

The { Inside sCo-op }



Student Profile: California Dreaming...and Designing

Naheed's Work on Windows Mobile 7

Q&A: JobMine's Replacement

The Team Working on the New
System Reveals how Students will
Benefit

Warning - You May be Matched with a Job Ranked 9



The Inside sCo-op

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The Inside sCo-op is an e-publication that is released bi-monthly by Co-operative Education & Career Services.

This term's editor is Jennifer Pepper

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California Dreaming...and Designing:

A UW Co-op Student's Work Term with Microsoft



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There tend to be specific things we associate with the summertime. Those things often include seagulls, sand, beach umbrellas, the smell of sunscreen, and freshly cut grass. For those of us in co-op however, we have a slightly different experience this season that may include the fluorescent lighting of the various interview rooms we enter or the ticking clock in the classrooms to which we return (It's a cruel summer, eh?). But in the end it's worth it to further our professional careers.

This issue includes steps that will prepare you for your summer interviews. There's news about JobMine's replacement system, tips from a fellow co-op student, some advice from HR experts, and a story about ranking on JobMine from 13 years ago that I think you'll find pretty entertaining.

In terms of student profiles you can check out Nahir Hirji and Mark Funk who both spent their work terms catching some rays...one as a software developer in California and the other working outdoors for ABCA.

It's been a great term serving as your editor, and now I'm off for interviews of my own. Keep reading the Inside sCo-op and enjoy your summer term however you spend it!

Pepper Out

Got a Story for the sCo-op?

If you think that you have had a co-op experience worth sharing with our readers, please send it to [Olaf Naese](#) with the subject line "Inside sCo-op Story." If you do not have the time to write the profile yourself, you can make an appointment with our editor and we'll write it for you!

Conclusions from a Co-op

By ANNI YANG | 2B Actuarial Science Student, Student Contributor

By the time you read this article, you've probably completed at least one or two work terms and, like me, you have read tons of articles on interviews, résumés, and many other workplace tips. However, there is no recipe for building a successful career. Often it is the small details that help you stand out and get the jobs you really want. At every job, I ask my employer about how they select their candidates because they are the people you want to impress. Here are a few things to keep in mind.

Are Marks Important?

To put it simply, I believe the answer is yes. However, the process of hiring is more complicated than simply picking the student with the highest average.



As you have probably noticed, some jobs on JobMine receive hundreds of applications. When the employer is faced with massive amounts of information, marks become the most simple and straightforward scale to rank all candidates. Of course, just because you have a ninety-plus average does not mean you are an excellent worker, but marks do say something about your learning ability and studying habits. If someone does not even put in enough effort to pass courses, they probably will slack at work too.

Employers usually pay attention to

people who have outstanding grades or people who have failed or dropped courses. If you are anything in-between, you should be fine. Generally, overall average is more important than your mark in a particular course.

The bottom line is that you should always strive to achieve the best you can in school. Try not to drop or fail courses, because no matter what your résumé and cover letter look like, marks will be the first thing the employers see.

Let's Talk Money

Most career advice says that you should never ask about salary during an interview, but for co-op students, work terms may be a sole source of income. Therefore, it is perfectly reasonable to ask interviewers what kind of salary they



Tips & Tricks

will be offering and use that information to help you make the decision.

While I was working for the federal government, my supervisor told me that the regulation caps undergraduate employees' salaries at around nineteen dollars an hour. The average hourly rate for a math student is about twenty dollars, which means half of the upper year co-op students earn more than that offer presented. If a fourth year student did not ask about salary during the interview and accepts the job, he or she would soon find that the salary is much lower than his or her fellow students.

Additionally, during those times when you receive two or more equally attractive offers, salary could be the factor that sets them apart. A good reference is the salary survey on [CECS's website](#). It will give you a general idea of what you could earn based on your program and year.

All in all, do not be afraid to raise the topic of money. An interview is the opportunity not only for employers to get to know you, but also for you to know more about the employer. Ask politely at the end of the interview, or send an email to the interviewer when you receive the job offer on JobMine. It is just like the poster at the Tatham Center says: It is about YOU after all ♦

WARNING: You May be Matched with a Job You Rank 9

It's a situation that most of us in co-op have been warned about: an unassuming student goes for an interview and happens to dislike the job for a variety of reasons, ranks the job with a nine, yet must take the position when matched. Although this is a rarity, co-op advisors warn that it can happen. But, all things considered, this situation may not be a nightmare. Johann Junginger, a former UW co-op student, is living proof. In a twist of fate, his "nine" ended up being the position of his dreams. In fact, he's returned to the company he'd ranked those 13 years ago and really enjoys his job.

