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# Teaching Abroad



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**W**HEN the American job market looks narrow and overseas opportunities beckon, some academic job seekers hop on a plane to go teach at universities abroad. The articles in this collection describe how academics have adapted to expectations and political realities at posts in Europe, the Middle East, and South Korea, and the steps they may need to take to readjust when they decide to come back home.

- 4** **Why New Humanities Ph.D.s Should Leave the Country**  
For too long, the U.S. academic job market has compelled us to see our careers in black and white.
- 7** **Why I Started My Faculty Career in the Middle East**  
The academic benefits are great, and the drawbacks no more disqualifying than anywhere else.
- 10** **A Photography Professor Struggles With Saudi Culture in Transition**  
Her year at a women's university in Riyadh was not easy, but it was rewarding.
- 13** **Case Study: South Korea for Overseas Job Seekers**  
Job hunters considering a move to a new country should scan the academic environment carefully.
- 15** **Globalizing Your Academic Career**  
A search consultant and an American academic who went to Japan offer advice on working overseas.
- 17** **Conducting the International Job Search**  
As a Ph.D., your skills are as portable as you want to make them.
- 20** **A Move Abroad: Travels and Travails**  
What you need to bear in mind if you consider moving your academic career overseas.
- 23** **The Simple Gets Complicated in an Overseas Move**  
Subtle differences between your port of origin and your new country require constant little adjustments.
- 25** **Coming Home: Re-Entering the American Job Market**  
Taking steps to return to the United States can be as daunting as going overseas.

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JAMES YANG FOR THE CHRONICLE

# Why New Humanities Ph.D.s Should Leave the Country

For too long, the U.S. academic job market has compelled us to see our careers in black and white

By SCOTT T. GIBSON

**I**N DECEMBER 2014, my wife and I took a fairly routine trip to visit her parents in Quito, Ecuador, for the winter holidays. It was our first trip back since I had finished my Ph.D. the previous summer. December, of course, is prime time in the academic hiring season, and my job search was already yielding better results than the previous year when I was still A.B.D. I had strong interest from a few colleges and hoped I might get at least one campus visit that spring. My plan was to return to the United States, prepare for my interviews, and hope to become one of the lucky few to land a tenure-track job.

Today, I am writing from Ecuador to offer this advice to new Ph.D.s in the humanities: Pack your bags.

When I learned that a university in Quito was in the midst of a hiring spree, I spent the first few days of winter vacation preparing my application, just to see what would happen. Two days later, I received a response from the university's chancellor asking me to come in for an interview at noon on December 24. That's right — Christmas Eve. My three-hour interview included everything from standard job-talk fare about my research agenda and teaching philosophy, to discussions about the Higgs boson and the Tao Te Ching (the chancellor is a physicist and studies Eastern philosophy). In the end, we shook hands and agreed to communicate by email about possible next steps, which included follow-up video interviews with a vice chancellor and a dean at the university.

If that sounds like a pleasantly unconventional experience for a faculty interview, that's because it was. Even though my U.S. job search looked promising, I was also frustrated with some of its inherent absurdities: compiling bloated dossiers; being required to spend several hundred dollars (if not \$1,000 or more) to attend a major convention just for a preliminary interview; and enduring the mutually uncomfortable campus-interview experience in which some departments seem to spend more time airing their dirty laundry than objec-

tively evaluating job candidates.

In contrast, the application process in Ecuador was clean, simple, and direct. The university knew what it wanted from a new English professor, and I knew that I had what it wanted. So what if the chancellor wants to interview me on Christmas Eve and give me a personal tour of the campus? Great. I'll bring the eggnog.

Less than a month later, I was offered the job. My new employer gave me another month's time to decide if I really wanted to uproot my life to move to South America. By then, I'd already completed a second campus interview in the United States, and had my visiting assistant professorship (or VAP, as it is widely known) renewed for another year, too. I was fortunate to have several options and a window of time to decide. Ultimately, though, I would have been a fool to stay in the United States.

Here's why.

First, I had to ask myself: Would moving to Ecuador pay off — literally? I wasn't going to move to a new continent just to stay broke. I could do that at home.

In my case, the starting salary in Ecuador was actually a few thousand dollars higher than my VAP salary, and not much lower than I could have expected as a new assistant professor at many U.S. colleges. (Ecuador has used U.S. dollars since 2000, so currency conversion and exchange rates weren't an issue.)

Raw salary, however, was only a starting point. Several other financial factors contributed to my decision to move abroad:

- It was clear from cost-of-living differentials that even a comparatively modest salary in Ecuador would be worth more than a better-paying job in the United States. For my circumstances, I used several cost-of-living calculators and found that life in Quito costs roughly 60 percent to 70 percent of what it costs to live in Greensboro, N.C., where I had been living for the previous eight years. In short, I could

earn a lower salary and still fare much better financially in Ecuador than at home.

■ Taxes in Ecuador and many other countries are much lower than in the States. The IRS requires U.S. citizens to file a federal tax return no matter where you live, but the tax code includes provisions that diminish the effects of double-taxation on foreign wage earners. For example, the “Foreign Earned Income Exclusion” exempts your salary up to a certain amount (currently set at \$100,800) after you live abroad for a full tax year. You will pay taxes both here and in the country where you live during the first partial year, but your income will be exempt in the United States afterward. (Unless, of course, you earn more than \$100,800. In that case, don’t complain. You’re doing fine.)

■ Student-loan repayment terms can also change when living overseas. Under the standard repayment plan, for example, I was paying around \$980 a month. Once I adjusted to the “income-based repayment” plan on my VAP salary, my monthly payment dropped to around \$480. However, my current repayment is \$0, and will likely stay that way for up to three years because of a provision in the income-based repayment plan for situations in which your calculated monthly repayment amount is not enough to cover interest. Moving overseas maximizes the benefit because my taxable income in the United States will be virtually zero, even if I earn a substantial raise. In the meantime, I can take the money that would have been used on student loans to build financial assets.

Of course, I also worried about how taking an overseas job would affect the direction of my academic career. What happens to my research agenda? What if I ever decide to re-enter academe back home? The university does not have a tenure system akin to the U.S. version; the majority of faculty here are under permanent contract in one of two categories as either “professor docente” (teaching professor) or “professor investigador” (research professor). I hold the latter title. How would that lack of tenure affect my candidacy at a U.S. college? I do not yet have clear answers to these questions. But I realize now that those concerns were largely defined by my narrow vision of what an academic career should be.

As a scholar of African-American and U.S. multiethnic literature, I knew that I would have limited resources for my research if I moved overseas. How could I possibly be a productive scholar without instant access to the MLA database or a

research library’s special collections?

The truth is: Aside from presenting papers at a few conferences, I hadn’t been all that productive anyway, research-wise, since writing my dissertation. I was spending most of my time and energy trying to get a job rather than *doing* my job.

Even though I now teach a heavy load of four courses a semester, somehow I have found the time to write more than I have since completing my Ph.D. In just seven months, I have submitted a new article manuscript to a selective journal, I am drafting a second article, and I’ve started work on expanding my dissertation into a book manuscript. Any research I cannot do overseas can be done during trips home during the summer — the time when most of us get our research done, anyway.

I’ve also regained a sense of purpose in my teaching and research. In U.S. higher education, the job market for humanities Ph.D.s can feel demoralizing, and with good reason. It’s no secret that the humanities have been facing a deteriorating job market for decades and that the market in English and foreign languages, in particular, has been especially grim. Furthermore, humanities professors consistently get paid much less than faculty in other fields such as business and the hard sciences. It’s no wonder that many of us are so willing to accept lower salaries than our academic peers. The implicit message is that we should just be grateful to have jobs at all.

Don’t get me wrong: Competition for international jobs is stiff, too. But in my case, at least, it was a relief to feel that the job didn’t come served with a side of indebtedness. It also saved me from the possibility of facing years of rejection on the tenure-track market. Yes, rejection is an inevitable part of the job search, publishing, and life in general. But many young academics would do well to remember the lesson most teenagers learn in high school: You shouldn’t base your self-worth on whether the prom king or queen will go out with you. The same goes for hiring committees.

For too long, the academic job market has compelled new humanities Ph.D.s to see our careers in black and white — either “make it” into a tenure line at a U.S. institution, or leave academe. But there are more options beyond our borders. Ph.D.s in the sciences figured that out years ago, and humanities Ph.D.s are just now learning to follow that lead.

