



Informational Interviews

Talk to Someone Who Knows

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THE PLANS:



THE PLAN YOU
TELL YOUR
ADVISOR

- "I'M GOING TO BE A
PROFESSOR AT A MAJOR
RESEARCH UNIVERSITY
AFTER I GRADUATE."



THE REAL
PLAN

- LOOK FOR CAREER
ALTERNATIVES.



THE SECRET
PLAN

- BECOME A
BAKER/ROCKSTAR/WRITER.



Learning Outcomes

- **Describe** what an informational interview is
- **Justify** why information interviews are important
- Learn **how to** conduct an informational interview
- **Empower** you to go out and talk to someone who knows

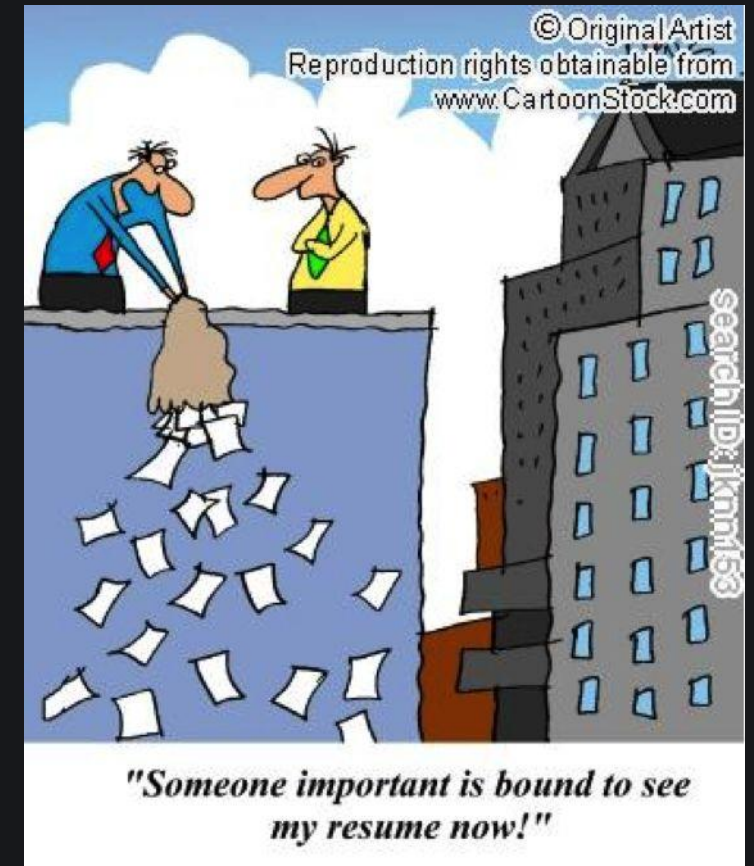
What is an informational Interview?

- **Conversation** with someone who works in a position/area that interests you.
- Networking Tool = **Relationship Building Tool**
- Career Exploration Tool
- It is **NOT** a job interview



Why are Informational Interviews Important?

- Information!
- Competency development
- Build a Network
- Access the Hidden Job Market
- Career Mapping Skill- Life skill





Where can informational Interviews be used?

- Undergraduate students - summer research positions/internships
- Graduate students and Post Docs – finding a lab and PI
- Medical Students - Identify Residency Positions
- Finding a position when you graduate

What questions do I ask in the interview?





Personal

- Would you mind giving me more detail on why being a science writer interested you? How did you get started?
- Tell me about a typical day?
- What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying?
- What interests you least about the job or creates the most stress?

Qualifications

- What level of qualification is required for the position PhD, Masters Post-Doc?
- What skills are crucial to be successful as a science writer?
- Can you suggest some ways a student could obtain necessary experience to become good candidates for this position while they are studying.
- What courses/ graduate experiences have proved to be the most valuable to you in your work? What would you recommend for me?
- Do you think this is a position that can be filled by an introvert or is it more suited to an extravert?



Landscape

- What can you tell me about the employment outlook in the field?
- How much demand is there for people in this occupation? Is it growing or shrinking?
- How competitive is the field?
- How will a certain technology affect this sector – AI or automation for example

Leads

- Do you know any staffers I could speak to?
- Are there any writers focused on molecular biology based in Canada you could introduce me too?
- I'm not sure this career is really for me, could you recommend another position that would be better suited to my skills and interests?

