

THE KEY TO YOUR FUTURE: GETTING ROUND THE GATEKEEPERS

ELIZABETH WILKINSON

Elizabeth Wilkinson, Head of Post-graduate Career Development at the University of Manchester, offers her advice on careers for post-graduates.

As a research post-graduate, there are so many fabulous futures you could create for yourself. You could be a highly respected academic, a leading industrial researcher, an influential public policy maker or carve out your own entrepreneurial career, beholden to no single "boss".

Having a PhD doesn't mean your career is cast in stone – it can take you to winning a Nobel prize (like Andre Geim and Kostya Novoselov), leading a country (President of Iceland, Olafur Ragnar Grimsson), becoming a novelist (former UMIST post-doc Claire Dudman) or walking on the moon (three Apollo moonwalkers had PhDs).

However, whichever path you take, you'll come across gatekeepers who hold the key to getting what you want. Having the skills and evidence to impress them will smooth your path.

Know what your gatekeepers want

You probably know your first gatekeeper well - your supervisor. Trouble is, many post-graduate researchers don't recognise that the next gatekeepers may want something quite different, even if you want to stay in academia. The academics we interviewed for our website, *An Academic Career*, picked out leadership, resilience, time management, communication and networking as key skills for successful academics, in addition to a strategic approach to your research.

Outside academia, a recent survey of private sector employers found that on average, PhDs scored highly on using subject specialist and analytical skills, but fell short on marketing their skills, had unrealistic expectations and struggled with the transition from a narrow specialism to the broader team-oriented business world.

If finding your own niche is more appealing, you may not have a boss, but gatekeepers will still be there – clients, customers, banks, funders, even voters – and they all bring their own expectations.

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STEPS aims to keep post-graduate researchers updated on skills training events and additional development opportunities. Visit our blog to give feedback and to get more details, contacts, and regular updates:
www.manchestersteps.wordpress.com

NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

Next STEPS: this issue focuses on careers after post-graduate research study. We take a look at options within and outside academia, proffer some advice and useful resources, and consider what our predecessors have gone on to do.

Why not help your friends and colleagues by pointing them to the STEPS newsletter and blog?

THE KEY TO YOUR FUTURE (continued)

ELIZABETH WILKINSON

Be outstanding

You don't have to be good at everything - don't Hoover up skills and courses just for the sake of it. Spot the skills and achievements which will matter most to your future gatekeepers and make sure you are exceptional at these, whilst avoiding any gaping holes in other, less critical but still important, skills.

Can you convince them?

Academia thrives on criticism, and it's easy to forget how far you've come. Try describing your conference presentations, how you've managed your research project, the problems you've overcome to an awestruck undergraduate and rediscover how impressive you really are. Now translate that into the language your gatekeepers will understand. Real credibility, of course, comes with evidence, and this is where it can get tricky if you want to head outside academia. Getting some experience applying your

critical skills outside the university will transform your CV for non-academic employers.

The toughest gatekeeper – yourself

It's all too easy to sabotage your career plans by blocking the gates yourself. Whether it's downplaying your achievements ("It was just ...") or telling yourself (and others) "I couldn't ...", try to recognise whether your instinct to protect yourself from failure is also blocking your way to success. Learning to negotiate with your inner gatekeeper might be the most important skill you ever learn.

Elizabeth also has a great post-graduate careers blog which is worth keeping an eye on: www.manchesterpgcareers.wordpress.com. See page five for a review of the new website 'An Academic Career.'

A FIRST AID KIT FOR CAREER DECISIONS

ELLEN VAN REULER

'Do I want to stay in academia or would I prefer a different job?' Many people finishing their PhD feel they need to make important decisions regarding their career. During a meeting, one of the STEPS editors mentioned that she would like to use a personality quiz to support her in this choice. Despite the wealth of career information available, we did not identify such a test targeted at PGR students.* This finding may not be surprising given the variety of options after a PhD. However, the process advocated by career counsellors and books on career management comprises a fairly consistent set of elements. I discuss these elements below to fill our first aid kit for career decisions.

Aspirations

The first thing to think about is what you want to do. Imagine, for example, that you won the lottery or inherited a fortune from a distant relative, what would you do? What interests and desires motivate the answers you give?