Currently a Physicist working at the Xerox research centre in Canada, Johann tests materials and works with chemists who invent products for Xerox machines. Having graduated from UW as a co-op student in 1996 with a B.Sc. in Physics, he explains his job as a research scientist in the Materials Integration Laboratory is exactly what he's been searching for.

Reflecting upon the factors that contributed to his decision to rank the job so poorly, he says, "Initially, I had blamed the interviewer. He was a huge bear of a man and he *really* intimidated me. I hadn't really done any preparation for the interview so I knew nothing about Xerox or what they did."

Unprepared, Johann was further discouraged when he was required to solve problems on the spot.

"He gave me what I like to call a BS - detector quiz. He scribbled three elementary circuits on the back of a napkin and he asked me if I could solve them. But I'd never taken a circuitry course in my life so basically I failed his test completely. It was one of those first

impression situations where the impressions didn't really mesh. I was also unimpressed with the location because I do not drive and back then the location had very poor access to public transit."

"I had blamed the interviewer. He was a huge bear of a man and he *really* intimidated me."

Upon discovering the match result he recalls, "I was absolutely devastated. It was the end of the world (he laughs). I was ranting and raving and screaming."

However, within half a day of showing up at the workplace, "I realized that my misgivings about the interviewer were completely misplaced...that crazy man who interviewed me before, he's now one of my best friends and mentors. He retired years ago but we still go out for a beer and chicken wings to talk things over. He's my favourite Xerox scientist."

Johann discovered that the reason why he wanted to stay at Xerox was the learning he experienced there compared with other jobs in the industry. "I learned to get my hands dirty in the lab and to solve real problems. In other jobs I didn't have the satisfaction of knowing my contributions were impacting the operations of the company."



When Johann was a co-op at UW he was in charge of developing a digital photography system. This photo was one of his first successful acquisitions of a digital image which was a bit exotic back in the 90's

Now the tables have turned and Johann is the co-op interviewer from Xerox. Knowing, first hand, the complications involved with first impressions, Johann's references are on his business card and he encourages the students he interviews to call his previous co-ops to ask what it was like working for him. Overall he advises co-op students: "Remember that you aren't making a firm long term commitment, try different career paths, it's really a way to explore what the working world has to offer." ♦



Dreaming ...and Designing

UW Co-op Student on the Design Team for Windows Mobile Phone

While the majority of co-ops endured a winter term bundling up for the icy trek to work or class, Naheed Hirji, a 2B Systems Design Engineering student, was enjoying the winter in sunny California on his co-op with Microsoft.

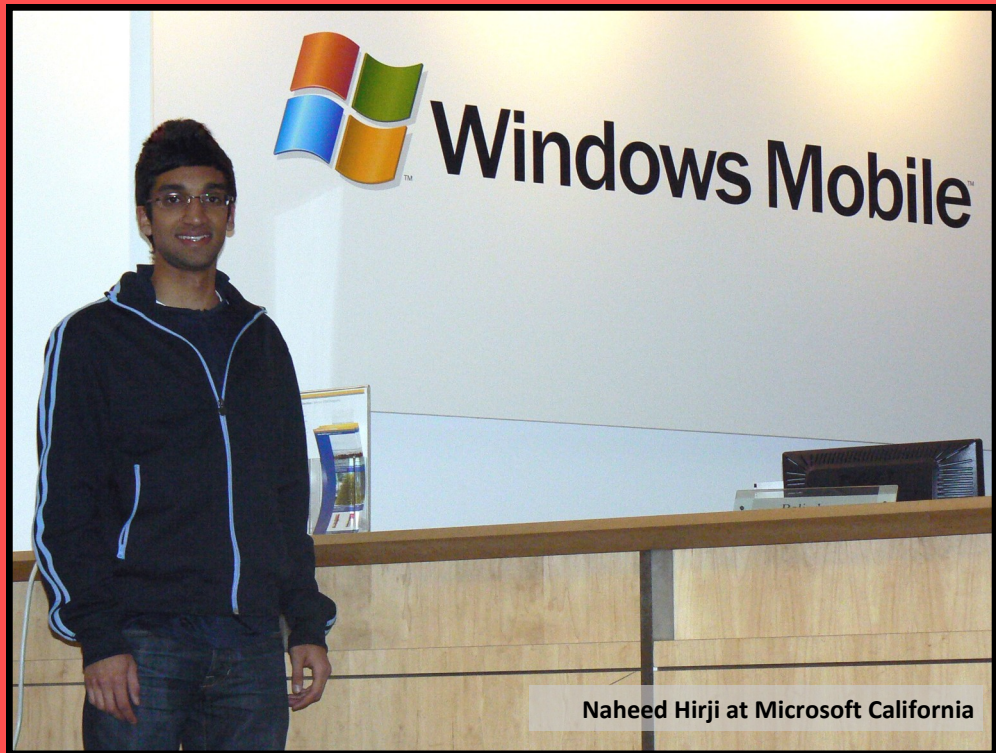
Naheed was employed as a Program Manager, designing Microsoft's new mobile OS, Windows Mobile 7, for release in 2010. While he couldn't reveal too much about the project in the works, he explains, "The aim of Windows Mobile 7 is to be a hybrid between business and consumer oriented phones." While competitors like Apple's iPhone were initially consumer-oriented, their recent focus has been on making it enterprise-friendly, using tools such as Microsoft Exchange email. On the other hand, RIM's BlackBerry is traditionally too business-focused for the average user in their mid-teenage years. Considering that Microsoft targets the entire market, from business users to consumers in the student demographic, the plan is to develop a platform that incorporates the best of both worlds, including all the features today's generation loves.