So is it time for you to apply for a visa, too? That all depends on what kinds of challenges you are willing to face.

*Scott T. Gibson is a full-time research professor in the humanities at Universidad San Francisco de Quito.*

*Originally published on May 19, 2016*

# *Why I Started My Faculty Career in the Middle East*

One more case for why new Ph.D.s in the humanities should consider working overseas

By JAMES HODAPP

I ENTERED the academic job market in 2013 and 2014 as an A.B.D. candidate in African and postcolonial literature. Given the scarcity of tenure-track jobs in my fields — and the fact that I was studying at a large public university rather than an Ivy or comparable — I knew that my job search would be an uphill battle.

My program and my adviser both had a respectable history of placing students in reputable, if not always spectacular, jobs. The tenure-track market, however, had gone from bad to worse. So I entered it apprehensively and was satisfied to secure 10 initial interviews and four campus visits over two years.

PAT KINSELLA FOR THE CHRONICLE REVIEW



I never expected that the job that would sweep me off my feet would be at a university in the Middle East.

Like many humanities Ph.D.s, I cast a wide net with my applications. Unlike many others, however, the scope of my applications included positions in Asia, Europe, Australia, and the Middle East. Having lived abroad before, the idea of limiting my search to the United States had never entered my mind. If you could get a full-time job teaching two courses a semester in your field in Paris, why would you go to a rural American town and teach a 4-4 load of survey and composition courses? However, when I asked my department's otherwise laser-sharp placement coordinator about the overseas market, the dismissive answer I got was to maybe try looking in *The Guardian* jobs section.

With that mindset, I was thrilled when the American University of Beirut invited me to an initial interview at the annual convention of the Modern Language Association. I wasn't sure what to think. I knew little about Lebanon or the Middle East in practical terms and, as open-minded as I may be, I kept looking for reasons to remove my application from consideration. Despite an invigorating MLA interview, followed by an intellectually and socially dynamic campus visit, I kept expecting someone to pull the rug out from under me by presenting some aspect of the job that made it unacceptable. Finally, the offer came and I had no good reason to refuse. So I didn't.

This is not to say that there were no impediments. My wife would have to leave her job, and the university would not assist her in finding one in Beirut. Thankfully, she found one on her own. We were also bringing our 1-year-old son and had to consider what the move would mean for him. Moving is always a hassle, but it's even more so when the move is overseas. That cushy leather chair you eyed forever and finally managed to buy? It's not making the trip. Distance from family was also an issue, but having lived abroad before, this was something I had come to terms with quite a while ago.

Beyond these navigable obstacles, the benefits were what drew me to the job. I am contracted to teach a 3-2 schedule, but by the end of my third year, I will have taught only nine courses (rather than 15), thanks to release time from teaching that I received for service work and an internal fellowship.

My department also rarely asks me teach outside of my fields, so I've been able to offer undergraduate courses like "African Literature by Women" and a graduate course on "African Literature: A Post-National Approach." Beyond the freedom to teach in my fields, I have also been given the support to invite African scholars to come to workshops and conferences with my graduate students and to bring Nigerian-American writer and photographer Teju Cole to campus, including a vis-

it to my class.

Beyond the professional accommodations, I have also been provided with an apartment by the sea on campus (though not all faculty live on campus), and when my son is old enough, his primary, secondary, and tertiary education will be paid for by the university. Right now he attends a school where the language of instruction is French, and he often comes home sprinkling Arabic into his vocabulary. His linguistic acumen is quickly outstripping our own. Personal travel is another huge boon. We have taken trips to Egypt, Turkey, Cyprus, Greece, Spain, Germany, Ireland, and the United States — with trips to Slovakia and South Africa arranged for this summer. Most of those trips would have been beyond our means had we

## Anyone having to debate whether guns should be allowed in U.S. classrooms knows that governmental overreach into the classroom is not limited to the Middle East.

remained in the States.

None of that is to claim that there are not serious issues at my university and other Middle Eastern institutions, particularly regarding the humanities. All I am saying is that those drawbacks are no more disqualifying than anywhere else. Faculty here bristle at poorly conceived administrative policies and criticize the university for not shielding them from inefficiencies of Lebanon's dysfunctional government. However, anyone having to debate whether guns should be allowed in U.S. classrooms, or trying to figure out the innumerable "triggers" of their students, knows that governmental overreach into the classroom is not limited to the Middle East.

Recently a visiting American scholar asked me if I felt isolated from academe, seeing that I am geographically removed from the American scene that wields so much power and influence. That's a

natural question, given the centrality of American academics in Anglophone, African, and postcolonial scholarship. But, as I told my colleague, I have published in South African, American, and British journals and welcomed to campus postcolonial and Africanist scholars and writers from the United States, Nigeria, Ethiopia, and South Africa.

In short, I feel anything but isolated. I am much more central to academic conversations here than I imagine I would be at any of the other places I interviewed where heavier teaching loads would have left me weighed down with course prep and grading. Being overworked in the way that many junior American academics are now seems to me to be a much more decentering and disempowering situation.

As graduate students we were often told to “write your way out” of first jobs that were less than ideal. Now it seems not only that these first jobs are more uncommon but also that they are designed to prevent you from bolstering your CV by burying you in teaching and administrative duties.

Many academics already understand that the faculty job market extends beyond the United States. But having served on several search committees, and looking down the barrel of chairing one next year, I am taken aback by the low numbers of applicants that Middle Eastern universities receive from U.S.-trained Ph.D.s. My university has managed to hire world-class assistant professors with Ph.D.s from places like Indiana University, New York University, the University of Kansas, Rice University, and Yale University, but it is frustrating to see that so many scholars are taking themselves out of consideration for jobs based largely on locale. As Scott T. Gibson argues in his recent *Chronicle* essay, “Why New Humanities Ph.D.s Should Leave the Country” (see Page 4), a whole slew of jobs around the world await humanities scholars who venture beyond U.S. borders.

So what keeps U.S.-trained scholars from applying abroad?

In reference to Beirut and other Middle Eastern locales, the perception of a lack of safety is often involved. I regularly receive emails from prospective students, visiting faculty, and university guests asking me about the safety of Beirut. Ironically, the emails often come from cities like New York, Chicago, Washington, Johannesburg, Paris, and London — all places with significantly more

violence than Beirut.

When someone from Chicago — where it’s not unheard of for 80 people to get shot in separate incidents on a summer holiday weekend — tells me they are worried about violence in Beirut, I smirk. However, I also gain insights into the mindset of a highly educated populace of scholars who live under the constant threat of gun violence nearly unmatched in the world yet somehow still worry that everywhere else is more dangerous.

This is not even to mention the questions I get about whether one can drink alcohol here, whether women must wear hijabs, and what it’s like to live in a Muslim country. (Quick cheat sheet: Yes, alcohol is readily available; women can dress as they please, as well as drive; and Lebanon is not a Muslim country but rather a Muslim-majority one). As judgmental as this may sound, I’m less concerned with wagging my finger at the insular nature of U.S. academics than I am at figuring out what my university is up against when recruiting American faculty and what we need to do to broaden the horizons of those who see the Middle East as one indistinguishable unit characterized by oppression and terrorism.

Ultimately, I’m not trying to convince people to come to Beirut or the Middle East, and certainly not as compelled labor chasing capital in support of a neoliberal globalizing project. But I do think that far too many Ph.D.s do not seriously explore the many viable career options for serious scholarship available outside the United States — some of those options more serious than they would find inside the United States. I have far too many friends with Ph.D.s who are marginalized into adjuncting, endless postdocs or visiting positions, and alt-ac jobs against their will who would be better served in thinking about Beirut, Singapore, Quito, Dehli, Sydney, or elsewhere if they want to pursue advanced professional academic research in the humanities.

The humanities at U.S. institutions have made a point of dismantling the Eurocentrism of our fields of study. Perhaps now is a good time to turn the same critical lens on our own careers. There are more viable options abroad than most American graduate students are led to believe, and I am one of many unacknowledged cases that prove it.

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*Originally published on June 8, 2016*



SELF-PORTRAIT COURTESY OF THE ARTIST, COPYRIGHT, JANICE L. LEVY, 2017

Near the beginning of her stay in Saudi Arabia in 2010-11, Janice Levy developed a rapport with a young camel in the Al-Hasa region.

