



If you're part of the Beyond Prof Community, chances are you've heard me talk about why asking, "What can I do with my PhD?" is the wrong question to ask. ([If you haven't, listen to Episode 8 of the podcast.](#))

I still feel compelled to write about this topic today because even after nearly ten years of working in this space, similar comments have been popping up again, specifically around *job boards*:

- "We should have a job board for PhDs." (No, not really.)
- "Do you have a list of jobs for PhDs in my field?" (No, because this isn't where you should start.)
- "What job boards are good to look at?" (Hm, if you're wondering about this, chances are you've skipped steps in your job search. Let's go back to the start.)

Forgive my tough love, but let me explain. We should NOT have job boards for PhDs for the same reason Beyond Prof doesn't direct PhDs towards specific career fields.

Because there is no such thing as a list of jobs "for" PhDs.

Yes, there are jobs where you can leverage the skills you've developed during your PhD. Yes, there are jobs that will more closely align with your combination of interests, skills, and values. Yes, there are jobs that will value the work you've done during your PhD.

But let's be clear: for the overwhelming majority of PhDs there is **no such thing as a direct pathway from your PhD into a specific nonacademic career.**

Some academic disciplines may appear more closely aligned with career fields – UX research often attracts anthropologists, but in reality UX researchers come from a range of backgrounds – archaeology, communications, literary studies, psychology, computer science, etc. The same could be said for Marketing, Technical Writing, Data Science (and actually many other careers in IT), and so on. People in these fields come from a wide-range of disciplinary backgrounds.

Because here's the other part of the equation we forget about in a job search – there is a world of difference between your subject matter expertise and what it is you *actually DO*. Faculty don't just work on their research or teach. They also write grants, recruit students, run committees, attend to administrative work, manage HR and personnel, manage labs and budgets, manage equipment acquisition, contracts, negotiations, etc.

So even if your subject matter expertise leads to a specific career path, *it doesn't mean you'd actually enjoy doing this work*.

Another case in point: My PhD is in History. I do not actually enjoy archival research. Eventually I came to understand that what I enjoyed in academia was leveraging skills that could be *applied* to historical research: *I enjoyed taking complex histories and weaving them into meaningful stories, analyzing and interpreting information, and uncovering hidden insights in data*.

Similarly, I've watched PhDs with STEM backgrounds go into sci-comm only to find they hated it. Literary scholars who went into teaching but didn't actually love it. Social scientists who want nothing more to do with research and IRB reviews.

So here's my challenge to you: instead of thinking about job boards this week, think about what **you actually enjoy doing** as a junior scholar and academic.

- Do you enjoy managing groups and navigating potential crisis?
- Are you motivated by statistical thinking and the itch to always iterate towards new insights?
- What makes you feel most energized? Editing student papers? Designing a curriculum that addresses your students' unique needs?

There are so many questions we can ask ourselves to think a little deeper about what it is we actually do and enjoy. Spend your time and focus *here* first, not on job boards.

Then start to talk to people about your interests. Share what you love doing and what

you're good at. Ask them about what they love doing and what they're good at. You might be surprised to hear that your skills and interests align with all sorts of interesting career paths.

But we'll save talking about networking in more detail for another day :-)

All the best,

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