Once again, I welcome our readers to a new volume of SEM Student News. In this, my final volume as editor, I might ask that the readership bear with some reflexivity. As an instrument of SEM and as a sounding board for issues important to the student body, the newsletter’s contributors have covered a wide breadth of topics during my tenure. From research funding to researcher health, labor issues to publication, and interdisciplinary approaches to music studies, we have focused on the issues students feel are most pressing. In some ways, this volume revisits many of the themes we have already covered but with reflection on the growing concerns over the current job market for ethnomusicology graduates.

In the following columns and editorials you will find advice and discussions on the ever-growing issue of contingent labor within academic and public sector work. However, this volume deals as much with the job market as it does the need to reconsider how we approach the training of ethnomusicologists, and our conceptions for what we can do with our interdisciplinary skill sets. “Applied,” “public sector,” “private sector,” and other modifiers have been used as alternative or supplemental options in our paths as student scholars, predominately training to be professors. Many programs continue to focus solely on training students for the tenure-track job, but a few have broadened their offerings to at least acknowledge divergent paths. For many, myself included, the academic job is indeed the aspiration, but the reality remains that those elusive and limited posts at institutions are increasingly difficult to land and many of us find ourselves in “alternative” work. For some, the “alternative” paths are or would be the goal, if they were presented as valid and valued.

The larger point here is not to only discuss possible solutions to the job market crunch, but to think about the ways these labels inadvertently divide our career aspirations and limit our options. We hope that this volume can begin discussion anew to reconsider our field continued on next page . . .
as truly interdisciplinary and encompassing numerous career options. To keep ethnomusicology relevant, we must not think of “alternative” paths as lacking or projects only “on the side” of academia. We have to consider that our paths as ethnomusicologists are equally valuable and help students understand the importance of work both in and out of academe. The continued use of labels, such as “academic” or “applied,” might continue to limit our options. Ethnomusicologists are trained with a variety of transferable skills—learning the scope of public sector work is equally valuable for someone wanting a career in education just as learning pedagogical theories from academe can transfer to community-building projects.

The most important thing here is that these discussions cannot come only at the end of graduate training. This conversation must take place at the beginning of one’s journey into graduate studies. Students must ask, “What do I want to do with my training?” Teachers must ask students, “What do you want with your degree?” Finding meaningful answers to these questions will allow students and faculty to make better strides toward finding positive career outlooks for the next generations of ethnomusicologists. Whether taking paths into academia or in public sector work, ethnomusicologists are, as ever, willing and able to contribute in meaningful ways to society and our communities, both on and off of campuses.

It is my hope that the words that follow will inspire important conversations on how our readers can think about ethnomusicology’s future.

*By Justin R. Hunter (University of Arkansas)*

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**Ethnomusicology Translations:** This is SEM’s new peer-reviewed, open-access online series for the publication of ethnomusicological literature translated into English. Articles and other literature in any language other than English will be considered for editorial review, translation, and publication. Preference will be given to individual articles published in scholarly journals or books during the past 20 years. As a central online resource, *Ethnomusicology Translations* aims to increase access to the global scope of recent music scholarship and advance ethnomusicology as an international field of research and communication.

The editors of *Ethnomusicology Translations* are currently seeking nominations of ethnomusicological articles representing a wide range of languages and geographic areas. Ethnomusicologists are encouraged to nominate articles by sending an email to Richard Wolf, General Editor, at rwolf@fas.harvard.edu. See SEM’s website for more details about nominations and the review process.

**SEM 2016 Elections:** The society is currently holding its annual election for positions on the board and council. The board seeks to fill four positions: President-Elect, 2nd Vice-President, Treasurer, and Member-at-Large (Prizes). In addition to the 12 regular positions open for the council, there are 2 open positions for students.

The ballots and nominee bios were delivered to members via email in October and the election ends on September 8 at 11:59pm, EDT. All members of the society have a vote, **MAKE YOURS COUNT!**

**SEM Annual Conference:** The 61st annual meeting of the society will take place in Washington, D.C., November 10–13, 2016. There will be an important one-day pre-conference symposium—**Soundings: Public Sector Ethnomusicology in the 21st Century**—on Wednesday, November 9th at the Library of Congress. Student registration is only $10!
As I, and many fellow ethnomusicology students around the world, advance toward graduation, I have started to think about my future employment situation. In Spain, my current home, my possibilities in the local job market look dim. Relevant job openings both in and outside academia are very limited. Hiring conditions in temporary job contracts make it quite hard for people my age to start up a new chapter in life, and after almost fifteen years of traveling around, striving to get a good education in ethnomusicology, my heart felt desire to live in the same place for a long period of time seems like a sweet but unattainable dream. But this is just me, one of the many student members of the Society for Ethnomusicology. I wondered how things look in this respect for other ethnomusicology students.

To this end, I designed a short survey of related questions and asked students from around the world to participate. A total of 130 students made the effort to answer the online questionnaire, which was sent through different Facebook pages1, as well as through the e-lists of SEM and SIBE (Iberian-American Society for Ethnomusicology), and the SEM student members’ email list. Unfortunately, the online survey platform I used restricted analysis to only the first 100 respondents so approximately 30 responders are not recognized in these findings. Eight out of the ten questions were short yes/no or multiple-choice questions, while the two remaining questions were open-ended. From the answers I could access, 58% identified themselves as students in the United States, 13% in the United Kingdom, 14% in different parts of Europe (Ireland, Northern Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Serbia, Malta, Austria, France, and Catalonia), 1% in Argentina, and 1% in Japan. Further distribution was planned, but due to the limitations of the program and the fact that response was quick (the limit was reached in three days), further polling was not done.

The results of the survey highlight the love and commitment ethnomusicology students have for their discipline, their sometimes negative views on the current academic job market situation, and their extended opinions on the need to look beyond academia for future employment opportunities. To the question “Do you feel prepared for the academic job market?” 43% of the respondents answered positively and 34% negatively. Among those answering “other” to this question, one respondent wrote “for faculty jobs, yes, for non-academic possibilities, no.” The next point in the questionnaire was, in fact, an inquiry into whether or not participants’ academic programs discussed multiple career paths, to which 63% of students answered negatively and only 29% positively.

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Not surprisingly, then, most respondents expressed the intention to pursue academic teaching as their primary career path (63%), followed by the public sector (12%), and grantsmanship and publishing (5%). A combination of all or some of the paths previously mentioned, plus performance, was chosen as the second strongest career option after academia (20%).

Ethnomusicology students voiced worries and hopes about their professional futures in a near equal percentage. Whereas 50% of respondents were worried about their future due to unemployment or poor working conditions, 42% expressed trust in their professional futures and in the possibilities of doing interesting things or things that they like. On this same topic, 2% of students answered that they do not think about the future and 6% expressed changeability in their views on this issue depending on their mood. The latter also considered ways to “continue my scholarship even if I do not get an academic job.” To the question “How is your current working situation?” only two students raised their voices beyond the multiple-choice options given by the phrases “I am currently working” (50.51%), “I am not working” (25.25%), and “other” (24.24%). One of these students noted a problem with the question itself saying that “the fact that graduate school is not considered work (as evidenced by this question) is one of the most insidious problems with the entire structure of these programs. Academia is a job, not a cult.” A second student told us about his/her specific situation, writing that he/she is “not currently working, as my university cut a number of student jobs this year, including mine (while funneling money into expensive building projects and a £400,000 [ca. $570,000] per year salary for the vice chancellor). I checked other because I feel it is important to draw attention to how universities treat student workers, de-prioritizing them and keeping their employment precarious.” A majority of respondents (43.43%) said they have jobs, or at least one out of multiple jobs, related to ethnomusicology—as opposed to 16.16% who said they do not. 49.49% of these respondents believe their job(s) strengthens their professional qualifications as ethnomusicologists, versus 12.12% who do not think so.

