

OUTSIDE ACADEMIA 2010

Professional Paths After Graduate School

College of Arts and Humanities
Office of the Dean



TOP FIVE TIPS on finding non-academic jobs

Joy Heyrman (Art History)

Director of Development,
The Walters Art Museum

Joy P. Heyrman has been with the Walters Art Museum since 1991. She manages the Development Division which oversees public and private grants, sponsorships, Annual Giving circles, special events, planned giving, museum rentals and numerous volunteer committees. During the 1990s, she also managed the museum's \$36 million Walters 2000 Campaign for the renovation of the Centre Street Building—enlarging the endowment and the enhancement of the visitor experience. A career art museum professional, Heyrman was selected in 1998 for the Getty Museum Management Institute (MMI) and has served as an arts advocate and development consultant. She holds a B.A. from Amherst College and a Ph.D. from the University of Maryland, where her dissertation, inspired by William Walters album of American drawings, investigated the collecting, reception and developing market for drawings in early 19th-century America.

1. Be aware of the transferable skills (writing, data analysis, public speaking) you have and hone them at every opportunity.
2. Seek mentors beyond your field and keep them informed of your progress and your aspirations in a personal way.
3. Just as academic fields have their own "language," so do fields of business. Study and practice them as you have in your academic life.
4. Tuck your ego away. Most non-academic fields place a higher premium on teamwork than on individual expertise.
5. Follow your passion. You devoted your life to your field for a reason. Try to find a place where you can tap into the excitement you have felt in your research, your discussions with professors and colleagues, and in your teaching. Good luck!!

José Enrique Idler (Philosophy)

Assistant Director, Americas Office of Public Policy
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José Enrique Idler obtained his Ph.D. in philosophy in 2005 specializing in ethics and public policy. He then pursued a career as an advisor in international relations, trade policy and business climates. He currently manages government and public policy affairs focusing on Latin America for a large international accounting firm.

1. Speak with people who have followed a similar path, i.e. PhDs in non-academic settings.
2. Look into different kinds of non-academic settings—e.g. government, business, non-profit, etc.—and determine which way you would like to go (these environments are not only very different from each other, but they will determine your job-search strategy).
3. Learn how to write a resume (not a CV!) and, more importantly, a cover letter.
4. Look for opportunities (volunteering, internships, short-term projects, etc.) to immerse yourself in a non-academic setting and obtain some experience.
5. Ignore your academic peers (in a good way, of course—the point is to resist the external or internal pressure to think that unless you're following the academic path you're not doing something worthwhile).

Michael Petersen (History)

**Historian, Historical Research Program Office
Defense Intelligence Agency, Washington, D.C.**

Michael Petersen received his Ph.D. in 2005. He is currently a Historian with the Defense Intelligence Agency, where he writes on intelligence and space history. Previously he served on the staff of the National Security Council and with the National Archives and Records Administration. He is also the author of *Missiles for the Fatherland: Peenemuende, National Socialism, and the V-2 Missile* (Cambridge, 2009).

- 1. Network, network, network:** For government jobs, it very often comes down to who you know, not what you know. Take internships, student employment, etc. Find someone who will be your advocate in an agency in wish you would like to work.
- 2. Start early.** Priority #1 is finishing your degree, but take as many internships, student employment opportunities, etc. as your academic schedule allows; or work them into your academic schedule over the life of your student career.
- 3. Think two jobs ahead:** If you want a job as an archivist at NARA, for example, you may have to start as an Archives Specialist; as Curator in a Smithsonian Museum, you may need to start as a Museum Specialist.
- 4. Think flexibly about your professional career.** You may find that you are doing something different from what your academic career prepared you for, but it can be related and you may find it even more enjoyable.
- 5. When applying for government jobs:** Write KSAs clearly and do not attempt to write with scholarly sophistication. Use active language, pay close attention to the wording in the job announcement, and use that language in your KSAs. It is ok to be repetitive, blunt, and dull. Government human resources staffers do not make decisions based on your skill with prose.

Jason Rhody (English)

**Senior Program Officer, Office of Digital Humanities
National Endowment for the Humanities**

Jason Rhody is a Senior Program Officer in the Office of Digital Humanities (ODH) at the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Prior to joining the Endowment, he worked at the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH), contributing to and advising digital humanities projects while teaching courses in literature and digital media.

