Applying for Postdoctoral Fellowships

Center for the Humanities at Temple
16 February 2010
Deciding to Apply

- Attractive option in difficult job market

- Postdocs provide:
  - Valuable time for book research
  - Time to publish articles
  - Funding to develop book off tenure clock
  - Opportunities for professional development

- Positions are competitive – candidates should be near completion of dissertation
Types of Postdocs in the Humanities

• Be smart about your time, especially if applying for TT jobs
• Sometimes, postdocs go under alternative names (Ex: external fellowships, research fellowships)

Types:
1) Large “Society of Fellows” type postdocs
   Michigan, Columbia, Harvard, Stanford, Chicago, etc.
   Open to all disciplines: http://www.rackham.umich.edu/sof/
   or, geared to specific disciplines:
   http://mellonfellowship.stanford.edu/apply

2) Postdoctoral Fellowships for Themed Seminars
   Examples: http://www.fhi.duke.edu/projects/annual-seminar
   http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Pembroke_Center/research/postdoc.html

3) Visiting Fellowships at Centers
   Example: http://uchv.princeton.edu/fellowships_awards/hts_bioethics.php
Types of Humanities Postdocs

4) Postdocs in Programs (Women’s Studies, Environmental Studies, Race and Ethnic Studies, etc.) or in emerging fields within departments:

5) Library Fellowships
   Ex: [http://www.loc.gov/loc/kluge/](http://www.loc.gov/loc/kluge/)
   (Sometimes, library postdocs are listed as long-term fellowships)

6) Teaching Postdocs
   Ex: [http://www.sas.upenn.edu/deans-office/Mellon/](http://www.sas.upenn.edu/deans-office/Mellon/)

7) International Postdocs
Searching for Postdocs

• Job List within your discipline, appropriate professional organizations
• Chronicle of Higher Education
• H-Net
• University postdoc databases:
  – Berkeley database
  – Duke Funding Opportunities
• Subscribe to relevant listservs
• Read newsletters and journals in your field
• **Keep eyes open for opportunities throughout the entire year – postdocs searches are not always run on the same timetable as jobs in your field**
The Application

- Some, but not all, application materials overlap with job apps
  - Likely components: CV, application letter, writing sample, dissertation or book abstract
  - May ask for application letter AND research proposal
    - Have at least 2 compelling descriptions of your project ready to go
    - Spend time thinking about how your book will differ from the diss as well as specific plans for revision
  - May ask for bibliography, multiple chapters from dissertation or peer-reviewed articles

- Prepare materials early!

- Contact recommenders well in advance of due dates
  - Recommenders may need to upload or e-mail letters of rec
Tips for Application

• **TAILOR your Application to the postdoc announcement**
  – Generic applications are unhelpful
    • Demonstrate knowledge of the postdoc (you know what the position is and what it entails) and be clear about why you would be a good fit for the position
  – Do not send job letters!

• Materials should look professional and uniform
• Write as if your dissertation is already complete
• Be aware of your audience
  – Ex: search committee members in other disciplines
  – Be clear not only about how the project makes a significant intervention in your field, but also: what are its larger implications for scholars in other fields and disciplines?
Pitching Your Project

• Most postdocs are research focused and applications are judged, in large part, by the strength of your research project and your ability to complete that work in the fellowship

• Clearly indicate your research agenda and timeline
  • Be specific about how you intend to revise the dissertation or justify why and how the book is different from the diss
  • Do not repeat dissertation description and call it your book
  • Committee wants to know what you would do in the fellowship
  • Give the committee reasons to want to support your research and give you the time to complete it
What Comes Next?

• An increasing number of fellowships require phone interviews and/or on-campus visits
• If you secure a postdoc, congratulations!
  – If you get a job and a postdoc (double congratulations!), you may be able to defer the job