The last two points of the questionnaire were open questions. To the inquiry “How do you see the job market for ethnomusicologists?” there were a total of 88 respondents (out of the one hundred participants considered), and to the question “What does it mean to be a successful ethnomusicologist?” there were 83 respondents. Regarding the former, 62 students answered negatively with words like “bad,” “highly competitive,” “poor,” or “difficult.” Longer answers framed the job market as “crowded! Very few jobs for a lot of candidates. My career goals are fairly modest so I remain optimistic.” Another said, “Programs need to do more to support students seeking non-faculty jobs. Student and faculty focus on the tenure track weakens the field by fostering anxiety among students, and by making it seem that teaching in a university is the only use for ethnomusicology.” In relation to the idea of “success,” as delineated by the latter question, student voices were uplifting. Fifty-three respondents linked success in ethnomusicology with “being honest, ethically committed. Developing good quality studies that contribute to the community,” “giving back to people,” and “1) producing and circulating original work (written, artistic, otherwise) related to ethnomusicological research, or 2) having an engaging job in an ethnomusicology-related position; either way success means finding personal satisfaction in my ethnomusicological endeavors.” 27 respondents identified finding a job with both a schedule and a salary that allows a balance between the personal and professional aspects of life as important. 13 participants marked academia as a synonym for success, and 4 people found the question irrelevant. As in earlier questions, an issue that came to light was that of academia being considered the only valuable site to do ethnomusicological work: “To be a successful ethnomusicologist means pursuing ethnomusicological projects. Nothing else. With the lack of professorships available, SEM needs to embrace the idea that scholarship can occur outside of academic circles. Too many of my colleagues retain exploitative adjunct positions all so they may stay in the circle, as even the slimmest association with a college or university seems vital to being recognized as a contributing member of academia. This system needs to change, as it silences a lot of voices that otherwise have great things to say.”

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Student Voices

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All in all, this short survey highlights the importance of talking about employment opportunities for ethnomusicology students. Respondents were simultaneously pessimistic about their future employment in academia and positive regarding their opportunities when expanding their job expectations beyond academia. Academic jobs are still among the most prestigious and most desirable jobs for graduates in the field. Some students suggested collectively working to change this by being prepared and advised on employment opportunities beyond academia, as well as by giving visibility to successful non-academic ethnomusicologists. In spite of having a majority of participant students from the United States, this survey hints to the international dimension of ethnomusicology students’ actual struggles and concerns regarding employment in the field. One student expressed discontent towards the lack of empirical information regarding the job market for ethnomusicologists and suggested that a thorough study, led by SEM, could be beneficial for all of us.

Endnotes:
1. These included ethnomusicologists in the UK, INET-md|CESEM (Portugal), Etnomusicologia-Brasil, Jove Associació de Musicologia (“Young Association of Musicology”) in Catalonia (Spain), JAM Asturias (Spain), and JAM Madrid (Spain).
2. Results of this survey and the international concerns of ethnomusicology students regarding employment opportunities, correspond with the findings of the SEM Student Union Blog team in their ongoing project “In Discipline.” Developed last year in Europe, and currently developing in Colombia, and looking to cover more places in the near future, students participating in the project highlighted the growing precariousness as well as the scarcity of academic job posts in European academia.

The State of the Field

your views, your visions, your voices

By Justin R. Hunter (University of Arkansas)

Out of necessity, this column took a different approach from previous volumes. Typically, we receive numerous responses to our calls for submission and students have enthusiastically engaged in this column. This time we received many inquiries from students but few submissions resulted. Our attempt to reach out to colleagues to fill slots for the column, which usually features 4–5 students, had surprising responses—from simple hesitation to discuss training to fear of possible repercussions for those on the job market—and again, few participants signed on.

Despite these issues, we still have two quite insightful responses that use varied approaches to discuss job market preparation. The first contemplates the virtues of multidisciplinarity inside and outside of academia while the second discusses the benefits of applied ethnomusicology, especially as a scope for research. I want to personally thank Hilary and Doug for their thoughtful remarks.
That being said, though ethnomusicology is shifting away from an area-centric approach, hiring committees still seek “Africanists,” “Latin Americanists,” and the like. When I began studying Tibetan and other Himalayan musics, I was encouraged to consider my positionality—does that make me a South Asianist? East Asianist? What else could I teach outside of the Himalayas? If forced to choose an area, I generally consider myself a Himalayanist/South Asianist, but I also feel capable of creating courses on Irish music and music and media. Having taught world music and Western art music courses, I could also present versatility of musical knowledge as an attractive feature for music departments that only hire one (token) ethnomusicologist. While our discipline internally values—and our methodologies intrinsically require—depth over breadth in our research, my experiences in ethnomusicology courses have resulted in some knowledge of many musics around the world. This, combined with a strong foundation of research methods and contact with our vibrant community of colleagues, supports the assertion that scholars with our backgrounds have the resources and skill sets to design and shape courses that are useful to myriad university departments, musical or otherwise.

Despite the sense that what we do is quite specialized, an additional advantage of ethnomusicology is its (and our) versatility. How many of us have written a grant proposal that includes the phrase, “I will use music as a lens for investigating X”? I have never assumed that I would necessarily end up in an ethnomusicology department specifically. Because our discipline both uses music to understand myriad aspects of life, and requires knowledge of those aspects in order to understand music, there are potential spaces for us in anthropology and history departments, as well as cultural, global, performance, religious, and media studies. An ethnomusicologist might arguably fit just as well, if not better, into an area studies department as they would in a music department that privileges performance over sociocultural context, as so many of them do.

Finally, I would invite us to consider that while we may call what we do ethnomusicology, and ourselves ethnomusicologists, it is neither all of what we do, nor the entirety of who we are as individuals. In that same vein, just because so many graduates in ethnomusicology become professors does not mean that this trajectory is patently inevitable, enviable, or even viable. It is not enough to wonder if we will fit into academia, but we must also think critically about whether or not academia enables, and even supports, us in the doing of what we love and the loving of what we do. If we focus less on how to shape ourselves into the academic model, and instead ask whether or not academia facilitates the work we want to do, some of us might find more success and happiness in positions previously under- or unconsidered, such as documentarians, museum curators, international aid workers, and non-traditional educators.
PAUL HARTLEY: The conversation surrounding what to do after graduating with a Master’s Degree or PhD in any field has become more heated as of late. It is heated for a reason. The vast majority of people graduating with an advanced degree will not find professorial positions. While it was always difficult to move directly into a tenure track position, the truth is that it has become even more difficult, and the precarious option of adjunct teaching is often the best that anyone can do (Weissmann 2013; Lewin 2013). Many graduate students have decided to explore the possibility of working outside of the academy. But this transition is not easy and is fraught with often debilitating emotional turmoil. The practical challenges confronting someone who is in a post-ac/alt-ac transition are profound given that their graduate programs rarely prepare them for this option. The biggest problem confronting a recent graduate is how does someone with a degree in ethnomusicology get a job outside of the academy that fulfills them. Everyone wants to avoid fulfilling Liz Lemon’s crack about her fiancé in the finale of 30 Rock: “Criss has gone back to work. He has a degree in ethnomusicology from Wesleyan, so, he’s a receptionist at a dental office.”

In its approach to applied ethnomusicology, Indiana’s Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology is, unfortunately, in the minority. Many graduate programs preach the superiority of academic over applied careers—a position that deserves honest reassessment. The distinction between ethnomusicology inside and outside of academia helps us differentiate our responsibilities but should not be a value judgment on the nature of the work itself. Rather, the public sector should be described for what it is: a challenging yet rich landscape of professional opportunities in which ethnomusicologists are well-equipped to thrive. □

A response column by Justin R. Hunter with respondents: Paul Hartley (Idea Couture), Sandra Graham (Babson College), Andrew Hillhouse (Harrison Festival), and Terry Liu (National Endowment for the Arts).