More questions . . .

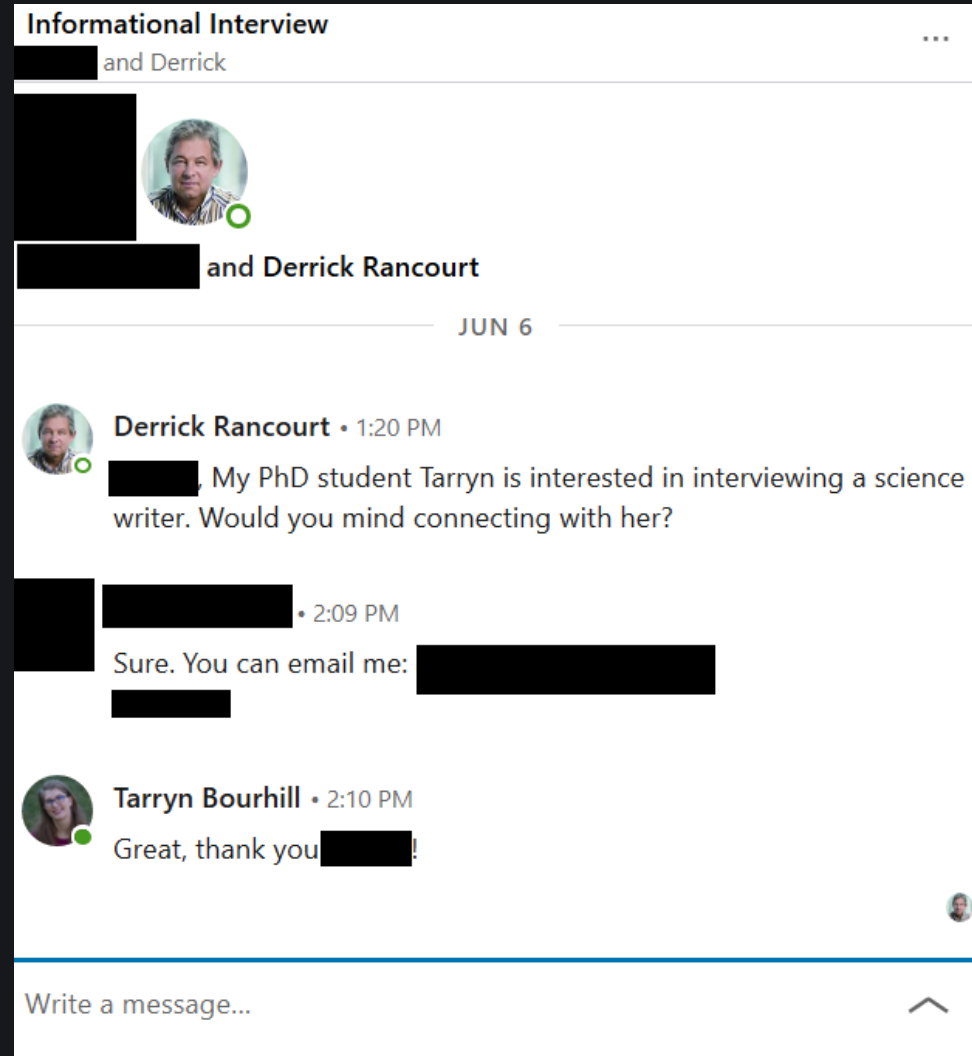
- Travel
- Metrics for success in the position
- Career progression
- Organisation structure
- Salary
 - What are the salary ranges for various positions in this field? Is there a salary ceiling?

How do I find someone to interview?

