Editor’s Note

Dear Readers,

The end of winter is fast approaching, and with all of the changes that spring brings, we at the Inside sCo-op have also decided to implement some changes. How does this affect you, our faithful readers? Well for one, the sCo-op will now be published twice a semester instead of just once, so you get a double dose of student stories, tips and advice, and important co-op notices.

A second change is also occurring to help you become more interactive in the production of this newsletter. The Inside sCo-op is asking for your contributions! Whether you’ve had an incredible co-op term someplace, you have advice for other students or you just want to share your experiences, the sCo-op is accepting submissions! These can be sent in a word document to olaf@uwaterloo.ca with the subject line “Inside sCo-op story.” If your story is chosen for publication in a future edition, you will receive some sweet UW swag in appreciation of your effort.

Inside this edition, you can find information about our 2006 co-op students of the year, read about what it’s like to spend your work term at a movie studio, get advice on how to make a good first impression in your interview, and much much more!

Have a good read,

Brielle Vautour
March 2007
Bachelor of Arts, Honours English Literature, Honours Political Science

The Inside sCo-op newsletter is published six times a year by the Co-operative Education & Career Services department for students of the University of Waterloo.
Who doesn’t dream of working in the movie business? Herve Bizira, a 3B Computer Science and Business student will be working as a Technical Director on the ground floor at Starz Animation for the third time this upcoming work term, and he wouldn’t have it any other way.

At first, Herve was hesitant to apply to the job at Starz when he spotted it on Jobmine, but he decided to take a chance after seeing the word “studio” in the description. This was Herve’s chance to turn what had always been a hobby into a career path. It wasn’t easy – Herve had to refuse offers from other places while waiting to hear from Starz. “I was really lucky- I think sometimes, what would have happened if I took a job doing data encryption instead? That would be boring for me.”

Herve’s last term was anything but boring. He worked on the ground level of production for the movie Everyone’s Hero, which is about a young boy’s cross-country journey to help Babe Ruth and the New York Yankees win the World Series. Herve met daily with the set artists to discuss what needed to be done and then implement those changes to the studio pipeline. If there was currently no tool to allow the changes to be done, then Herve and his team of programmers would create a new tool to accomplish what was needed, sometimes working very long hours to get things done in time.

Herve cites his greatest achievement to date as occurring during his last term at Starz, when he was given the huge responsibility of designing a new tools system to be used by the studio animators. This tool is supposed to streamline the process of applying textures and colors to movie characters and significantly reduce production time. This technology will be used on the set of Sheepish, a Starz film about sheep set to be released in 2008.

Working in animation, Herve was also given the chance to apply his school-acquired mathematical knowledge into real world situations. “That little thing you see [on screen], like someone falling and their pants ripping, has a lot of math [determining] what part of the pants rip.” The most difficult part of animation? “Calculating the smallest, most minute detail that the audience doesn’t even see, but if it wasn’t there, they would notice. It takes a lot of work to make things look real.”

When asked about his future, Herve cites an interest in continuing his work in 3D animation, because there are always opportunities to create new tools and different ways of doing things. Herve has also started a graphics consulting group in his spare time. While this is currently a side occupation, Herve is open to the possibility that with a few more clients, his business could become a full time job.

You can check out Herve’s website at www.creoFx.com or look for his name in the credits of Everyone’s Hero, currently available on DVD at your local movie store.
Harjot Arora completed his second “Outstanding” work term at the Bank of Montreal this fall working as an Associate Project Manager. During his first work term, he was overwhelmed by the excellent working environment that he was so fortunate to be a part of. “My responsibilities were that of a regular Associate Project Manager at BMO and I was always given respect from my co workers,” he explains. After having such a great experience at BMO, and noticing that he was one of very few co-op students working at BMO, Harjot decided to approach his sister, a senior business consultant in the IT Strategy and Planning Department, and try to convince her to hire some co-op students of her own.

In the competitive process of applying for jobs, going to interviews, and trying to beat out other students for the best employment, Harjot’s attempts to open up co-op opportunities for other students is nothing short of remarkable. “[BMO] made me feel very important and integral to the team. They made me feel like part of the company and part of the project ... And I said to myself, why not give other co-op students the opportunity to experience the same?”