At SEM Student News we try to address the most pressing issues and diverse research fields for our student body and broader readership. Want to get advice from our network of peers, colleagues, and mentors? Email your questions to semstudentnews@gmail.com.
Dear SEM,  

My advice to the graduate students who ask how I obtained my job as an anthropologist at a global design thinking consultancy is to remember that graduate students learn much more than just how to be professors. As ethnomusicologists, we must learn how to think critically, write well, speak foreign languages, speak in public, and do ethnography. While these are expected skills for an ethnomusicologist, they are exactly the skills that are sought after elsewhere. Any one of them can be sufficient to get a job in one line of work or another. The trick is to turn what is understood and expected in our discipline into a point to differentiate ourselves from other applicants when looking for work elsewhere.

Additionally, I always tell current graduate students who are considering the post-ac/alt-ac transition to begin to prepare themselves for the shift before they graduate. It is essential to obtain skills for the non-academic work that interests them before graduation.

Students still enrolled in school have the opportunity to use their degrees, and their time in school, to their best advantage. Join related student organizations to network. Meet with people who are already doing what you want to do. If you are able, take a class in something that teaches a new skill directly related to your job search. It is also important to learn everything about the area that holds your interest and explore possibilities. Use your skills as an ethnographer and researcher to learn about the organizations to network. Meet with people who are already doing what you want to do. If you are able, take a class in something that teaches a new skill directly related to your job search. It is also important to learn everything about the area that holds your interest and explore possibilities. Use your skills as an ethnographer and researcher to learn about the languages, structures, values, expectations, and experiences that are part of the working world. Employers are looking for fluency in these things in an interview anyway, and at the very least they will help you decide if the new job is what you want.

References:


SANDRA GRAHAM: If I were a graduate student today, here are some things I would do:

I would acquire practical skills. In my case that would mean website design, graphic design, coding, and/or search-engine optimization. But it could also be recording technology, documentary film, radio, accounting, archiving... Ideally these skills would not only further my specific interests but they would transfer to other professions (just in case).

I would get to know my community thoroughly: network/perform with arts organizations, libraries, musicians, schools. (For example, I sing with a local Revels chorus that puts on a show every year with students from Perkins School for the Blind. This has opened up a whole new world that I wish I had time to be an integral part of.)

Acquire administrative and management skills: become an officer or committee chair in an organization—any organization will do, since we cannot all be SEM Council and Board members. Learning about organizational dynamics, how leaders lead, all while making your own contributions, is invaluable experience. It also gets you noticed, which can lead to further opportunities.

Find a problem you care about and work on a solution to solving it. This is the foundation of entrepreneurial thinking, and it is a statement that every undergraduate learns on day one at the business college where I teach. All of us who teach, research, communicate—in whatever venue—are, by necessity entrepreneurs.

Perhaps most important, know yourself. Be realistic: What are you good at? What do you really love to do? What are your weaknesses? Not every graduate student should be in academe. Being clear on what you have to offer, and in what capacity, will not guarantee you a job, but it will ensure that you are looking in the right place.

ANDREW HILLHOUSE: My dissertation involved research into roots music festivals as sites for the creation of transnational musicians’ networks. This subject matter intersects with and informs my current full-time position as Artistic and Executive Director of the Harrison Festival of the Arts, a 9-day roots music/multidisciplinary arts festival in British Columbia. There are a few important ways that my academic work prepared me for this job. My work as a TA and lecturer improved my organizational and administrative chops; my coursework and research enhanced my knowledge of the world’s musics; I developed strong (and speedy) writing skills, useful for writing copy; I learned how to write grants; and, perhaps most importantly, I gained a nuanced, philosophical understanding of the role of music in culture.

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Dear SEM, ... continued

This affects my programming and informs my ability to articulate the community-based, inclusive mandate of our organization.

In this job, I really value this philosophical training. An AD or ED of an arts organization is often called upon to speak up for the arts. For example, soon after stepping into this job I was surprised to find myself as part of a group of advocates for small to medium local, non-profit festivals. I believe that training in an arts administrative program, while providing many useful skills, does not focus on the deeper issues concerning the role of participatory, local community-based festivals in this corporate, neo-liberal age. The primary question I regularly need to articulate and address is “why does music (or the arts in general) matter in our culture”? As ethnomusicologists this is pretty much all we talk about!

As far as the practicalities of preparing for this type of job, my main advice is to look at the breadth of skills you have gained, such as those listed above, and to mention them in job interviews. It worked for me. And finally, do not limit yourself by seeing your training as singly relevant to an academic career. You really are gaining a range of transferable, valuable skills.

TERRY LIU: If one desires to share knowledge to deepen and clarify understanding of others in order to make a difference in the world, it should not matter where the teaching and learning takes place. Academia remains a noble place for one to teach, but a growing portion of the world is unable to enter academia or spend precious time there studying the music of the world, let alone make a career there on the faculty. Everywhere on Earth, there is work for ethnomusicologists in broadcast or written journalism, documentary film making, sound recording and production, concerts and festivals, and consulting informed and conscientious commercial distribution of culture. Rapidly manifesting phenomenon of cultural commons compels ethnomusicologists to study, gain foresight, and find a voice and pathway to caution contemporary society about culture change, appropriation, and exploitation. Need and opportunities for trained and experienced ethnologists increases in response to proliferating information and communication technology and travel that feeds popular curiosity and consumption of the world’s cultures. It is more important than ever to bring to bear traditional practices of ethnomusicologists, including learning from people expressing themselves in the context of their societies, explaining clearly the importance of the expressions of those people and what their music tells us, and appropriately making that culture accessible. Misunderstanding leading to fear and hatred today can only be placated by those who are able to mediate with clear understanding of how emotions of all sides arise and are expressed. In all these matters, ethnomusicologists must be among the first responders on the scene.

The Ethnomusicology Job Market
a report on the numbers

By Kyle DeCoste (Tulane University)

Eleven years is a really long time. Staring down the barrel of a PhD program that will add at least another five years onto my post-secondary education, some might consider it unwise for me to invest in a job where my preferred career—a tenured professorship—might never actually come to fruition. Discourse in academia would have us believe that placing faith in the academic job market—especially in the humanities—is nothing but cruel optimism (Berlant 2011). We have all heard that the prospects are barren and that, in terms of a career, the time spent in PhD programs does not yield commensurate returns. As far as our discipline goes, these claims are supported by surprisingly little evidence. In order to get a handle on the current state of the ethnomusicology job market it is helpful to move beyond anecdotal evidence. While I prefer existing in a qualitative world, what follows is my attempt to quantitatively evaluate the ethnomusicology job market so that we can develop realistic expectations for our post-doctoral outcomes.

One reason why data on the ethnomusicology job market is scarce is a lack of standardization among ethnomusicology programs for reporting the placement of their graduates, which renders the available data unwieldy. Looking through the websites of various ethnomusicology/music programs, I determined four (not mutually exclusive) ways that PhD graduate data is reported:2

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The Ethnomusicology Job Market

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1. Full placement records reported by universities (e.g., Florida State University)
2. Placement records reported by graduates via online forms (e.g., UCLA)
3. Partial placement records by universities (e.g., Harvard University)
4. List of dissertations completed (e.g., York University)

I used SEM’s “Guide to Programs in Ethnomusicology” as a starting point and began amassing data from each program represented on the website. Where only lists of PhD dissertations were reported or placement lists were incomplete, I used LinkedIn, Academia.edu, ResearchGate, and Chronicle Vitae pages, as well as personal websites to best ascertain the current occupation of each individual PhD graduate. In the case of all graduates, I used information from current placements rather than those immediately out of PhD programs.