Naheed is thrilled to be working for a company that provides him with an abundance of freedom and two market-leading projects to manage. Considering the target audience, he admits that he is at an advantage designing phones for other young people. Additionally, as the phones will be used by millions across the world, there is a sense of pride associated with working on the project and its features.

When asked about his transition to California, you could hear him smiling on the other end of the phone.

"The first few days before you leave, there is a sense of nervousness that comes over you. You don't know anything about the place you are going to, you don't know other students, and you wonder if you'll find friends in this foreign place."

But his adventure out to the West Coast became easier after the first month. Naheed experienced many of the perks, "There's an abundance of places you can visit on the weekends: San José, San Francisco, Las Vegas, and Seattle. I just got back from LA for a five day visit. As a co-op student, Microsoft definitely gives you leeway to explore. Not to mention the great California weather; it's the middle of April and already 30 degrees."



Naheed Hirji at Microsoft California

While Microsoft's future includes the release of Windows Mobile 7, Naheed's future may include one of three different paths. He is considering earning his MBA after a few years in the working world, getting a Masters in International Development from McGill, or jumping into work full-time in a role similar to the one he is in now.

"The first few days before you leave, there is a sense of nervousness that comes over you. You don't know anything about the place you are going to, you don't know other students, and you wonder if you'll find friends in this foreign place."

Overall, Naheed enjoyed working on his own large-scale projects and gaining a high level of responsibility. Through his end of term presentation to the General Manager and Division Managers of his team, he learned how to defend his technical decisions and to provide business justification for his work – two skills which are bound to come in handy in his future.

Naheed has some advice for others seeking program management co-op positions in Silicon Valley (home to many other high profile headquarters such as Yahoo, Google, Apple, eBay, and several others). "In your interview, it's all about user-based design questions. They want to know your ability to determine what the user wants and designing with that as your focus." ♦

HR representatives from four organizations recently provided some helpful advice regarding the hiring process and beyond. While their opinions do not necessarily reflect those of all employers, their recommendations provide some very helpful tips.

Hot Tips

from
the Pros



Just in time for
your spring term
interviews...

Cover Letters

While some employers like cover letters, others simply don't have the time to read them. When there are hundreds of applicants, it's faster to read only the résumés. Remember that a generic cover letter that is mass produced is lazy and stands out in a negative way. Our entire panel insisted that if you do create a cover letter, do it right. Include all proper names of those you are addressing, be specific and only send it if you are positive it is correct and worth your time. If the job posting does not specify to send a cover letter, consider following the provided directions, skipping the cover letter and sending only your résumé as this company may be anticipating many applicants.

To Facebook or Not to Facebook: That is the Question

Our panel believes that professional networking sites such as Linked In are more appropriate for business. When asked if they used Facebook to screen applicants in advance, most believe that Facebook is a fun social site and would never consider screening using a fun tool rather than a professional one. Instead of basing all of your networking online consider CECS' employer information sessions which were a big hit with the panel. If you attend these sessions and develop a rapport with someone from the company, you can mention this in a cover letter or you can follow up with a phone call after you send this person your résumé.



