

Christine Zaporzan

**EDUCATION
MARKETING
ASSISTANT**

*Bachelor of Education, Queen's 1991
BAH History, Queen's 1990*

In her own words: "I'm hooked on variety and challenge — that's what keeps me excited about going to work every day!"

Christine Zaporzan loves history and teaching, but she equally loves heading off the beaten path. The result? A history teacher who has traded the direct route to the classroom for a more winding career path that she calls exciting, rewarding, scary and fun. Living on the edge, she says, is "a hoot."

"I've done things that I thought I would never get to do — work in a museum, head up a research team, teach at Queen's, and even publish an article in a book! My career path has been unusual, but actually my jobs have all been a progression toward — toward what, I'm not sure. I'll tell you when I retire!"

If nothing else, her jobs have taken her closer and closer to an understanding of what makes her tick, a process that started after she made an early career blunder. Essentially, she listened to the worst piece of career advice she has ever received: "Follow the labour market." Even though she gobbled up history in high school, she opted to enroll in a pharmaceutical

chemistry program at Seneca College, figuring that jobs in the pharmaceutical field were a sure bet. After a year she handed in her lab coat.

"The work was too far removed from people for me. I'm a real extravert, so measuring the amount of ASA in a compound didn't mean much to me. I had a heart-to-heart talk with my parents about pursuing an English and History degree. That's when my dad gave me the best advice I've ever heard: 'Do what your heart tells you.' He also asked me an important question: 'Who has had the greatest impact on your life?' My immediate answer was 'teachers.'"

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Enrolled in the Concurrent Education program at Queen's, with a History major, she began steeping herself in history — Canadian, American, Latin American, Chinese, Japanese — along with

education courses that would qualify her to teach kindergarten to Grade 6 students.

"I started out in the Intermediate/Senior panel but switched when I realized that little people aren't jaded about learning. They're still full of wonder. It's great to tap into that and to run with it. As a

teacher you have to know yourself and what you're good at, and I knew that I would be better off teaching little kids."

She graduated during the worst of the recession, at a time when very few teachers were being hired. Within a week of finishing classes, she followed up a friend's tip and found a summer job working as a researcher for a heritage products company based in Kingston. By the following spring, she had catapulted to the head of the 11-person research department. "The job was a good combination of my teaching strengths — strong organizational and interpersonal skills — and business skills in sales and marketing that I'd picked up doing part-time retail work in university. Management is not terribly different from teaching. You're always trying to help people to reach their potential."

Christine was downsized herself in 1994. She quickly located part-time work as Education Coordinator at the Hastings County Museum in Belleville (later Glanmore National Historic Site), along with part-time teaching work at a private business college. There she taught business math, world geography and marketing in some odd places, including a makeshift classroom next to a bowling alley. "I used to dread hearing that first ball rolling down the alley every day. I had to plan my lesson around the noise!"

When the museum offered her a full-time position as Education and Marketing Coordinator in 1995, she went for it. Once again, her teaching and business skills dovetailed neatly.

"Glanmore was a real hoot! I taught more than 20,000 kids between kindergarten and Grade 6 over the five

years I was there. For three years in a row we doubled our attendance. The curator was wonderful and let me do all kinds of crazy things. I brought in a huge dinosaur exhibit created by the company that made castings for *Jurassic Park*. It was too big to have in the 1880s Victorian house we worked in, so we put it on in downtown mall. About 10,000 people came to the exhibit. Photos of me and my staff lugging dinosaurs were picked up by the CP wire service and ended up in newspapers from Moncton to Winnipeg. During the show I was also overseeing regular programming at the museum. It was one of the busiest times of my life, but what a riot!"



flash!

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After mounting equally successful exhibits on space and Egypt, she spotted an advertisement for the position of marketing assistant with the local school board. Hungry for a new challenge, she applied and was hired in June 1999. These days her work revolves around number crunching, networking and fundraising, largely for the sake of at-

risk and special-needs students. You can hear the teacher in her when she points out that her “projects and programs help the kids, not someone’s portfolio.”

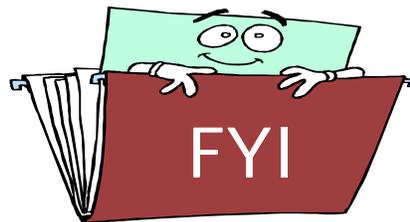
evaluate, organize, interact — it’s all part of the teacher package. But it’s up to the teachers to tell the corporate world about these skills.”

Meanwhile, she recently squeezed in a class at the Queen’s Faculty of Education, but this time as the instructor in the Teachers in Business and Industry course. She made a strong pitch to her 22 students about the skills they can take beyond the classroom. “I explained that there’s ‘pioneer’ work to be done in helping business understand what they can do: train employees, provide leadership,

“There’s ‘pioneer’ work to be done in helping business understand what teachers can do: train employees, provide leadership, evaluate, organize, interact — it’s all part of the teacher package. But it’s up to the teachers to tell the corporate world about these skills.”

A piece she wrote about a Glanmore servant will soon appear in a book about 20th century Canadian women. Along her “alternative” career path, then, Christine has kept the historian alive as well. Her career, she admits

happily, is a work in progress. “I believe that it’s all about adventure and self-discovery, with each step adding to the last.” ❖



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