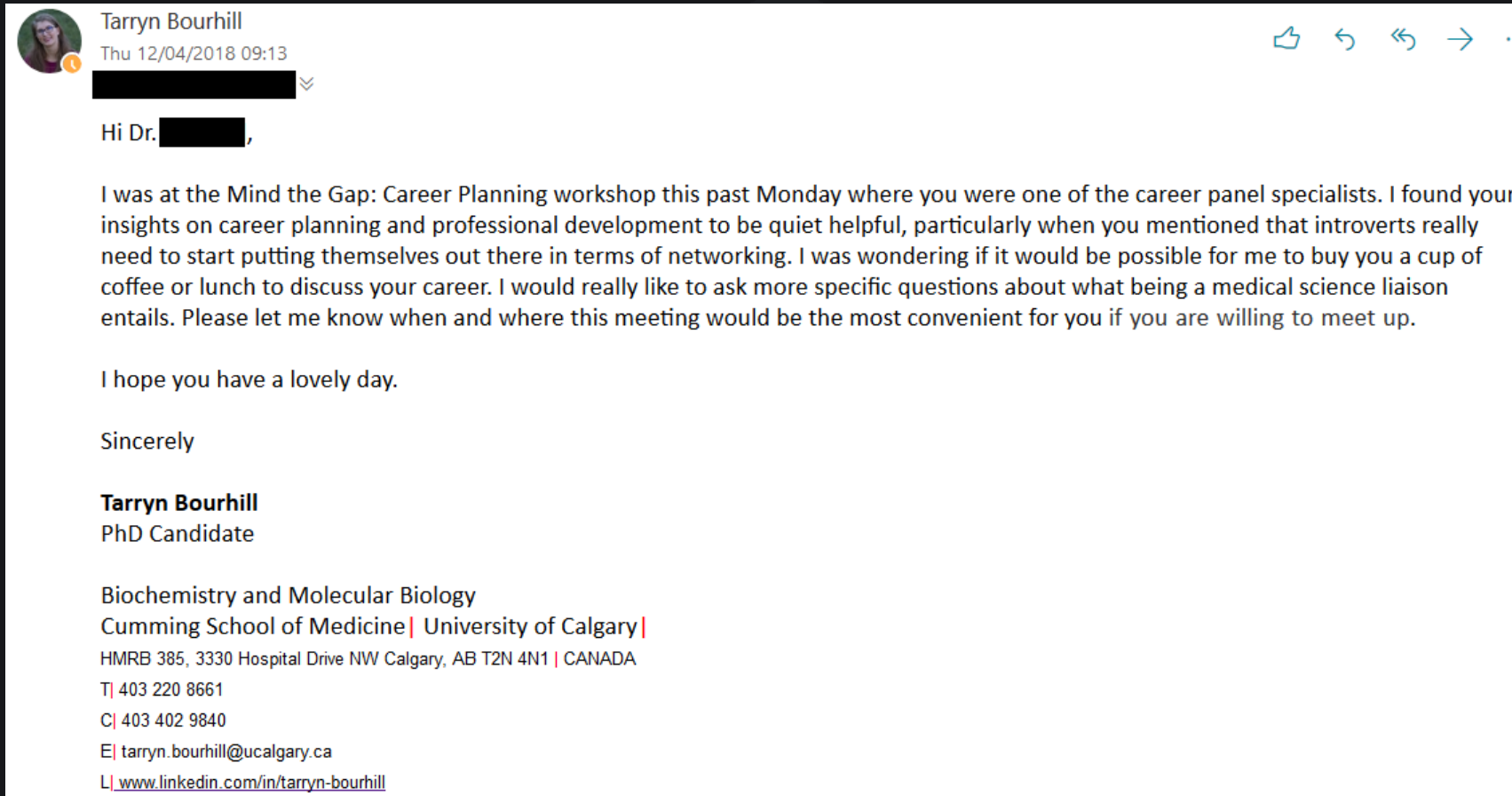
- LinkedIn
 - Find Alumni
 - Get an introduction
- Your Network
 - Friends, Family, Peers, Supervisors etc.
 - Lab mates – talk to the post docs!
- Conferences/ Symposia/
 - Lunch with an invited speaker
- Career Days/ Career Meet-Ups



