking someone to connect on LinkedIn, it’s important to change the default message. Make it more personal by referring to how you met or to a common interest. Social media are tools to help build relationships, says Choy, which means they’re more than just a way to secure a job—you want to use them to network with like-minded professionals.

Once you make a new connection (or even if you haven’t—your profile could come up in a Google search) and someone views your profile, your picture is one of the first things that they see. Choy

THE 80/20 RULE
80% OF YOUR POSTS SHOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO YOUR COMMUNITY, AND 20% CAN BE SELF-PROMOTIONAL.

emphasizes the importance of using a professional headshot, as opposed to a cropped photo or a picture with friends or family. Ryerson’s Career Development and Employment Centre offers free headshots for students that attend its one-to-one LinkedIn Profile Advising appointments.

Attention will naturally move from the picture to your summary. Write in first person, and apply your creativity and personality. Instead of merely listing the companies you’ve worked for, show off what you did for those companies by highlighting major achievements and using key words from your target industry. You should list both your soft and hard/technical skills so that employers can see all you have to offer.

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■ FACEBOOK

Facebook can also be a useful tool in the job hunt. Company profiles do a good job of showing the environment and culture of a workplace. They're also a great place for employers to post job opportunities and provide links to applications.

Filling out an application is only the first step in being considered for a job, especially when companies have large networks. To stand out, you need to engage with the company through its Facebook page. Occasionally post comments, videos and links on its profile so that the person in charge of hiring can see that you're serious about the company's work.

Facebook can also be used for networking, says Choy. "We often think of LinkedIn as the go-to resource, but Facebook can also be a platform where users can leverage their network." She points to the new Graph Search feature, which allows users to narrow down their network based on parameters they indicate: "This is useful for determining individuals within your network that could potentially have leads on industries or companies."

■ TWITTER

Companies and recruiters on Twitter tend to tweet updates, job openings and networking opportunities, making it more convenient for job seekers who would have previously had to scour company websites. It also helps to use hashtags. For example, if you're looking for a job in digital marketing, search for the hashtag "#digitalmarketing." You'll find a variety of tweets about the topic, and if you're lucky some of those tweets will be about job opportunities.

In an article for mashable.com, Elisha Hartwig writes, "Don't just retweet what others are saying; create meaningful content that people care about. Be a thought leader." By following the industry you are interested in and participating in live discussions, you prove how much you care about being a part of that community.

With social media continuing to rise in popularity, Dagsi believes these platforms have become a key part of the job hunt. "I think it's definitely something that keeps expanding because of the fact that people do want to see how people are aside from a piece of paper," she says.

While Choy agrees, she cautions students to remember social media are still only tools: "Even though students or job seekers may be looking online... it's important to take things offline as well... [and it's] important to try and make that effort to meet with these individuals in person." **CO**

MEGAN RUDSON recently completed her journalism degree at the University of King's College. Now living back home in Toronto, she is pursuing a career in journalism or public relations.

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By Jordan Adams

BIG DEMAND IN BIG DATA

Just a few years ago, if someone said that they “worked with data,” you probably would have pictured a dull, tedious existence—crunching numbers and poring over spreadsheets. Now, Google’s chief economist has predicted that **statistician** will become the “**sexiest**” career of the next decade.

What changed?



“**M**asses of data are produced as people and businesses go about their daily lives,” says Stan Matwin, director of Dalhousie’s Institute for Big Data Analytics and Canada Research Chair in Visual Text Analytics. “There is this sort of metaphor used: as people live, they leave behind digital crumbs.” Every time you make a phone call, post a photo online or buy something at a shop, you are contributing to “big data,” the term used to describe massive, complex sets of data.

For a statistic that shows just how enormous the field has grown, consider that two years ago, 90 percent of today’s data didn’t exist yet—every piece of information we had from the beginning of time only amounts to a small fraction of what we have now. We are living through the so-called “Industrial Revolution” of data thanks to technologies like social media, cell phones, e-commerce, GPS signals and countless other sources, which altogether collect 2.5 quintillion bytes of data every day.