# A Photography Professor Struggles With Saudi Culture in Transition

By URSULA LINDSEY

**G**RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA  
RAPPLING with a different culture is often part of the challenge, and appeal, of teaching abroad. But imagine going to a country where many consider your discipline sinful or criminal, to teach a group of students whose freedom of movement is very limited. That's what Janice Levy embarked upon last year when she took a job teaching photography at a women's university in Saudi Arabia.

"It's not for everyone, obviously," says Ms. Levy, a Boston native with short salt-and-pepper hair and a friendly, outspoken manner. Her year has been

difficult, disorienting, and exhausting. But it's also been, she says, "the most rewarding teaching experience of my life. And I think that's because you can make such an impact in such a small amount of time."

Ms. Levy was on leave from Ithaca College, where she is a professor of photography. She has taken students on trips to Antigua, the Dominican Republic, and Madagascar, and she first traveled to Saudi Arabia in early 2010 to give a workshop on leadership to female deans. It was during that trip that administrators invited her to come to this capital city to teach introductory photography at Princess Noura bint Abdulrahman University. The

class is a requirement in the all-women's university's newly established College of Art and Design.

When Ms. Levy started teaching last fall, most of her students had never picked up a camera before. And they weren't sure why they should.

Because education for women is still relatively new in Saudi Arabia, says Ms. Levy, "young women don't have a sense of what their education is going to do for them. Initially I was very surprised by students' lack of seriousness: They were always late, perpetually texting on their phones, didn't take notes ... I didn't imagine I would have to teach them to study, to respect the teacher. I had to give them pep talks."

The gist of those pep talks: You are the first generation of female Saudi photographers, and the world is eager to see what you have to say.

The professor had a "big impact," writes Yasmeen Al Barrak, her teaching assistant, in an e-mail. "Most of the students were looking at photography as a hobby rather than a job or an art that they can study, and [in which] they can be a successful artist."

Yet even once Ms. Levy's students became enthusiastic about their work, they faced difficult questions: Where could they photograph? And whom?

In a country where many consider all portraiture forbidden by Islam, and where no one but a woman's close relative is even supposed to see her face, students could find few willing subjects and were extremely reluctant to have their own pictures taken. "If I even picked up my camera and pointed it at one of the students to demonstrate something, they flinched," says Ms. Levy. Eventually students — whose faces Ms. Levy always digitally blurs — came to trust her.

### STEPPING OUT

In their first assignments, says Ms. Levy, the women in her class photographed what was safe and close at hand. "I was seeing a lot of pictures of cellphones and stuffed animals," she says. "Feet is another thing they photographed a lot. And I was seeing a lot of photographs taken from car windows. I said: No, no, no."

A lot of her students, Ms. Levy explains, "didn't feel comfortable leaving their homes" and heading into the streets to take pictures. Saudi women are required to be accompanied almost everywhere by male guardians and — especially in pedestrian-unfriendly Riyadh — tend to circulate in chauffeured cars. A woman on the street is likely to attract the unwelcome attention of unknown men or of the religious police.

In Saudi Arabia, Ms. Levy herself discovered, "people are unaccustomed to seeing people taking pictures ... you don't see anyone walking around with a camera. So the first question is going to be, Why is this person taking pictures?"

The suspicious attitude toward photography is a combination of religious, cultural, and political factors. Islam forbids idolatry and the representation of the human form; Saudis are particularly sensitive to any violations of privacy, especially when it comes to women; and the absolute monarchy's repressive police apparatus tightly monitors all public space.

Yet with the advent of cellphones with built-in cameras, many Saudis are now used to snapping photos (so much so that at weddings and other celebrations guests are asked to hand in their phones at the door). In 2006 a royal decree authorized photographing "tourist sites, architectural landmarks, and shopping malls as well as government buildings where there is no sign banning photography." But many policemen seem to be unaware of the decree. Photographing private residences and

**Ms. Levy's students at Princess Noura University feel "a certain amount of fear," she says. "They have to move out of that little safe bubble."**

individuals without permission can provoke angry reactions.

Ms. Levy was detained once after she took a photograph of a man napping on the ground, and a bystander called the police. She was released without charges. Several of her students were questioned by bystanders and police, and one — despite carrying a letter from her university — had her camera's memory card confiscated.

For her students, Ms. Levy says, "there is a certain amount of fear. They have to move out of that little safe bubble." She says she kept telling them: "The more you're out there photographing, the more common and accepted it will become."

Ms. Al Barrak said the professor's "vital and dynamic" style of teaching "was very different

from what we have in our college.” Ms. Levy had a hands-on approach, says the teaching assistant, and shared her passion for photography and her own work with the students.

Eventually, Ms. Levy says, most of the young women got out of their houses and out of their cars and produced work that justified her faith in them. One student photographed a Filipina woman who works in her family’s dental clinic. Others visited low-income neighborhoods and schools. Ms. Levy took her class on a field trip to the coastal city of Jeddah and also set up a project in which her students taught disabled children what they had learned. She has organized exhibitions of her students’ work in Saudi Arabia and Europe.

### **PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES**

Princess Noura University, where Ms. Levy worked, is the kingdom’s premier women’s-only university and was planned to accommodate up to 40,000 students. Established in 2007, it is in the process of relocating to a new, sprawling campus on the edge of Riyadh. Like many Saudi institutions of higher learning, the university is busy recruiting faculty from outside the country and establishing new departments and programs.

Arriving at the College of Art and Design, Ms. Levy says, she faced “practically insurmountable difficulties” (although she seems to have surmounted them all). Though the administration says all courses will eventually be taught in English, many of Ms. Levy’s students hardly spoke any, and Ms. Al Barrak had to act as translator. Her lab did not have the computers, software, and printers she’d been promised. There weren’t enough of the cameras she’d requested. The administration ordered books that she had told them would be unsuitable. Since the new campus — and the faculty housing it contains — was unfinished, she lived in a one-room apartment on a dusty road across from the old campus.

“We had to do everything from scratch,” says the college’s dean, Yasser Balila. “All the furniture, all the equipment, all the staff members. It wasn’t easy.” He says that the new campus, scheduled to

open this fall, will have all the necessary facilities as well as faculty accommodations. “Everything will be there,” he says.

Ms. Levy describes less-material challenges as well. A colleague was fired two weeks into the semester, leaving her to teach 100 students. And while she was happy about the support Dean Balila gave her, she felt she ruffled the feathers of other administrators by openly criticizing the program’s flaws and suggesting improvements.

“I’m somebody that likes to make things happen quickly,” says Ms. Levy. “When I arrived, I knew I had a limited amount of time and I had all these ideas. But in Saudi Arabia change happens very slowly. In hindsight I see that my style ... can be very disconcerting to some people.”

Mr. Balila says that the professor had to get used to “a different academic environment.” He notes that he met regularly with Ms. Levy to hear her views and that he appreciated receiving “really good advice from somebody not from Saudi Arabia — on how to improve the program, what skills students are lacking, what is the difference between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia.”

Those differences had a huge impact on the photography program, Ms. Levy says. Even as the university was setting it up, she believes, administrators were ambivalent about the program’s value and goals. Photography was a requirement; yet at the university’s inauguration, cameras were forbidden. “What kind of a message are you sending?” asks Ms. Levy. “Are you embracing it or not?”

She believes the challenges she encountered as a teacher reflect “the kind of challenges going on politically and culturally in the country.” In her view, Saudis feel that “We want to maintain a sense of who we are and what our values are. We also want to embrace things that are new.”

Ms. Levy left Riyadh at the end of June. She hopes that some of her Saudi students will be able to come study with her in the United States, and she would like to return at some point. “I believe that photography is a just a vehicle to get people thinking about their world,” she says. In Saudi Arabia, “there’s so much to photograph and so much to think about.”

*Originally published on September 4, 2011*

# Case Study: South Korea for Overseas Job Seekers

By ZEN PARRY

**T**HIS is the time of year when South Korean universities are finishing up decisions on filling their numerous fall vacancies. Why all the openings? Because somebody else left. Indeed, lots of people just left. But there is a larger story behind this cycle, as there often is when Westerners are recruited into foreign institutions.

Although the details of that larger story may be different in each country, the “job hunter beware” sign should be the same.

Applying for a position in Korea can appear similar to any other hiring process, with applicants submitting their résumés, cover letters, publications records, and other documentation. Korean institutions follow similar accreditation standards as American universities, so they balance doctoral hires with applicants who have lesser qualifications. But that is about as far as the similarities extend.

