CHAPTER SEVEN
BEYOND THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM:
APPLYING FOR TEACHING POSITIONS

ENTERING THE ACADEMIC JOB MARKET: THE DISSERTATION AS A KEY FACTOR IN
THE DECISION

The dissertation is the item of greatest interest to most hiring departments, serving as the most important
means of distinguishing among candidates. It is therefore essential to be far enough along on the
dissertation when entering the job market so that you will be able to communicate about it effectively in
all contexts that are connected with the job hunt: the dissertation abstract that normally accompanies the
curriculum vitae, the cover letter, the interview, and the job talk. If you enter the market prematurely,
before you are ready to make a strong impression, you risk running into trouble on the next round, should
some of the same hiring departments have unfilled openings in your field. Although the progress of the
dissertation can be unpredictable, if you really feel on top of your material, and if there is a chance that it
would be finished in time for a June degree of the academic year of the job hunt, or even in time for a
November degree in the following fall, then you should seriously consider becoming a candidate and
discuss it with your advisor and with other key people. Most hiring departments will want assurances and
strong evidence that you can complete the dissertation before the start of the new position. At the very
least, you should be able to prepare a polished chapter to offer as evidence of good progress — which
many hiring departments request in any case, and which could also serve as the basis of a job talk.
(Having a polished chapter can also be helpful to your advisors in writing strong letters of
recommendation — more on that presently.) Some hiring departments are even more demanding, and
will not even look at a candidate without “completed dissertation in hand.” There is no hard and fast rule
about the best timing for entering the job market; close consultation with your advisor and with others
who know your work and who also know the market in your field is your best bet. In fact, entering the
job market is something that must be done with the support of your advisor and your other recommenders
as well, so keeping them well informed is important.

STEPS TO TAKE ONCE YOU DECIDE TO ENTER THE JOB MARKET; TREATING THESE
STEPS AS AN INVESTMENT

Once you decide to enter the job market — again, in consultation with key advisors — you will need to
get application materials into highly polished shape as early as possible: the curriculum vitae, cover
letter, recommendation letters, and supplementary materials — such as a polished dissertation chapter, a
syllabus and reading list from a course or two, teaching evaluations, article reprints if you have any
published articles. Hiring departments may ask for specific supplementary materials, but you also may
volunteer them (more on this in the discussion of the cover letter and accompanying materials). The order
in which these application materials are discussed below suggests a logical way to proceed; however, you
will find that you will be working on these items almost simultaneously, since they all must be ready as
early as possible for the job hunt.

You should also register with the Dossier Service, if you have not already done so
(http://www.ocs.fas.harvard.edu/students/gsas/dossier.htm; also see below for more details). Within the
department, you should go beyond your dissertation advisor and make an appointment to see any faculty
member who might be helpful with the job hunt. Many professors are available for advice and assistance,
but you must seek them out. Also, the PhD counselors at the Office of Career Services are available to
discuss all aspects of your job search. You will also want to consult the OCS publication, Cracking the
Academia Nut, prepared by former OCS PhD counselor Margaret Newhouse (copyright 1997 by the

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Above all, we suggest that you think of the process of preparing application materials as an investment. All items should be given the utmost thought and care and unsparring effort, so that they are highly polished and reflect your strengths as effectively as possible. Once you have made this strong initial effort and investment, however, we would then urge you to try to proceed with the job hunt without letting it become an all-consuming process. The task of adapting and refining your cover letter and possibly other items to fit a specific position should be relatively simple if your preparation of the initial “generic” version — your investment — is thoroughly done. We realize how difficult it can be to eliminate the sense of pressure and of high stakes that the job hunt entails. Nevertheless, we do believe that preparing effectively at the outset can make it possible for you to engage in the job hunt and to go on with your life — including not only finishing the dissertation or getting close to completion, but also giving attention to other matters of high priority to you.

**PERFECTING YOUR CURRICULUM VITAE**

The presentation of academic credentials — whether in the curriculum vitae, the cover letter, or the dossier — has become a crucial part of the academic job hunt. A hiring system that once relied almost exclusively on the “old-boy network” has been altered by affirmative action requirements, giving candidates the opportunity to submit applications for all openings for which they wish to be considered. A growing practice in many departments is to place student vitas on the internet for even wider dissemination. It is therefore essential to prepare a strong curriculum vitae.

This step should precede or at least coincide with your becoming an active candidate. When you have prepared a draft, be sure to discuss it with the appropriate advisors in your department and with a PhD advisor in the Office of Career Services. The following are some suggestions on format and content:

- The cv is a presentation of your academic qualifications in outline form. Above all, it should be clearly organized, succinctly written, set in a format that can be scanned quickly for the essentials, and attractive in appearance as well (using good bond paper and a good printer). Note that some categories are identified as “optional,” and some are expected in particular fields and not in others.

- In preparing a cv, it is important to be aware of the norms in your field — which means taking the steps already suggested, and consulting closely with key people in your department.

- It is also important to pay attention to your own individual strengths and to tailor some of the more flexible categories in a manner that best highlights those strengths. Categories should be arranged hierarchically, with your strongest qualifications first. Note as well that categories can be re-arranged and adjusted for particular positions — for example, in applying to large research universities, you might put research and publications first, while for small teaching colleges, teaching could be earlier.

- The samples provided at the end of this chapter reflect this individualized process. They have been chosen because they illustrate helpful points about how to proceed, with accompanying notes to

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1 I am grateful to Margaret Newhouse for suggestions as I was preparing the fifth edition of *Scholarly Pursuits*. The first edition came out around ten years ago, and was itself a successor to a booklet on academe that I had written in the early 1980s — all of this in response to what we now recognize as a job market that would become increasingly competitive over the years. With each new edition, there has been a need to refine my thoughts and to “modernize,” paying attention to such innovations as the role of e-mail, the internet, and even improvements in word-processing and printing. As noted above, Margaret Newhouse's book on the academic job hunt is also a source you will want to consult; it is available at OCS.
explain those points. There is, however, no single model that will work for everyone, and it is important to keep that in mind when viewing the samples.

