CHAPTER 11

THE VIEW AHEAD: THE Profession SPEAKS TO THE Future

In observing the evolution of career counselling in Canada, one notices a convergence of four sectors of society: government, education, organized labour and the not-for-profit sector. Historically, government priorities have been to satisfy the economy's needs for skilled and productive workers. Educators, in turn have tried to provide opportunities for the acquisition of both knowledge and skills, to equip their students. The concern of organized labour was for workers' rights and protection from exploitation. And finally, the concerns of non-governmental organizations—or what has come to be known as the third sector, or civil society—involved the needs of individuals and their community.

In this case, "community" was defined in various ways. A geographical community, for instance a single industry town, could be grossly affected by an economic downturn, leaving those employed by primary industries, such as mining exploration or pulp and paper, bereft of income and social cohesion. At times like these, smaller centres became very reliant on the skills of its career counsellors to help displaced workers and their families adjust to being without work, to seek retraining or other options, and to deliver support programs to both workers and employers during the transition.

Community has also come to be defined by people who share a common characteristic. For instance, career counselling has become a significant part of the community of persons with disabilities. Employment programs of community organizations such as the Canadian Paraplegic Association, Canadian Hearing Society or Epilepsy Association, which assist those disadvantaged by a particular

disability, or through post-war programs like the Workers' Compensation Boards, which facilitate the rehabilitation of people injured on the job, developed specialised approaches to career counselling that met the paticular needs of their client groups.

One of the most obvious "communities" in career counselling is those who serve newcomers to Canada. Originally part of the services offered by Settlement Houses which formed in the middle of the century, career counselling services to immigrants and refugees has become a specialized and sophisticated part of Canada's ability to replenish its workforce. Language testing and training, together with certification programs and other ways of validating the qualifications of newcomers, have again enriched the capacity of the profession to meet the needs of both the willing worker and the employer wishing to hire.

Employment equity legislation, developed in the 1980s and implemented widely within the public sector and to a lesser extent in the private sector, advanced employment programs and opportunities for those disadvantaged by market forces. Although controversial at the time of implementation, employment equity programs did spur on the development of refined counselling, assessment and placement tools that more accurately met the needs of those marginalized from gaining access to work.

Career counselling is a field that intersects almost every aspect of Canadian life. As you have read, again and again politicians have won—and lost—elections based on their capacity to satisfy the desires of Canadians for access to work. Jobs. Jobs. Jobs. It has been the career counselling community that has been able to bridge the gap: from school to training; training to work; employment to unemployment and back to employment again. Virtually every government department is concerned with some aspect of work: safety, excellence, health, education, competency and competitiveness. Similarly, within the private sector, the field of human resource development has become an increasingly sophisticated one. Job readiness and lifelong career planning continue to be the focus of community agencies and organizations which constitute the third sector across Canada. The tasks and skills of the career practitioner have had to keep pace with the ever-evolving demands of employers from every sector and job seekers from every community.

In contemporary life at the dawn of the 21st century, a phrase should be added to the old adage that there are two things in life a person cannot avoid: death and taxes…and a career transition…or two…or three.

Career as vocation

One of the benefits of affluence in Canada during the post-war period has been the shift from seeing work as simply a means of earning an income to understanding its potential role as a source of personal fulfillment and as a means of contributing to society. This shift in our understanding of the role of work in our lives mirrored the change we observed in the economy, where society no longer required every available worker to be engaged in meeting our most basic needs of food and shelter. But, in fact, as our economies grew and diversified, so did the work that went with them.

Although vocational counselling was an early part of the profession, initially it seems to have connoted a more limiting course of action leading to a job placement. In fact, at the close of the century the term "vocation" had come to carry a much more sonorous tone: suggesting one could be "called" to a unique, enriching work life through a vocation. Again, this may have only been the luxury of a certain segment of Canadian society, not an option for workers whose experience, skills and circumstances confined their work choices to a narrow set of options. But for others, particularly those able to afford post-secondary education in the latter third of the century, a vocation—or choosing work that some would say they loved—was a possibility, enhanced by the career counselling professionals' ability to assist in laying out the options.

In this sense, career counselling has itself become a vocation. Through the efforts of people like Cosgrave, Conger, Parmenter and Lawson, this critical societal function has become a coveted and hard won vocation of professionals operating in different settings and serving diverse communities across the country. Now understood as an essential part of a person's life—from their earliest school-aged years to beyond their retirement, where many Canadians continue to seek fulfillment through work even when their financial situation may not require it—career counselling goes part and parcel with our understanding of work in Canadian life. The career practitioner has a vital role in both the efficient functioning of the Canadian economy and in our societal life together, which affords people the opportunity to participate to the best of their abilities.

