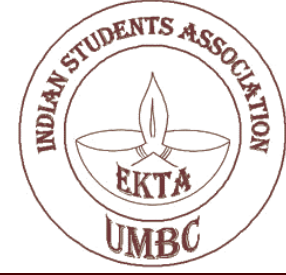




|| srishti ||

Newsletter of EKTA,
The Indian Students' Association at UMBC
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From the Editor - Namita Parab

Well, "so yet another semester down and that sense of relief I tell you". This is what most of us would be like at the end of every semester. The ones that would be graduating this semester would be on the verge of having an emotional imbalance as they experience profound ecstasy (Note: Incase they have jobs). Anyways, congratulations to all those people graduating this semester and even more, hats off to those who still plan to continue.

This semester like all other sems was a very busy one for all of us at EKTA. The Radio show, now hosted by Kajal and Poorva, seemed to do just great. In addition, the cherry blossom festival was a major hit. The credit of that goes to every one at EKTA. However, I would particularly like to mention that this very innovative idea was suggested by none other than Andy who is so much a part of all the creative thinking at EKTA. Also, not to forget the very sachin tendulkar of our EKTA team Kunal Punwani was nominated for the GSA Student Leadership Award 2003. In addition, a special thanks to Karthik who has as yet contributed to every issue of Srishti.

A year has passed by as if in the blink of an eye and now it's time to hand over the reins of Shristi to poorva. She assisted me this semester portraying as an assistant editor and she would be taking over as the editor from the next semester. Well, that does not mean you will not have the privilege to read my articles, kidding. I surely would like to continue contributing articles to Srishti. I have really enjoyed every part of what I did here at EKTA. I would also like to thank all the EKTA committee members for all their support and encouragement.

At the end, I would just like to say: "Take life as a journey and travel but never stop, thinking it's the end, as every end is just the beginning of a new start".

Job Search Tips

- **Shamit Patel** This article describes my job search experience. It's that time of year again. New students looking for a summer internship and graduating

students looking out for full-time positions. This article is more biased towards a full-time job search techniques though I will point out optional steps for internship search techniques too. If you are looking for a full-time job, you can expect to spend roughly 1 month for every 10000 dollars a year you earn. That means expect to spend approximately, 5 months for 50K job. Your job search will consist of various stages

- ♦ Identifying areas of specialization
- ♦ Building resume and cover letter
- ♦ Posting resumes to job search sites and companies
- ♦ Soliciting interviews
- ♦ Preparing for telephone and on-site interviews
- ♦ Acing the interviews
- ♦ Negotiating offers and applying for EAD card (Applying for OPT)

Identifying areas of specialization

What are your specialties? What are your top 2-3 skills? Your field of research is one place that you should definitely include. You might be surprised how many companies would be interested in someone with your expertise even during a stuttering economy. Your odds of landing with a job in your research area are better than you might think. For computer science graduates other areas might be Web Application Development, Object Oriented Programming, etc.

Building cover letter and resume

A cover letter needs to be included in every job application you send, period. A good cover letter should state the position you are applying for, and it should show one to one mapping of skills you can bring to the company and skills required to be competent to do that job. Always ask for an interview, and don't ask for a job right away. You will be asking for a job during an interview anyways. It also helps to have a professional looking letterhead. If you know the person your letter is going to be read by, use his/her name and designation. It's important to follow formal writing conventions even though you might be sending it by email.

Once you identify the areas, go through the skill sets required. Can you write code in that particular language without use of a reference book? (Certainly true for C/C++ programming). Are all the skills up to the mark?

If not, what can be done to increase the knowledge base? Make milestones to reach desired proficiency. I would suggest not using time-line to determine milestones. More often than not, one tends to give more time than necessary. Remember software engineering principle "Time taken to develop takes all the time assigned for that project".

Make a list of project-related information, one line project statement, a 30-second summary (Kind of elevator speech), skills used, number of project members and your role in it. What were the design options faced, why you chose some options, what were the obstacles and what did you do to overcome them. Write it up and save it safely in a folder or writing pad. This ensures you don't miss any points when you talk about your projects with different people.