It can be helpful to consider the values that you find important. Autonomy, security, and contributing to society are examples of possible career values. Values are often fairly stable over your life time. Therefore, pondering over past decisions can help to identify what is essential for you.

Skills

A further step is to review what you can offer a future employer. Are you good at building relationships or are your analytical skills excellent? Make an inventory of the skills you acquired inside and outside academia, preferably with concrete evidence for each of them. Moreover, it might be helpful to think about how your skills transfer to different contexts.

Options

Matching your interests, values, and skills with specific positions may not be an easy task. You may not even know exactly what some jobs entail. In that case, the Prospects website (www.prospects.ac.uk) might provide a starting point. Additionally, it is a good idea to talk with people who actually do the job you fancy.

In my view, it is important that you think through all features of the job you spotted. For example, a tutor at the 'Vitae Careers in Academia' event

mentioned that if you become a lecturer you will not only have to teach and supervise. You also need to judge the quality of the work students submit and you might even have to tell people that they cannot continue their course.

Questions can be asked about the implications of a job for your life style as well. For instance, are you willing to dress smartly and sit in an office every day? Can you cope with the years of temporary contracts that often come with academic careers?



You might think you want a certain job, but you cannot show evidence of the skills required. In that case, you could develop these skills outside your PhD or job with the view of making your living using the new skills later. Thus, it is not only useful to think about your goals for the following month or next year. Identify your longer term goals too.

Decisions

If you have two or three career options, you might feel anxious about making a choice. The good news is that a decision is not made for eternity. Adjustments are nearly always possible! However, time used to think through your decision will be time well spent. You can, for example, score your options against several criteria or count the pros and cons of each career path. What worked for me – and might do for others of a relatively analytical bent – is to give each option two scores for each aspect: one rational score and one based on your (gut) feelings. This helped me to understand my hesitation to go for an option of which I found part of the characteristics really appealing.

The text above is meant as a first aid kit for those who find choosing a career a daunting prospect. If your doubts require more extensive treatment, you can attend a careers workshop organised by the University or organisations like Vitae (www.vitae.ac.uk) or you can see a counsellor at the Careers Service (www.careers.manchester.ac.uk).

Thanks are due to Dr. Emma Gillaspay from Vitae's North West Hub for sharing some ideas on this theme.

**The Prospects Planner is for higher education students and graduates in general, but it's also useful for post-graduate researchers too – see review on page five.*

STEPS TEA PARTY

On Wednesday 9 March STEPS celebrated the first edition of the STEPS Magazine created by the new editorial team with a Tea Party in the Burlington Rooms. With the spring edition hot off the press, the STEPS Tea Party turned out to be a huge success with interesting speakers, a workshop, plenty of information on skills training, and loads of cakes and tea! See the STEPS blog for a more extensive report of the STEPS Tea Party 2011.

STEPS AROUND THE WORLD

STEPS has launched a competition for all post-graduate students to see how many different places the magazine can travel. If you're off anywhere, no matter how near or far, take a copy of STEPS with you, send us your pictures and you could win a prize. The deadline for entries is September 30th 2011. For more information and to see where STEPS has travelled so far check out the STEPS blog.

ALUMNI PATHWAYS

IMOGEN CLARKE

'Why am I doing this? What happens next? Is there really any point?' I would hazard a guess that questions such as these pass through the minds of 100% of PhD students at some point during their three years of toil. Whether you started your research with an ultimate career in mind or purely for the love of the discipline, there's no getting around the fact that at the end of it all you're going to have to get a job. And we'd all like to think that after all this hard work, we'll be better off in the job market than we were before. But is this really the case?

Vitae have also been asking this question, and published an analysis of employment destinations and impact of doctoral graduates three years after graduation. Respondents were asked about their motivations for going into doctoral study, their satisfaction with the subject and institution they chose, and what their particular research degree entailed. It's an interesting read, whether you tackle the full report (published as a PDF online) or Elizabeth Wilkinson's helpful breakdown on her careers blog. However, what I'm most concerned with is where these PhD students ended up. The report breaks down graduate destinations into six 'occupational clusters' – Higher Education (HE) research; non-HE research; HE teaching and lecturing; teaching roles outside of HE; other common doctoral occupations; and other occupations.