EVALUATING DATA CAN HELP US FIND NEW SOURCES OF ECONOMIC REVENUE, FIGHT CRIME, REDUCE ENERGY CONSUMPTION, PUT A STOP TO DISEASES AND DELIVER BETTER HEALTH CARE.

Although big data has recently become analogous with “Big Brother”—surveillance and privacy concerns have dominated the news this year—there are unlimited positives that can come from mining big data. The practice has great potential to improve the world if significant trends and patterns are discovered.

“We’re trying to use this data that already exists to help people and organizations fulfill their missions better,” explains Matwin. Evaluating data can help us find new sources of economic revenue, fight crime, reduce energy consumption, put a stop to diseases and deliver better health care.

For big data to have any real impact, decision-makers need to understand what it means. Naturally there is a need for people to discover trends and patterns within the data, and communicate it in a way that resonates with people from all backgrounds.

DATA SKILLS SHORTAGE

A study by the McKinsey Global Institute found that “by 2018, the United States alone could face a shortage of 140,000 to 190,000 people with deep analytical skills as well as 1.5 million managers and analysts with the know-how to use the analysis of big data to make effective decisions.”

“Data is exploding,” says Amir Asif, a computer science and engineering professor at York University and the principal investigator for the Centre for Innovation in Information Visualization and Data-Driven Design, a collaboration between York University, OCAD University and the University of Toronto, funded through the Ontario Research Fund – Research Excellence (ORF-RE) initiative.

“There will be a huge demand of people who can analyze this data, and who can represent the underlying information in a way that people with a non-technical background could understand and interact with,” says Asif. “From my analysis of companies in Ontario there’s a big demand for people with data discovery, design, analytics and visualization skill sets. The banks, media companies, medical companies, environmentalists... they’re all on the

lookout for people who have skills in this area. And the need is just going to grow.”

JOBS IN BIG DATA

The ideal data analyst has skills in mathematics and statistics, computer science and graphic design. However, those working in big data usually work in teams that contribute a combination of these skills. People from these backgrounds come together to mine the data, find the meaning within, and communicate it in a simple way.

At its core, big data analysis and visualization requires computer science skills, but students studying statistics, multimedia and even design can get into the field in varying aspects—data science is interdisciplinary and requires different sets of skills for different parts of the job.

Those working on the computer science side of things are the first in the big data chain—they develop the software and programs that can mine data. Math and statistics students can come into the field of big data as analysts. They are the ones who find significant patterns and trends that, if recognized by decision-makers, have the power to drive change. But first it needs to be visually represented; this is where data visualization comes in.

Data visualization is not just creating tables or infographics—the job is a lot more in-depth than that. It’s combining technology and aesthetics to depict data of massive size. “You need training that would combine the analytical side with the graphical communications side,” says Matwin. “I think that’s an important element of a modern education.” Multimedia and interactive arts programs can help you get into the field.

Because virtually all sectors will need someone to find trends in their data, you must have a natural curiosity to learn about new subjects if you want to work in the field, says Matwin. “It’s not conceivable that you can train someone who can be professionally prepared to interact with people in medicine to ocean science to retail marketing to newspaper publishing. They must have a curiosity about how things work in the world.” **CO**

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JORDAN ADAMS is a Carleton University journalism graduate and editor at *Career Options* who is fascinated by the stories uncovered through data journalism. Follow her on Twitter @jordanadams04.

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By Emily Rendell-Watson

DISCOVER YOUR PASSION

VOLUNTEERING OPENS YOUR EYES TO NEW CAREER PATHS

“**J**ambo! Jambo!” yells a young girl, greeting us with the traditional Swahili welcome. She runs towards us, a huge smile on her face despite the fact that she is barefoot and her dress is tattered. She’s just 11 years old, but Rebecca will not only teach me to have an open mind and an open heart, but also inspire me to pursue a career in journalism.