When writing up a resume, it is imperative it has an objective. Your objective should mention the area and level of position you are applying for. It is often useful to write "To seek a position as a software engineer" than to mention "To seek a full-time/internship as a software engineer". If you have a prior work experience or you think that your project related experience plays as much a role as your formal degree, don't be afraid to put your projects above the degree.

Posting resumes to job search sites and companies

Now you need to post your resumes. You can start with job search sites. I have some of them, please let me know if you find some job-search sites which have worked for you and are not included [here](#). Once you finish putting up resumes, don't wait for the telephone to ring. Start applying to jobs in small companies (having 5 - 25 members). The rational is simple, everybody applies to IBM etc. It's too easy to lose your resume in database. Big companies look for very specific skills, whereas, small companies know that you will be working on more than one thing at a time and you will have to learn new things anyway. More often, small companies want to judge you as a person. Being enthusiastic, systematic, looking at various options and every now and then thinking out of the box helps. It also makes sense to apply to higher up in hierarchy than to the recruiter. Imagine if your resume passes from CEO to CTO to Technical Human Resources Director to HR Manager. HR Manager is more likely to look at your resume with positive attitude.

Now you finally get telephone ringing! Do some research about the company, the recruiting practices etc. If you know what the recruiting process is, the questions asked, and better still why do they ask those questions, you are better prepared for answers. Always ask questions. If recruiter says "Any questions?". Always have 2-4 questions. You can ask about how many people you are competing with. What are the current projects? What are the potential problems faced? What are the common mistakes done by a newly hired in your position? Now you can bet that they won't have time to ans all of them! Remember, by end of each interview your recruiter

has to make a decision "Hire or No Hire". If you can't convince them that you should be in, then you are out! Now how can you make your recruiter believe you are indispensable? You should be able to convince him/her that they cannot afford to have you in their competitors company. How can you do that? Couple of ways. One way is to make sure they learn something from you. Other way is if you and he/she connect mentally. If you ask them questions about their projects/ problems and how you can solve them, they have an impression about you as smart, quick thinker, enthusiastic and having ability to take up roles voluntarily. Once you prove that, they are more inclined to hear from you. Always remember, don't think that when you have an interview you are there to answer questions. Imagine that you are meeting an interesting stranger. Both of you want to know more about each other. Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know". Never ever, blabber. Try to show them how you think you can get ans to the questions you don't have ans currently. Please don't stop applying when you have some interviews going on. It's too easy to lose time when you start waiting for companies to get back to you after an interview. Don't be disappointed if things are not going your way; re-evaluate your resume/cover letter/ approaches regularly. Ask them for a job. Show them that you want to work right away! BTW, Congrats on your new job. Don't be afraid to negotiate once an offer is made.



Respecting Copyrights - Karthik Gurumurthy

I guess all of you would be working hard towards finishing your projects and exams and best wishes to all of you for your finals. In the last issue, I had addressed issues of plagiarism and the tools used for detection. In this issue, I would like to address issues of copyrights and everyone needs to be aware of what you can or you cannot do. We are all adults here, versed in the pragmatic ways of the world so there is a little sense in turning a blind eye to reality. Most of us are in the same boat, facing deadlines, which makes us susceptible to the same temptations and shortcuts. But here's the hard truth: Many presenters are digital thieves-hardened copyright-claim jumpers who all too frequently download, copy or adapt material from the internet for use in their presentations without the copyright owner's permission. Few of them seem to lose much sleep over the criminal activity. The web makes it all so...easy. What is that? You sleep restfully knowing the same copyright laws that govern physical content or media don't apply to the vast world of cyberspace, where ideas are up for grabs and information, flows as freely as traffic in the car-pool lane.