Harjot encourages fellow students to seek out jobs not just for themselves, but for other students as well. His reasoning? “You’re representing the University of Waterloo, not just yourself. You are a Waterloo co-op student!”

So how can other students help create jobs and opportunities for co-op students in general? Harjot suggests introducing yourself as a co-op student, attending on-campus events like the Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce “business after 5” networking events and going to conferences.

Nothing but benefits awaits you: “It may get you a job, it may get you conversation, it may get you a mentor,” says Harjot. And you have a great conversation starter already, as a co-op student. “Take advantage of [Waterloo’s name] and use it,” Harjot advises.

Harjot is currently completing his third year at UW in the Honours Arts and Business co-op program. For future work terms, he hopes to work in different countries, doing product management on a global scale. Harjot continues to search out those perfect opportunities to spread his, and Waterloo’s, name.
Each year, the Co-operative Education and Career Services department of the University of Waterloo name the top co-op student from each faculty “Students of the Year.”

These students are chosen based on the work-term evaluations they received from their employers, their co-op achievements, their academic marks, school and community involvement, and their overall contribution to the co-operative education program. Their names are engraved on a plaque which hangs in the lobby of the Tatham Centre and they each receive a certificate and a Retail Services gift card. This year in celebration of the University’s big 5-0 a special 50th Anniversary award was created to honour the University’s top overall co-op student. This student’s application was sent on to Education at Work Ontario (EWO) and the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education (CAFCE) which are the provincial and national equivalents of UW co-op student of the year competition. The results were astounding...

Without further ado, here follows the results of the 2006 UW Co-op Student of the Year Awards, and much, much more...

Science: 
Kathryn Dorman, 3B Science and Business

Katie completed her fourth outstanding work term at Mount Sinai Hospital’s Surgical Skills Centre by travelling to Ethiopia to help set up a surgical lab. While there, Katie organized a mini Objective Structured Assessment of Technical Skills (OSATS) test in order to assess the basic surgical skills of 20 surgical residents and 10 surgical faculty members, and volunteered in the operating room. Before leaving Canada, Katie negotiated with local skills labs and operating rooms for surgical equipment, resulting in a 40 foot crate filled to capacity with donated tools, teaching aids and books.

Mathematics: 
Fiona Ng, 3B Actuarial Science and Finance

While at Statistics Canada, Fiona unearthed 3000 problem cases located within the operating and statistical structures of her department using statistical analysis. Additionally, she made a comparative analysis of the new GST figures, checking them with past records in order to uncover discrepancies. While at Statistics Canada, Fiona was nominated for the Best Team Worker Award.
Environmental Studies:  
Katherine Howes, 4B Environment and Business

As a program developer in the Waste Management section at Bruce Power Inc, Katie implemented a site-wide compost program, a first at a nuclear power plant, which will save the company two to seven years in landfill lifespan. Katie also successfully took over the role of Work Management Coordinator of Radioactive Waste Shipments for a quarter of her work term, and implemented paper-free washrooms at her facility.

Engineering:  
Simon Lancaster-Larocque, 3B Mechanical Engineering

Simon returned to RIM for the third time in 2006, working as a mechanical test systems designer. While on his term, he submitted 4 patents for inventions designed at RIM, including a revolutionary Testing Clip which used reverse polarity magnets instead of the standard wire springs, making the diagnostics process easier and more efficient. Additionally, he acted as a RIM Campus Ambassador, recruiting 6 additional students for RIM.

Arts:  
Carolyn Fitton, 2A Arts and Business

Carolyn acted as a Product Marketer at Sybase iAnywhere, generating almost $6000 in sales, and over $13000 in forecasted sales. She also prepared customer success stories, video scripts, monthly field briefing reports and a monthly newsletter.
In 2006, Kristin spent 8 months as a clinical research assistant at the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. Kristin’s significant research at the Toronto Sunnybrook Regional Cancer Centre merited her international acclaim. Her work on a Bone Metastases Module required her to travel to Portugal and England to present orally and through poster sessions. She has authored and co-authored over 24 medical papers, while also peer-editing manuscripts and reviewing grant applications.

