Landing a Faculty Position

Philip D Loewen

University of British Columbia

2015-10-23

Looking for a postdoc or tenure-track job at a research university, or a teaching college with a strong research component? Then consider these topics.

- Who's hiring?
- Your application package:
  - Cover letter
  - CV
  - Research statement
  - Letters of recommendation
- How to apply
- Your website
- Your job interview
- Planning ahead

Who's Hiring?

- Most job listings in the US and Canada are now on mathjobs,

  https://www.mathjobs.org/

- The Canadian Mathematical Society has its own page of ads,

  http://cms.math.ca/Employment/

- Check the math association of your home country.
- Visit math department webpages. Let Google help.
- Apply widely. If you are not sure whether or not a job listing is appropriate for you, go ahead and apply.

Cover Letter:

- Cover the essentials. The American Mathematical Society sponsors a standardized cover sheet for this purpose. Complete this sheet, and include a copy with every application.
- Find a concise way to go further. Show personal interest in the job; briefly indicate why you would be an excellent choice for the selection committee. If possible, identify by name some future colleagues you would be interested in working with.

Your CV:

- List all your degrees. Include the granting institutions and dates. Name your PhD advisor; give your thesis title.
- List *all* papers. Include undergraduate papers, papers in different fields, everything.
- List preprints. And post them on the arXiv.
- List work in progress. Give completion percentage, target date.
- List all talks, even local seminars. Give date, series title, talk title.
- List conferences/workshops attended—BIRS, AIM, Oberwolfach type workshops.
- Teaching: List courses you taught. Mention advising (even informal). Include any involvement in course development or teaching innovation.
- Proof read carefully. Spell check.

Your Research Statement:

- Write with your audience in mind:
  - Your letter writers
  - Hiring committee members
- Aim for 3–5 pages. The first page should be readable for any math audience.
- Describe your past results *and future plans.*
- Be precise, but not too technical.
- Proof read carefully. Spell check.
- Read through some examples of your peer's research statements (especially those who have been successful on the market). You can find examples on people's websites.

Your Letters:

- Solicit 3–4 letters for research, plus 1 for teaching.
- Who should write? Discuss this with your advisor; generally,
  - Your PhD supervisor or postdoc advisor
  - Somebody from outside UBC, if possible
  - Leading/known researchers, from big schools, with good connections
  - People who should know (of) you and your work
  - People known to write good letters
- When to ask? **Now!** Or very soon. You are asking a busy person to do something which doesn't benefit them directly, and takes a lot of time to do well.
- How to ask? Email is fine. Be sure your writers have your CV and research statement. If there are deadlines, give your writers plenty of time and send them polite reminders as the deadline approaches.

Where and how to apply

- Use mathjobs. Upload just one copy of all your application materials. For each job you apply for, you can specify "faculty with related research interests". Do this: it's a good way to make sure that your application gets looked at by someone in your field.
- The January AMS meeting has a job fair "The Employment Register". This is used by many schools, especially the smaller ones. Strongly consider attending the meeting!

Your website:

- Make a website.
- Make it professional: choose an appropriate photo and limit your site (mostly) to professional items.
- Post your CV and your research statement.
- Provide links to your papers and preprints. Make it easy for someone interested in your work to download your papers.

Interview Process:

- Your colloquium talk:
  - Make it understandable!
    - 25 minutes for the grad students in the audience
    - 15 minutes for all the faculty
    - 10 minutes for the experts
  - Convey your results and how they fit into the bigger picture.
  - Be confident, but stay humble.
  - Don't self-deprecate. (You do have something to offer, right?)
  - Don't brag. (There are probably smarter people in the room.)
- Meeting with faculty members and going to dinner:
  - Be yourself (charming, friendly, interested).
  - Keep it professional.
  - Good conversation starter: ask a mathematician about their own work.

Planning Ahead

If you are not seeking employment this year, you will be soon! So ...

- Check out the job services and information at AMS Employment Services, Advice for new PhDs.
- Go to conferences and workshops. Give talks as often as possible.
- Get to know senior colleagues in your field. Tell them about your work.
- Do good mathematics, and write it up!