Not long ago, many copyright owners accepted the idea that infringement was one of the costs of doing business on the Internet. Those infringing on copyright

took the threat of being caught about as seriously like getting a jay walking ticket. But a number of court cases in the past few years some of them high profile, some not have shifted the legislative and legal tides in favor of owner protection and against unaltered copying and disseminating the copyrighted material on the internet. The highly publicized Napster trial regarding music is one of the cases that made it to court. Many others have filed in different industries, and the results of those trials will shape the way Internet copyright issues addressed in the U.S as well as around the world. However, you do not need to wait for the outcome of the cases to catch the general drift of the courts, which is in favor of copyright owners and against copyright thieves.

OK...how guilty are you? Given the stunning ease with which we can copy, download, transform, reuse and swap digital work for use in our face-to-face or web delivered presentations, opportunities for copyright abuse know few bounds. So take this test to see whether your hands maybe red.

- ◆ You sign up for a website which offers stock photos and on a royalty free arrangement, you don't think about whether the site has legally cleared copyright for your unlimited use of those images in your presentation.
- ◆ You copy and paste full page from an article in Science magazine or ACM journal web site that beautifully underscores points that you will make in an upcoming presentation about data mining in Bio-informatics. You include the segment in handouts for the 50 people in your audience, fully crediting Science in your handout.

All of the above carry high odds for copyright infringement. According to US copyright law, "anything you find on the web be it text, music, graphics, video or clip art - is copyrighted the moment it's created and fixed in a tangible form, so that it is perceptible either directly or with the aid of machine or device." A common misperception is that gaining copyright requires an author to officially register a work with the US copyright office. Some people continue to think that if they don't see a copyright symbol on web content, it is a fair game. Well, that could be a dangerous assumption.

So what should I do then? How do you get permission to use the content in a presentation? Well the simplest way is to contact the copyright owner directly and pray for leniency. It is dangerous to assume that copyright owners will embrace your limited use of their works as free advertising. Although laudable, that attribution provides absolutely no protection. Bottom-line: Giving a copyright owner credit does not mean you have secured permission to use to the content. To reduce the headache, you can actually contact the licensing agencies that serve as copyright clearing houses for the point, photography, cartoon, music or videos. You can check out the copyright clearance center, which grants

licenses to photocopy works of many popular newsletters, magazines and books. Hope this information was helpful. Have a great summer!



License Wars

- Anand Patwardhan

Episode I: License Wars - A New Hope

Once upon a time in a country far far away, there lived an international graduate student. He used to live with his fellow international graduate students. They used to work in the day and some times in the night and lived near their university. The student tired of having to walk long distances for groceries and such, an idea hit him. He decided to buy a car. In that country like most other countries, one needed to have, a State issued Driving license in order to drive a car. He already had a license from his native country and, under the aegis of an international accord he had been able to get an International Driving Permit which would allow him to drive in most countries of the world for about a year; within which time he was required to get a locally issued license of the host country. All the roommates decided to get driver's license.

Due to a high toll of human life in road accidents due to inebriated drivers, the particular state home to this student, required its drivers to give a "Drug and Alcohol" test in an effort to increase awareness of the general public regarding this menace. Therefore, they located a place where this test was administered and took the test. As always, they passed with flying colors. Armed with the Drug and Alcohol test certificate they were now prepared for the next step, the written "Law" tests. For this, one was required to study a "Driver's Handbook" which described the laws of the land pertaining to motorized vehicles and laws for driving on state roads. The three friends had but one book amongst them to study for the test. Therefore, they studied in turns. They also had to go to a neighboring city to the office of the Motor Vehicle Administration to give the Law test and the Driving test. Now since none of these poor students had a car of their own, they rented a car at an exorbitant price. They practiced driving the car for the various tests in the Driving test. Since they had already rented a car, they took some friends with them and went for a joyride to a nearby forest and later next day to a beautiful city by the ocean. Having driven a car for such a long distance, they were quite sure that they would easily pass the Driving test the next day. Only time would tell the fate of the three friends.

