



Preparing for the Academic Job Market

It's a challenging and stressful time to be on the job market. Jobs in History are down 25 percent; in English and Foreign Languages and Literature, the situation is even worse. Here is practical advice about steps you can take to maximize your chances for success on the academic job market:

If you aren't on the job market yet:

1. Build Up Your Credentials

- Present a paper at a conference
- Submit an article to a journal
- Work as a research assistant or at a research center or university press or journal

2. Network

Develop professional contacts

3. Increase Your Professional Visibility

Consider participating on a scholarly listserv

4. Demonstrate Your Energy

Organize a lecture, a conference, a reading group

5. Get Some Teaching Experience

Start and maintain a Teaching Portfolio, documenting the courses you have taught, your successes and innovations, and the evaluations you received.

If you are currently on the job market:

1. Don't get discouraged--or desperate.

The path to a tenure track job has never been easy.

2. Finish.

Time to completion is one of the ways departments predict future productivity. If you wait another year, you will be on the market with completers next year and delayers this year.

3. Short term options:

Build up your credentials: Publish and get varied teaching experience. Get to know faculty members in your niche.

4. Get feedback on your job application materials.

Contact the Teaching Center!

5. Network.

Develop connections with faculty members in your field outside of Columbia.

6. Don't be generic.

Identify (and tout) your special strengths and accomplishments. Show your range. Particularize your job application letter. Know what you have to offer that's special.

7. A bite--or even a nibble--from a university press greatly enhances your job prospects in the humanities, in particular.

Put together a book proposal (the Teaching Center will tell you how) and begin to shop it around.

8. Toot your horn, professionally.

Figure out why your dissertation topic is significant—and why it would be of interest to a non-specialist. Are you opening up a new subject? Have you pioneered a new methodology? Have you re-thought an older debate?

9. Aggressively pursue research grants.

In addition to year-long residential fellowships, there are a large number of short term grants, which help to validate and underscore your credentials.

10. Remember: There's life west and south of Manhattan.

Sure, you'd prefer to teach in New York City--and at a tier 1 research university. But there are many institutions that would love to have a Columbia Ph.D. outside of the area--in the fastest growing parts of the country.

11. Don't abandon hope.

Some jobs will open up in the Spring.