I temporally limited the scope of my study to those who graduated from 2005 onward in order to get a sense of the present moment in the job market, but also because those years were richer with data as a result of what seems to be a concerted effort among programs to report placements. For programs that offered PhDs with concentrations in ethnomusicology or where the discipline was subsumed under “music” or “musicology,” I included only placement information from PhD graduates whose dissertations had a substantial ethnographic element. Because of this, the data collected is imperfect and reflects my own biases. Disciplinary categories are messy—especially in a field like ours—but I deferred to graduates’ own disciplinary labels whenever possible and privileged their academic leanings at the time they entered the job market rather than the ones they may use now. For those who occupy several professional positions (as is the case with many adjunct professors who are also performers), I included only the position that seemed most prominent.

I found information for 287 ethnomusicology PhD placements from 35 different universities between 2005 and 2015 (an average of 26 graduates each year). I supplemented the information from program websites with information from the Ethnomusicology/Musicology Academic Jobs Wiki. Nineteen of the 287 placements I found were taken from the Jobs Wiki (6.6%), skewing the results slightly in favor of academic jobs. Figure 1 reflects the overall PhD placement broken down by placement category and rounded to the nearest whole number.

Over the past decade, roughly 84% of ethnomusicology PhD graduates found work at universities in some capacity as professors (tenure-track, visiting, or adjunct), librarians, archivists, research fellows, or academic advisors. The private and public sector jobs were often closely related to ethnomusicology and included professions in radio, education, government, and arts administration. As is to be expected of our discipline, professional performers ran the gamut from shakuhachi players to heavy metal vocalists.

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The Ethnomusicology Job Market

Additionally, for eleven of the programs included in this study, I was able to track the placements of ten or more PhD graduates. While I was unable to find the placements of a few of the graduates from these programs, the numbers presented below are a good approximation of the total academic placements of each program since 2005 and provide enough information to assess each program’s academic placement rate. The programs visually represented in Figure 2 are all those for whom I have complete or nearly complete placement information from 2005 onward.

Figure 2. Percentage of Ethnomusicology PhD Graduates in Academic University Positions by School (2005–present)

In 2013, public music historian Durrell Bowman penned a blog post about musicology and ethnomusicology job outcomes. He found that 22.6% of musicology/ethnomusicology graduate students end up in tenure-track jobs and 6.7% in temporary academic positions. Basing his calculations on the total number of students admitted rather than those who graduated, however, he did not account for attrition rates. The data I have brought together adjusts for this while also attempting, however messily, to separate ethnomusicology from musicology.

Though the quantitative information I have assembled is imperfect, I hope that it will at least paint a clearer picture of what to expect when completing a PhD program in ethnomusicology so that we can spend less time worrying about our futures and more time enjoying our tasks at hand.

Endnotes:
1. And to a lesser extent, the social sciences.
2. I based this study on total graduates from PhD programs rather than total students currently enrolled or total students accepted. This way, I can account for attrition.
3. I did not include those who recently got academic jobs ABD.
4. If the intention is to separate ethnomusicology from musicology, this is a subjective judgment that is impossible to avoid. I tried not to exclude historical ethnomusicologists to the best of my abilities.
5. One should note that this is an optimistic figure because 6.6% of the total graduates I was able to track came from the Ethnomusicology/Musicology Academic Jobs Wiki, rather than program websites. It also seemed that I was more likely to track the whereabouts of employed graduates.

References:
Preparing for Marketability and Success In Academia

By Brett Gallo (Tufts University)

While often the goal of many humanities-based graduate students, a professional life in higher education is obviously rigorous. The road to professorship may also be taxing, competitive, even discouraging at times, and many would agree that the lifestyle of an academic can be mentally and physically exhausting. Those who aim for permanent lecturer positions at colleges and universities should be prepared to cope with periods of professional uncertainty, the pressures of a limited job market, and the likelihood that the best (and sometimes only) option for their individual career may require them to uproot and move at a moment’s notice. Indeed, the academic lifestyle is not for the faint of heart, but the development of certain habits early in one’s journey can ease some of the growing pains and contribute to professional success overall.

Make a habit of regularly updating your curriculum vitae. Keep records of all academic endeavors including research, presentations, teaching experience, awards, as well as various conferences, seminars, or projects in which you have participated. If you are unable to remember the last time you updated your curriculum vitae then there is a good chance that you will benefit from adding to it. Talk with professors and career advisors at your institution to find new opportunities, such as part-time teaching roles, assistantships, conferences to attend, or some type of community service. Such experiences will expand your own skill set as well as your resume. It can also be worthwhile to create a profile on an academic-oriented social networking site like Academia.edu. Sites like this act as a virtual CV with the added capability to upload articles, dissertations, and other media, making yourself more visible to PhD programs, potential employers, and other academics. With the increasing use of these networking sites, any aspiring academic will benefit from registering, maintaining a profile, and perusing the exciting research made available by other scholars each day.

Just as it takes great ambition and strategy to navigate the postgraduate and postdoctoral experience, success as a permanent lecturer also hinges on the development of particular skills. In conjunction with the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity, Professor Rachel McLaren of the University of Iowa has outlined a ten-point model aptly named “How To Thrive In The Academy.” Certain points have already been encouraged here, like cultivating a network of professors, colleagues, and other mentors, but I want to draw further attention to a few of McLaren’s curriculum modules that are particularly constructive. In a field where we are often measured by the quality and quantity of our writing, the importance of developing a daily writing practice cannot be overstated. McLaren offers advice not only for developing such strategies but also more specifically for turning procrastination into production. Her module, “Overcoming Academic Perfectionism,” discusses what may be one of the most crucial techniques in terms of maintaining a balance between personal and professional obligations (McLauren 2016).

McLaren features two modules that work in tandem to address time management, namely, “Aligning Your Time with Your Priorities” along with what McLaren calls “The Art of Saying ‘No.’” This brand of judiciousness is increasingly important in an academic environment that continues to expand in terms of extracurricular offerings and organizations; in other words, your time is valuable, so invest it wisely to avoid unnecessary stress. On that note, techniques for managing stress and rejection are paramount to a successful tenure in academia (ibid). Part of what makes our field so stimulating is the ardent intellect and formidable competition, and while we should take time in rejection to reflect on what we did well and what may be improved, these hang-ups should not discourage our efforts. Each and every turndown brings us closer to the next acceptance, each miss closer to the next hit. While such advice should not be confined solely to professional matters, adopting these techniques and philosophies as a graduate student will serve you well while laying the foundation for a healthy lifestyle as full-time lecturer down the road.

References:
Transference and Creativity in the Job Market 
an interdisciplinary approach

By Eugenia Conte (Wesleyan University)

“Transferable skills.” The catchall term used in multiple arenas, academic and non-, to describe knowledge and critical thinking abilities that can be used in a variety of jobs and fields, “transferred” from one area to another. Since the early 1990s, this term has gained traction and become a hallmark of discussions surrounding liberal arts education (Assiter 1995; Fallows and Steven 2000; Pellegrino and Hilton 2012). Transferable skills have been seen as a way to diversify student capability and job marketability during a time when liberal arts studies were losing rhetorical ground (and funding) to technical job-specific training programs in the late 2000s, during the Great Recession.