Kristin was honoured with the Early Career Investigator award at the International Society for Quality of Life Research held in Lisbon, Portugal, an award normally granted to doctors in the early years of their profession. Kristin was also granted the 50th Anniversary award in recognition of the significant achievements that she has already accomplished in her short career and in acknowledgement of what she will surely accomplish in the future.

Kristin is also the recipient of the 2006 CAFCE and EWO Co-op Student of the Year Awards, two highly prestigious awards. While two individuals from the University of Waterloo won these awards last year, this is the first time that the same person has won both awards. Those who have met Kristin are anything but surprised at her incredible accomplishments – in the words of Kristin’s employer, Dr. Edward Chow, Kristin “has surpassed my expectations and exceeded her peers.” Clearly, this is true.

Honourable Mentions have been awarded to:

Leah Mattheus, 3B Health Studies

Caustan de Riggs, 3B Environment and Business

Patrick McVeigh, 3B Physics

Orlando Marquez, 3B Software Engineering

Co-op Student Receives S&C Electric Scholarship

Ali Kazerni, 2B Electrical Engineering (centre) recently received the S&C Electric John R. Conrad Award of Excellence valued at $2,500. Presenting the scholarship are Grant Buchanan, S&C Electric President (centre left) and Doug Patten, S&C Electric Director of Employee Relations (centre right) as Peggy Jarvie, CECS Executive Director (left) and Dwight Aplevich, Associate Dean, Co-operative Education and Professional Affairs, Faculty of Engineering look on.
Making or Breaking the Deal:
First Impressions Count! Make Yours a Good One

by Brielle Vautour

It’s the day before interviews start, yet again. You’ve researched your companies, prepared mock interview questions and answers, and brushed up on your funny anecdotes. You feel ready to kick some serious butt at your interviews. BUT WAIT! Knowledge and experience alone won’t get you the job that you want. You need to make a good first impression with your interviewers too.

Before you’ve even answered your first question, the recruiter has begun to form their opinion of you. Take into account these three easy tips in order to make the best impression possible.

1. Posture, Posture, Posture

You may not believe your parents when they tell you the importance of keeping your shoulders back, but your posture and stance reveal a lot about how you’re feeling and what you’re thinking. When you go into the interview room, walk briskly, keep those shoulders back, and strut your stuff with confidence. No one needs to know that you feel nervous, especially not your interviewers!

2. Body Language

Posture is important, but your body language is even more so. Body language includes the simple basics, like making eye contact when you greet your interviewer, having a firm (but not death-grip firm) handshake, and keeping your body and head turned towards whomever is speaking. This is a great clue to the interviewers that you are actively listening, and it’s easy to do.

Having effective body language includes having welcoming facial expressions, maintaining eye contact through out your interview, and keeping your hand gestures to a bare minimum. To use your body language to the utmost benefit, conduct a mock interview in front of your mirror so you can observe how you look when you answer questions. It’s hard to pick up on your own personal ticks all by yourself, so ask a friend to gauge your body language too. It will be a great learning experience for both of you.

Body language can sometimes be misinterpreted. Don’t let yours work against you. Sit up straight, and send the signal to your interviewers that you’re listening, enthusiastic, and interested in what their company has to offer.

3. Clothing

Ideally, interview clothing should be both professional and comfortable.

Ladies, if you’re wearing a skirt, it should be no shorter than 2 inches above your knees. Wear nylons, and avoid open toed shoes – they are too casual for an interview. If you are wearing dress pants, make sure that the cuffs aren’t frayed. While dressy sweaters are appropriate, low cut, belly revealing, or spaghetti strapped shirts are not.

Gentlemen; dress or khaki pants are ideal for an interview; jeans are not. Tuck in your shirt, and if you’re going to wear a tie, make sure you can actually tie it. Invest in at least one good button up shirt with a collar and wear scuff-free dress shoes. Most importantly, keep your boxers inside your pants – the interviewers do NOT care that you wear Calvin Klein.

