

EARLY CAREER

The Early Career Section is a new community project, featured here in the *Notices*. This compilation of articles will provide information and suggestions for graduate students, job seekers, early career academics of all types, and those who mentor them. Angela Gibney serves as the editor of this section. This month's theme is Getting Ready for the Academic Job Market. Next month's theme will be Teaching.



Cultivating an Online Presence for the Academic Job Market

Holly Krieger

When you're on the market, time is your most valuable commodity. Maybe you're rushing to finish and write a nice result before your applications go out. Perhaps you're busy expanding your knowledge of the literature and thinking deeply about where you might take your work in the next five years to make your research statement as compelling as possible. There are so many time-consuming ways to invest your valuable time in improving your application that before going any further, I should explain why cultivating an online presence is worth the effort. Some mathematicians deride the notion that such a presence is necessary when on the market; however, these are often the same people who strongly encourage their students and postdocs to build reputation by "getting themselves out there" at conferences and via email.

An easily discoverable and informative online presence is the modern supplement to conference introductions and mathematical correspondence. Hiring committees are not passive entities that sit back and wait for the best candidates to approach them. Well before any deadlines arrive, some departments with open positions are seeking out and contacting qualified candidates who are most likely to suit their subject-area needs. The names that arise this way are often people unfamiliar to most or all members of a hiring committee, and the first step taken is to gather more information about these potential applicants by searching online. By curating an online presence, you lead them directly to your research and answer basic questions about your field of study, whether you're on the market, your inclination toward teaching or a research focus, and so on. Making this information easily available can lead to your application being solicited by universities you never

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1090/noti1897>

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dreamed might have interest in you, and by departments you didn't realize would be an excellent fit.

Solicited application or not, online content can give you an edge in presenting the strongest aspects of your file. In application files, a candidate's features and accomplishments are all presented equally dryly, and in no particular order. On the other hand, your website, blog, or social media can (and should) draw attention to your most outstanding features. Are you particularly proud of a recent paper? Include a summary for non-experts on your webpage that communicates the importance of the work. Are you an excellent speaker or teacher? Embed a video of your talks or lectures on your page, start a YouTube channel, or promote your videos or course development on social media. By creating content, you control and direct the searcher's attention to your best attributes.

The bare minimum. One effort you *must* make is to ensure that your online presence doesn't work against you. Not having a professional website is unusual (and frustrating) enough that it counts as a negative against you! Even if it is bare-bones, have a departmental website. It's also critical that your pages are up-to-date. Both a nonexistent and a very old site not only fail to provide useful information to searchers but also communicate that you are probably not on the job market (and possibly no longer in academia).

It is in your best interest to communicate only professional information to potential employers. If you have any social media, blogs, or websites that contain offensive, embarrassing, or controversial opinions or images, or are purely personal, you are better off making them only privately accessible. This is a matter of directing your audience's attention beneficially rather than censoring yourself. If making such content private offends your sensibilities, or it is externally hosted and cannot be made private, at least be sure that you do not link to it on any professional pages.

Your professional webpage. Once you've mitigated any negative online presence, the most fundamental tool to develop is your professional webpage. Your webpage should at a minimum provide your contact details and field of study, your CV, and information on or links to your research and teaching experience. If you come to a department's attention via word of mouth, there may not be anyone on the faculty who knows whether you're on the market or not. A seemingly uncommon but vastly useful line to add to the top of your webpage is: "I am on the job market in [year]." A photo on your site can make it, and your application, more memorable. A photo related to professional activities is a better choice than one from a night out drinking ten years ago—and yes, that latter happens more frequently than you might think.

Once the basics are in place, give some thought to how your webpage might emphasize your strengths; if you don't know what the strengths of your application are, ask someone! This information will tell you how to order and organize your website to your advantage, drawing attention

to your successes, and including content (such as videos or paper summaries) that highlight your abilities.

Actively engaging. A basic professional webpage is a good starting point, but a more active online engagement can be worth the effort. Math communication and other online outreach are increasingly valued by universities, and can connect not just the general public but also other mathematicians (who might be involved in hiring) to your work. Maintaining a mathematical blog, Twitter, or YouTube account increases both your professional network and your online professional content. This content showcases your communication, outreach, and teaching abilities as no paper application can.

Now go and do it! In the academic job search, your goal is not only to be an excellent candidate, but also to communicate that fact as widely as possible. By cultivating an online presence, you easily and effectively disseminate the most impressive features of your application, and open lines of communication that can result in unexpected opportunities. You've worked for years building the professional experience to prepare you for this job search—now go and make sure everyone knows it.



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Credits

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