While the term is overexposed now—employed in the business world just as often as it is in the realm of education—it serves as a reminder of the multiple fields in which each ethnomusicologist is educated, often seemingly inadvertently. The self-sufficiency of our field dictates that we do multiple “jobs” throughout our schooling, including grant, academic, and popular writing; editing and proofreading; arts advocacy and fundraising; community organizing; arts administration; travel arranging; event planning and logistics; teaching; public speaking; research and fieldwork; computer technology and web design; language translation; and music transcription. To top it all off, ethnomusicology students are asked to switch back and forth seamlessly between these tasks and to simultaneously develop deep understandings of theory and philosophy to support our own research endeavors.

Certainly graduate work prepares us for roles in academe. Professors in the humanities and social sciences are perpetually asked to toggle between administrative, educational, and research projects. But in reality, though we may be well-trained and well-favored graduates, we will knock on the door of a modern-day House of Usher as we apply for jobs in higher education. The structure is crumbling around us and will likely be completely demolished before it is rebuilt to another, hopefully more sustainable, plan. So many of us will combine non-tenure track teaching with various other positions in academia and in our communities. And the more aware we are of our amassed transferable skills, the more likely it is that we can cobble together a career involving multiple areas of engagement.

As academic posts become increasingly competitive, and as ethnomusicology programs graduate more and more masters and doctoral students, we must rely on transferable skills to gain meaningful and influential employment inside higher education and within arts and cultural communities. These realms are often divided into “applied ethnomusicology” and “academic ethnomusicology,” but in reality, jobs in both areas require the same skill set, just in different combinations and at different times. Also, increased engagement in surrounding communities may help bridge the “town and gown” gaps that are often so evident near college campuses. In fact, the “town/gown divide” could be narrowed through our music and art departments anyway, given that community members are most likely to visit college campuses for cultural events and concerts.

Each ethnomusicology student possesses a different set of transferable skills, due to individual interests, proclivity, personality, and history. Thinking outside the academic box when applying for jobs might lead to a lucky break, an interesting professional detour, or a fruitful community engagement. While the job market is perpetually frustrating in any field, ethnomusicology and humanities/social sciences fields in general present particular challenges. Patience and imagination when entering the job market can make the most of the transferable skills we have been building throughout our graduate training.

References:
The first time I seriously and gravely started to rethink the feasibility of my professional calling—being an ethnomusicologist—happened during the processes of graduation and collaboration with the SEM Student Union Blog for their project “In Discipline: Talks from the European Side.” The task of writing a short review of my experiences studying ethnomusicology in Croatia inspired my (personal) definition of a “true ethnomusicologist” as a sociocultural mediator, mostly relying on the learned paradigm of being an academic, scientist, and researcher. Not knowing how to achieve and satisfy in advance a set definition, I concluded that my awakening passion for ethnomusicology should be an essential guide. Quite enough to start!

Ethnomusicology graduates seeking employment in Croatia generally have two prospective career paths: the public (e.g., tourism and festivals, diplomatic missions, editorial offices, mass media, etc.) and the academic (e.g., research, professorship, etc.). Additionally, if candidates, during their academic studies, took courses on pedagogical methods and approaches then they are capable of working in secondary music schools teaching music history or in grammar schools teaching general music. These descriptions of employability and professional status identify an ethnomusicologist as a cultural and social activist, researcher, or pedagogue. Regardless of various positions an ethnomusicologist may hold, at the core of every ethnomusicological job is transmission of ethnomusicological knowledge. Therefore, I feel that every ethnomusicologist is a pedagogue, in either the narrow or broad sense of the word: as a festival manager/sociocultural activist involved with shaping the musical and cultural life of a particular place; as a researcher offering to share academic knowledge and solutions with individuals and communities; or as a music teacher introducing students into new worlds of music(s).

Admittedly, this is a very nice range of employment opportunities and when read aloud sounds promising. My experience of the realities of labour exchange and possibilities of further academic education in Croatia, however, reveal a slightly different situation.

Recently, I started working in a music school in northeastern Croatia. This job, however, does not fulfill the "ethnomusicological standard." I am not teaching ethnomusicological content, but temporarily teaching music theory. According to the Croatian music education system's qualification rules, music theory subjects should be exclusively taught by music theorists, composers, or conductors, and only potentially by others (e.g., ethnomusicologists) with "incomplete" music expertise in theoretical studies. In accordance with the lack of music qualification, a full-time position becomes intractable. This job provides me a living despite the concessions both I and my institution have to make. However, I found myself, as an ethnomusicologist in a non-ethnomusicologist occupation, unable to implement ethnomusicological content in the existing curriculum.

Knowing the current situation and difficulties with ethnomusicological involvement in public activities and the impossibilities in continuing further education in Croatia (no such PhD exists), I decided to intertwine ethnomusicology (academic) with pedagogy (applied), researching the role and status of the ethnomusicologist as a pedagogue and secondary grammar education in Croatia.

The current state of research on secondary levels of teaching music in grammar schools in Croatia reveals some interesting facts. Firstly, papers are written mainly by music educators and only occasionally by a musicologist or ethnomusicologist. Secondly, the major issues in almost every research paper were between different approaches to teaching, namely the traditional approach (current, mainstream, and diachronic) and the contemporary approach (new, "better," and synchronic). Most researchers were trapped with these two options, actively lobbying for changes but not offering solutions or analyses of the exact causes of the failure of the old pattern or success of a new pattern. In most cases, because of difficulties in implementing the new synchronic curriculum, researchers gave up.

**What is a “True Ethnomusicologist”?**

**finding space for ethnomusicology in Croatia**

By Andreja Vrekalić (University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz, Austria)

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What is a “True Ethnomusicologist”?... continued

However, thinking about the idea of synchronization and the processes of musical experience made me reconsider the content and the status of ethnomusicology in the current curriculum. Through closer examination of the curriculum, which has been unchanged since the 1990s, I noticed a sharp divide between ethnomusicology and musicology, and therefore between the content which is offered in schools. The results were the same after further analysis of a series of textbooks. Musicological content is exclusively associated with fine arts, musics, and philosophies while ethnomusicological content is sporadically and poorly presented; paradoxically, the latter is seen as exotic, in the case of world music, or as “everyday,” in the case of Croatian traditional or popular music. When it comes to lectures that could be purely ethnomusicological in terms of content, for instance introducing Croatian traditional or popular music culture, the percentage of lectures which include ethnomusicological approaches and issues are, in comparison to musicological approaches and issues, minimal during the four year music education in grammar schools. Consequently, I was eager to do fieldwork and try to find a balance between the two discourses: the official curriculum and its projection in textbooks, on the one hand, and the independence of teachers and students during the classes, on the other. While preparing questions for my fieldwork, I considered the range of Croatian ethnomusicology’s visibility in shaping the image of the ethnomusicologist as a good pedagogue not only as a scientist and researcher, which, is in my opinion, the most common conception.

My research was conducted in a classical grammar school and included 89 students, from the first to the fourth year. Data was collected using semi-structured questionnaires. Taking into account the state of literature mentioned earlier, I entered the field with three assumptions: 1) it is possible that teachers have individual affinity toward ethnomusicological content and will insist on better representation of that content; 2) if ethnomusicological content is seen as "everyday," as opposed to exotic, teachers may assume that students can access the content easily outside of class, and 3) 45 minutes, once per week does not allow enough time for spreading musicological content, thus ethnomusicological content, assumed to be commonplace, could be omitted. Through quantitative analysis of data, I noticed a rise in interest in ethnomusicological content from students, from the first year to the last year of secondary grammar school. Despite this rise in interest, respondents to the question of the utility of music content learned through secondary education indicated that the content, and therefore the whole subject, was not of great importance. Could the reason for this unpopularity be the methods of representing the content? Even though they are satisfied with the successive presentation of historical periods, historical periods, or the diachronic approach, students seem more interested, and have intrinsic motivation in learning ethnomusicological content. This is primarily because they want to know more about Croatian traditional music and its modernity, about world music, and about popular music. Students, therefore, proposed that an ideal music class in their grammar school would include a combination of musicological and ethnomusicological content (cf. Vrekalić 2015).