The first signs of divergence between appearance and reality may emerge at the interview. What nobody tells job applicants is that if their panel is primarily made up of Koreans, then the criteria for hiring are radically different from those of a similar panel of foreign professionals. In the Korean culture, there is strong emphasis on “harmonization” and less emphasis on qualifications. In many Western cultures, the emphasis is on developing unique personality traits and professional skills, and being confident in one’s opinions. The Koreans will be looking to see if an applicant is likely to harmonize within their system, while the foreigners on a panel will be wondering if the person could actually do the job. But the twain shall never meet, as usually the foreigners will not be asked their opinions about the interview.

Another tip on getting through the interview stage: Don’t talk about change!

Foreigners are not being hired to bring in change. In many instances, their role is to add

window dressing to a program to demonstrate a commitment to internationalization, which is a domestic game of one-upmanship in Korea rather than a true national policy. Foreigners who are native English speakers have value and will usually teach in English, but they are not being hired to save the Koreans. Their job is to continue more of the same, with a good accent and a nice suit.

Proof of this will come at the second faculty meeting. The first one will usually include newcomers, if they have been invited. After that, their lack of fluent Korean will be viewed as a burden, so the meetings will happen without them. That can be a gift.

Many times the bait of tenure is dangled in front of a foreign hire. Numerous professors have been promised tenure only to have the rules mysteriously change right before the decision was supposed to be made. Although about 5,000 foreign academics are employed by Korean higher education, very few of them have tenure. If tenure is part of their package, applicants should clarify the process for achieving it, and then be prepared for some bait-and-switch.

Understanding the context around hiring a professor, Korean or non-Korean, might help a job-seeker’s decision. Two thirds of Korean academics are hired as part-time faculty, generally because it is cheaper for the university than to bring faculty on board full-time and give tenure. (Sound familiar?) Foreign professors are hired as “full-time,” which is part of their visa status, but that full-time status does not guarantee a lengthy career of teaching and research. There are two standards at play.

In fact, being hired full-time is a mechanism that allows full-timers to work in the country, and also be terminated without notice if their teaching evaluations do not hit the right score. The code word for being fired is “non-renewed.” Sometimes that message is delivered without any conversation. Having to tell someone he or she is not being

renewed is stressful to Koreans, and such confrontation is not part of “harmonizing,” so they prefer using e-mail.

To understand the future of the Korean job market, applicants should know that Korean higher education is at a crossroads. Frequent reports discuss the population’s low fertility rate and the unsustainable boom in new universities. Over the next two decades the forecast is that many of these newer institutions will be forced to consolidate, merge, or shut down because of falling enrollments. Also, the cost of education in Korea has increased sharply over the last 15 years, and many Koreans believe that for about the same cost they can get a higher-quality education abroad. The net result: Korea is realizing that its “bell jar of education success” is running out of air.

Korea is hiring. There is no mistake about that. In 2009, the country began its World Class University program, which had the key goal of importing high-quality scholars. If you have your Nobel Prize medal framed and ready to travel, go straight to the front of the interview line. This project is hiring foreign professors at a rate almost three times higher than in previous years so that sponsoring universities can qualify for government money for broader World Class University projects.

Anyone who gets a job offer should consider other key issues that will not be talked about at the contract signing: the quality of housing and the quality of academic professional life in general.

Strict Korean rules determine the size of housing. And many people are moved, without notice, in their first year of joining a university. One colleague I know has been moved every six months in his two-year contract, with each move a downgrade.

The Korean system for allocating housing is designed on the Korean social order, but the results do not usually match the lifestyle expectations of foreigners. Families are heavily favored over single people. A foreigner married to a Korean national with a young child hits a sort of trifecta, making for both better housing and an easy hire. Less paperwork is required because such foreigners usual-

ly have a residency card, are thought to be already “culturally sensitized,” and are considered less likely to leave unsatisfactory situations because they have their families in tow.

As for expectations about professional satisfaction: If job seekers are looking for a teaching gig and a lifestyle that lets them save money to pay off their student loans, then Korea is a decent place

## **Korean culture has a strong emphasis on “harmonization” and less emphasis on qualifications**

to be. Academic salaries for foreigners usually roughly match those of the United States. (That puts them at twice the pay rate of most Koreans, leading to resentment.) But if foreigners are looking to continue the academic aspirations they had prior to arriving in Korea, then those expectations might need some adjustment.

Foreigners do leave on short notice. Some have a choice, some don’t. But job seekers really can find a position one or two months before the semester starts. It is how someone feels after the first term ends that determines the rest of the contract. Half full or half empty? Sometimes you have to let the glass stand still and let the contents settle, to see if it is drinkable.

*Zen Parry, of Australian origin, lectures on entrepreneurship in South Korea.*

*Originally published on August 16, 2011*



BRIAN TAYLOR FOR THE CHRONICLE

# Globalizing Your Academic Career

By KATHLEEN M. PIKE and JEAN DOWDALL

**W**E ALL LOVE a great adventure story that transports us to faraway lands. Reading those stories can rouse the imagination, but why not live your own adventure and literally transport yourself to another world?

Thomas Friedman argued in a recent article in *The New York Times* that career paths aren't stable ladders anymore — they are entrepreneurial ventures calling for creative steps. In academe, one of those creative steps may be to work overseas. As American colleges and universities globalize, faculty members and administrators have the opportunity to globalize their professional careers as well.

One of us is a search consultant who has worked with foreign institutions and with American candidates for administrative positions. The other is an American academic who taught overseas for more than a decade and has recently returned to the United States. Drawing on our experiences and conversations with expats, we offer advice here to inform your thinking about pursuing your

career overseas.

**Academic communities are transcending national borders.** Once it was relatively uncommon for an American academic to pursue a position outside the United States, but now the landscape for careers in higher education is changing, with opportunities multiplying around the world.

Many models of global higher education are developing, including the creation of entire institutions (e.g., King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, in Saudi Arabia), overseas campuses (e.g., Cornell, Georgetown, Northwestern, and Texas A&M Universities, among others, in Qatar) and specially defined programs (e.g., the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Alliance for Research and Technology, in Singapore).

Which will thrive and provide attractive places to work, and which will not? That's an important question without easy answers for someone considering an overseas appointment, especially an administrative one that will entail building and marketing an institution against increasing competition. Only you can decide how much risk you

are willing to assume.

**Go — but stay connected.** Don't be afraid to take a post overseas, but do not risk becoming "out of sight, out of mind" back home. Being forgotten by colleagues will make it much harder to build on your international experience in the next stage of your career.

**What kind of commitment do you want to make?** Overseas opportunities vary widely. If your institution has a campus in another country, you might seek a short-term assignment there. That has the obvious benefit of allowing you to work within the structure of your own institution and, presumably, remain on the same payroll.

A slightly deeper commitment might be an overseas teaching assignment during a sabbatical or a summer. To get the most out of that experience, plan ahead. Identify potential colleagues and research collaborators, track down archives or other data, and arrange for research-related travel. If you don't do those things in advance, you will waste precious days after you arrive and may run out of time to complete your project.

For a more substantial commitment, you may want to consider actually taking a full-time position at a new university, for a fixed or an indefinite period. Depending on the country, that can be an immersion experience that is likely to have the deepest personal and professional impact.

Short-term opportunities for administrators are more limited and will very likely be built on networking rather than formal pursuit of advertised vacancies. If you know the right people and are in touch with them at the right moment, you may have the opportunity to spend a few months or a year setting up a new program overseas, or tackling a problem in which you have [http://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Lessons-of-Dislocation/126484/jobs\\_\\_topjobs-slider](http://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Lessons-of-Dislocation/126484/jobs__topjobs-slider) expertise.

However, most administrative roles call for a longer commitment, and most administrators seeking to go overseas would be well served by following the normal route: applying for vacancies advertised in U.S. publications.

**Anticipate complexity and delay.** Once you arrive at your destination, it is likely that setting up shop — both personally and professionally — will take longer and require more energy than you anticipated. It helps to think of the transition as part of the cultural adventure you are looking for.

Depending on the terms of the overseas assignment, your home and/or host institution might assist you with issues both practical (visa, bank account, housing) and professional (long-distance computing access, grant-submission assistance, office-space issues). For an administrator, an international move is more likely to carry personal and professional support.

*Originally published on September 19, 2011*

However, there are many things no one can do for you. For example, even if the institution is grounded in the English language, the more you can learn of the local language, the better. And grasping the culture of the region will facilitate your transition and in some cases be dispositive.