In short, you’re dressing for an office job, not a club. Anything you’d wear to Phil’s you may want to reconsider for your interview.

Wearing comfortable interview clothes is a must. When you’re picking out your clothes, check the labels. Cotton is always good because it’s soft and ventilates well, while wool, polyester, and spandex are generally to be avoided. Wearing comfortable clothes will help you relax, which in turn will help you perform better in your interview!

With these three tips under your belt, you are now well on your way to making a great first impression on your future employer. Use these tips to your advantage, and don’t be surprised when the job offers keep rolling in.
The Co-op Program is What you Make It

by Corina McDonald

Parts of this article first appeared in the University of Waterloo Department of Earth Sciences Undergrad News, Vol 2. N°1

For some students, myself included, graduation is fast approaching and the thought of where I will be and what I will be doing next year is in the forefront of my mind. I can’t help but reflect on my last five years at Waterloo; there have been many great professors and their respective courses, lots of awesome TA’s and wonderful friends who have helped me through the years. However, what stands out from everything else is the practical experience I gained from co-op: doing the grunt work, being a lab technician and pounding away at a keyboard. I realise that co-op is not for everyone. Regardless, it has been my experience that the co-op program is what you make it.

Travel

Because of the co-op program and the jobs that I have pursued, I’ve seen more places than I would have imagined before graduating. However, beyond simply seeing these places, I was able to live in and be a part of several unique communities. Places such as Ottawa in Ontario; Lynn Lake in Manitoba; Calgary, Long Lake and Fort Chipewyan in Alberta; Diavik Diamond Mines in the North West Territories and Juneau in Alaska have provided many opportunities for personal and emotional growth beyond the work that brought me there.

Every new location presented an occasion for me to broaden my horizons. When I was employed by Aqua Terre Solutions Incorporated in Alberta I often worked the night shift at the Oil Sands Long Lake camp. As an amateur photographer I was able to capture some of my experiences on film. The pictures below were taken on a very cold February night on my way to and from field monitoring wells.

Of course travel and adapting to new situations is not all fun. There can be some awkward and even scary situations, like being caught on the Peace River in Alberta after dark, without a light, in a six foot inflatable dingy, hours from home. Regardless, I would not trade these events for something less adventurous because learning how to adapt has enhanced my personal growth.
Through co-op I have been involved in some very exciting research and have been introduced to some of the most recent technologies used in Earth Science today. While in Long Lake I learned about Steam Assisted Gravity Drainage (SAGD) technology that was being used to extract bitumen from deep oil sand lithologies. Four months later, I was working with the Earth Science Sector at Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), dating rocks using 206Pb/238U ratios within zircons. These ratios were derived from a sensitive high resolution ion microprobe (SHRIMP).

My next work term brought me to the Peace Athabasca Delta where I was part of a team trying to understand paleo-climates and climactic change by examining invertebrates, isotopes from tree cores and sediment records. While there I also got whirled around on a helicopter and snorkelled in many of the leech-infested shallow lakes of the delta.

This past summer I spent the better part of four months working at the Diavik Diamond mine installing instruments with graduate students and professors from four Universities to help measure the effects that the arctic climate has on waste rock piles. This was exciting because it is something that has never been examined before on such a large scale.

During my first co-op job, a Waterloo graduate student and I drove up to Lynn Lake, Manitoba to gather field data for his M.Sc. project. We lived in the tiny northern community for a month. I learned how applied science can mitigate mining activities by improving the quality of the environment. I also learned how Canada’s North and its people can be greatly affected by resource extraction. I have experienced the relationship between earth science, the land and its people in varying degrees at each of my co-op jobs. I don’t think I could have fully grasped the importance of this relationship if I had not been personally involved.