Croatia is currently experiencing internal educational reform that aims toward restructuring the national curricula in primary and secondary schools and includes public discussion with the goal of changing the rules on qualification in music education. If one understands that the idea of teaching music,

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What is a “True Ethnomusicologist”? . . . continued

According to the broader and external discourses on understanding its function in society in/as culture, is to raise/educate active participants in their sociocultural environment, then something needs to be changed. Regardless of the position—instrumentalist, music theorist, music educator/pedagogue, musicologist, or ethnomusicologist—the task should always be the same: musicking. However, there is a reality gap between production of music experts and reproduction/implementation of their knowledge in working places in Croatia. Studying the literature, in the case of ethnomusicology both worldwide and in Croatia, the problem of teaching is rarely discussed (cf. Krüger 2009). What was mentioned from the Croatian perspective is the lack of ethnomusicology in teaching ethnomusicology, specifically a lack of methods, approaches, and perspectives not clearly emphasizing open-minded thinking, interaction, or tolerance. On the other hand, what is proposed is the idea of “ethnomusicologization” which embraces performance, processes, contexts, and musical meanings in everyday life (cf. Ceribašić 2009). Applicable to internal educational reform, in the context of music education, “ethnomusicologization” can be expressed through closer collaboration between non-ethnomusicology scholars, who are mainly in charge of secondary education curriculum, and ethnomusicologists, taking into account their attitude toward implementation of the content as much as pedagogical liability. On the other hand, in terms of the public discussion, “ethnomusicologization” could be a spark for reconsidering of the role and status of ethnomusicologists on the job market/“ethno marketplace” not only as purveyors of the strange and exotic but rather as those whose role as sociocultural activists and researchers could benefit everyday encounters with musics within pedagogical places.

In an attempt to write my personal definition of a true ethnomusicologist, in April 2015 I presented the aforementioned research at the teacher education conference. In July, I presented a paper at an ethnomusicological conference, and in October, I began a PhD program. Perhaps, gaining personal satisfaction in past and future ethnomusicological (ad)ventures I can find a space for ethnomusicology in Croatia? □

References:

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT: Currently, SEM Student News is seeking to fill two positions:

Assistant Editor—this position aids the editor in the running and editing of the publication with duties assigned as needed.

Column Editor—this position runs the “State of the Field” column by soliciting contributors and editing submissions in conjunction with the editor.

Both positions require keen attention to detail and the ability to work independently, and in a timely manner, with assignments. Ideal candidates will be able to commit to at least two years of service. Interested candidates should email semstudentnews@gmail.com with their interest, a writing sample, and an up-to-date CV. Early career graduate students are strongly encouraged to apply.
Dissertation Grant Writing
issues, structure, and transferable skills

By Maria Stankova (New York University)

Ethnomusicology students gain many skills during their education. Throughout graduate work, students learn to push their limits with time constraints, reading and comprehending copious amounts of information, writing and editing themselves (and often their peers), and much more. A key phase for all graduate students is seeking funding for this work, and grant writing is particularly important to the success of advanced studies and directly applicable for other types of work beyond academia. In this piece, I will examine the preliminary work that an applicant needs to complete before starting to write a dissertation-related grant proposal, the specific sections that such a proposal should contain, as well as the skills that one has to possess in order to write effective and successful proposals, and the relevant transferable skills outside the field of ethnomusicology. As others have said in this volume of *SEM Student News*, the skills we learn in graduate school are marketable and useful in many professions. Being effective grant writers, in particular, can enable ethnomusicologists to find meaningful work in public- and private-applied capacities, with government and local non-profits, and, of course, continued academic research.

When writing a grant proposal for a dissertation-related grant (proposal, research, or writing), we have to consider multiple issues:

1. Structure: how to organize our plans, achievements, and aspirations so that they sound most convincing.
2. Content: what do we include and exclude from a grant proposal? A grant proposal should address three fundamental questions:
   a. What are you doing?
   b. How are you doing it?
   c. Why is it important?
   It’s a good idea to start the proposal with a paragraph answering all three questions.
3. Accessibility: how are we writing the proposal with respect to the difficulty of the academic language?
4. Relevance: how do we lay out the topic and show its widest possible relevance or interest? You should always demonstrate a wider context for and further implications of your topic.

Being able to collect and efficiently lay out this material is paramount in grant writing and these skills are directly transferable and effective tools for other grants beyond the dissertation level. For example, finding funding for community projects would equally require such detail. As you prepare during graduate school, consider the ways in which you can hone this important element to be used in other contexts beyond graduation.

A closer look at the specific requirements of a dissertation proposal are also applicable to other projects. A dissertation proposal typically requires outlines of all chapters, including paragraphs focused on methodology, budget, and timelines. Project proposals require similar structures that outline the scope, need, and a plan for implementation; a project proposal that mirrors a dissertation research proposal typically includes:

1. A project statement in which the applicant describes the scope and breadth of the project.
2. A defense of the project in which the applicant provides a literature review and argues for the significance of the project or why the project should be undertaken.
3. A discussion of the current state of research for the topic/issue of focus, including the most significant books/articles written on the subject, the contributions that the project will make to the field, and the relevant literature, which might have been neglected by other projects.
4. A methodology section that addresses how the subject is going to be tackled, and what kinds of relationships are going to be explored.
5. An explanation of necessary resources for the project, including where the research is to take place and what archives need to be visited.
6. And, lastly, a conclusion clearly stating what the central aim of the project is, the contributions of the project, as well as the intellectual gaps that are going to be filled through it.

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The skills involved in writing a proposal are:

1. The ability to write a grant proposal such that scholars outside your discipline can understand your project. If applying for a research grant at your own university, usually such proposals are first reviewed by your department. If it passes the department level, it is generally reviewed by the dean and a committee comprised of scholars from multiple disciplines. At this level, a proposal should be written in a manner comprehensible for scholars who are not necessarily related to the social sciences and humanities. If applying for a grant outside your university (like the SSRC Dissertation Proposal Development Fellowship or the SSRC International Dissertation Field Research Fellowship), then a proposal goes through at least two committees: one comprised of scholars from any field, and another comprised of scholars from the applicant’s field. Therefore, it is important that a proposal be comprehensible to scholars from all fields.

2. Planning and research skills, including: the ability to plan a project’s budget and expenses; to foresee how much time is necessary at each research site; and how much time is required to write a proposal (if it is a dissertation proposal grant) or your dissertation (if it is a dissertation writing grant).

3. Communication skills, including the ability to deliver and communicate your ideas in the most accessible way and to network with other scholars and gain information about grants in your field.

4. Organization skills, that is, the ability to manage your time so that you meet all deadlines, and the ability to organize your research and writing in order to present effectively.

In addition to academia, all of these skills can be useful in public service work. For instance, if an ethnomusicologist interested in medical anthropology decides to work in the field of health care, the last two skills are highly relevant. If an ethnomusicologist has extensive training in anthropology, they can work as a forensic anthropologist in a police department. University and museum settings are also possible. The grant writing skills discussed here can all be used in numerous ways beyond graduate school, and finding the opportunities to sell these skills is key to successfully navigating the job market as an ethnomusicologist.

“Music in Times of Trouble”
the activist-ethnomusicologist

By Simran Singh (Royal Holloway, University of London)

The title of this piece owes itself to Timothy Rice (2014) —who questions how we as ethnomusicologists, particularly those of us living in communities affected by contemporary social, political, medical, and environmental problems—use music to make sense of and potentially mitigate them, in theory and practice. In the field, to quote Anthony Seeger, the academic/advocacy dialectic is knowledge “forged in the crucible of action” (2008).