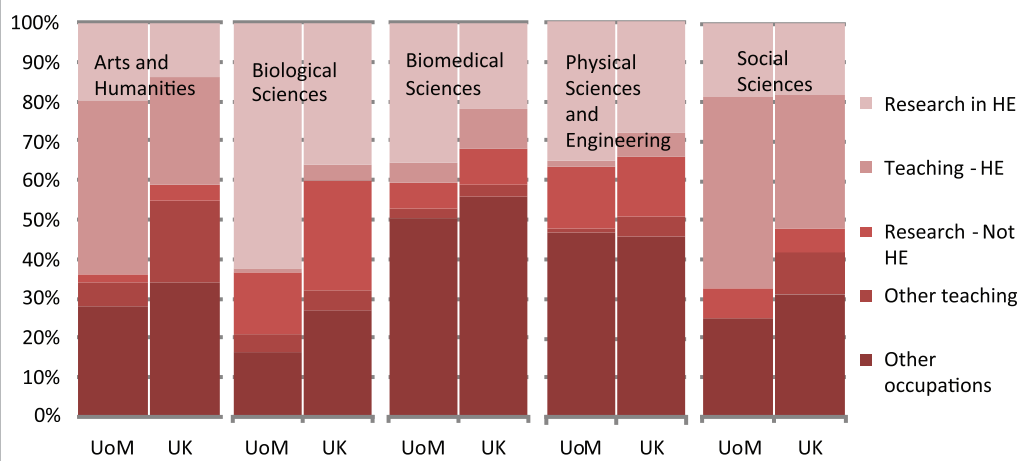
Good news for anybody who particularly dislikes vague categories – doctoral graduates are far less likely to land a job in the 'other occupation' cluster than those with first or masters degrees. However, when it comes to 'other doctoral occupations' the results are pretty evenly matched, despite 30% of respondents in this sector claiming that a formal PhD qualification was required for their role. As Elizabeth Wilkinson points out, if you end up in one of these jobs you *could* take this to mean that doing a PhD was pointless, or you could think about it as having opened up a wide range of jobs for you. Finally, as you might expect, doing a PhD makes it much more likely that you will end up researching or teaching in HE. However, while you've got more chance than if you hadn't done a PhD, there's still only a 40% likelihood of having an academic job three years after graduating.

What about Manchester in particular? Well, while we have quite a lot of statistics about doctoral graduate destinations six months on, it's understandably harder to keep track of the same alumni three years later. (I'm now starting to feel a little bit guilty about ignoring all those alumni letters from Leeds University.) The Alumni Office is working on a general review of

PhD longer term destinations, and Elizabeth Wilkinson has produced a more detailed summary for FLS (which will be appearing on the STEPS blog). But in the meantime the general six month figures will have to do.

And if you're hoping for a career in academia, then the results, when compared with the national average, are promising. Perhaps unsurprisingly, acquiring your PhD at a Russell Group University seems to improve your chances of obtaining a research or teaching post in HE. And what if you don't want to end up in academia? A lower proportion of Manchester University doctoral graduates in other sectors doesn't necessarily mean it's harder for us to get a non-academic job, but rather that we're more successful at obtaining

DOCTORAL GRADUATE DESTINATIONS AFTER SIX MONTHS



posts in HE. And of course, the fact you study at Manchester means you have access to STEPS, which should hopefully help improve your chances!

Finally, I should point out one rather pleasing conclusion noted in the Vitae report – doctoral graduate respondents were generally satisfied with their choice to do a PhD and most, given the chance, would make the same choice again. In fact, they were far more confident in this respect than graduates of first or masters degrees. So maybe we've got no reason to worry after all.

Elizabeth Wilkinson's blog:

www.manchesterpgcareers.wordpress.com/2011/03/29/where-do-postgrads-go

The full report:

www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/WDRD_3_%20years_%20on_soft%20copy.pdf

MANCHESTER CAREER PROFILES

Tom Lean obtained his PhD from the Centre for History of Science, Technology and Medicine, in FLS. He now works as an oral history interviewer for the British Library's 'National Life Stories' project.

I did my PhD because I liked doing research, I found the subject fascinating, I enjoyed university, I liked learning new things, my masters had left me with a taste for the area, and a PhD appealed more than any graduate job I was likely to get.