**Family matters.** The array of alternatives for overseas pursuits places varying degrees of demands on family members. Your spouse or partner, children, and aging parents will have much more at stake in your plans to teach abroad for a year than if you are away for only a short time. Taking a full-time job overseas puts the greatest demands on other key people in your life.

If significant others plan to join you in your travels, don't make assumptions about their views and the quality of life they will find. You may think that your teenager would never leave her familiar high school and BFF's for a year or an indefinite period in Europe, but she could surprise you with her adventurous spirit. You may think that the schools overseas will not be adequate to your son's special needs, but they may be the equal of any school in the United States.

To come at this from a different perspective, you may assume that the rhythm of daily life will be the same elsewhere as it is at home. But many things take a lot longer, and can be much more complicated, for you to do as a foreigner. Employment for a trailing spouse or partner may be easy to obtain or difficult, depending on local laws and norms and on your partner's area of expertise. Check out those things before you assume that the situation will be either excellent or unworkable.

An overseas work experience can profoundly enrich your teaching, research, and/or administrative capabilities. There may be material benefits, too, as some overseas posts (but definitely not all) offer generous compensation packages. Think about your professional development in creative and adventurous ways, and you might find a world of global opportunities that are deeply engaging in the short term and transformative in the long term.

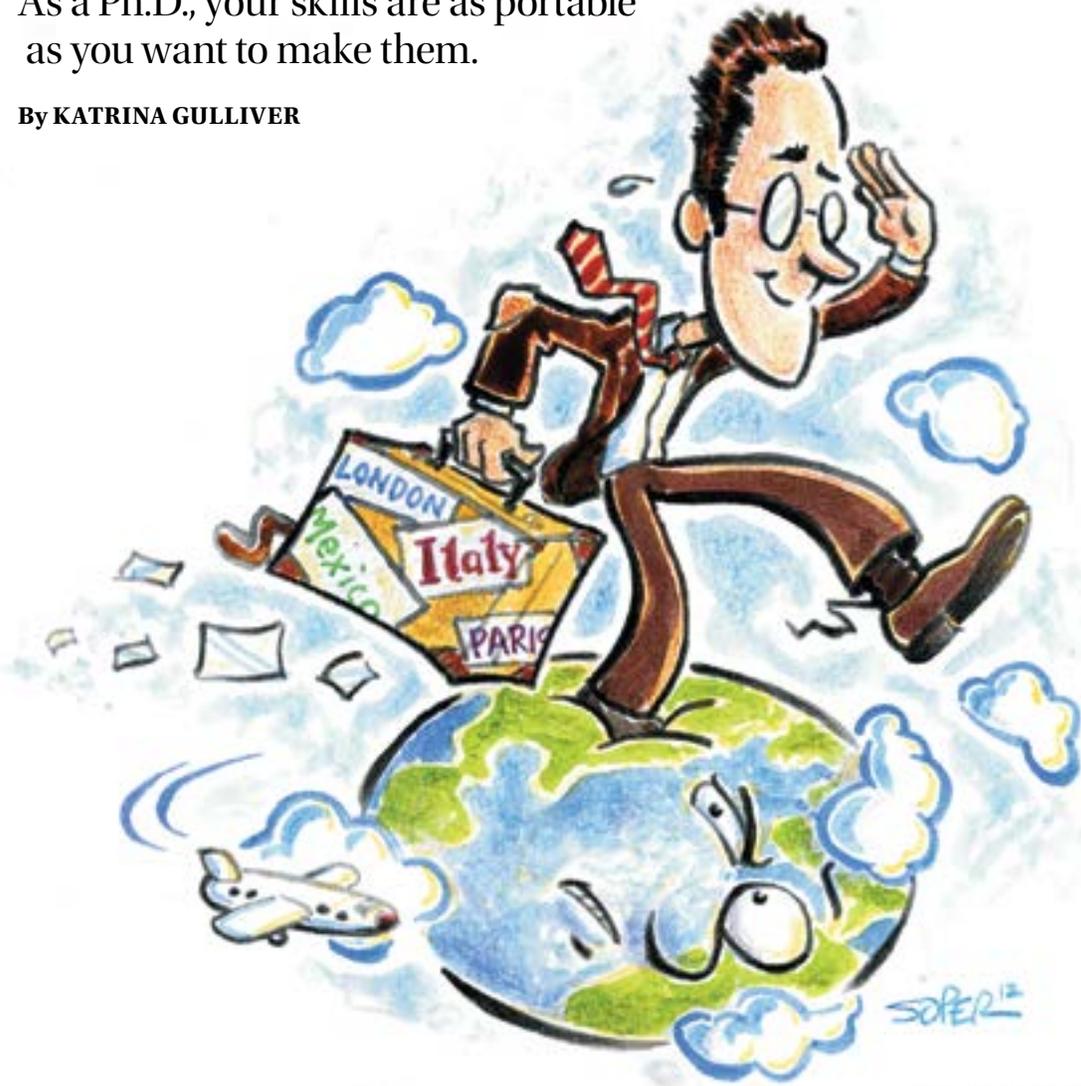
In a subsequent column (see Page 25), we'll discuss bringing your career back home, and look at ways to make it easier to return to work at U.S. institutions.

*Kathleen M. Pike spent the past decade in Japan, overseeing a research program at Keio University and serving as a professor and assistant dean for research at Temple University in Japan. Recently returned to the United States, she is heading a task force on global mental health at Columbia University. Jean Dowdall is a search consultant at Witt/Kieffer, working in higher education in the United States and globally.*

# Conducting the International Job Search

As a Ph.D., your skills are as portable as you want to make them.

By KATRINA GULLIVER



KERRY SOPER FOR THE CHRONICLE

**W**ITH the faculty job market as tight as it is in the United States, more academics are looking for options beyond their own country. In many fields, especially the humanities, the reality is that you can increase your chances of landing a position if you are willing to consider a long-distance move.

While the academic market in many fields winds down for the year in North America in May, it is just warming up then in other parts of the world, making that a good time to seek work abroad.

You will find much variation in the hiring process, even within the En-

glish-speaking world. So as someone who has held academic positions on three continents, I offer some tips worth bearing in mind if you are applying beyond your own region.

**Attend conferences outside your country.** In the sciences, international collaboration is common, and research laboratories often have money to help students defray the costs of going to an overseas conference. In the ever-cash-strapped humanities, however, many American graduate students can barely scrape together the money to get to the annual convention of the Modern Language Association on their home turf, let alone a conference on a different continent.

But that is no reason to rule out a foreign trip. Many international conferences, particularly in Europe, offer some financial aid to graduate students or junior scholars.

**Cultivate international contacts.** Searching for jobs internationally can mean seeking out mentors — people who can write letters of recommendation — from different countries. Demonstrating that you have that kind of broad network of colleagues can help your international applications. And just as with domestic connections, your professional contacts overseas can also give you a heads-up on vacancies in their departments.

**Know where to look for positions.** Jobs in Britain, Hong Kong, and Singapore can appear at any time but are advertised predominantly from February to June. For Australia and South Africa (where the academic year is the calendar year), most job ads appear from June to November. So if you're planning to conduct a search that is truly unrestricted geographically, there is no off-season.

Make yourself familiar with the Web sites that advertise jobs, such as Jobs.ac.uk and Campusreview.com.au. In Australia and South Africa, academic jobs are often advertised on general employment Web sites, so check South Africa's Careerjet and Australia's CareerOne.

**Familiarize yourself with the job titles.** In Britain and much of the Commonwealth, the closest equivalent to "assistant professor" is "lecturer." There is no tenure track, however, because positions are effectively tenured from day one. The British promotion track goes from lecturer to senior lecturer, reader, and finally professor.

**Learn to use local terms in your cover letter.** The doctoral dissertation, as it's known in North America, is called a thesis in Australia and Britain. Learn how the curriculum works in the universities where you are applying. There is no point talking about students "majoring" or "minoring" in your field if you are applying to a system where students take only one subject for their entire degree.

If you are American, don't use U.S.-centric terms like A.B.D. That lingo means nothing in education systems where everyone is "all but dissertation" from the first day of the Ph.D. program.

Don't use numeric codes to describe the courses you've taught, and don't refer to your teaching experience in terms of "credit hours." Likewise, for those applying to jobs in North America from outside, be prepared to teach much more broadly than you may have in the past. Remember, you want members of the hiring department to feel that you will be a good fit, and that starts with speaking their language in your application.