Institutions where ethnomusicologists can pursue interests in advocacy, internationally and in a variety of roles, exist within all three sectors of society—the private sector, the public sector, and civil society. During my master’s research I came across Gregory Barz’s work, Singing for Life: HIV/AIDS and Music in Uganda (2006). I was struck by the urgency it imparted towards, first, educating those at the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, and second, informing non-governmental organisations about the positive contribution music can make to the lives of those infected. The issues that Barz dealt with include: the ethics of representing those living with HIV/AIDS; "living positively" with the disease; the situation of music in discourses on HIV/AIDS; strategies for and performances in the fight against the epidemic; and addressing misconceptions, such as the disease as retribution for sin. Barz talks about the loss of collective memory that comes from a generation lost to the disease. Music and performance can create a sense of continuity that mitigates this tragic loss of life and help toward community regeneration. Most vitally, Barz’s work makes known to the world the human faces and voices of Uganda’s HIV/AIDS epidemic.
“Music in Times of Trouble”
. . . continued

All of this made clear the need and importance in particular situations to discard the stance of impartial observer, and instead to get involved, even at the risk of being partisan. In Jeff Todd Titon’s understanding, applied ethnomusicology is a “music-centered intervention in a particular community, whose purpose is to benefit that community—for example, a social movement, a musical benefit, a cultural good, an economic advantage, or combination of these and other benefits,” all moderated by “ethical principles of social responsibility, human rights, and cultural and musical equity” (2015, 4).

Today, we face issues that are truly global in scope and foreseeable impact; these particular tragedies transcend the extent and reach of the nation-state, formations and alliances, and transnational institutions. Climate change is one of these global issues, and socioeconomic inequality is exemplified by the discourses surrounding the One Percent. How then can we make sense of intervention and community in the face of such great scale? And what lessons can we learn from seminal studies such as Barz’s? Perhaps we need to redefine the terms of community, and subsequently, activism, in order to formulate a vocation that, in truth, meets these ethical principles. What I mean is that, as scholar and activist, one needs not only to recalibrate and reconsider what being an activist means but what it means to be a human being living in the world today.

During my field research on hiphop in Uganda, I found myself observing, in many instances, musicians involved in initiatives that fulfill Titon’s description of applied ethnomusicology. These are grassroots, ‘bottom up’ enterprises, as it were, where young people choose hiphop as a means for constructing a self and, by extension, a negotiating a self in society. Here, the message is education, but it is not as simple as that. These are narratives of empowerment, defined in terms such as entrepreneurship and leadership, in spaces of stark and grinding poverty. You cannot eat words. So, I found ‘hiphoppers’ setting up agronomist enterprises, where crops are grown not for subsistence but for commerce. These nascent entrepreneurs “hustled” the land with as much swagger as they pushed CDs of their music, creating particular avenues of advancement through the generation of economic capital. In spaces of structural violence where, through corruption and neglect, power relationships exacerbate poverty and suffering thus engendered, what could be more activist than going out there and trying to make money?

Drawing on my own career in an emerging economy such as India, and, more recently, in my research on the political economies of popular music in fragile states, the discourse of entrepreneurship shapes perception of empowerment, and social and economic mobility. This is in no small part because of the nature of neoliberalism, the ubiquity of which means that a market rationality extends itself to political and social configurations, transforming, for better or worse, how we as individuals live our lives. Identifying those exact spaces where one can combine ethical awareness, economic advancement, and musical expression might provide a vital space for newer renditions of what we call activism. Within this schema, most powerful is the ability to act with agency, however constrained dimensions for change might first appear. Pushing against these, one may, in Berger’s words, “bring forth events in the world” (2014, 310), be it music-making, teaching, research, or public sector work.

References:

We are currently discussing plans for Volume 13 of SEM Student News. Please answer a quick poll with the topics under consideration. If you have further suggestions, please email the editor at semstudentnews@gmail.com.
Thinking Beyond Your Degree

eleven suggestions for a competitive job search

By Dr. Rebecca Dirksen (Indiana University)

There’s a great deal of handwringing over the state of today’s job market. This anxiety makes sense: we are facing restructuring of the academic world, with a move toward fewer tenure-track positions for humanities scholars. Moreover, there’s a generalized (and often poorly articulated and thus poorly received) antipathy toward academics, as public dialogues turn to “elitism,” “irrelevancy,” and “employability.”

Technically, however, academic job rates for early career ethnomusicologists have been relatively constant if not higher over the past several years, based on the unscientific measure of job postings to the job wiki, ethnomusicology-related listservs, and the Chronicle—although as a discipline we have no firm grasp on where these figures will stand in just five years. But let’s be blunt: even the most accomplished ABDs and recent PhDs with the best connections and the most exciting, cutting-edge research are not guaranteed an institutional home at a university. That said, there’s a comparatively strong market outside the university setting for those with serious public/applied/activist research skills. And there’s an extensive and growing range of available tools and resources that have opened up tremendous latitude for self-designed and directed careers.

So it may be time to reframe a solution to job market stresses: ethnomusicology graduate students might be best advised to build the skills necessary to be a competitive applicant for university and community college jobs while simultaneously positioning themselves to pursue other avenues. Academic work and public sector/applied work are not mutually exclusive categories.

1. Don’t expect your formal education to prepare you perfectly for exactly what you need to do. That’s okay; it’s not supposed to. Customize your learning process, and chart your own course of acquiring knowledge and wisdom in tandem with your academic program.

2. If you haven’t already, hone a secondary skill set that is not directly related to your academic training (and hold yourself to the same professional standards in this area as you do with your research). You might consider: filmmaking, web design and coding, podcasting, social media management, community organizing, non-profit management, project design and management, accounting, cultivating expertise in applied statistics, urban planning, digital humanities, exhibit curation (conventional or online), or public policy analysis.

3. Familiarize yourself with arts and cultural organizations that may have objectives roughly parallel to your own. Good places to start: museums, archives, independent record labels, music festivals, city or state arts councils. Think: Smithsonian Folkways, the Library of Congress, the Musical Instrument Museum, Maryland Traditions, California Arts Council, the Lotus World Music and Arts Festival, the World Festival of Sacred Music, the Northwest Folklife Festival, etc.

4. Get to know the people who do stuff similar to what you ultimately want to do. There are many scholars concentrating on public/applied/activist work whom I admire. I have found that meticulously studying their methodology and process is instructive for my own work, even if they’re working in completely different settings and contexts.

5. Diversify the ways in which you present your work, and capitalize on different publishing mediums for each major project. Different types of audiences are receptive to different types of presentations and media.

Ethnomusicology graduate students might be best advised to build the skills necessary to be a competitive applicant for university and community college jobs while simultaneously positioning themselves to pursue other avenues. Academic work and public sector/applied work are not mutually exclusive categories.

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You could think of this method as a “production suite” of publication, to borrow a phrase from one of my colleagues, IU law professor Christy Ochoa.

6. Study grant writing as seriously as you study for your qualifying exams. It’s an art form. It’s a literary skill. Grant writing to support individual research contrasts greatly from grant writing for nonprofit organizations, and it’s useful to be well versed in both genres. Straight-up fundraising is again a different beast. While I’m personally ambivalent about crowdfunding, you may find that it is appropriate and desirable for your work and research situation. As a public/applied/activist ethnomusicologist, your ability to convince funders to give you money (assuming that you do what you say you will with that money) may be a key indicator of your long-term livelihood and project completion success.