I'd given some thought to a post-doc during the latter half of the PhD, but somewhere in my third year I was lucky enough to be offered the chance to work on a six month project helping to organise the Manchester History Festival. I recall I handed in my thesis on a Monday and started the job on the subsequent Tuesday. It was a bit like going from running a marathon to competing in a decathlon - I went from working on one big thing to loads of little ones. I coordinated the contributions of around fifty local history societies and museums, handled the website, communicated with lecturers, planned parts of the exhibition, worked on a couple of school outreach projects, and more other small jobs that I can't really remember.

The festival taught me a lot, but following that I rather needed a break and I took a few months off to consider my options. I completed a post-doc application, applied for a few jobs and, in what turned out to be a rather lucky break, I went to a conference on oral history in science. I'd seen the job with National Life Stories advertised before I headed over to the conference in Finland. Buoyed by that experience I applied on my return.

Michele Curioni obtained his PhD from the School of Materials in EPS and now works as a research fellow for LATEST2, a large research project based in the School of Materials at Manchester.

I did my PhD because I wanted to work in a university as a researcher/lecturer and to finish my studies in a country other than Italy. I was impressed by the facilities of the School of Materials when I attended the interview for the PhD position and I was very happy when I found out I'd been given the opportunity to study here. After I submitted my PhD I worked for a few months as a Research Assistant on a European research project. Subsequently, I studied new strategies to reduce energy consumption due to the surface finishing of aluminium aerospace components, before becoming a Fellow for LATEST2.

I think that one of the most important factors in obtaining any position is to do a job that you like, so that you can enjoy every day. The success of my PhD was fundamental to obtaining my current position. During the PhD, I learnt how to manage my research, how to prioritize work and how to write scientific publications. These are all skills that I keep using every day. I like my job because I can study different scientific and technical problems and am in contact with the best scientists and a lot of industries that require solutions to corrosion issues. I like being at university and meeting very different people from all over the world. I like explaining things to other people and learning from them. I like to travel to conferences and meetings. What do I think I will do next? I would like to continue my research career here.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

UNIVERSITY EVENTS

JUNE

- 1 Library: Scopus for researchers
- 8 Methods@Manchester: Research methods and social responsibility
- 8 Library: Endnote
- 9 Library: Endnote for humanities
- 10 Pathways: Career Panels
- 13 Pathways: Interviews and Assessment Workshops
- 14 Research to Enterprise Summit
- 15 Pathways: PhD and Researcher Career Zone @ The Graduate Recruitment Fair
- 15 Methods@Manchester: Estimating and measuring the effects of inequality
- 15-16 Careers: Graduate Recruitment Fair
- 22 Library: Scopus for researchers
- 28 Methods@Manchester: The impact of culture and cultural processes: a dialogue

JULY

- 4 Methods@Manchester: The interaction between academic knowledge producers and government organisations, Royal Statistical Society, London

- 7 Library: Endnote for medical, human and life sciences
- 7 Library: Endnote for humanities
- 13 Library: Electronic journal articles
- 18-21 Manchester Enterprise School

OCTOBER

- 5 Careers: Ethnic Diversity Fair
- 5 Methods@Manchester: Methods Fair
- 19 Careers: Engineering, Science and Technology Fair
- 20 Careers: Finance, Business and Management Fair

Every Wed 2pm-3pm Live Online Writing Clinics for Researchers
www.tinyurl.com/5s6alz

Methods@Manchester www.methods.manchester.ac.uk

Careers www.careers.manchester.ac.uk

Library www.library.manchester.ac.uk

To keep up to date with the latest **Faculty Skills Training Events**, log in to eProg (www.eprog.manchester.ac.uk) and search the Skills Training Index.