- Below are the basic items that belong in an academic cv. Note that the order of the first four items — through “Fields prepared to teach” — is fairly standard, as presented here. Beyond that point, however, the hierarchic order and choice of the remaining categories can and should be more individualized — based, as noted, on your strengths, with perhaps with readjustments for particular positions for which you are applying.

  a. Name, address, phone number, both home and office, and/or e-mail address: It is crucial to have a reliable number where you can be contacted at all times (an answering machine or e-mail both work well for job candidates). This information always comes first in a vita; items of a more personal nature normally have no place in a professional vita: age or birth date, religious affiliation, marital status, children, etc.

  a. Education, including non-degree programs — confined to the level of post-secondary school education: Give name of all institutions, degree dates, including the date when the PhD is expected, or dates attended for non-degree programs, with items listed in reverse chronological order. If you have received the college degree with honors (for example, *cum laude* or *phi beta kappa*), indicate that along with the degree; you can also include your undergraduate major and thesis topic here. Other college honors or prizes should be reserved for a separate category for honors and awards, along with subsequent honors.

  b. Dissertation topic, with advisors — with an indication that there is an attached abstract (“See attached abstract”). In addition to the abstract, which should be attached at the end of the cv, some candidates include a two or three-sentence summary along with the title in the cv itself. In two of the samples (that of Helen Kuno and John Baker Gruff), the candidates provide a dissertation summary in the cv, roughly the length of a long paragraph, and omit a longer abstract at the end; the significance of their research, in these cases, could be presented effectively with this succinct treatment. For a detailed discussion of how to prepare the dissertation abstract, see the next section below.

  c. Fields prepared to teach or fields of specialization — an optional category that is strongly favored in some fields; it typically includes fields taken on the General Examinations. Once again, it is important to consult with experienced people in your field and learn about these norms. This category, if used, normally comes right after education.

  d. Publications and papers presented at professional meetings — with the two commonly combined at this stage, especially if there are only a few items: Publications should also include works accepted for publication, with an indication of that status. If you have submitted a manuscript that is under consideration for publication, you can include that, but, once again, make that status clear. (Eventually, as your list of publications and presentations grows, you may want to place them on a separate page and also divide them into categories: books, articles, papers, reviews, etc.; or, you can place “Selected Publications and Papers” on the first page, and refer the reader to the attached “Complete List.”)

  e. Teaching experience — to include information on both course content and the nature of the teaching responsibilities, plus any recognition awards for good teaching (more details on teaching to be discussed below).

  f. Honors and awards — a category that might be placed earlier, if awards are your major
Research experience — a category which is commonly expected for candidates in the natural sciences and which includes not only dissertation research, but additional projects and research interests, including future research plans as well. This category may be useful in other fields, especially if advanced research has been done over and above the dissertation topic; it can also include works in progress — with an indication of that status. If you have been selected by a faculty member to serve as a research assistant on a project you should include that in the cv, naming the subject of the research and the nature of the responsibilities. Be sure to note it if the project has resulted in a publication and if you are cited as a contributor in that publication. (If you are a co-author, it belongs under your list of publications.) In the fields of anthropology or archaeology, a special research category, “Field Work” is usually included.

Academic service — a category which you might label as “administrative experience”, or possibly “related professional experience,” depending on the nature of your experiences. This category would include serving as a House Tutor — be sure to define this title — or on a departmental committee, or as a conference organizer, or in student government.

Languages and related skills — with indications of your skill level; it can also include special technical or computer skills that are at a level that is worthy of note.

Pedagogical training — a category common in the foreign language areas, but also may be relevant for others.

Special categories or experiences that are particularly relevant for certain fields — for example, editing, translating, performances or recitals, museum curatorial experience, published creative writing, newspaper articles, work experience for a government agency, experience abroad, or possibly some special appointment or leadership position that does not fit in any of the above categories.

Hierarchic order also applies within categories, which means arranging items in reverse chronological order, the most recent appearing first. Similarly, the hierarchic concept should be applied for horizontal reading as well, which would mean putting position titles and course titles prior to dates — contrary to what is frequently done.

Avoid opening a category for a single item; instead, try to make it fit into a closely related category, adapting the category title, if necessary, for a better fit.

Good organization also means giving careful attention to typeface in the treatment of categories and items within categories. Your typeface should reflect your hierarchy — making appropriate use of bold, underlines, upper and lower case letters, in order to make distinctions among categories and within categories in a systematic and consistent fashion. Consistency also is needed in the labeling and arranging of items — for example, if you opt for position titles first, then you should stick to that for each entry. Since the cv is meant to be an outline, you should word things as succinctly as possible, and avoid having dense paragraphs that would interfere with having a clear outline.

Rather than following a rigid rule about length, you should make sure that the first two pages contain the most essential items. With qualifications placed in hierarchic order and entries worded succinctly, the question of appropriate length for a vita is of less concern. If you follow that principle, then any remaining items that you choose to include will also have a good chance of being read. Be sure to
Teaching experience requires particular care, to maintain a balance between thoroughness and succinctness. This entry can entail a considerable amount of information: the departments in which you have taught, including core courses, which are often of special interest to hiring departments; the subject matter of courses, either using course titles, if that suffices, or naming the subject yourself, if necessary; the nature of your teaching responsibilities, highlighting if you have been a Head Teaching Fellow or if you have designed your own seminar, or have given some lectures; note as well, if you have received a commendation from the Derek Bok Center for the outstanding quality of your teaching. Terms peculiar to Harvard, such as “Tutorial,” need definition or at least a synonym. It is especially important, for the sake of succinctness, to avoid redundancy: If you have taught the same course several times, just list it once and give all the dates; if you were Head Teaching Fellow more than once, just list the major responsibilities once, and refer back when it is applicable to another course.

If you are beyond the graduate student stage and have already had teaching positions in several institutions, then you should summarize even further. It might be better to list your teaching institutions first and then courses taught as a separate entry. If the latter is a very long list, perhaps group them in categories, or make it “Selected Courses Taught.”

It is best not to follow the common practice of listing your references on the vita. By omitting reference names you maintain greater flexibility in choosing which letters to send out for each position. A number of candidates apply for different types of positions warranting different types of letters. The hiring departments in any case will know who your references are when they receive your dossier or individual letters of recommendation.

THE DISSERTATION ABSTRACT: DISCUSSING THE DISSERTATION’S CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD

As has been mentioned, the dissertation is the item of greatest interest to most hiring departments, helping them to distinguish among candidates. You will need to be able to discuss it effectively in several different contexts: the abstract, which should be attached to the cv, the cover letter, the interview, and the job talk. The abstract is the ideal place to begin; once you have developed a statement for the abstract (roughly one or two pages in length), you can readily adapt it for the other contexts.

Effective communication about the dissertation for the job hunt differs in function and style from the dissertation prospectus, which is often lengthy and detailed. In the job hunt you are not just seeking approval of your topic from your own department; your goal as a job candidate is to generate enough interest and enthusiasm about your work to convince a hiring department that you are their leading candidate. The dissertation abstract therefore must be a persuasive argument, a clear and highly polished argument, of how your work contributes to the field. Note that the discussion should be in the present tense — it’s no longer a matter of what you will do, but are in fact doing.

Elsewhere — in Chapter Five, in the discussion on writing a fellowship proposal for funding dissertation research — we suggested that in order to construct a polished and tightly-knit argument on how your dissertation contributes to the field, you must decide in advance what your principal contribution argument is. We suggested three possible paradigms for discussing the contribution to the field:

- It brings to light new material that hitherto has been overlooked by scholars (making it clear that the topic is important, despite this past neglect, and long overdue for consideration)
- It studies well-known material that has been examined many times before, but calls for a
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reassessment by looking at it in a new way (being careful to avoid suggesting that everyone else has gotten it wrong, but rather, emphasizing that your study “complements the rich existing literature”)

- It does some combination of the two — i.e., it exposes some new material, which in turn calls for some reassessment of what already has been done (a generally popular paradigm).