The introduction



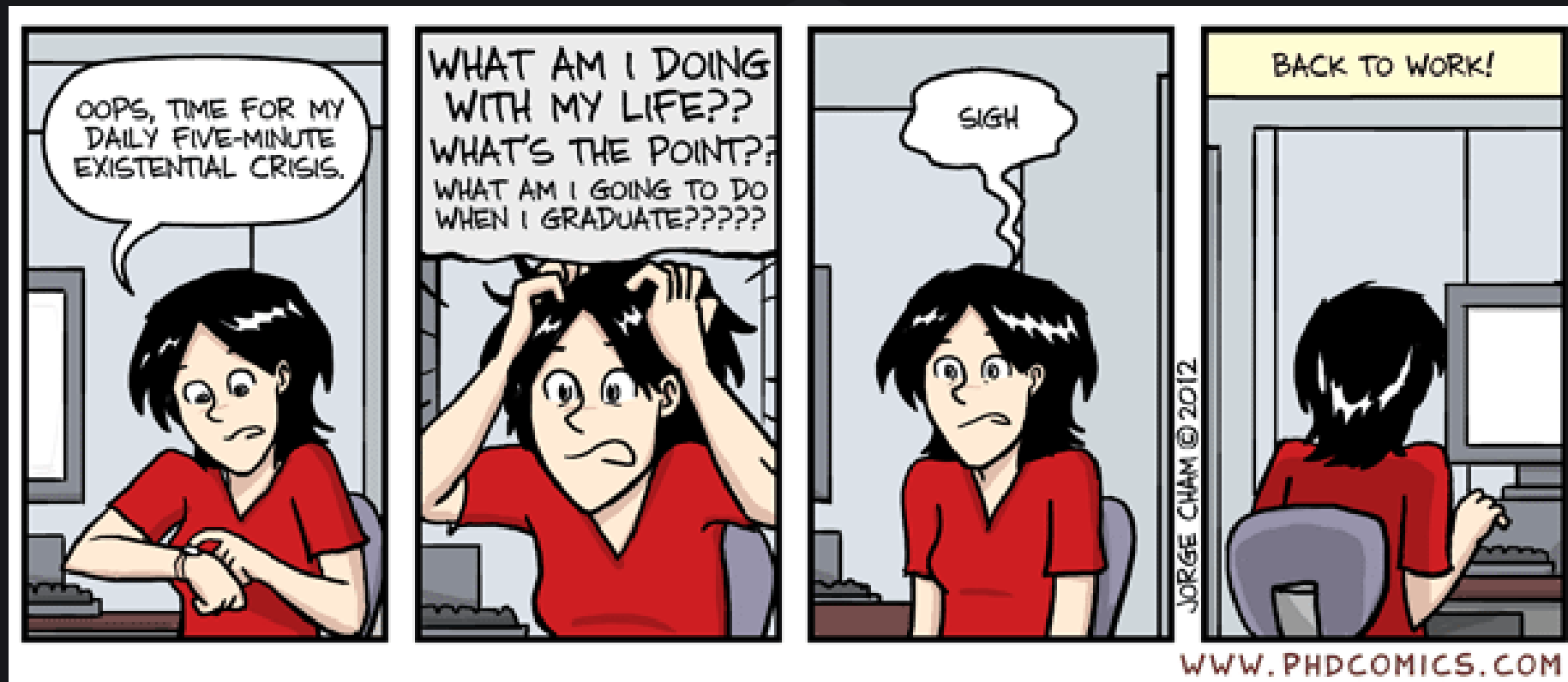
It is OK to go in cold!



Interview Etiquette

- Do I take my résumé?
- What do I wear?
- Note taking – let them know!
 - If you record an interview ask permission to do so.
- Are skype/ phone calls allowed?
- Should I interview more than one person in the same career?
- Always Thank your interviewee

Be Kind to Yourself!





Crazy Interview Game

- Pair up
- Everyone can look at their occupation card
- Do not tell anyone what you do for a living
- Everyone is allowed to ask **ONLY** 10 questions about what their partner does.



Crazy Interview Game

- You may not ask yes/no questions
- By the end of the 10 questions you have to guess the occupation.
- Can you ask the right questions to guess correctly?



Crazy Interview Game

- What was the most difficult thing about this game?
- What did you learn about the questions you asked, were some more effective than others?
- Do you have a better idea of the types of questions you would like to ask during your informational interviews?

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- Good Luck!



Additional resources

- <https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2010/summer/art03.pdf>
- <http://blogs.nature.com/naturejobs/2015/03/19/the-hidden-job-market/>
- <https://www.nature.com/naturejobs/science/articles/10.1038/nj7625-417a>



Thank you

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