Clockwise, from top left: Christina Bouda of Conestoga-Rovers and Associates, Denise Mahoney of Symcor, Angela Fennelow of Sunlife Financial, and Katie Fines of Valé Inco. (Photos courtesy of Scott Charles, ITMS)

Résumés

- Include courses that directly relate to the jobs you have applied for and use space wisely. Eliminate outdated high school information.
- Include both your permanent and current addresses and telephone numbers. **Indicate your preferred contact** to help the hiring managers. You want to reduce their stress levels any way possible and your professionalism will be apparent.
- Make sure your skills in your "profile" match those in the job description for a higher chance of being chosen for an interview.
- **Candidates who get the interview are those who can show how skills gained previously can be used by the hiring manager.** Just think of all forms of communication like sending out a handwritten letter rather than an email which gets lost in the pile. In other words, the more professional, proper, and specific you are the more you will get noticed.

In the Interview

- **Remember the Acronym STAR (Situation or Task, Actions, & Results) for behavioural based questions.** If you follow this order for answering behavioural questions you are likely to have a good way to tell a few stories that show how well your skills are aligned with the requirements of the position. *(Note: University of Waterloo uses the W5 format, a similar and equally effective method of addressing behavioural questions)*
- **The best advice is to brand yourself. If you are known for something, let that show.** If you are excellent at presentations make sure this skill really comes through, if it relates to the job description.
- **Ask questions at the interview** and not just any questions! Showcase your initiative and drive for this position. Show that you've done your research and always have questions.
- **Have a copy of your résumé with you** – you can glance at it and have an answer that relates back to what you have consistently promoted about yourself.
- **Dress the part.** Don't chew gum, wear "bling", sunglasses on your head, or jeans.
- **When shaking hands with the interviewer, be sure to look him or her in the eye.** They understand you are nervous, but staring at the floor puts them on edge too and makes them feel like they have to make you comfortable.

What Not to Ask First:

1. Salary (indicates you may be motivated solely by money)
2. Vacation time (questionable commitment)
3. "Do I get a BlackBerry?"

On the Job

Be involved in the workplace with committees and **be noticed socially for good things**. As one of our panellists said with a laugh, "you don't want to be that guy at the party ... and we all know which guy I mean." Remember to develop your professional image and be known for making a positive difference. Additionally, **find a mentor** who is willing to help you find your way and provide advice for future work terms. If they have followed a career path that suits your interests that's a bonus!

Things to Consider...

Do:

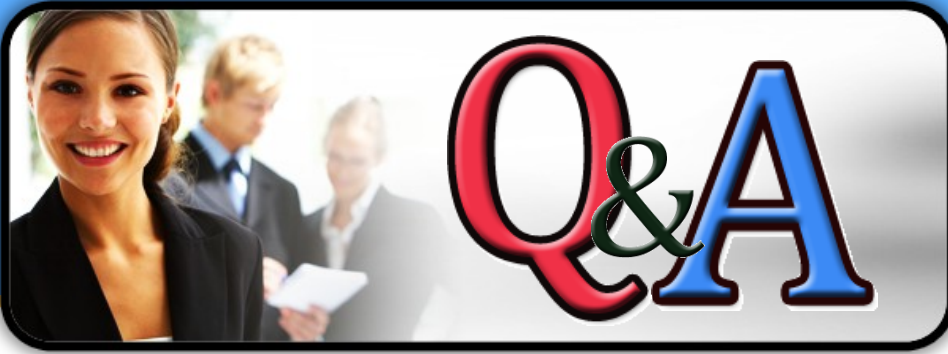
- Include something in the subject line and body of the email to which your résumé is attached. It is very frustrating as a hiring manager to try to guess why someone is emailing you.
- Show that you know something about the business' core values. Christina, who hires for an environmentally responsible company, recalls a time when a student sent in a résumé that was printed on recycled paper. "It was ugly, but they made points because they showed me their values matched with our company's."
- Indicate to the employer where you found out about the opportunity.



Avoid:

- Send out a mass email to all employers from whom you hope to gain opportunities. According to Angela, "there is nothing more insulting."
- Include a photo on your résumé.
- Skip questions when you go through a company's online application process. Some of these sites will eliminate candidates based on skipped questions.





JobMine Replacement

You may or may not know that JobMine is being replaced by a new online job application system that will provide users with an improved job search experience. The team developing the project in the lower level of the Tatham Centre answered some of our questions...

What were the main reasons for developing a new system?