Each of the paradigms has the benefit of allowing you to discuss how your dissertation relates to the scholarly dialogue in the field — one of the most crucial issues in explaining the significance of your topic. Once you decide on the paradigm and the principal contribution argument that you wish to make, then it should be argued so tightly, that each sentence and each paragraph advances the contribution argument; keep tightening until that is the case.

Choosing a paradigm by no means implies that there is only one correct way to describe your dissertation. It is mainly a device — one that helps you not only to structure a tightly-knit contribution argument, but that also helps you to step back and view the dissertation in the kind of broader and bolder strokes that are more helpful for the job hunt. Dissertation writers often get so close to their subject in all its minute details, that they find it difficult to formulate the topic in terms of the larger themes that can generate stronger interest and enthusiasm.

Another important consideration in writing the dissertation abstract, or in any discussion of your dissertation, is the nature of the potential audience. You should not assume that the members of a search committee will be fully knowledgeable about your own specialized topic, even if they are all in your own discipline — and that is not always the case. Indeed, even specialists need convincing that your project will contribute to the field and may in fact view your project with a more critical eye. The safest course is to provide enough background in making your contribution argument, so that both generalists and specialists will view the background as a necessary and logical part of your contribution argument. It is also wise to avoid jargon or unnecessary technical terms.

By now it should be clear that writing a polished dissertation abstract is one of the major components of your initial investment in preparing for the job market: Work at perfecting it, seek advice from many readers, and polish it some more. Once you have done this demanding job, the point is to carry the fruits of your labors into all the contexts where discussion of the dissertation is required. Above all, do not worry about redundancy if you re-use the basic arguments and even some of the wording from your abstract in your cover letter, your interview, or even as a framework for your job talk. Bear in mind that members of search committees are probably looking at a large number of candidates; by the time they finish, they probably have trouble remembering their own name or their own research specialty, let alone retaining what they have read from applicants. Consider it not as redundancy, but as a form of emphasis and assurance of consistency. It is absolutely counter-productive to depart significantly from your strongest presentation in order to avoid redundancy, and may only confuse your audience. All application materials should re-enforce one another, and the best way to do that is to be highly consistent. (For similar reasons, you will want to have enough copies of your cv and abstract available to give to anyone who expresses interest, even if you have already given that person a copy; protect yourself from taking things personally or thinking they are not taking you seriously if they seem forgetful.)

WRITING THE COVER LETTER

While the cv is a presentation of your overall qualifications, the cover letter provides an opportunity to respond more directly and in a more individualized manner to the specific opening for which you are applying. Not only should each cover letter be tailored individually, but you should pay close attention to specific application instructions, especially what to include or not to include in the application packet. It is best to address the letter to a specific person, often indicated in the job description — if not, you can call the hiring department and ask to whom the letter should be addressed. (See the sample cover letters at the end of this chapter.) Before writing, you should find out as much as possible about the university or
college, the department and the position for which you are applying. Many departments have a home page and other materials on the internet, as well as on-line catalogues. Check as well with people in your field who may have some further insights into the particular opening and department.

The letter should convey a strong interest in the position, backed up by solid information that shows how suitably matched you are — that should be the main theme of your letter. In developing this theme you should pay close attention to the wording of the job description — and anything else you have learned about the position and department — and then highlight all of your qualifications that are particularly relevant for the position, proceeding in hierarchic order, just as you did in your cv. In fact, work very closely with your cv, utilizing the careful organization and wording that you chose — but now emphasizing and elaborating upon those points that are particularly helpful in showing you as a good match for this particular position. You should enclose your cv and refer to it as you point to particular qualifications. (Other possible enclosures will be discussed presently.) Once again, if there is an element of repetition between the letter and the cv, that should not be a cause for concern; re-using your best wording and then adapting it for each context of the job hunt is an assurance of consistency and emphasis — both of which are needed for the busy readers on search committees.

The opening paragraph of the cover letter is the most formulaic: State the job for which you are applying, as described in a particular source, name your department and university, area of specialization, and give the expected date for receiving your PhD (perhaps even indicating how much is completed, if helpful). You can also add to this paragraph a line that foreshadows the qualifications that you intend to highlight in the letter. In an ideal match, you might be able to cite a whole range of items that show that you are well suited for the job — including your area of specialization, dissertation research, publications, and teaching experience; it might seem as if the job description were written just for you. More often, however, you will have some qualifications that show a good match, while others are less relevant for the position. The art of a good cover letter is to emphasize those qualifications that clearly fit, and then do some further work for the reader by showing how some other items that might be overlooked also enhance your qualifications for the job.

The remainder of the letter should pursue these points, proceeding in hierarchic order and discussing your strongest and most relevant qualifications first. Be thorough, but be succinct. One paragraph should be devoted to your dissertation — again, working closely with your polished abstract, but highlighting how and why it works well for this position. Do the same for any publications that you may have. Another paragraph should present your teaching experience, highlighting the most relevant courses, citing any commendations in recognition of good teaching, and noting any special responsibilities you performed. If the job description is very general, try to show the general or broad themes you have dealt with in courses. It’s always a good idea to stress that you have versatility. For all positions, not just those in small teaching colleges, emphasize your commitment to students and to good teaching, and offer evidence from your cv and background that shows this commitment.

Other topics are more optional. If you have some qualifications that are particularly outstanding — prestigious fellowships, or extraordinary academic service, or items of a similar nature, you might want a paragraph to cover those as well. Pay careful attention to the length of the letter; word everything succinctly, and do not let the letter run over two pages single-spaced — keep it shorter, if possible.

In a closing paragraph you should reiterate your strong interest in the position. If you have any special affinities with this institution — for example, it’s in a region where you grew up, or you have family members who attended, or you yourself attended a similar school — this is a good opportunity to let them know that the job would have a personal meaning for you. Be sure as well in the final paragraph to note that you are having recommendation letters sent (unless requested not to in the job description), and mention any enclosures. Finally, tell them how you can be easily reached, and mention if you plan to attend the professional association meetings.
DECIDING ON SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS TO INCLUDE IN THE APPLICATION

In addition to the cv and cover letter, you will of course need to comply with any requests made in the job announcement: They may ask for teaching evaluations or a writing sample, perhaps a dissertation chapter; alternatively, they may specifically ask that no supplementary materials be sent at this time. The whole issue of what supplementary materials to submit and how to submit them is discussed below, on Using the Dossier Service.