REGIONAL AND NATIONAL EVENTS

JUNE

- 1 Vitae: How and why do we use interpretative and participative research methods? Salford
- 7-12 Times Cheltenham Science Festival
- 8-9 SPARC: Salford Postgraduate Annual Research Conference, Salford
- 14-17 Vitae: National GRADschool, Bournemouth
- 15 British Library: Information Skills Navigating Research in the British Library, London.
- 18-19 Bristol Festival of Nature
- 21 Vitae: Making an impact: Getting Research into Policy and Practice, London
- 22 British Library: Making the most of the humanities reading room – All About Periodicals, London
- 28 BrightClub Manchester: Obsession
- 30 Vitae: The Engaging Researcher, Liverpool
- 30 Science Communication Training Day, Glasgow

JULY

- 3 International Doctorate School, Stirling
- 4 Vitae: PRISM 2011: Postgraduate Researchers in Science Medicine conference, Liverpool
- 5-10 Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition
- 7-8 Vitae: Transformations Postgraduate Conference, Cardiff
- 14-22 Wrexham Science Festival
- 16-18 Festival of British Archaeology

- 20-22 British Interactive Group (BIG) Event 2011

AUGUST

- 28 BrightClub Manchester: Mind

SEPTEMBER

- 10-15 British Science Festival, Bradford
- 13 Vitae: Careers in Academia, Birmingham
- 22 Naturejobs Expo, London

OCTOBER

- 11-14 Vitae: National GRADschool, Windermere
- 19-26 London Science Festival
- 22-30 Manchester Science Festival
- 29 ESRC Festival of Social Science (until 5 Nov)

Vitae www.vitae.ac.uk

British Library www.bl.uk/reshelp/inrooms/stp/workshop/workshops.html

British Science Association www.britishsociety.org

Salford Postgraduate Annual Research Conference (SPARC)
www.pg.salford.ac.uk/sparc11

Naturejobs www.nature.com/natureconferences/njce2011/index.html

Manchester BrightClub www.tinyurl.com/6gq9koj

For more information and to keep up to date with upcoming events
www.manchestersteps.wordpress.com/events

FACULTY TRAINING CONTACTS

ENGINEERING AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES

EMAIL eps-grads@manchester.ac.uk

WEB manchester.ac.uk/eps/grads

BLOG researchsupport.eps.manchester.ac.uk/theword

TWITTER @epsgrads

HUMANITIES

EMAIL humanities-training@manchester.ac.uk

WEB humanities.manchester.ac.uk/humnet/acaserv/pgresearch/training

BLOG pgrdocblog.wordpress.com

TWITTER @skillstraining

LIFE SCIENCES

EMAIL Davina.Whitnall@manchester.ac.uk

WEB intranet.ls.manchester.ac.uk/pgr/gtp

MEDICAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES

EMAIL mhstraining@manchester.ac.uk

WEB mhs.manchester.ac.uk/trainingteam

BLOG researchtraining.wordpress.com

TWITTER @trainingteam

RESOURCE REVIEW

JENNY GOODARE

LinkHigher
www.linkhigher.com

LinkHigher is a great concept. It connects post-graduates with companies who value higher degrees and their associated transferrable skills. You can view the company profiles and job listings of employers who have expressed an interest in hiring post-graduates. In turn, you can create your own profile and upload your CV to the database so that employers can find you.



It's a relatively new website with big ambitions and at the moment is catering mainly for science, engineering and business post-graduates, with almost all the company profiles relating to R&D or banking and business (if this is what you're interested in, *LinkHigher* is your new best friend). If it's arts and humanities you're into, it's not that useful for you at the moment because employers in this sector have been slower to respond, but watch this space for future opportunities. Plus, you can still pick up some great information and advice; a particular highlight was an article on how to boost your digital identity. Other articles take a much needed look at the place of post-graduates in today's job market; do employers really value a post-graduate education? Are employers put off by a PhD? Not all the answers to these questions are music to the ears, but engaging with these issues is part of the whole scary process of becoming employable, and at least *LinkHigher* is connecting you to the people who value your post-graduate degree.

An Academic Career
www.academiccareer.manchester.ac.uk

This new website takes a frank look at careers in academia, and is really designed to help us answer the question *is an academic career for me?* You probably (hopefully) began the PhD with an enthusiasm for the subject, and if you're anything like me, had a vague concept of progression into academia which has been regularly permeated by little voices in your head: *How will I cope with the uncertainty of that period between PhD and a permanent position? Am I prepared to move around the country (or the World) for a job? Will I get post-doc funding if I haven't published anything yet? Can I get back in if I decide to take a break or go on maternity leave? Will I die alone?!*



This website actually tries to guide you through these kinds of insecurities (excluding the latter) and is a refreshing assessment of the realities of an academic career. It also addresses less frantic but equally important questions such as *What can I expect to do on a day-to-day basis?* You might be dead set on a career in academia, and that enthusiasm will stand you in great stead, but, if at the end you're still wavering, there's a section on alternatives to academia with some good links to other sites. There's also some great advice on looking for academic jobs and making applications. Definitely worth a look.

