

Review of The Careers Directory 2010/11

Edited by John Mainstone and Ken Reynolds

These are challenging times for all graduates and all job seekers entering an economy in recession. The results of the public spending cuts announced by the coalition government increase the challenge ahead. The association of graduate recruiters (AGR) report for 2010 graduate vacancies are down by 7%.

More than ever before it is essential that graduates both enter and finish a degree with a sense of purpose. They must know rather than guess what they want to achieve. They must have a plan. They cannot rely on fate or old networks. They cannot hope being a graduate with a respectable degree is enough.

The long established The Careers Directory published by COA and updated this year is a book that offers to make a difference. This year the directory has been revised with the down turn in mind, updating salary information in line with new expectations, and with updated web addresses for all career entries. It also gives entries on new technologies that are arising that will play a larger role in the economy of the future. Knowing detailed information about what is required for different careers and what is the reality in the market today is more crucial than ever.

The directory offers up to date practical and easy to read information about 300 professional careers in 173 Chapters. There are 167 careers also in the additional career outlines section at the back of the book. Its strength is in its brevity which is achieved by the unique WORKBRIEF acronym system. In the system under each letter of WORKBRIEF the reader explores different aspects of a career. Examples are: What is involved in the work, Opportunities for Training and Requirements for entry etc.

Unlike many directories it covers aspects of personality so often forgotten under Kind of Person but which are vital to career sustainability and success. There is a Broad Outlook section which is helpful at getting a picture of what is happening in each sector of employment at present. Trends and earnings potential are highlighted and impact on lifestyle which make the reader think - is this really what I want to be doing? I use this with students to challenge them to look at the things they might dislike or "gloss over" when considering a career idea. These so often are the matters that make or break.

The Directory is arranged in an easy format with some broad chapters at the beginning with the individual career descriptions after this arranged in alphabetical order. These broad chapters prove to be incredibly useful. They contain information on preparing for university, the UCAS tariff and particular changes to certain qualifications and training. In this way it offers not just career information but a complete package allowing discussion and analysis of all the facts in the safety of knowing the information is accurate.

As an adviser I use the directory weekly with young people but also with those in career transition. I have used it to discuss options with someone facing redundancy, for the second time in construction and also a young person considering medicine who needed to know more about the training and to compare this to other possibilities they knew nothing about previously such as pharmacology.

If you had the money to only buy one directory then buy this one. The reason being it is readable and reliable. It delivers information in less than two pages for each description, in a user friendly way that allows the reader to flick and dip. You don't have to be a careers professional or teacher to understand the information given. It is relevant to the employment market today, highly insightful, and makes you think. This is why it is different. It is what it says – the one-stop guide to professional careers.

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