One item that you need to start preparing in advance is a teaching portfolio, since hiring departments are increasingly showing an interest in this item. Typically, it consists of a statement of your teaching philosophy, course syllabi and reading lists, and summaries of teaching evaluations, accompanied by copies of the original forms. Harvard’s Derek Bok Center provides advice on assembling such a portfolio; in some cases, a teaching video is requested, for which the Derek Bok Center will also assist. For a complete description of a teaching portfolio, see the Bok Center web site: http://bokcenter.harvard.edu/.

As emphasized below, in Using the Dossier Service, it is important to be selective in submitting supplementary materials, basing your choices on the nature of the position and the school; it cannot be helpful to inundate a search committee with too many items. You can also contact the hiring department if you have any questions about their requirements or preferences about what to include.

ACQUIRING LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION FOR THE JOB HUNT

We have observed in an earlier chapter that a good letter of recommendation not only makes a statement of support about a candidate, but also presents a well-documented and informative evaluation of performance. We strongly advised that you should not wait until your final year of graduate study in acquiring letters of recommendation. If you have followed this advice, or have acquired letters for other purposes, such as fellowship applications, you should be sure to have your letters up-dated and also adapted for the specific purposes of the job hunt, with a current date affixed to the new letter.

In choosing recommenders, you should not necessarily select those with most prestige, but those who know you best and are most supportive. The previous process of choosing advisors and mentors more or less determines the choices available for you at this stage, so this is something that begins early in the graduate career. There is no ideal number of letters to acquire for your dossier. A letter from your dissertation advisor is essential. In addition, the group of letters as a whole should present a complete and rounded picture of your strengths in different areas: your teaching, other research, professional papers or publications, administrative and House activities. For most students, this method of choosing normally means having somewhere between three and six letter writers for the job hunt — any number beyond six may be an overload, unless there is some special reason.

When making a request for a letter or asking for an update of a letter, it is best to ask in person, using office hours or by making an appointment. In either case, be sure to provide the letter writers with sufficient information to produce a well-documented and informative evaluation of your credentials for the job hunt: your current curriculum vitae, a sample cover letter, and any other materials that you hope the writers will discuss. If you are asking for a letter on your teaching performance, you should do so shortly after your professor has observed your performance, while memory is still fresh, rather than waiting several years until you actually go on the job market. Similarly, if a professor has greatly admired a seminar paper, perhaps recommending it for publication, it is best to get a letter while the details on the paper’s merits are still fresh in memory.

You must decide in advance whether to waive your right to read the letters of recommendation — a right granted under the Buckley Amendment of 1974. The general wisdom is that letters have greater credibility if you waive your right to see them, but you must decide for yourself in each particular instance. If you have any uncertainty about a particular letter writer, you can suggest that if there is any reservation about writing a letter, you would prefer to know that.
Upon completion of the dissertation, it is best to ask your advisor to write a new letter (if you have any earlier one), discussing the work as a finished product, rather than just adding a new paragraph to the original letter. The finished dissertation should no longer be discussed as “promising,” but in terms of what it has accomplished. As your career grows, your letters should change and grow as well. If you have been out of Harvard for a while and have taught at a number of different institutions, it is important to have a letter from the chairman or other representative of each department where you have taught. In addition, the longer you are out, the more important it is to have testimony from people in your field — those who have read your manuscripts or published works. The main point is that for each application campaign, it is essential to see that your letters are current and relevant for the purpose at hand.

**USING THE DOSSIER SERVICE**

The Harvard Office of Career Services (OCS) has partnered with Interfolio, a portfolio management system that provides an electronic platform for Harvard’s dossier system. The dossier service is very important for letters of recommendation, which you will be able to store electronically in your Interfolio account. Hiring departments typically require confidential letters, and many are increasingly asking for electronic submissions. The management system, in addition, gives a large number of options of what else you can send through the system as part of the application packet, either in electronic form or on paper.

Given the options offered by Interfolio (described in detail on the Interfolio web site indicated below), you will need to give thought as to what to include in the Interfolio packet over and above the recommendations. You will surely want to submit a cv and also a cover letter. While the same cv may work for most jobs in your field (although you might possibly need more than one version if you are targeting a few different sub-fields), the cover letter needs to be individually tailored for each position, emphasizing how your qualifications match the particular job description (see above for more details on the cover letter and other application materials).

Beyond this point, the selection process of what to include in the application packet needs careful consideration. You will of course need to comply with any requests made in the job announcement. The hiring department may ask for a writing sample -- perhaps a dissertation chapter; alternatively, they may specifically ask that no other materials be sent at this time. If no mention is made or if you have any questions about the application process, you can check with the hiring department to see if any supplementary items would be welcome, and which ones they might be. **As a general rule, we would suggest the importance of being selective and basing your choices on the nature of the position and the school; it cannot be helpful to inundate a search committee with too many items.**

Once you have decided what to submit as supplementary items, another decision is whether to submit everything via Interfolio, or whether you wish to use nicer paper or nicer print for some of the items, such as the teaching portfolio or a writing sample; you may also choose to submit an off-print of a published article in a separate mailing. This special treatment may be something you wish to reserve for a few special positions, while using the single Interfolio packet for the rest of your applications. Special treatment might also pertain to letters of recommendation. Some letter writers are prepared to adapt letters, producing individualized ones for specific jobs or special ones. If you do opt to have any letters sent individually by professors rather than using the dossier service, it is important to verify that they have been sent — it is your responsibility to see that all required application materials reach their destination by the application deadline.

No matter what path you use for submitting letters of recommendation, it is still very useful to have letters on file in the dossier service as well. Setting up such a file is a form of insurance, enabling you to meet deadlines when your letter writers are away, or otherwise unavailable. It also allows you to apply for a large number of jobs without having to track down individual letter writers every time you wish to apply. The dossier service is also convenient when you are applying from out-of-town, or once you have
obtained your degree and have left Harvard. Another valuable use of the dossier service is at an earlier stage, when you are still engaged in teaching: getting a letter on your teaching performance close to the time when your teaching has been observed by a course professor helps the professor to write a more informative letter than if you wait until you enter the job market. In sum, having a dossier file does not preclude having individual professors send out letters, it simply offers an additional option. Above all, it allows you optimal control of your job hunt at all times.

Be aware that some hiring departments simply require the e-mail address of your letter writers, who are then contacted by the hiring university’s own portfolio service; in that case, the submission of recommendations is made through that channel (and may include a questionnaire for the recommender to fill out).

ASSEMBLING A TEACHING PORTFOLIO

One item that has become of increasing importance to hiring departments is a Teaching Portfolio, which consists of a statement of your teaching philosophy, description of past teaching and advising responsibilities and courses taught, course syllabi and reading lists, and summaries of teaching evaluations, accompanied by copies of the original forms. The Harvard Derek Bok Center provides advice on assembling such a portfolio; in some cases, a teaching video is requested, for which the Derek Bok Center will also assist. For a complete description of a teaching portfolio, see the Bok Center web site (http://bokcenter.harvard.edu).