**Focus on the specific hiring criteria.** Jobs ads in Britain or Australia often list the selection criteria. Be direct. Even if you have the requisite skills or experience, don't expect the human-resources department to go looking through your CV to find that out.

In many cases, human-resources departments screen the applications first, and only those meeting the criteria as advertised will be passed on to the department's search committee. In your cover letter, list how you fulfill *all* of the criteria.

**Even little things count.** On your CV, don't include personal details like your date of birth or marital status, unless you're applying to a country where that is customary. Look online for CVs of scholars in your field in the country you're considering. Their formatting should give you some clues about the standards.

When uploading documents, make sure your CV and cover letter are formatted for the right size of paper. You don't want your document cut off when it is printed out at the other end. Make sure the last line of your address is the country, and include the international dialing code with your phone number on your CV.

**Do your homework.** Hiring a long-distance candidate can be more of a challenge for a department, but those committed to hiring the best will always try to consider international applicants. That said, the idea of selling yourself as someone who will fit in well is doubly important when applying internationally. Educate yourself not just about the country, but also about the specific region in which the university is located. That may seem obvious, but I've encountered applicants who clearly had no clue about how higher education operated in the places they claimed to want to work.

Reading higher-education publications from your target country is a good way of knowing what the current issues are for universities. Some good ones are Britain's *Times Higher Education* and Australia's *Campus Review*. As you read, take note of things like assessment schemes (such as the Research Excellence Framework, in Britain), and be able to talk about how you can contribute.

A globalized job search will be a lot more work than one restricted to your home country. But it can be very rewarding to experience academic life abroad. Depending on your field, access to research materials and colleagues from other theoretical backgrounds can enhance your research.

Your experience can be turned into a useful asset in career-building, too. Teaching experience overseas can make you marketable to departments looking to build study-abroad programs or raise their enrollments of international students.

Having seen how universities work in different countries, I have gained a broader understanding of higher education, curricular approaches, and the purpose of the various forms of humanities degrees. As anyone who has presented a conference paper in different venues will tell you, audience responses and academic cultures can vary a great deal. A European colleague explained one difference to me: Americans learn by asking questions, while students in his country stay quiet until they are confident enough in their knowledge to make a statement, at which point they can be brutally blunt.

*Originally published on May 18, 2011*

Such differences are cultural, existing not just at the student level. Having presented your work before a range of audiences is crucial before giving a job talk in a foreign country, so that you won't be taken by surprise.

Academics in many fields have more opportunities to move abroad than people in other professions do. Unlike medical practitioners or lawyers, we don't need to be recertified to work in different places. Your skills are as portable as you want to make them.

*Katrina Gulliver is a Ph.D. in history and a research fellow at Ludwig-Maximilians University, in Munich. She has held faculty and administrative positions in Europe, Singapore, and Australia*



BRIAN TAYLOR FOR THE CHRONICLE

## *A Move Abroad: Travels and Travails*

By CHRISTOPHER PHELPS

**A** YEAR AGO, I moved to England to accept a teaching position at the University of Nottingham. I came as an American historian at midcareer with a family in tow. Those in other academic fields, or who are single, or looking at a position in, say, China, will very likely face circumstances quite different from my own. Nevertheless, I will try to share what general pearls of advice I have for American academics contemplating relocation abroad.

As any scholar of immigration can tell you, both “push” and “pull” factors explain transnational migration. In my case, institution, not country, was decisive. The push was that I had been teaching on a small regional campus for 10 years and had lost my two best friends on the faculty, one to cancer, the other to transfer. The pull was that I was excited by the chance to teach graduate students in a top-tier program at a world-class research university. When I made my move, Nottingham was ranked 86th in the world by *Times Higher Educa-*

*tion* (the rank has fallen since then after the ratings criteria were changed), and the university’s faculty members in American and Canadian studies had received the highest possible distinction in a British research assessment.

Given my political leanings, it did not hurt that Nottingham’s local folk hero took from the rich to give to the poor. But intellectual exchange was the chief draw. On my former campus, I was the only full-time scholar of American history. In my new program, there are four other scholars in my intellectual-history subfield alone, and other Americanists at work on such topics as slavery, civil rights, literature, and foreign policy.

Moving abroad has proven intellectually justified, but it has not been without challenges — some more severe than anticipated. My family and I were not strangers to life abroad, since I had had previous teaching stints in Canada, Hungary, and Poland (the latter two on Fulbrights). But permanent relocation is a more decisive process. Here are

some working notes:

**The transition will be complex logistically.**

In any long-distance move, you can expect many headaches. When moving abroad, expect a multiplication of hassles, large and small.

The visa process was surprisingly daunting. Even for a professional with a job offer in hand, the British government has made the process exceptionally unwieldy. After I filled out countless forms and supplied endless documentation, the process stalled. A few days before we were to depart, I sent a desperate e-mail, and a British consulate staffer in Chicago worked miracles. We now hold three-year, renewable visas. I would take renewal for granted except that debates over immigration have intensified since we arrived.

Once we got here, we had to decide where to live. We would have preferred to live in Nottingham, a bustling city, so I could walk to work, but a check with other faculty members with children indicated that the best primary and secondary schools were overfilled. Our three children would almost surely be bumped into weak schools.

So we settled in a village 18 miles away from the city, renting a converted carriage house behind a large Edwardian house where our landlords live. Directly across the street is an immense stone cathedral, built in the 12th century. The village is picturesque, with butcher shops, bakeries, cafes, and a secondhand bookstore.

It is a storybook setting, but getting our children (ages 9, 10, and 12) into the schools did prove taxing, particularly in the case of our oldest daughter. Residency does not guarantee school enrollment, and our daughter's case dragged out on appeal for four months, during which time she was in our daily care. Now all three children are ensconced in the schools, which we find excellent.

What would be a short commute in the United States takes longer in Britain, given lower speed limits and circular roundabouts. The university is on the other side of the city, so the journey to work is 90 minutes by bus or 50 minutes by car. That practically obligates driving, so we have taken tests, written and practical, to obtain drivers' licenses, a process that requires more time and energy than one would have thought.

Such transitional issues — housing, schools, transportation — diminish with each one ticked off. But for the first year, at least, arrangement-making combined with unpacking can seem all-consuming.

**Your finances will transpire in two currencies.**

I did not move for money. Based upon currency conversion, I anticipated a near-identical level of salary, but that turned out to be meaningless because the cost of living in Britain is, in many respects, higher. We therefore took a hit to our income.

In the spring, my wife, a credentialed university reference librarian, managed to obtain a one-year position in the main humanities library at Notting-

ham. She did so on her own, since British universities do not practice spousal hiring. Her extra income has made all the difference, and we hope the job will lead to something permanent.

Living abroad adds layers of financial complexity to life. We have been unable to use our American savings to put a down payment on a house in England, because to transfer the money here would result in its being taxed at a very high rate. What's more, despite an excellent credit rating in the United States, I was unable to get a line of credit for more than 300 pounds on any British card — including ones branded American Express, Visa, or MasterCard, companies that know my track record.

Above all, know this: American citizens living abroad must file income taxes in both the host country and the United States. Naturally, the accountants who specialize in expatriate issues charge prime rates.

**There will be ups and downs.** We have had glimpses of the sublime, as when scaling a mountain in Wales at Christmastime, discovering hot lamb-and-mint pasties at the bakery, happening upon remote castle ruins in Northumberland, or listening to the choir sing Thomas Tallis in the cathedral across the way.

But we have also had days of gloom, wondering whether we will ever belong in this culture, with all of its inscrutable differences. For me the moments of greatest doubt have come when I have held one daughter or the other on my lap as she cries. (Fortunately, that has not happened very often, or I'd have packed it in long ago.)

Technology makes communication easier than ever before, but being at trans-Atlantic distance can still make one feel remote from family, friends, and country, especially at holidays or — I admit, this may just be me — elections.

Kind colleagues have gone out of their way to welcome us. One took me to a professional cricket game. Another, an American, invited us over for Thanksgiving. Still, you find yourself missing home in the strangest moments, as when you need drain-clog remover at 8 p.m. and realize that because you are no longer in a 24/7 society, all the shops are closed.

**Words will differ.** Living in a non-English speaking country presents challenges, of course, but difficulties arise even when you supposedly share a language with your adopted country. Few people in England talk in the polished tones of the BBC, but the British do have a vocabulary of their own. A variant lexicon of academic life must be learned. Prepare to experience moments of infantilization as you ask for explanations of things that everyone else considers obvious.