Connecting to the Real World

The great thing about field work is that I could make a direct connection between the scientific research of which I was a part and how it contributed to the environment that I experienced. I have found that when studying in an academic environment for an extended period of time I tend to become so involved in the ideas or simply getting the work done that I remove myself from reality. Co-op gave me the chance to get involved. There is one particular location that has significance for me because it was the first time I felt I could make a difference.
UW MATES-Mood Assistance Through Education and Support

Recently, a new peer support group has been established on UW campus. UW MATES (Mood Assistance Through Education and Support) is a new student outreach program that seeks to promote the well-being of students coping with mental health issues. Their goal is to heighten awareness of mental health issues at UW and be a resource for students in need or curious about mental health. MATES volunteers are there to listen and to act as a link between students who may feel low to someone who may have been there before and cares or a professional who can help. MATES is establishing a database of places where co-op students can find professional help all across Ontario and can find information about other cities upon request.

For more information or to get involved, contact uwmates@hotmail.com.

Have You Had a Co-op Experience That You Want To Share?

I have made the most out of my time as a co-op student. My choices while being in the program have led me to new communities, greater knowledge of the earth science field and to an appreciation of how we, as earth scientists, affect our environment. I hope that life after graduation and into the future will be as diverse and fulfilling as the last five years have been.

Thanks for reading,

Corina McDonald

Do you like to write? Are you interested in spreading the co-op word? Want to share what you’ve learned throughout your years as a co-op student? Do you want to brag about your employers? Talk about any difficulties you’ve experienced?

Submit your co-op stories now! If you think that you have had an experience worth sharing, send it to olaf@uwaterloo.ca with the subject line “Inside sCo-op Story.”

If your story is selected, not only will you be overcome with fame and glory, but your story will be published in the Inside sCo-op and you will receive a thank you gift in appreciation.

Don’t feel like writing it all down? No problem! Make a 20 minute interview appointment with us, and we’ll write your story for you!
"You're Fired!"

Avoid Making These (Sometimes) Common Mistakes On Your Work Term

by Brielle Vautour

This isn't The Apprentice, and that's not Donald Trump you're hearing. That's the angry voice of your co-op employer. So how did this happen? And what could you have done to prevent it?

The following situations have actually happened to co-op students at UW. In order to avoid being reprimanded or even fired from your co-op job, take the following suggestions into mind:

DON'T check your personal email at work. DON'T take personal phone calls, send text messages or browse the web. If you want to check your email, ask your employer if they mind you doing so on your breaks or lunch-hour. Companies can and do monitor your internet use, so don't be surprised when you're scolded for using MSN throughout your day.

DON'T abuse your employer's generosity. At most places you can take a day off or leave early if you've accumulated some extra hours throughout the week, but don't use this as an excuse to slack off while still getting paid. In one recent case, a former student spent most of his days sleeping on an office couch for a few hours and then coding for a few hours alternately. Needless to say, their employer was not impressed.

DON'T think that you should automatically be granted the same privileges as full-time and senior employees. A co-op job is just like any other job—you start at the bottom and work your way up.

DON'T call in sick when you're not. You will get caught if you use your sick days for nefarious purposes! And if you actually are sick, remember to inform your employers. Forgetting to call and say you can't come in is just as bad as faking an illness to get the day off.

And more seriously...

DON'T go behind your employer's back. In another case, a student came across a network problem in his company's system, and decided to take the initiative to fix it. However, he didn't have the authority or proper access codes to do so, and rather than getting his employer's permission to work on the problem, he tried to hack his way into the system instead. Using illegal methods to solve your work problems is definitely not a good idea, as this student found out.

DON'T ignore the warnings your employer has given you regarding your previous conduct, DON'T show up to work intoxicated, and DON'T look at pornography on your work computer. These things will get you fired, not to mention some of them can get you arrested.

Can You Save Your Job?

If you find yourself heading in the wrong direction on your work term, there are things you can do to help improve your situation. First, stop whatever behaviour is creating the problem. Whether it means leaving your email until you get home to respecting your co-workers, it needs to be done. Second, show your employers that you are trying to change your attitude and behaviour. And remember, you have a field co-ordinator for a reason. They're here to advise you, and will do their best to smooth over any bumpy situations you have encountered or created while on your work term. With their help, you can attempt to salvage your working relationship with your employer.