Prospects
www.prospects.ac.uk

Prospects is a great resource for inspiration in those dark 'I have no idea what I'm going to do with my life' moments. Does that fantasy job you've been thinking about actually exist? Probably not, and if it did it would be horrendously over-subscribed. So what is out there for you? You're going to have to find out some facts, and if you're worried about drowning in a sea of information, *Prospects* is the place to dip your toes in.



Find a spare ten minutes to create a profile with your qualifications, skills, interests and motivations, then sit back while the *Prospects* planner churns it up and finds you some job matches. Granted, it's not a perfect process, you are after all a complex individual with a mind whilst it is merely a machine (broadcast presenter and fire-fighter were two jobs to which I gave a wide berth). It didn't take long, however, to find some more appealing options on the list and peruse some job profiles, many of which I'd never heard of before. I've now decided I want to be a commissioning editor, which is nice. You can also pick up some great careers advice, browse information on jobs by sector, or search for graduate job vacancies and work experience placements. Also check out the section 'Your PhD...what next?'

Beyond the PhD
www.beyondthephd.co.uk

Shortlisted for the 2009 Times Higher Education ICT Initiative of the Year Award, *Beyond the PhD* is a fantastic resource developed



specifically for arts and humanities post-graduates. This website is great for advice on pathways into, and experience of, specific jobs outside academia: for example, in publishing, as a freelance writer, in the civil service or a NGO. Most information is presented in an individual profile format, so it focuses on their particular circumstances, which makes it engaging, honest and varied. Discussions include: their feelings about the value of the PhD to their career, times they considered quitting the PhD, how they pitched their skills to a non-academic audience, being a mature student, employers' attitudes to the PhD, and regrets about leaving academia.

Although there appears to be a focus on non-academic careers, there are also some thoughts and advice from post-docs about continuing in academia, for example, feelings about teaching, what the university is like as an employer, moving back into academia from a commercial career, and experiences of being interviewed for an academic post.

A highlight (in the audio section) is 'Career building during the PhD' with advice from 17 different people, some of whom didn't bother. One of the take home messages of the whole site is *get some work experience!* So you should probably do that. I'm fairly convinced this website hasn't been updated since 2008, but I don't think it matters – there's lots on there, get stuck in.

MORE RESOURCES

Vitae: Careers in academia
www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/1406/Careers-in-academia-.html

Vitae: Careers
www.vitae.ac.uk/careers

Postgraduate Toolbox
www.postgraduatetoolbox.net

Graduate Junction
www.graduatejunction.net

Manchester Postgraduate Careers Blog
www.manchesterpgcareers.wordpress.com

TOP TIPS FOR... WRITING A CV

ELIZABETH GRANGER

- **Make sure that every CV you send out is tailored to the job you are applying for.** Rather than starting from scratch every time, it's a good idea to have a 'master copy' of your CV. Try to keep it up to date and include all the skills and experiences you have gained that might be relevant for any job application. You can then edit this master copy so that it only includes and emphasises the relevant information for a specific role.
- **Try not to use 'filler' in your CV.** A good CV is a short, concise summary of who you are and why you are the perfect candidate for a job. Try to concentrate on the transferable skills you have gained from previous experiences rather than the finer details of the duties and tasks you carried out.
- **Don't lie or be misleading about your experiences and abilities.** This may help you to get an interview, but it will come back to haunt you.
- **What if I don't have much work experience?** This can be quite common for post-graduate students, because we've been in education for so long! In this case, avoid the chronological CV, which has its main focus geared up towards your employment history. Instead opt for a skills based CV. You can highlight the abilities and the skills you have gained through your education and extra-curricular activities. Another approach in combating a lack of experience is to emphasise the positive qualities you have, for example, ambition or enthusiasm.
- **It's worth taking a look at some of the advice on The University of Manchester website:** www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/students/applicationsinterviews/cv. From getting your head around formatting to deciding what type of CV would suit you best - there's loads of helpful info here.
- **Get somebody else to proofread your CV before you send it to a potential employer.** The University Careers Service can help check your CV via their quick query appointment service or you can contact them by email.
- **Once you have written the 'master copy' of your CV, why leave all your hard work going unnoticed while you wait for the perfect job?** Put it online for employers to see. Quite a few sites, such as *Linked-In* and *iProfile*, let you do this for free.