Cultivating a vision for the Canadian workplace had fallen initially to Etta St. John Wileman and then her successors throughout the century. The various stakeholders in the Canadian labour market, she had said, "must recognize their responsibility for unemployment and regard work as a social obligation, which has to be provided in order that both individual and the state may reap the benefit of constant regular productivity."

Today, after nearly one hundred years of development and growth, the venerable activist's vision still holds true.

This community comes of age

At the end of a century of momentous change, Canada's career counselling community has come of age. A national industry with roots throughout society, the field has acquired an identity. Scholars and educators now view it as a field of study and practice, one of direct relevance and value to the life of almost every Canadian worker.

The notion of a coming of age holds all sorts of important implications. It is a time of recognition, a time of opportunity and risk, a time of imminent change. For Canada's career practitioners, it is a time to examine the field as it has developed over the years and to work together to create a new vision of its potential in the years ahead.

In this new era, working Canadians will face significant challenges. In urban centres especially, the workplace is technical and highly specialized, the economy multi-layered and bewilderingly complex.

Abstract assets such as information and knowledge have become our nation's most valued commodities. Work life success demands a range of sophisticated skills: computer, math and literacy skills; and interpersonal and communication skills. In the smaller cities and rural centres, the availability of technology has made many traditional jobs obsolete, but at the same time has opened the door to innovation and excellence being produced in and exported from the most remote of communities.

For the most part, Canadians have risen to the challenge and today are as highly educated and skilled as workers anywhere in the western world. When they need help, these workers turn to professionals in the career counselling field—to career and employment counsellors, career information specialists and career practitioners.

Throughout the industrial era, work and life were largely considered as separate concerns. Work was the "job" to which one went for a specific time, then returned home, to take advantage of "leisure time." In the post-industrial society, although many people continue to work at jobs, the lines between work and life have become increasingly blurred. Work is brought into the home, into the car, often cutting into leisure time. As work has become a central aspect of Canadian life, people have begun to tread with care along the career path they chose to walk. Shifts have occurred in the demographic make up of the workforce, in occupational demands and in legislative mandates. The school-to-work transition has become much more difficult.

Theoretical perspectives have changed as well, shifting our basic understanding of how to help people know themselves and connect with their inner beings. In keeping with the tenor of the times, no longer is it a matter of "fitting the man to the job," but rather of fitting the "person" to the "work opportunity."

Career counselling at the start of the new millennium

A specific process to counsel others about their potential in the workplace first emerged in Canada in the 1940s. At the time, counselling was a one-time event, a battery of tests and assessments that were interpreted along psychological lines. These personal insights, it was hoped, would help people make appropriate work or educational choices.

Describing the career counselling process as "multi-faceted," Judy Hayashi of the Frank G. Lawson Career Centre at Dalhousie University in Halifax emphasizes the need to remain flexible in order to meet the different needs people have at different points in their lives. "At times," she says, "it is self-examination. At other times it is decision-making, information-gathering, and helping people understand and deal with change.

"There's another dimension," Hayashi adds. "Sometimes people get stuck, either because they have their own expectations and beliefs or they've picked them up. They feel pressured from family or culture or situations that are making them feel they can't decide or can't move in a certain direction. Then a lot of the focus needs to be on identifying difficulties and helping them to overcome those barriers."

Like most practitioners in the field today, Marilynn Burke, an edu-

cator and program developer with the Toronto District School Board, believes that career counselling is no longer "a point-in-time event. It is a process," she says, "an ongoing process, founded on self-examination, to help people build the knowledge and the skills they need to make good decisions and select appropriate, satisfying and meaningful roles throughout life."

"It facilitates individuals' understanding of all the dimensions of themselves," she believes. "Their interests, their skills, their personality and values, what motivates them, what's in their heart, what they feel passionate about and, of course, it includes knowledge of their opportunities."

A survey of practitioners and theorists in different sectors and different regions of the country reveals a wide range of views and perspectives on exactly what the process of career counselling is, what it should be and what it needs to offer to the people it serves. It is largely a "facilitation process," in the view of Gail Whitely, an employment counsellor with the Toronto District School Board. "Counselling is a journey from one point in time to another point in time which is in the future. It's something we create with our clients together. I'm not the expert on everything, but I do have some pieces that I can add to their process."