Fortunately, you will absorb much of the terminology by osmosis. What we call a dissertation, they call a thesis, and vice versa. A course to us is a module here; a course here is what we would

call a major. When we say “class,” we mean a single teaching session; they mean primarily a grade cohort, as in “the second-year class.” Service duties become “admin” tasks. And so on, into the more technical.

The vocabulary can suggest different cultural norms. “Staff,” for example, applies to faculty members here, unlike in the United States, where the word tends to be shorthand for administrative employees. That would seem to indicate an egalitarian sensibility: We are all staff.

In other ways, however, British terminology reflects a more pronounced sense of hierarchy. I, for example, hold two titles: senior lecturer and associate professor, British and American ways of expressing an equivalent rank. At first I thought that in granting both designations to me, the university had extended to me a remarkable courtesy. But when, without giving it thought, I selected “Prof.” on a human-resources form as the designation I prefer before my surname, I learned that I was not to do so, since that designation is appropriate only for those with full professorships. Curiouser and curiouser.

One completely unexpected and delightful advantage of a considerate culture is that, for the first time in my life, almost everyone is calling me by my actual name rather than truncating it in assumed familiarity, as if every Elizabeth must be a Betsy and every Robert a Bob. I had given up on that entirely in the United States.

**Higher education will be structured differently.** Rather than being compelled to master a broad spectrum of knowledge, the British-university student specializes intensively, taking but a single subject area — such as American and Canadian history and culture — for three years (not four, as in America). Some of my students choose “joint honors” degrees, or double majors, hence complete additional work in politics or English literature. But that’s it — no math, science, psychology, or French.

In our program, the performance of incoming students in the first year does not count toward their cumulative grade-point average. The marks count in the second year for 20 percent and in the third and final year for 80 percent of the final grade. At the end of every year, there is an exam review board, where for several days the entire faculty assembles, with outside observers on hand, to review every single student’s performance. Yearly marks that fall just shy of a given grade may be rounded up.

Instructors here act as “personal tutors” to a number of students. That may bring to mind visions of sherry-sipping sessions discussing Montesquieu in oak-paneled offices, but it is more mundane. You hand them their marks at the end of term and chat about how things are going. Once

*Originally published on January 2, 2011*

in a while, a student comes and sees you out of the blue, and it is very nice.

Nottingham’s expansive green lawns set it apart from many European universities, attracting not only locals but also students from all over Britain, especially wealthy southern England, as well as from Europe and Asia. Apart from a generally higher level of fashion sensibility — skinny-legged jeans, scarves, and other accoutrements abound — and a generally greater degree of politeness, students here seem to me to occupy the same range as Americans, from apathetic to brilliant, although the best here are among the best I’ve ever taught. The actual hours spent in the classroom here are fewer (two hours a week, typically) than stateside, so the reading you can assign is less. More emphasis is placed upon lengthy independent research papers as opposed to small, assigned-topic essays.

The Ph.D. is purely a research degree here. Writing the thesis is the rub. Doctoral students don’t have seminars, except when candidates present their research to one another. In our program, each Ph.D. candidate has two advisers, not one.

National policy intrudes upon academic life more directly when higher education is state-provided. A severe budgetary restructuring by the British government, with outsize tuition hikes forthcoming, has introduced major unknowns and righteous student rebellions this year. The Research Excellence Framework — a tool that measures faculty performance, and by which budgets are set — is defined at the national level, with goalposts sometimes moved in the midst of a given cycle.

Despite the myriad differences, however, the elemental life of a university scholar remains largely the same under the British and American systems: dominated by teaching and research.

**It may change your scholarship.** Being in a more research-driven setting has prodded me to submit more articles to topmost journals. I also find myself writing more for British publications, such as *Times Higher Education* and the *Journal of American Studies*.

But the main effect on my scholarship of living abroad has been that in explaining the American past to an international audience across the Atlantic and reading more British history, I am thinking more consistently about transnational and comparative themes in American studies. There is nothing like a move to put things in perspective — particularly if it takes you far away from the country you study.

*Christopher Phelps is an associate professor of intellectual and cultural history in the School of American and Canadian Studies at the University of Nottingham.*



CAROLE HÉNAFF FOR THE CHRONICLE

# *The Simple Gets Complicated in an Overseas Move*

Subtle differences between your port of origin and your new country require constant little adjustments

By RACHEL HERRMANN

**A**S A PH.D. who has taken a faculty job overseas, I haven't had to make the adjustment from teaching my own history classes in the United States to teaching them in England. I'm starting from scratch over here, because this is my first academic job.

The move, consequently, hasn't been an overwhelming adjustment professionally. Instead, the challenges have been of the everyday variety — cooking, shopping, banking, finding a place to live.

For example, each week I stand in the grocery store and Google for about 10 minutes. Such research is essential in order to find the English counterparts of products I'm familiar with in the United States. And it's easy to be confused: I've nearly used dishwasher soap in my washing machine because both cleaning products come packaged in dissolvable pods. (I don't even know if it matters.) During another trip to the store, sussing out the difference among various versions of yeast here took an additional 10 minutes beyond my weekly Googling quota.

I've located almost all of the cooking supplies I need to make my favorite dishes, although some culinary endeavors have demanded modification. Commenters on a previous column I wrote for *The Chronicle* ("In Defense of Stuff," June 3, 2013) were kind enough to offer advice regarding what I should bring with me. I knew, for example, that my cookie sheets would not fit in my smaller oven here. I also anticipated having to convert my baking recipes from Fahrenheit to Celsius, but I remained mystified when my popovers baked 20 minutes faster than they were supposed to (and almost burned), until I realized that my British oven was a convection oven. Finding oxtails to make *pho*, a Vietnamese noodle soup, took far longer than it had back home. And a grocer I asked about cheesecloth had no idea what I was talking about; I ended up using a tea strainer.

Subtle differences between the two countries remain — the kind you don't really think about until you've made the move. I traveled to England with cash because I've had trouble using traveler's checks in the past. Once I arrived, the agent at

the bank where I'd opened an account warned me against depositing any significant amount of money at one time because that sort of activity might appear too similar to money laundering. So for a good amount of time I had a bank account without much cash in it.

Not having enough money in your bank account is a bigger problem in England than in the United States, because many major payments must be made using a bank transfer rather than a credit card. I couldn't buy a cellphone, because the phone company wanted to be paid by bank transfer and wouldn't set up an account unless they could double check my nonexistent credit here. Without a cellphone, housing proved difficult to find because realtors wouldn't email me back.

I solved these problems only with the help of my boyfriend, who has started a teaching job in a city a couple of hours away. He had the foresight to open a bank account while he was visiting Britain for a conference in May. So I ended up giving him cash, and he bought my phone for me.

Thereafter I split my time between making cash deposits that I hoped were small enough that they wouldn't draw suspicion, and persistently calling brokers to ask about apartment listings. (I would urge anyone making a move overseas to make an extra trip to set up a bank account ahead of time. When you open the account, have your foreign debit card mailed to you in the United States. Some banks will allow you to do that as long as you change the address on the account to a British one within three months. Alternatively, see if a colleague in your new hometown is willing to receive your mail for a while.)

The quest for housing turned out to be quite different than in the United States. Leasing agents in Britain seem to excel at an approach I've come to think of as "the undersell." They prefaced multiple showings with warnings about how "basic" the apartment was, as if to caution me that I didn't really want to live there.

In some cases, they spoke truthfully, but in all of my encounters, I wondered why these brokers weren't trying particularly hard to sell me on something. They didn't seem to know very much about any particular apartment; they couldn't tell me approximate gas or electric bills, or what appliances the tenant was leaving in the apartment. It was a relief to finally find a place and move in.

Now that I'm settled, I'm feeling better about lots of things, including my health. I walk to and from the office, so I'm getting more exercise (and finding time for more-vigorous excursions, too). I know health care here really isn't free, because it automatically comes out of my paycheck, but I decided that if I was already covered, I was going to take advantage of it. I experienced a bit of a scare

during my routine checkup, when the nurse informed me that my blood pressure was too high.

Apparently, having your blood pressure taken during your first week on the job might not yield the most accurate result. It turned out to be a blip, but the high reading meant that the doctor required me to take a 24-hour blood-pressure-monitoring test, for which you wear a blood-pressure cuff under your jacket, and it inflates twice an hour and records the results. The machine that records the readings is attached via a cord, and fits in your pocket like a large, old-fashioned cellphone.