7. Consider incorporating a practicum or partnership into your studies. Through the IU Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology, for example, students may hold graduate assistantships with the Archives of Traditional Music and the Archives of African American Music and Culture; they can do practicums with Traditional Arts Indiana and the Mathers Museum of World Cultures. Such activities encourage professional relationships between students and faculty and set the scene for modeling and mentorship. There may be comparable opportunities on your campus or in your community. It may be possible to arrange independent study credits for such training.

8. Put together or collaborate on a clearly articulated and carefully documented public/applied/activist project while working on your degree that is ready to showcase around the time you go on the job market. If completing such a project means opting out of one or two conference presentations during your grad career, and assuming you have demonstrated your aptitude for this performance mode that is a staple of our profession, so be it. If you can find a way to work an applied aspect into your dissertation, even better.

9. Quite possibly the most challenging thing you will encounter throughout your career is ethics—pertaining to your research and professional activities, your interactions with others, and your personal convictions. Study every publication you can get your hands on from a wide variety of disciplines and, critically, from scholars from the country or community (ideally!) in which you work. Speak with as many people from different backgrounds and experiences as possible to gather their perspectives. A lot of complex politics are tied up in ethical issues, as well as family and social histories going back generations and centuries, to which you will never fully be privy, no matter how much of an expert you become. Ethics is all about how we balance conflicts, especially when we can’t see all facets of an issue or situation.

10. Determine the level of commitment you are able and willing to make, and design your plans accordingly. Your commitment level may be about timing (Will your project be completed over a few months or is it about long-term investment in a community?); it may be about the resources you are able to pledge (What sort of financial implications might this have? What sort of emotional or physical reserves can you draw on?). Such determinations will need to be made according to your personal situation, which may include family responsibilities, financial realities, health concerns, etc. Construct your life and career with these considerations in mind. Be realistic.

11. Most importantly, figure out the “meta” questions. What drives you to do this work? What can you contribute? What should you contribute? How are you managing your partnerships with your field colleagues? How do you answer the “so what?” about your research? Try to assess responses to such questions not just from your viewpoint but from the viewpoints of your field colleagues and any beneficiaries of your projects—to the best of your ability.

I hope these ideas serve as encouragement for a proactive approach to the job market. Good luck! □
I compiled this list of employment resources to target a variety of anxieties about looking for work outside of academia. Though some of these sources are from the 1990s, I believe much of their information remains relevant. That said, I mostly suggest sources published within the last fifteen years. Let this list give you a starting point for thinking about employment at any point in your graduate work.

I divided the list into four parts based on the themes I noticed in the ever-profitable field of doling out job advice. The first section includes resources for developing and marketing such intangible assets as critical thinking, superb communication skills, time management, and attention to detail. The second section offers services and survival skills for tackling the job market inside or outside academia: turning a CV into a resume, dealing with rejection, and locating where employers post jobs. In addition to the sites listed, I also recommend reaching out to museums, endowments, and foundations. The third section focuses more specifically on jobs in ethnomusicology outside academia. I hope these texts aid your reflection process after you think: “Maybe I do not really want an academic position.” Finally, the fourth section provides a look at the fluctuating field of ethnomusicology. When the job search gets you down, remember that we have committed ourselves to a field of study that is inherently interdisciplinary. Use that to your advantage!

### Creating and Communicating Transferable Skills


### Job Market and Job Search


Interfolio. Last modified 17 May 2016. [https://www.interfolio.com/](https://www.interfolio.com/).

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Ethnomusicology Career Affairs


Thinking Beyond Academia


Ethnomusicology Profession in Transition


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Titon, Jeff Todd, ed. 1992. “Special Issue: Music and the Public Sector.” Ethnomusicology 36(3).


Did we miss something? Contact us at semstudentnews@gmail.com. We will be happy to add citations and resources. Also, check out our past extended resource lists on SEM’s website, SEM Student News.
Justin R. Hunter, out-going editor & design/layout
Justin is an alumnus of the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa where he completed his PhD in May 2015. With concentrations in Indigenous, Japanese, and tourism studies, Justin’s research focuses on the Indigenous Ainu of Japan and globalization theory. Justin serves on the SEM Council and is the founder, and previously served as chair, of the SEM Student Union. He is currently adjunct lecturer at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

Davin Rosenberg, incoming editor
Davin is a second year PhD student in ethnomusicology at University of California, Davis. His current research focuses on North American flamenco and explores musicking and dancing in the (re)construction of time, space, and (sense of) place; performance temporalities; kinesthetic and sonesthetic impacts of performance; and transnational musico-cultural flows and interrelationships. His previous work discusses flamenco performance, instruction, and tradition in Phoenix, Arizona. Davin is also an instrument repair technician and plays trumpet and flamenco guitar.

Heather Strohschein, copy editor
Heather is currently a PhD candidate in ethnomusicology at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. Her dissertation research focuses on Javanese gamelan use outside of Indonesia, as well as music and the performance of community. Heather also serves as one of the editors and founders of the SEM Student Union Blog and currently teaches online world music courses at the University of Hawai‘i West O‘ahu.

Ana-María Alarcón-Jiménez, sem student union liaison
Ana-María currently works as assistant researcher and is a doctoral student at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa. She has researched and studied at the Graduate Center of the City of New York (CUNY), the University of California in San Diego, the University of Arkansas, and the National University of Colombia, among others. She has been awarded full scholarships by all the above mentioned institutions. Ana-María is Vice Chair of the Society for Ethnomusicology Student Union and she is contributor to the SEM Student Union Blog.

Hannah Adamy, researcher
Hannah is a PhD student in ethnomusicology at the University of California, Davis. She recently received her MA in Performance Studies from Texas A&M University, where she studied processes of heteronormativity in Euro-classical vocal pedagogy. Her current research focuses on vocal production as praxis in speaking back to violence in North America. She also composes music for various community theaters in New Jersey.
Kyle DeCoste, contributor

Kyle holds a BA in music from Bishop’s University and an MA in (ethno)musicology from Tulane University. His master’s thesis, entitled “Street Queens: The Original Pinettes and Black Feminism in New Orleans Brass Bands,” uses a black feminist lens to examine gender and race in the New Orleans brass band community. In the fall, he will be beginning his PhD in ethnomusicology at Columbia University.

Brett Gallo, contributor

Brett Gallo earned his MA in Music (ethnomusicology) from Tufts University in 2015 and his BM in Music Theory from the University of New Hampshire in 2012. His master’s thesis documents and analyzes the music of Borborbor, the dominant genre of dance-drumming among the Ewedome of Ghana’s Volta Region. Brett remains an active musician among music scenes from Boston, MA to Portland, ME, primarily as a member of NOLA-style brass band the Soggy Po’ Boys.

Simran Singh, contributor

Simran is a Reid scholar and recipient of the Overseas Research Award at Royal Holloway, University of London. Her doctoral research explores hiphop and civil society, focusing on Uganda. She holds an MA with distinction in Media and International Development from the University in East Anglia, and is Visiting Tutor at the departments of Music and in Politics and International Relations, following a seven-year career as Creative Director of a branding firm in India.

Maria Stankova, contributor

Maria is a PhD candidate in ethnomusicology at New York University. Her primary research interests lie at the intersection between music and politics, music and economics, and music and identity. Her current scholarship is an ethnographic and analytical study of the phenomenon of ethnic choral music through the lens of globalization. She currently directs the NYU Bulgarian Chorus, composes music for various projects and ensembles, and dances with the Bosilek Bulgarian Folk Dance Ensemble.

Adriana Martínez Falcón, facebook manager

Adriana is an ethnomusicologist focusing on Chinese cultural studies. Since graduating from the Autonomous University of Mexico, she has continued her studies as a postgraduate candidate at The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). Most recently, she has been focussing on the study of ritual music and identity in Chinese lion dance. She is a teaching assistant at CUHK as well as an invited lecturer at Hong Kong University, among others.