Finally, it is important to remember that your dossier and portfolio should be kept current at all times. As your accomplishments grow or your career goals change, your dossier and portfolio should grow and change as well. Dated letters or cvs should be removed from your active file — i.e., the file that is sent out to prospective employers — and new ones entered. The main point is that each dossier request needs your thought and attention to the many issues raised in the present discussion. The Interfolio web site now includes a set of detailed considerations for dealing with the options offered by the Interfolio system. (http://www.ocs.fas.harvard.edu/students/gsas/dossier.htm). The OCS staff is available to assist you as well.

KEEPING INFORMED OF VACANCIES AND CHOOSING WHERE TO APPLY

Almost all new academic vacancies and job descriptions are publicized — usually in the appropriate academic journals or employment bulletins put out by the various professional associations — in conformance with affirmative action requirements. Most professional associations now list job announcements on their web sites. In addition, letters with vacancy announcements are sent to many departments, or to individual faculty members in the field. These usually are more detailed, and appear earlier than the published announcements. Some departments maintain these letters in an open file or on a central bulletin board. Some departments send active candidates photocopies of openings in their field and increasingly are using e-mail for this purpose. Job listings on the internet will probably transform this whole system in the near future, so try to keep abreast of the use of new technologies as part of this process.

In addition to utilizing all departmental services, it is important for you to be systematic and self-reliant in keeping informed of vacancies. If it is not too expensive, it is best to get your own subscription to the professional employment bulletins (which may also exist in electronic form); also check the department regularly for new job listings.

The Chronicle of Higher Education is another important source, especially for openings in smaller schools or administrative positions. It appears weekly, while most professional bulletins are printed only four or five times a year. It lists job announcements on the internet as well, at “Academe this Week” (http://chronicle.merit.edu/).
In choosing where to apply, it is important to recognize that the academic market is highly structured: announcements usually appear early in the academic year, and the job search is basically confined to published listings. Unsolicited inquiries — if used at all — are helpful mainly for obtaining adjunct or part-time teaching positions or last-minute openings of a temporary nature. For this alternative path, used at times by candidates with geographic restrictions or other needs, you would write letters to department chairs, do follow-up calls, and networking as well. If you have no geographic restrictions, it is best to be flexible and open-minded in your consideration of vacancies. Taking a job at a less prestigious school than you had anticipated would not necessarily hurt your chances to move on to a better institution, should an opening arise. The main point is to continue to develop your teaching skills and polish and expand your scholarly research. If, on the other hand, you feel that a given position would thwart that growth; or if for other reasons you know you would not want the job, then it would be unwise to apply.

**KEEPING A RECORD OF YOUR APPLICATIONS**

It is important to record all contacts made with potential employers, including telephone calls. The most useful record is a photocopy of all your correspondence, kept together with all responses you receive. You might also want to record your impressions after all personal or telephone contacts, and in addition, any activity by faculty members made on your behalf.

**FOLLOW-UP**

If you receive no response or acknowledgement within a reasonable period — around a month — it is appropriate to inquire about the status of your application. Any further contact that you initiate requires discretion and should have a clear purpose. You might want to report to the hiring department on significant developments in your credentials — the completion of the dissertation, or perhaps the acceptance of an article that was under consideration for publication. If you do so, be sure to use the occasion to reaffirm your strong interest in the position, and possibly to clarify any remaining questions that you may have.

In one case, a candidate applying for a job in California telephoned the chairman of the search committee to let him know that he would be in the area. The department had already invited three candidates for an interview, but was pleased to take advantage of his presence in the area, since he was number five on their list. The outcome was that they liked him better than their first three choices, and he got the job. In another instance, a candidate telephoned a hiring department to ask if she might submit a late application. She learned that the first competition was indeed closed, but was told of a new opening that was even closer to her field. This kind of contact may not always produce such results, but if you think there is some chance, it is worth a try. Whatever course is pursued for a particular vacancy, it is also important to keep watching vacancy listings and to apply for all positions of possible interest. Announcements of new openings, or of positions that are reopened, appear even in late spring and summer. A flexible and patient attitude can be an important asset.

**THE INTERVIEW**

The interviewing process will be discussed in two parts. The first will deal with the shorter interviews that are conducted at the meetings of the professional associations — interviews of around 30 minutes in length. The second deals with the longer interviewing process that is part of an on-campus visit — lasting one or two days.

**SHORT INTERVIEWS AT PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS**

In this interviewing process, the candidate is still part of a fairly large pool, having made it past the first cut — usually on the basis of the curriculum vitae, cover letter, and letters of recommendation. In some cases, the interviews are conducted with less prescreening; last-minute sign-up lists for interviews are posted on bulletin boards at the meetings themselves, with just an opportunity to submit a curriculum
Be sure to find out, as well, which faculty members from your department will be at the meetings, and make sure that they know of your candidacy and special field and that they have copies of your curriculum vitae and dissertation abstract. It is also important to make provisions so that you can be easily reached throughout the meetings. Staying at the convention hotel is the most practical choice, and special rates for students are often available, but be sure to register early to get a room at the convention’s main hotel.

In preparing for the short interview, bear in mind that a half-hour is not very much time for persuading an interview committee — generally two or three people — of your suitability for the job. (There is actually less time, since the interview generally begins with some conversational remarks as a warm-up.) In order to assure that you are prompt, try to avoid scheduling two interviews back-to-back in two different places. It is important to prepare in advance, to formulate answers to questions that you are likely to be asked — even writing brief notes on what you plan to say — and to rehearse your delivery through a mock interview. A number of departments offer interview practice, which is also available at the Office of Career Services, where you can arrange to have a videotaped mock interview with a PhD counselor. You may want to rehearse a few times and get different reactions. In doing so, it is also useful to try out your handshake as well — a good strong one is important; so too is eye contact. You might also choose to do a rehearsal in interview clothing. There is considerable range as to what is appropriate to wear, but in general, it should be something that makes you feel both comfortable and pleasing in appearance. Men do not usually wear three-piece suits (sports jackets are perfectly fine), and women usually choose between dresses or suits, either with pants or skirt.

Another part of advance preparation is to decide what written materials to bring to the interview — beyond an extra supply of cvs. The possible items are the same as the suggestions made above for voluntary supplementary enclosures with the cover letter (if you have already made these enclosures, it still cannot hurt to bring extra copies to the interview): a polished dissertation chapter or other writing sample, a teaching portfolio, and an article reprint. Just as it is important to dress professionally, it is also important for all materials to have a professional appearance — keeping them in labeled folders, with sufficient copies to go around.

It is also important to learn as much as you can beforehand about the hiring department, institution and position. Look through catalogues, see if the department has a home site on the internet, get information if possible from someone who has had recent first-hand experience with the department. Be familiar with important scholarly works by members of the department.