- 1. Take your non-tenure-track job search as seriously as your tenure-track job search.** Educate yourself about the realities of the academic job market. Start with articles at the Chronicle of Higher Education and Inside Higher Ed, such as:

Benton, Thomas. "Just Don't Go, Part 2." <http://chronicle.com/jobs/news/2009/03/2009031301c.htm>

Lord, Alexandra. "Every Ph.D. Needs a Plan B." <http://chronicle.com/jobs/news/2009/03/2009031601c.htm>

- 2. Search for government jobs at <http://www.usajobs.gov/>.** You can search by keyword, but also try searching by agency (NEA, NEH, NSF, IMLS, Smithsonian, NHPRC, NARA, LOC). Explore working for the government while still in school (<http://www.studentjobs.gov/>) or consider opportunities such as the Presidential Management Fellows program (<https://www.pmf.opm.gov/>).
- 3. Pick up an extra set of skills outside of your traditional domain** (e.g. learn about technology, or dip into museum or archival work), or try to enhance your experience with collaborative and interdisciplinary work (e.g. editing in another discipline).
- 4. Think about the audience for your application.** Consider drafting a 2-page résumé from your lengthier CV or adopt a hybrid approach. Translate your academic accomplishments into specific job skills (e.g., do not simply list the classes you taught; instead, describe the skills you developed and used as an instructor). Make the case for your qualifications. For government jobs, learn about KSAs (Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities): <http://www.usajobs.gov/infocenter/resumetips.asp>
- 5. Be patient, apply early, and apply often.** The job search can take months, especially in academic and government circles.

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1. Don't forget to look in the same place you would look for academic jobs. Professional organization websites and newsletters often have sections devoted to such jobs. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* may also list relevant opportunities.
2. Ask around. Let everyone know what kind of job you're looking for. Department heads and administrative staff receive notices from local employers looking to fill non-academic positions. Professors you know may have working relationships with local archives, libraries, or other organizations for which you might be the ideal employee.
3. Don't ignore temporary positions. Many non-profits especially work on soft money, and have to hire year by year. A position advertised as a one-year may, however, be endlessly renewable. Like one-year teaching positions at universities, you may also become the "inside candidate" for a permanent position within the organization. Especially if personal considerations are dictating the geography of your job search, be open to these opportunities.
4. Look at places where you have done your own research, organizations from which you have sought funding, and the like.
5. If you're applying for non-research positions, consider working with the Career Center to prepare a résumé (rather than a C.V.) and a cover letter that emphasizes your non-academic skills.

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1. Try to identify the environment or organization in which you want to work.
2. Be flexible--your first job is not likely to be the one you keep forever.
3. "Network," establish contacts--mentors, colleagues are good sources of advice.
4. Be willing to move. Opportunities are available in unlikely places.
5. Accept all opportunities to expand your CV in your area of expertise; you can decline them later!

General Tips

- Look for non-academic jobs in the same place as academic job listings.
- Be prepared for anything. Be open to the possibility of getting a non-academic position, even if it is not something you were considering originally. Non-academic jobs may be very fulfilling!
- Do not say no! Take every opportunity that comes your way within your field.
- Do internships. These create experience, and most importantly, networks that will be very valuable to you when job hunting.
- Expand your computer/technical skills.
- If you have flexibility, consider internships or jobs outside of the DC area or a city you would not have normally considered, even in a non-metropolitan area.
- TRY, TRY AGAIN! - Many of the non-academic positions are extremely coveted, just like academic jobs. So, do not give up. KEEP TRYING!
- BE PATIENT! The application process for government jobs takes a very long time and goes through many people.
- There is no seasonality to when govt. positions are open. Often, positions only become open when someone retires.
- Watch news to see what is happening in govt. climate to prepare for possible increases in activity or budget of a particular dept. This will often result in a hiring phase.

General Application Tips

- Make it very clear you would work in the position. Be transparent! (not only about what you know, your special expertise in your field, but specifically how you can USE your knowledge in that particular job)
- Write simply, be direct, even dull. Do not be concerned with “impressive” writing.
- With KSAs, there is no need to show how well you write – simply address specifically what they are looking for.
- Literally look at the application listing and directly answer each qualification. Do not be afraid to use the exact verbiage from the listing.

What are KSAs?

KSA stands for Knowledge, Skills and Abilities. These are narrative or **Essay Statements**, which are frequently required along with a resume when applying for **government jobs**. The **KSA** statements must describe your experience in support of specific job-related questions. Your answers are designed to help **federal** hiring agencies select the best-qualified candidates for interviews. Your goal is to receive a high proficiency ranking from the information provided on your **KSA** statements. (see ksawriters.com)

Helpful Websites for Writing KSAs

www.ourpublicservice.org/OPS/programs/calltoserve/toolkit/KSAs.pdf

www.cdc.gov/hrmo/ksahowto.htm

<http://www.ksadoctor.com/>

<http://www.usajobs.gov/infocenter/resumetips.asp>

<http://www.ksawriters.com/>

Book recommendations

- *So What Are You Going to Do with That?*

Authors- Susan Basalla, Maggie Debelius

- *Great Jobs for Liberal Arts Majors* (Great Jobs Series)

Author - Blythe Camenson

- *Federal Resume Guidebook: Strategies for Writing a Winning Federal Electronic Resume, KSAs, and Essays*, 4th Edition

Author - Kathryn K. Troutman

- *How to Land a Top-Paying Federal Job: Your Complete Guide to Opportunities, Internships, Resumes and Cover Letters, Application Essays (KSAs), Interviews, Salaries, Promotions and More!*

Author - Lily Whiteman