The current JobMine system was slated for re-development in 2012. This redevelopment created an opportunity for the University of Waterloo to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the system, taking into account recommendations from co-op reviews conducted in 2005 and 2006. The timing also was aligned with a variety of renewal initiatives within CECS. The overall goal is to improve the employment process for students and employers alike.

How long has the new program been in development?

Requirements and planning started in 2006 and activity ramped up during 2007. The main activity started in September 2007 with the on-site team placement (director, three full-time staff members, and nine co-op students.)

What are the features of interest to students?

Students will find the usability and the flexibility greatly increased from what they are familiar with in JobMine. One of the major areas is in the type and form of information that a student can share with employers during the application stage, and the type and form of information that employers can share. The improved student information content will help students market themselves to prospective employers, and the employer information will help employers explain to students what's attractive about specific job opportunities.

Overall, the opportunity to create and share information is dramatically increased and there are corresponding tools for searching and managing the information. This new feature will help students to find and apply to jobs. Employers will also have better tools for reviewing and selecting students to interview. We are also investigating various schemes to improve the ranking and matching process – to get more students matched with jobs in the main round. This is becoming even more important with the economic challenges everyone is facing.

The 2006 review team also heard a great deal about “reducing the clicks,” “making it faster to find and review applications,” and “increasing hours of access.” A lot of work has been done in these areas. The goal is to provide a system that is streamlined and direct to use.

What are some of the challenges faced on a project like this?

Good question. There are definitely challenges. It is a major development undertaking and is a departure from the usual “buy versus make” strategy at the University. The requirements and stakeholder needs are varied and there are few rules-of-thumb that can be used. This lack of direction creates two major challenges: dealing with multiple stakeholder groups with varied needs, and the development of a system capable of mass customization and flexibility. Approximately two-thirds of the team are co-op students and while this has benefits, there are also issues with personnel changeover each term,

training, experience and so forth. Finally, the system is being developed in parallel with other initiatives within CECS and it is always a challenge when you have several major elements changing at the same time.

How do you think the transition to the new system will go? Is it easy to navigate?

Ease of use is something on which we are spending a lot of time and effort. From the beginning we have had part of the development team dedicated to user interface design, user testing, and user feedback. In 2008 we did limited testing which is now beginning to increase. We expect to be ready later in Spring '09 to start exposing early versions of the interface to a wider population for feedback and user interface testing. A limited pilot is also being planned for Winter '10 to get feedback from system users. There's also a team of CECS staff starting to look at communications and other implementation support to ensure a smooth transition.

What will it look like?

It will look substantially different from JobMine. That we know for sure. Unfortunately, we cannot show a screenshot, at this point, because we are constantly evolving the design based on feedback and testing. As soon as a version is ready for viewing and feedback, we will let people know. We plan to have a demo room in the Tatham Centre that will be used for early access. Later, we will create a mock system open on the web to University of Waterloo co-op students so that the students can try out the features and provide feedback. ♦

Mark Funk

Student Profile

UW's New Chancellor

From the Friends of the Library
Lecture April 20th, 2009.