Counselling helps people "take a snapshot of where they are right now," says Whitely. "They look at their past and how that interacts. It helps them to take a step-by-step approach to get to wherever it is they want to get to, and hopefully to other resources. What we don't have, we find together."

At the end of the century that redefined work, some counsellors continue to rely on a battery of psychometric tests to "measure" an individual's abilities. In the complexity of the Canadian workplace, however, a high degree of self-knowledge, although important, is only part of the intricate puzzle of career decision-making and planning. Achieving work and life success has become far more demanding.

Attracted by growing needs such as these, enticed at times by research and development funds, new theorists and program developers have entered the field. New counselling methodologies and products have begun to appear. Many of the field's theorists and program developers are found in the world of academe, business and the not-for-profit sector.

Vance Peavy, professor emeritus at the University of Victoria and a self-described "independent scholar," views the counselling process as "a specialized situation where someone, the counsellor, attempts to help the person identify and understand and develop their capacities. Career counselling, all kinds of counselling," he says, "should be a capacity-developing process. If you don't know how to read, for example, then your options are definitely limited. If you learn to read, develop that capacity, then your options are expanded."

> Career counsellors must be "part analyst, part therapist, part teacher, part consultant, and hopefully, in the end, a friend."
>
> Elizabeth McTavish,
> former Counselling Director,
> The Counselling Foundation of Canada

Careers bring personal meaning

At the University of Lethbridge in southern Alberta, Kris Magnussen teaches counsellors in the Faculty of Education. Magnussen emphasizes the importance of personal meaning. In a masters program twenty years ago, he recalls, the primary career planning focus was, "in the test-them-and-tell-them category." This approach may have provided personal insight, Magnussen says, but testing alone was not always enough to motivate people to action. As he worked with clients, he says, he discovered "this big gap between what we could measure and the sense of connectedness that people had to what we were measuring."

Magnussen began to focus his attention on "the notion of meaning," developing a process of career counselling that concentrates on "helping individuals get meaningfully connected within their working life, in any one of the number of roles they play, from parent, to child to citizen." Meaningful engagement, is the key motivating factor, he believes. "If we cannot get people meaningfully engaged, we may as well forget the rest of it."

University of British Columbia's Norm Amundson, who also teaches career counselling, has a slightly different perspective. "A lot of people, when they have career issues, really have a problem in imagination," he says. "They can't imagine a new future for themselves." Career counsellors, Amundsen believes, must use their own imaginations to stimulate the imaginations of those who come to them for help. "Career counselling is problem-solving," he says, "but it's a whole lot more than that."

Bryan Hiebert from the University of Calgary feels strongly that career counselling should be seen as an educational and learning process more than a psychological one. There is "an emphasis in the career development field now," says Hiebert, "on client skills and generic skills and transferable skills. Clients come into counselling seeking to make some change in their life. It's the counsellor's job to help identify exactly how the client would like things to be different. And then to arrange with the clients the kinds of experiences that will actually help them learn the knowledge and skills that will help them make the changes that they want to make in their life. It ends up more of a teaching/learning enterprise."

Placing the emphasis on skills and learning gives people a sense of power and control over the process, Hiebert maintains. "As soon as you place it in a learning context, people realize that they're learning things all of the time and they realize that the reason they are having difficulty is that they haven't learned how to do it any better. That's quite an encouraging mes-

In Canada, the rate of unemployment for employable disabled people is extraordinarily high. According to the latest Statistics Canada figures, 48 percent of people with disabilities work. In contrast, 81 percent of non-disabled persons are employed.

A similar disparity exists with respect to post-secondary education. While only 6 percent of people with disabilities have university degrees, more than double this percentage of able-bodied people have a university degree.

DiscoverAbility was formed in 1991 as a partnership between The Hugh MacMillan Rehabilitation Centre and the North York Board of Education. These partners collaborated to establish a Career Assessment and Resource Centre for disabled students. DiscoverAbility provided programs and services ranging from career assessment to placement and in many cases, monitoring for post-secondary school registrants. Other partners included The Counselling Foundation of Canada, Canadian Banking Association, Wal-Mart and local colleges.

sage." Not only is it encouraging, he believes it can help reduce personal stress.