Bear in mind that this is an opportunity to convey in person your enthusiasm for teaching and research; it is also an opportunity to show that you are articulate, reasonably assured and personable. Your interviewers will not only consider the content of your answers, but also your qualities as a potential colleague.

Below are some of the standard subjects covered in interview questions and some suggestions for planning your responses. The interview is essentially a dialogue, and your answers to questions should be presented in as conversational a tone as possible. Nevertheless, you should plan your answers as thoroughly as possible — including keeping brief notes — so that you know in advance the points you think are the most essential to make in the various categories below. The interview questions may not cover all of these categories, so be prepared as well with a strategy for introducing important points. Usually, there are some open-ended questions or some pauses that will allow you to determine the direction you wish to take.

• **Teaching experience**: Often the question has to do with how you would teach a given course — for example, an introductory survey — or how you approach teaching in general. The most important
message to convey is that you are responding from the point of view of someone who has had teaching experience, rather than just giving a hypothetical answer of what you would do some day. In order to present yourself in that light, it is helpful to introduce concrete examples that you have selected and prepared in advance: some class discussions that went particularly well as a result of assignments or questions that you devised, or a particular technique that you used in leading the discussion; a course syllabus that you designed or helped to design; or any other positive illustrations from your own teaching. If you have not taught in an introductory course — and that is one of the frequent questions asked — it is even more important to be familiar with some of the major textbooks in the field, or syllabi used in your department. You might also think about introductory units in courses that you have taught, and be prepared to extrapolate from them. Your experience does not have to be exactly in the course they cite, in order to give a knowledgeable response. The main point is to show that you have given the matter a lot of serious thought.

• **Your dissertation**: All of the suggestions we have already given in connection with writing the dissertation abstract apply to the interview; it is worth reviewing those suggestions as you prepare for the interview. Once again, don’t waste the effort and investment that went into creating a carefully worded and polished contribution argument that presents your work in the strongest possible light; adapt your presentation for the purposes of the interview, giving it a more conversational tone. Avoid minute details, and stick to the broad and bold strokes that you developed for your abstract. It’s not redundancy, but rather, a form of emphasis and a means of being consistent. Be prepared as well for some exchanges and possibly some rigorous questions; the more secure you feel about the basic lines of your contribution argument, the less likely that you will be thrown even if you are challenged on some aspects of your work. Be gracious at all times.

More than ever, be attentive to the nature of your audience. Do not assume that the interviewers will be fully knowledgeable about your own specialized topic. Once again, the safest course is to provide enough background in making your contribution argument, so that both generalists and specialists will view the background as a necessary and logical part of your contribution argument.

• **Future research plans**: For most candidates at this stage of their career, the dissertation is the primary source of future research plans. It doesn’t suffice to say that you plan to polish it and turn it into a book for publication; it is important to be prepared to discuss what further research you plan to do — with an emphasis on the amount of original work that would be incorporated. In general, it is best to stay fairly close to the dissertation in answering this question, unless you have a definite project that is fairly well thought out or are already engaged in research on it. Otherwise, you run the risk of talking about tentative ideas, about which you are not very well-informed as yet, and quickly being exposed in that position.

• **Administrative experience and university service**: Interviewers will want to know what kind of a colleague you will make. Any experiences that show good departmental or university citizenship would be helpful: conference organizing, orientation of new students, undergraduate advising — these are just a few of the many possibilities.

• **Open-ended questions — “Tell us about yourself”**: This should not be taken literally — to tell the story of your life — but rather should be used as an opportunity to discuss anything else about your qualifications that you would like the interviewers to know. As noted above, the specific questions don’t always give you the opportunity to make all the crucial points that you wish to make, so this would be the right moment to do so. For example, if you have some strong secondary specialties that have not been discussed, or some other desirable skills, or some special affinity with the hiring institution or its geographic area, this is the time to introduce them.
• **Asking you if you have any questions:** Even this question should place greater emphasis on conveying information about your candidacy, rather than gaining information. In our view, it is not an optimal use of a short interview to ask about teaching load, salary, housing, or other items that eventually will be of great importance to you. If you do choose to do so, then it is more appropriate to discuss these matters in general terms at this stage — reserving more detailed questions for the final negotiating stage when a job offer has been made. We would suggest that the best thing to do at this stage is to use the interview to ask well-informed questions about the department, its courses and programs, and other information that you have gathered in preparing for the interview. You could also ask questions that reveal something about your values and priorities — for example, about opportunities to meet informally with students, or collaborate in team-teaching, or other indications of commitment.

• **Questions to which you do not know the answer:** The most important thing to keep in mind is that the interview is not a General Examination — your academic credentials are already known to the interviewers, or can be known, through other more effective means. **How you handle a difficult question — your overall demeanor and self-assurance — are of far greater relevance to the interviewers.** It is helpful to plan a strategy in advance that would make you comfortable in confronting a difficult question. Remember, as well, that you are not being timed for speed; you can pause and give it some thought. With a little extra time, you may be able to think of something that is close to or analogous to the subject being asked about, allowing you to approach the answer through an indirect route. Finally, if nothing comes to mind, you can say — being sure to do it with composure, rather than panic — that you think it is an important question and you would like to give it more thought. Note: Another kind of question that produces discomfort is if the questioner challenges your research. Once again, take your time and keep your composure. Rather than getting defensive, observe that it is a reasonable or good question, and then calmly explain your point of view.

• **Questions that you find inappropriate:** You may be asked about your age, your religious beliefs, your personal life, or some other question, which is inappropriate. Once again, it is best to plan a strategy in advance, and to be prepared to handle it with composure. You may not want to work in such a department, but it is best to preserve the choice. One recommended technique is to rephrase the question subtly, turning it into a more appropriate one. Women report that they are still asked at times about how they will manage to combine career with marriage or motherhood. Increasingly, they are able to answer that they do so because their spouses share equally in the problem. Individuals will answer differently, but the main point to get across is the seriousness and professionalism of your career goals.

• **Where else have you applied:** This question is sometimes asked and can make candidates uncomfortable. You do not have to give a complete list; you can say you have applied to a number of schools, and then just give as examples those you prefer to mention.

• **Dealing with “the Harvard mystique”**: There are two different and somewhat contradictory strands to this mystique. One is that Harvard people are all terribly arrogant and tend to think they are better than they really are. The other is that Harvard is the absolute BEST in everything: students, faculty, resources — you name it. Either version tends to make people wary about Harvard candidates, at times creating an added obstacle to overcome. The best way to handle this is to be absolutely certain that you yourself are resisting all temptation to look down upon other institutions. There is a vast difference between having confidence, which is a good thing, and arrogance, which is not. You can also emphasize in the interview that Harvard students are exciting and challenging to teach because they come from such a wide range of backgrounds — economically, socially, and in terms of quality of high school education. You may have things in your own background that make you especially
well prepared to deal with people from varied backgrounds. The main point is to be sensitive to these issues, which indeed is essential for being a good teacher and colleague.