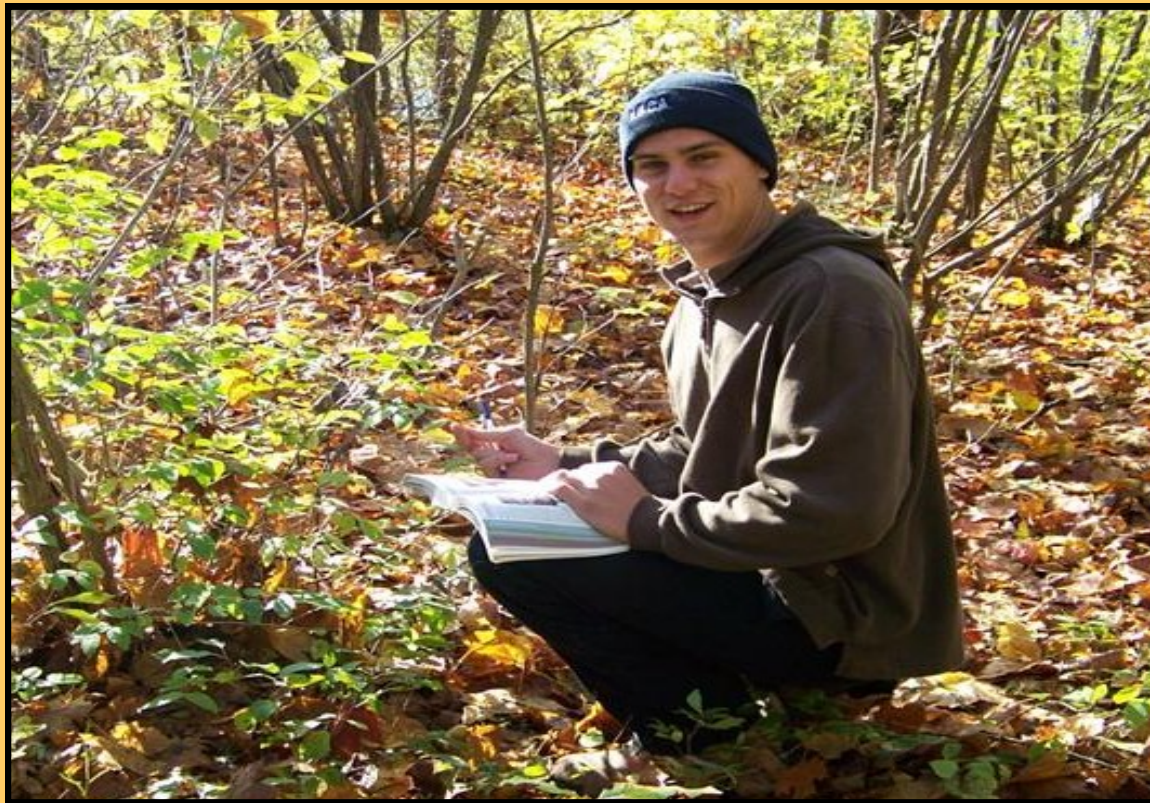
Photo Courtesy of CPA

Who: Prem Watsa,
Chairman and Chief
Executive Officer of Fairfax
Financial Holdings Limited,
Chancellor Elect of the
University of Waterloo

Claim to Fame: Fairfax has
total assets of
approximately US\$28
billion, and common
shareholders' equity of
approximately US\$4.6
billion.

Keys to Success: Prem
stands behind the Guiding
Principles he sets for his
company. He insists that
while the market can
change, the guiding
principles may never
change. For Fairfax these
principles fall into three
categories: Objectives (to
increase shareholder
value), Structure
(decentralized), and Values
(honesty and integrity,
team players, and friendly
acquisitions.)

Self Professed "Tree Nerd" Talks About Work Term at ABCA



When it comes down to it, not many people can honestly say they have done their part for the sake of the environment.

Mark Funk, on the other hand, has certainly contributed to the health of the planet with his work at the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) in Exeter, Ontario. He gained first-hand experience with tree planting programs, identifying species at risk, preventing agricultural erosion and other restoration projects for rare ecosystems. He also helped with ecological land classification on the property ABCA owns.

During the field season a lot of Mark's work was outdoors in woodlands, performing plant identification, surveys of the flora, and biological monitoring which included electro fishing. Mark describes this activity as fishing while wearing a backpack containing an electrical charge and a wand with which you probe the water. This wand releases a small current that stuns the fish briefly so that you can collect, sample,

count and measure the fish, and then return them to the water. However, Mark learned to like more than fish at ABCA.

"I never really thought about trees before. When I got there, I was doing a lot of terrestrial stuff. I thought, 'this isn't really up my alley.' But the more I learned about trees - learning how to ID them and everything - suddenly, I'm a tree nerd!" He adds with a bit less enthusiasm, "a reluctant tree nerd."

"They try to co-operate and teach people how to make use of the land responsibly and to protect the resources we all share."

On the job, Mark developed skills while working with private land owners, in terms of how to balance their needs (i.e., what would look nicest, aesthetically) with his concerns about what is best for the environment. He appreciates what the conservation authorities do because, "They are trying to

work with people rather than against them...they try to co-operate and teach people how to make use of the land responsibly and to protect the resources we all share."

The one thing that surprised Mark throughout the work term was that often theory just doesn't cut it in nature. He says, "Sometimes you learn the ideals in school but then, in reality, you get different factors...because of funding or privately owned properties. You learn to compromise based on the sacrifices you need to make. It doesn't always work out as perfectly as you want it to but it's a valuable lesson."

In the summer, Mark will be returning to ABCA doing tree planting (hooray!) and more specialized projects (such as the species at risk inventory). Eventually, Mark would like to earn a restoration diploma following his degree from Waterloo as he sees this aspect of the environment becoming a big part of his future ♦