“Opportunity isn’t a chance, it’s a choice,” said Mia Farrow during a Me to We presentation to hundreds of youth from across North America, including myself. In August 2011, I made a life-changing choice to travel on a Me to We trip to Osenetoi, a small village in Kenya’s Maasai Mara region.

Me to We, a social enterprise created through the charity Free The Children, offers youth volunteer trips to Kenya, Ghana, Nicaragua, Ecuador, India and Arizona. Activities on the trips range from

building schools in underprivileged communities, to learning about issues such as the need for clean water and sanitation and the cycle of poverty. Outside the confines of the classroom, we were able to see for ourselves how important the things we take for granted, such as clean water, are for children like Rebecca.

I met Rebecca when we set out to collect water for a local village. Many women in developing countries make this journey several times a day. I was astonished at how dirty the water was, and how grueling it was to carry the jerry cans on our heads back to the village. When we arrived with the water, the people of the village were singing and dancing as if we had given them an incredible gift. Rebecca had tears in her eyes as she grabbed my hand to include me in the celebration. She was determined to do something to repay us, and although she had very little to

give, she presented me with a bracelet that I still wear today as a reminder of the true sense of community I felt there.

I began the trip unsure if I would even attend university the following year, but the afternoon I spent with Rebecca and her family gave me the drive and passion I needed to make the decision to study journalism. We experienced such profound gratitude for the three jugs of water we brought to Rebecca’s family that I realized I want to ensure these people’s stories are told. I want to make sure that Canadians can understand the need to work together with developing countries, and begin to break down the stereotype that they are unable to help themselves.

Jenny Dadswell, a fellow volunteer, was also influenced by her experience in Kenya. “We think we know ourselves, but you don’t truly know yourself until you go on a trip like [that]. Everything is

stripped. You are raw. You learn who you are and what you like," says Dadswell, who learned that she is passionate about human trafficking and hostage negotiation, which led her to study criminology at Simon Fraser University.

Mallory Hilkewich, Me to We's Kenya manager of leadership, has seen how these trips completely change the participants' view of the world.

"I think this quote by Lilla Watson, an Indigenous Australian activist, says it best: 'If you have come here to help me, you are wasting our time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together;'" says Hilkewich, indicating that it's important for youth to understand the difference between charity and social justice—to see that people living in poverty aren't helpless.

Experiences like my trip to Kenya make you aware not only of the world and other cultures, but of yourself. You learn that if you're privileged enough to do what you love, you should pursue those dreams. You also learn that your life should not centre on the things you have, but rather the people that fill your

everyday life—whether they be family, friends or people that you may only know for a short time.

Volunteering abroad also gives you the opportunity to become passionate about a specific issue. In my case, this was the lack of clean water and sanitation in many developing countries. I was astonished to learn that more than 780 million people around the world, including Rebecca and her community, do not have access to safe drinking water. For my friends in Osenetoi, the water they drink every day is murky and brown. Without a reliable source of clean water, water-related diseases become a reality.

Unfortunately, a small percentage of the world's population consumes the majority of the clean water. While in Osenetoi, I learned that if we are part of the problem, we can choose to be part of the solution. To reduce water usage, we can take staggered showers and encourage our friends and family to be accountable for their water usage. It is my hope that the lack of clean water for villages like Osenetoi ends with our generation. This is our opportunity to take action.

You can look at life as full of opportunities or challenges—it all depends on your outlook. Everyone I met in Kenya saw every day as an opportunity to appreciate their lives and the people in them. This is one of the main reasons that volunteering abroad will radically change your perspective of the world. If you choose to take the opportunity, go in with an open heart and you will gain so much more than you can give. **CO**

EMILY RENDELL-WATSON is a second-year student at the University of King's College in Halifax, where she is pursuing a combined honours degree in journalism and international development. A competitive speed skater and travel enthusiast, Emily looks forward to returning to Osenetoi, Kenya, in the future.

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