Getting fired happens, but it is rare. Most co-op students are hard workers who prove their intrinsic worth time and again, and very few put their employers and themselves in that difficult position. Incredible co-op students are present throughout the campus, so don't let these tales of misconduct discourage you. You can choose to make the most of your co-op experience by doing your best, being a co-op ambassador to your company and creating opportunities for yourself, or you can choose not to by self sabotage, making poor choices and being irresponsible. It's up to you, and hopefully you'll make the decision that won't result in hearing those two ominous words, "You're fired."

>> On the next page...

Résumé tips from Nathan Ng

Nathan Ng is the Director of Human Resources at NexJ Systems Inc. (www.nexj.com), a leading provider of Enterprise CRM for the financial services industry. Targeting enterprise customers with sophisticated customization and integration requirements, NexJ Systems offers powerful and unique solutions for: Private Client Services/Wealth Management, Mutual Fund Wholesaling, Asset Management, Corporate and Investment Banking, Institutional Sales and Insurance. NexJ Systems is based in Toronto.
A strong application is a joy to read. It’s a clear, concise and powerful advertisement of your skills and experiences. A strong application engages the recruiter in your story and makes them want to hire you. Unfortunately, quite a few applications that I receive provoke the opposite reaction in me. What are the common elements that are most frustrating to witness in résumés?

**Blatant typographical, grammatical and continuity errors**

The number of errors I encounter in Waterloo student résumés is distressing. There shouldn’t be any errors in your application package. If you can’t assemble a simple two or three page document meant to represent yourself professionally without an error, then what is your potential work for the company going to be like?

To be clear, a single measly typo isn’t going to sink your application – but it nevertheless casts a shadow on the integrity of the message that you’re sending. You exercise complete authorial control over what goes into your résumé, so you might as well make it perfect.

Take cover letters as an example. Cover letters are a definite plus, when they’re well written and meaningfully personalized. A well written, short cover letter is an effective demonstration of your ability to communicate. Given the fact you’re likely going to re-use 90% of the letter across multiple employers, it is imperative that you proof-read its contents before submission. The only thing worse than having no cover letter is a letter that proves that you are either unable or unwilling to write using clear language, to spell properly or to form a coherent summary of what you have to offer.

**Laundry lists of skills without supporting detail**

It’s true that many companies automate their screening processes, and parse incoming résumés using computer programs – so I understand why prolific keyword inclusion can be a tactic (particularly within technical fields) to attempt to keep your résumé from being prematurely filtered out. The problem occurs when it’s time for a human – namely me – to look at your application. When you list Java as your top technical skill, but then are too vague as to whether you’ve actually used it in any of your co-op terms, this gets interpreted (fairly or not) as “no real world experience”.

What was supposed to be a positive becomes a negative. Wading through an all-encompassing blanket list of skills makes me wonder whether you are truly proficient in anything, or if you are merely a dilettante. You need to back up your claims of competency. Which leads me to my next point...

**Uninformative job descriptions**

Uninformative job descriptions I don’t necessarily want to read about the rote tasks you performed on a daily basis during your previous work terms. Rather, I’m interested in seeing a higher level description of what you accomplished, along with the skills you learned, used or developed. What project did you work on? What business or technical goals did the project achieve? What technologies did you use to accomplish those goals? What was your specific role on the team?

**Failure to pique my interest**

Ask yourself – what distinguishes you from everyone else? Have you won any awards? Have you performed any volunteer work? Have you contributed to any open source projects? Are you a member of any clubs? Do you have any online links to work you’ve published or written that I can look at? And no, your Facebook profile doesn’t exactly count. Remember that you’re trying to persuade me to pick you out of a pile of similar résumés. You’re competing with all of your peers and classmates who have taken similar courses and who often have similar work experience. If you don’t tell me in your résumé what makes you different from the rest, I won’t ever know. A paucity of extra-curricular activities and accomplishments is not going to help your cause. If you can, tie your activity to a concrete event or achievement (e.g. “Ran the 2006 Toronto Half-Marathon” sounds much more intriguing than just listing “Running” as an interest).

**Conclusion**

While many students do in fact submit crisp, articulate job applications, I still see far too many others unnecessarily blemished by these four general problems. Avoiding these pitfalls is easy and should significantly improve employer response to your submission.