BOOK REVIEW

ELLEN VAN REULER

What Color is Your Parachute? A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career-Changers 2010, by Richard N. Bolles, Ten Speed Press.

- More than 10,000,000 copies sold since its first publication in 1972
- Translated into more than 20 languages
- The gold standard of career guides according to *Fortune*
- Suggested for review in STEPS by the University's Career Service

The above statements suggest that *What Color is Your Parachute* is an extremely widely read book on careers. Therefore, the STEPS editors decided to have a look at it to find out what Richard Bolles' book offers to PGR students.

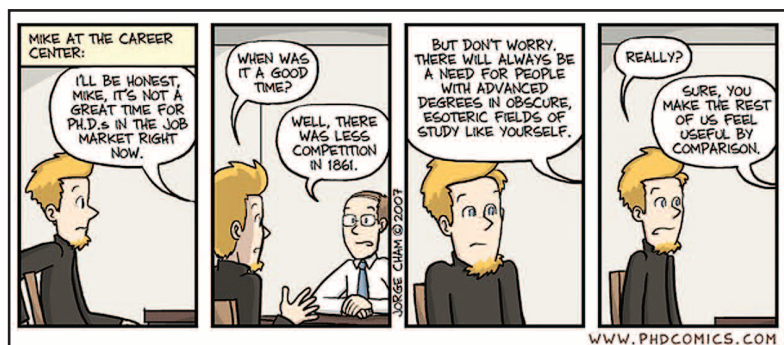
The first part of the book is titled 'Finding a Job...' and consists of ten chapters. The topics discussed range from the best ways to hunt for a job to presenting yourself during interviews and from salary negotiations to starting your own business. This part of the book is an easy read, because it has a clear lay-out and some chapters are written in Q&A form. The lists giving, for instance, 'the ten greatest mistakes made in job interviews' or 'skill as verbs' can make handy checklists. However, the usefulness of these recommendations depends on your previous exposure to job hunting advice. Moreover, the book takes a 'one size fits all' approach. I doubt whether this size fits a PhD student from Manchester. The section on the curriculum vitae, for example, does not transfer neatly from the American to the British context and for those who wish to stay in research jobs an alternative CV format is preferable.

The second part of the book contains one long chapter about finding a life.

The idea behind this workbook style chapter is that 'most job-hunters who fail to find their dream job, fail not because they lack information about the job-market, but because they lack information about themselves'. The 'flower exercise' is designed to help readers improve their self-knowledge. The heart of the flower is formed by a circle containing the five transferable skills you want to use. The flower has six petals with answers to questions, such as in what type of organisation you want to work. The chapter contains tasks to help you clarify the elements you want to include in each of the parts of the flower. I can certainly see the value of the flower exercise as a way to structure your self-inquiry. However, the idea that your 'dream job' will become clear from looking at your flower is in my view somewhat problematic. In particular, Bolles does not address how to prioritize different parts of the flower over each other or the steps you could take if you come up with seemingly irreconcilable desires.

The book closes with appendices on A) finding your mission in life, B) a guide to choosing a career coach or counsellor, and C) a list of coaches (who are mainly based in the United States). Appendix A is written from a Christian perspective on the way people ought to lead their lives. Although Bolles suggests that readers of other persuasions can translate his Christian thought into their own, I can imagine that the frequent references to predestination in this appendix would annoy people who do not share these views.

In summary, *What Color is Your Parachute* might be worth a look if you are a relative novice to job hunting and the self-reflection it may involve. If Bolles' approach and style suit you and you are willing to put up with the USA focused bits, this book could catalyse your job hunt.



CONTRIBUTIONS AND FEEDBACK

Get involved:

You too can shape STEPS, contributions are very welcome. Just drop an e-mail at steps@manchester.ac.uk

Give feedback: Comment on our blog – we want to hear from you! www.manchestersteps.wordpress.com