- **A follow-up thank you note**: A letter to the chair of the search committee should suffice. This can provide a further opportunity to re-emphasize important points, to ask for further information, or to enclose additional documents as a follow-up to issues discussed during the interview.

### ON CAMPUS VISITS AND THE JOB TALK

In this interviewing situation, the competition is down to a very small pool — usually between three and five candidates, each of whom has succeeded in making a favorable impression. You may get very short notice and have little time to prepare for a campus visit. Fortunately, all of the above preparations will carry over and be helpful for the campus visit as well, so be sure to read the above carefully for the on-campus interview.

**The most important new task is the job talk.** In preparing, it is important to find out in advance the exact nature of this event: Will it be a small seminar, or a large formal lecture; will it be for an audience of faculty members, a mixture of faculty and students, or one open to the whole community? Will you be asked to teach a sample class as well? Most invitations for campus visits are accompanied by a detailed schedule of all events — including social gatherings; if not, it is important to ask for one.

Whatever the forum for the presentation, most candidates talk about their dissertation research. In choosing the precise topic of your talk, it is crucial to consult with your advisor and other key people. It is also crucial to rehearse your presentation. Many departments provide the opportunity for a practice talk; if not, you can take the initiative and invite some faculty members and fellow students to hear your talk. After you have received a thorough critique of your talk, it is important to incorporate all helpful suggestions, and to polish the presentation as much as possible (remember that it is better to receive criticisms while you can still correct them, than during the interview itself). **Multiple rehearsals are beneficial, so start preparing early; you don’t want to read your talk, although you will want to have written notes with you.** Many candidates give practice talks in their departments, even before they have received an actual invitation for an on-campus visit. In addition, some departments recommend as a further form of preparation, that candidates attend scholarly presentations arranged as part of its own junior faculty recruiting. The experience of watching others go through the procedure can be an important learning experience.

Suggestions for discussing the dissertation have been thoroughly covered above in the section on the Dissertation Abstract. We would only re-emphasize — on the basis of feedback we have heard from hiring departments — that it is crucial to maintain a balance between larger themes and specific data. Too much of one without the other weakens the entire presentation. In addition, a good talk should only try to make a limited number of important points — five is perhaps a good goal. Another suggestion we have heard in regard to the presentation of complicated data is that written handouts are important for helping the audience to follow the argument. Alternatively, you may choose to use visual aids or graphics — slides if you are in Fine Arts. These will require prior arrangements with the host campus. Along similar lines, it is also important to be sensitive to the nature of the audience. A good talk, and indeed good teaching, requires an awareness of how other people may react.

There will probably be a question period; if you have given practice talks, you probably can anticipate some of the questions and be prepared to answer. We would re-emphasize what we said about the short interview: **How you handle a difficult question — your overall demeanor and self-assurance — are of far greater relevance to the interviewers than the precise answer that you give.** It is helpful to plan a strategy in advance that would make you comfortable in confronting a difficult question. Above all, be gracious at all times.
The on-campus visit has a number of other important differences from the shorter interview:

- You will probably make the rounds and visit department members individually. Now it is important not only to know what they have written, but also to have read some of their most recent or important publications. This is not for the purpose of giving them a critique of their work, which should be avoided, but rather to give you a better sense of how you would fit into the department, allowing you to note how you would complement their existing strengths. Making the rounds will also probably mean having to answer a similar set of questions multiple times. Each time that you do so, it is important to maintain a lively interest and enthusiastic tone — never letting repetition become mechanical.

- You will also have interviews with administrators, and this usually means a different agenda for discussion — now getting into issues such as salary, other benefits, housing, and, above all, possibilities of promotion and tenure. These will probably be discussed at the departmental level as well. While it is certainly appropriate to ask questions about these issues at this stage, you should still discuss them in more general terms than you would at the actual stage of receiving a job offer, when you would try to pin down the details more firmly (see below Negotiating a Contract). If you have two-career family issues, you might choose to raise them at this point, although many people feel it is best to wait until an offer has been received (more on this issue in a separate section on the two-career family).

- A campus visit offers you an opportunity to take a close look at the department that may make you an offer. In particular, it is an opportunity for you to gauge the morale and general climate in the department and the institution, since these can effect your whole sense of well-being in a job: Do colleagues seem to like and respect one another? Do junior faculty members appear to be comfortable — do they convey a sense that they are happy there, that their future prospects seem bright? Are there clear signs of openness and fairness on issues such as minorities, gender, and sexual orientation? At a campus interview you should be able to obtain this information through careful observation and attention to indirect clues. In general, it is unwise to engage in discussions of departmental politics or any potentially divisive issues. Similarly, it is best not to get into discussions about Harvard departmental politics.

- Still another important feature of the campus visit is that the interview is an ongoing process: conversations at mealtimes and other social events, in the hallways in between appointments, and even during transportation. If at all possible, try to arrange some unscheduled time, in order to allow you to replenish your energy.

- You may also be asked to give a teaching demonstration — something more common in the area of language study, where you might be asked to conduct a fairly specific lesson: Get as many details about the nature of the course, the text book, the level of the students, how the lesson fits into the syllabus. Consult with experienced members of your department on how best to prepare. Think back on what teaching techniques have proven to work well for you.

- Alternatively, they might arrange a more informal session for you to meet and talk with students, including perhaps graduate students as well as undergraduates. Here you might want to think back once again on some of your most successful techniques and questions for engaging students in lively discussions and attaining broad participation. The context is undoubtedly different, but some of these successful techniques can carry over.

- A campus visit should also give you a chance to get a sense of the larger community (ideally, a tour should be on the agenda, if time permits): where the junior faculty lives, the cost of housing, the
quality of schools, the cultural life, etc.

- Before leaving, it is helpful to ask for a timetable for their decision-making process, and also learn how you will be notified of their decision.

- After a campus visit, write a thank-you note not only to the department chair and the head of the search committee, but to all individuals who have extended hospitality. The thank-you note, once again, provides a further opportunity to re-emphasize important points, to ask for further information, or to enclose additional documents as a follow-up to issues discussed during the visit. If you have received no word after a reasonable amount of time, it is appropriate to call.

**NEGOTIATING A CONTRACT**

A job offer is often made by telephone, either from the chair of the department, or the chair of the search committee — with a letter of confirmation to follow. It usually happens shortly after a campus interview (perhaps within a week, although there can be some delay if they have first made an offer to someone else who has declined). It is wise to prepare yourself for this conversation in advance, making a list of further questions you would like to ask, and how you would generally like to respond.

Your response should first of all convey your pleasure at receiving the offer. After that, you will probably want to clarify details about the offer and raise points that are perhaps negotiable. Now is the appropriate time to discuss and negotiate the terms of the position in detail. Your actual answer as to whether you will accept the offer should wait until this part of the process is completed. It is a good idea to say you will get back to the department — even if you are almost positive that you will accept the offer — rather than to give an immediate decision on the telephone.