It was hilarious having the cuff inflate and deflate twice while I was running my first class.

I now have an actual record of just how high my blood pressure spiked during my first real hour of solo teaching.

To ward off future blood-pressure issues, I keep calm by traveling every other weekend to see my boyfriend. When I'm on the move between our two cities, I vacillate between delight and annoyance with public transportation. On the one hand, compared with living in the middle of Texas, it's easy to get anywhere in England. I am used to needing eight hours to leave the state, but here I can travel by train to conferences all over the country within a couple of hours. On the other hand, Americans can get pretty fanatic about proper etiquette on the quiet car of a train, and here in England the quiet car is not really the quiet car. I sometimes find children amusing — particularly those belonging to my friends. But I submit that the quiet car is there for people who would like to escape from those sometimes shrill voices.

A less practical, but equally important conundrum: Living far away from the States means that some of the American-history books I need are not readily available for my research. I've been lucky that my library has received some money to set aside for the purchase of such books. But that money will run out, and I'm a little nervous about the annual limit on my interlibrary-loan requests. I've been told that there may or may not be a black market in such requests. I sort of want to use up my quota just so that I can say I've participated in the nerdiest enterprise ever.

In short, I like it here.

Although I regularly stop traffic in the aisles of the supermarket, fight with my office computer over its insistence on using a British English spell-checker to assess my work, and silently grouse at people talking in the quiet car, I'm finding that the adjustment has prompted few causes for complaint — or "whinging," as they say here.

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*Originally published on November 4, 2013*

# *Coming Home: Re-Entering the American Job Market*

By KATHLEEN M. PIKE AND JEAN DOWDALL



MARTA ANTELO FOR THE CHRONICLE

**M**ANY MORE faculty members and administrators at all stages in their careers are pursuing overseas postings. Some have short-term adventures, while others make long-term career commitments. Some stay in one institution, country, or region, while others develop careers that take them to several countries.

At some point, however, most Americans who work overseas want to come home. But re-entering the U.S. job market can be almost as daunting as going overseas.

Unless you have made a permanent move overseas, it is never too early to contemplate when you would like to return, where you would like to re-

turn to, and what you want to do once you're back. As we mentioned in our first column on successful global careers, one of us is a search consultant who has worked with foreign institutions and with American candidates for administrative positions. The other is an American academic who taught overseas for more than a decade and recently returned to the United States. In this column, by providing a navigable path home, we hope to make it easier for faculty members and administrators to think about heading overseas in the first place.

**Home sweet home.** For many academics, the best opportunities for re-entry will be at your "home" institution, especially if you have been overseas for a relatively short period or have re-

mained connected to your campus (formally or by way of extended collaborations with colleagues). Many institutions have policies governing leaves of absence and obligations to accommodate returning faculty members. If you know your plans well in advance, you may have the opportunity to pursue grant support or reinstatement of your academic appointment while you're still overseas.

Administrators returning to their home institutions have the advantage of being known commodities to colleagues and may have the social capital to be the favored candidates for administrative positions within the institution.

The obvious benefit of returning to your home institution: Many professional and personal adjustment issues are immediately eliminated for you and your family.

**Maybe you can't go home again.** Going back to your home institution may not be an option, or it may not be an option you want. While you were gone changes may have occurred, and there may not be a position or a role for you now. Perhaps you are no longer well aligned with the institution's vision. And if there is a position available, it may be the same job you left — and not what you want to do anymore.

Once you decide to pursue a position at a new campus, you need to plan and network. Allow yourself a substantial amount of time to do so.

If you are under time pressures to return to the United States, you will need to be creative and flexible in crafting a transition plan. Some people are able to extend their overseas appointments by serving for a transitional period as nonresident fellows, for example. Other options include pursuing positions that you might not want to hold for the long term but that can re-establish you in the United States while you do a full search — for example, adjunct faculty appointments, interim administrative appointments, or project-based work like designing curricula, evaluating programs, building strategies for internationalizing the honors program, or teaching a new course that integrates your overseas experience in a meaningful way.

Work with your network of colleagues to create and construct a new position that would fill your needs and your institution's.

**Translating your experience.** In some cases, the work that you have done overseas is immediately self-explanatory and no translation to American employers is necessary. If you serve as provost at an American university campus overseas, your title and role are likely to be relatively clear.

But if you worked at a foreign institution, the university structure may be sufficiently distinct from the American system, and job titles sufficiently unclear, that you will need to provide a comprehensible description of the work you have been doing.

It is extremely important that you convey the leadership authority and decision-making responsibilities that you've had as you speak to search firms or committees and represent your experience on your vita. That is especially the case if you have spent considerable time overseas, have progressed in your career, and would like to re-enter at a more senior level than you held before you left.

No matter what move you are making, you want to avoid jargon, acronyms, and any insider language that may be opaque to committees reviewing your application materials.

Think, too, about how to link emerging issues in U.S. higher education with the issues you have observed or worked on abroad. Be knowledgeable about current hot topics here, such as distance learning, access and accountability, severe budget cuts at public institutions, endowment losses at private institutions, and the growth of for-profit institutions. You want to show that your experience overseas was unique and transformational while also demonstrating that you haven't missed a beat with regard to current issues in American higher education.

You also want to highlight the impact of particular experiences on your professional development. For example, someone based in Cairo during the Arab Spring will want to talk about the impact of those tumultuous events and the ways in which that person's teaching or administrative leadership might have changed as a result.

**Network, network, network.** If you are seeking a new position at a new institution, you need to aggressively network with professional friends and colleagues. Ideally, you have been doing that throughout your time overseas. Expanding your professional network is all the more important in an era when the competition for job openings is especially intense.

Your overseas experience gives you special strengths — many American institutions are searching for faculty members and administrators who can help expand their global reach and provide strategic leadership with international programs. Candidates for administrative positions should be pleased to know that, as many presidents and provosts approach retirement, and deans and others move up into these positions, vacancies will develop at many levels.

Meet with as many colleagues as possible to share your overseas experience and your career ambitions. Some of those people may be willing to speak on your behalf to a search consultant or a hiring committee. Consider making use of social media to keep informed.

As you network, think about how best to tell your story. Higher education does not always easily welcome those who stray, and you should anticipate questions about why you went abroad and why you are returning now. If there were difficult

circumstances surrounding any moves you made or jobs you held, you should speak to those concerns directly. It is always better for a search committee to hear about that directly from you.

**Navigating the search process at a distance.** If you decide to apply for a position in the United States, how can you best navigate the search process? You need to remove as many barriers as possible for the search committee or the consultant.

For example, don't assume that a search committee will understand the size, type, and status of your overseas employer, or the meaning and organizational placement of your academic or administrative position within that institution. If your overseas campus is included in some foreign ranking of institutions, mention its rank and help the committee understand how that compares with institutional rankings the readers may be more familiar with, like the one published by *U.S. News & World Report*.

Besides providing your own clear and complete contact information, make sure that information for your references is clear as well. Mention which time zone they are in, and whether they plan to be in the United States during the hiring period.

Think ahead about the possibility of an interview. Search committees working with tight budgets may be inclined to avoid candidates whose travel to an interview would be costly, or whose visit would involve a very long trip for a meeting of just an hour or two. If you are going to be in the United States, mention that, and consider whether you would be willing to share your travel costs with the search committee. If you are willing to have a video or phone interview, even knowing that other candidates will interview in person, state that.

*Originally published on October 10, 2011*

At some point, particularly if you are advancing in the search process, the question of compensation will come up. If you give your salary in a foreign currency, provide a dollar equivalent. If you have a benefits package that would be unusual in the United States, offer some explanation — for example, “my overseas salary is low but a home is provided for me, and thus my compensation package should be thought of as higher than it appears to be.”

Searches almost always take longer than anyone anticipates — especially candidates, and especially those who are several thousand miles and several time zones away from the search process.

Be prepared for a protracted process in which communication seems inadequate. But do what you can to enhance that communication: Make sure you provide e-mail addresses through which you can be contacted quickly, as well as phone numbers with all the necessary dialing codes. Make it as easy as possible to call you.

Returning home and finding the right position requires time and energy. And while the process may be exhausting at times, it will also afford you a unique opportunity to re-examine your personal and professional aspirations and expand your knowledge of the American academic landscape.

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