Episode II: License Wars - The Empire Strikes Back

Once upon a time in a country far far away, there was an international graduate student. He had set out with his friends to get a driving license from the

Local State Authority. As in many other countries, they had to wait a long time in a long long line at the local state government office. Eventually it was their turn to submit the paperwork. Those were dark days, and trust was hard to come by. The two friends of this student were fortunate to have an ageing torn license from their native countries and were breezed through the administrative process. However, the student himself had a newer license that used a newer technology. However, of course, this raised eyebrows and the student was asked to get a letter from the consulate of his country attesting the license. Fate had it that one of the friends, who had driven the least during the past two days, passed the tests and got his license the very day. The other friend fumbled in the Law test and couldn't get a license that day. The obviously jubilant friend, who got a license that day, drove the car home, while the other two sulked. Both of them thought they would try again some other day. Soon enough, some months later the other friend, who had failed the law test, went with his friends and this time got his license. Now, one student was left. The student however did not give up hope, the battle was lost but the war was to be won.

Episode III: License Wars- Return of the Jade-Eye¹

This episode concludes the saga of the graduate student trying to get a driving license. As soon as the student got some free time from his graduate studies, he decided to make the long journey to a neighboring state where the consulate of his country was located. He needed to get an official statement from his native country's consulate verifying the authenticity of the license from his country. His country was infamous for its bureaucracy and processing delays in any kind of official business, and he expected the same thing from the consulate. So it was no surprise that it took the poor student two long journeys to get the job done. Eventually after considerable amount of time, effort and money the student managed to get the required document. Now armed with the attested license and the Drug and alcohol certificate, he was all set to go to the MVA again. Since renting a car was expensive, he got together two other license seekers and together they rented a car. Since none of the other two had ever driven a car in this country, the student took the job of driving the car back home from the car rental office. After picking up the car from the rental, he drove back home to the third fellow's house to pick him up. On reaching the house, the two in the car got out and asked the third friend to stay in the car while they got some snacks before they would drive out again. However this fellow was too impatient to wait for the other two to return, sure of himself, he drove off with the car all by himself. On returning to the same spot, the other two found their friend and the car gone! There was nothing they could do but wait for their friend

to return. And he did return, but not without a huge dent and the passenger side rear-view mirror missing. The two who went to rent the car had not properly checked the car before renting it. They concluded that the dent must have been there when they rented it. The errant driver kept mum about any accident (if there had been one). The next day they took the car back to the rental and tried to get another car. The rental agency denied that the car was damaged when it was rented out and placed the blame on the hapless students. The issue of who actually damaged the car remains unresolved. The important part is that they lost their car-rental money and the car. Fortunately, the student's friend in whose name the car was rented had taken Comprehensive insurance while renting the car. So at least they did not have to pay for any of the damage, which would have amounted to thousands in local currency. However the real culprit got away scot free, and didn't even have his name on the accident report, though the two renters had their suspicions about who the real culprit was. The dejected lot returned home. The student was down but not out.

Several days later, the student decided to give one more try at getting a license. One of his friends was going to the MVA soon to get his vehicle registered. The student then tagged along with this friend and managed to get to the MVA without any further incident. This time, he was armed with everything that the MVA could possibly ask for. The irony is that, this time around they didn't question any of his documents and neither did they ask for any supporting documents or attestations. The student didn't say a word and went on to give the Law test. As expected, he aced the test. Now the next test was the driving test. Here too, there were no problems. The driving test went smoothly and the Inspector passed him with a "very good" compliment. Now the student had basically won the war, and only formalities remained. He dutifully stood in the long lines for all the remaining paperwork and eventually got his license. Persistence paid off, and the happy student gave a treat to his friend whose car he had used for the test. All's well that ends well. He went on his way merrily back home showing around his newest privilege, the Driver's License. From then on Feb. the 13th was marked as a lucky day in this student's calendar; the very next day the student went out and bought a car. Thus the quest for a Driver's License ended and let's hope the student drives happily ever after.

Disclaimer:

None of the characters in this story are fictitious. Any resemblance to the living or dead is intentionally coincidental. If you can relate the characters of the story to any such persons living or dead, the author will be delighted to get your feedback. The author is wholly responsible for all depictions and resemblances made in this presentation.

¹ Respecting original copyright, name changed