As for items that can be negotiated, the department may have little or no flexibility on entry-level salaries, but it is important to have done some research in advance, preferably about the entry-level salary range in that department (try asking faculty members in your department what they know about that department, or at least what they believe are reasonable expectations in your field), or about the general salary picture at that level (the annual Almanac issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* publishes data on average salaries by rank and nature of institution). A crucial area that you will also want to deal with concerns tenure promotion policy: the timing before tenure review, the chances of receiving tenure, the criteria that will be applied when the department makes that decision (unless of course the job description specifies that it is non-tenure-track). On this issue, you might even ask specifically about recent promotions to tenure from within the department — how many publications were required, and what consideration was given to teaching.

There are also a number of other items that can be clarified or negotiated: leave policy, special support for junior faculty such as a reduced teaching load for the first year, research and travel funds, office accommodations, support staff, research assistants, laboratory equipment for the scientific fields — including coverage of start-up lab experiments, computer-time, number of teaching preparations (the teaching load may be fixed, but repeat courses can mean less preparation), benefits package, summer support, housing, child care, moving costs, parking and others of a similar nature. Other issues that can be covered in negotiations concern early or a postponed review for tenure if you have special reasons, or issues related to the two-career family — to be discussed in the following section. You might also want to

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This subject is discussed in greater detail in the publication already cited, *Cracking the Academia Nut*, by Margaret Newhouse. The author also recommends *Getting to Yes*, by Roger Fisher and William Ury (York: Penguin Books, 1983). This publication may be more appropriate for negotiations at a more advanced stage in your career, but it could be helpful in giving you a sense of process.
raise the issue of the possibility of deferment in taking the position if you are also applying for postdoctoral fellowships and would like to take a year to do research and publish, in the event that you win one. Clearly you cannot and should not try to negotiate about everything on this list. An important part of your advance preparation for this conversation is to know your priorities, know which items are the most important and reasonable to try for in the negotiating process. The fact that they have made you an offer is actually a form of leverage — they now want you to come, and probably would be prepared to make some extra provisions in order to get a favorable — and swift — answer. Throughout the process, be sure to convey that your questions reflect a serious interest in the job, making sure that your questions are indeed reasonable and that they are asked in an amicable way.

One final part of the negotiating process that often arises is that one school may make an offer early, before you have had a chance to see the results of other applications, including applications for postdoctoral fellowships as well. Some schools, in fact, deliberately make early offers, in order to attract the most desirable candidates. Unless this is your definite first choice, it is best to be honest with the school, and ask for enough time to allow you to know what other options you will have. You should also contact the other schools or fellowship agencies to which you have applied, telling them of your situation and seeing if you can get an earlier decision from them as well. In many cases, the school making the first offer will give some extra time, but not enough to see all the options. The school may also try to entice you to accept by making a more generous offer, or by adding some of the amenities listed above. At this point, you must view the trade-offs: Is the security of making an early decision more important, or would you prefer to wait and give yourself a chance to see if a preferable offer emerges? Bear in mind that an early offer probably means that you are a strong candidate, and that your application to other institutions also stands a good chance of being viewed positively.

Once you have worked out all the details, it is important to have them in writing. If they do not provide a final written version of the offer, you can confirm them in writing in a letter to the department. Please note: Until you have received a written contract, you should not withdraw your application from any other school. However, once you have signed a contract, you should give prompt notice to others.

THE TWO-CAREER FAMILY: THE JOB SEARCH FOR TWO ACADEMIC JOBS

The structure of the academic job market makes this situation extremely complex. Geographic choice is often limited, and there are frequently a number of moves prior to the attainment of tenure. How do academic couples manage? There is no single answer, but most would agree that flexibility and willingness to compromise are essential.

Although each couple must work this out in its own way, there is an approach — with variations — that seems to be preferred by many couples. It involves an independent job hunt by each member of the couple — favoring jobs that are close to one another, but not making that a necessary condition for applying. When one member of the couple receives a job offer — or when both do, but in different places — and it becomes necessary to respond to an offer, then the couple must deal with multiple tradeoffs: Should one member accept, opting for security? Is it better to live apart, rather than to sacrifice job possibilities for the other? If security is opted for, then negotiation often occurs with the institution that made the offer to see if there are part-time teaching possibilities for the other. Within the geographic area of the offer, the second job search often becomes even more flexible — for example, consideration of part-time teaching or administrative positions. As difficult as this all seems, a sizeable number of academic couples have managed to keep two careers going in this fashion.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FOREIGN STUDENTS
Many foreign students who have received their doctoral degree in this country prefer to teach here for a few years before returning home. In preparing for the job search and for an academic career in general, it would be best if they focus on their professional interests, rather than thinking in terms of being foreign. One Harvard professor — having entered this country as a foreign scholar himself — warned against joining an intellectual “ghetto” in which Third World scholars feel that they must specialize in the Third World. In practical terms, this means conducting graduate study and a job search just as any other candidate does, except for the need to explain to an interested employer that visa provisions must be made. Once a department has decided on a candidate — and that decision depends on the strength of the candidacy — then visa arrangements may follow more smoothly. This foreign professor also stressed that ability to communicate reasonably well in English would be taken into account in their applications for teaching positions.

ON NOT GIVING UP

In this job market, it may well be the case that, after all your efforts, you did not receive a job offer, perhaps not even an interview. The most important thing to do after any professional rejections — whether for jobs, fellowships, or publications — is to make an immediate resolution to try again. The resolution should be made before you have the chance to think that if you did not receive any job offer or have an interview, then it must mean that you do not deserve a job. You haven’t come all this way — made it through Harvard’s doctoral program — without being highly qualified. Talk only to people whom you can count on to give support and encouragement to try again, to people who will not let you doubt yourself. Just look around, and you will probably find yourself in good company — if that is any consolation. Also, being an experienced candidate, with degree in hand, and perhaps getting something published or accepted before the next round, can greatly improve your chances. And of course, it cannot hurt to review all your application materials to see if you can give things a further polish. (A recent study of the career trajectories of Harvard PhDs in the cohorts from 1988 through 1993 shows that there is dramatic improvement in the employment rate between the time of graduation and the time of this study, which, for the people in these cohorts, is three years or more after graduation.) In the meantime, you will also need to find a means of supporting yourself that will not be so demanding that it will interfere with your job hunt or with remaining active as a scholar. Again, look around, and you will find that many veterans of the job market are doing part-time teaching or doing work as a research assistant right at Harvard. If you take a totally unrelated job, then at least try to get an academic affiliation, perhaps with a Harvard research center or lab, even if it is non-salaried. Above all, do whatever it takes to keep your own sense of identity as a scholar alive. You have earned it!