"When working with kids in schools, asking them what made them stressed, a recurring theme was, 'What do I do after high school?'" Hiebert says. "So the work I do in career development is a subset of the work I've been doing in stress. People are starting to understand the importance of having a plan for your life. They're starting to understand at an intuitive level that you're better off if you have an idea of what you want to do with your life rather than just playing it one day at a time."

> As the 1980s drew to a close, in the currents and crosscurrents of interactivity between the institutions of education, government, labour and not-for-profit agencies, the diverse and fascinating field of career counselling was gradually taking shape.

"The word 'development' in The Concise Oxford Dictionary means a 'gradual unfolding,'" suggests Marilyn Van Norman, the Director of Student Services and the Career Centre at the University of Toronto, "and that is indeed what I believe career development has done over the years and will continue to do." The University of Toronto Career Centre has evolved into the world's largest university career service. Initiated in 1948 in response to the employment needs of veterans graduating from university, the centre now serves thousands of students each year.

"Those 1948 graduates probably went on to work for the same employer for thirty-five years," says Van Norman. "Today's centre, while still providing employment opportunities to students through a web-based on-line system, teaches students and recent graduates how to take responsibility for their own career." Called the Self-managed Career Development Model, this tool equips the graduate for their working future. "Graduates today will probably have four or five different careers and at least twice that number of employers," continues Van Norman.

Career as part of the productivity equation

The perspective from those in the business community is somewhat more pragmatic. Edmonton psychologist, David Redekopp, puts his career counselling theories in business terms, looking at strategies and outcomes. "It's essentially the process of helping people think strategically about work and how that work interrelates with the rest of their life. You can't untie those two things, but it is a work focus. That's why it's called career counselling and not counselling. But the idea is to think strategically and to have some specific outcomes in place.

"You know, it is outcomes-based, it is not just process," says Redekopp, of the Alberta-based Life Role Development Group. "And if by the end of career counselling people have enough strategy by which to make their next moves and those moves are in a conscious direction, for the most part, career counselling has done its job."

Among the varied theories, philosophies and practices within the career counselling profession—strategic thinking, imagination, meaning, skill development, capacity building and good old fashioned "listening" —a healthy dialogue is underway. At the same time, a strong note of consensus often transcends the differences. Despite the seeming

disparities in theoretical thought, a common thread runs through advanced career counselling theory at the beginning of a new era of work.

Content, programs and a shared vocabulary

Contact Point is an interactive Website (www.contactpoint.ca) committed to producing relevant and topical career information and to opening lines of communication throughout Canada's career counselling community. The website was created by a group of career practitioners – each practicing in a different setting – who came together to define their need for information and design how to access that information. In practice, and central to the Contact Point philosophy, the practitioner as user is both the provider and recipient of the information.

Launched into cyber space in January of 1998, Contact Point offers discussion groups, gateway listings, professional development listings, a searchable Resource Centre, job postings, bursary applications, a quarterly newsletter, monthly circulars and special interest features. Services are offered at no cost to the practitioner.

Contact Point is a national not-for-profit organization directed by a multi sectoral Board of Directors comprised of volunteers from the private, not-for-profit and educational sectors

In pockets of intense activity peppered throughout the country, after nearly a century of development and growth, much of it occurring in the last two decades, the career counselling profession is still working to define its terms. Although different words are often used in different sectors, ever so slowly a common vocabulary is emerging. A common body of knowledge has begun to come together.

From within the various sectors of the field have come program, curricula and content developers. Some practitioners continue to work within institutions. Others have moved out of education or government to work in the voluntary or not-for-profit sector, some in the private sector. In addition to program development, a few have taken on some of the administrative tasks required by the field as a whole. The profession's sense of identity and professionalism was sufficient to give rise to the development of Contact Point, an on-line resource centre for career practitioners, drawn from the community itself and tailor-made to a Canadian audience of professionals. Also, a post-secondary consortium including Wilfred Laurier University, the universities of Waterloo and Guelph, and Conestoga College would offer on-line career practitioner curricula. By the close of the century, many students were enrolled in programs across the country leading to their obtaining the qualifications of a career counsellor.

Precisely how to refer to the emerging field remains a controversial issue. To some, at least, the term "counselling" seems too limited, too therapeutic in its connotation. "The term career development is more encompassing," says Jan Basso, of the University of Waterloo. "Career development includes the whole process of helping clients with that career decision-making, in terms of doing a self-assessment, identifying the kinds of things that might be appropriate and satisfying for them in terms of working."

Laurie Edwards, from Nova Scotia's Department of Education, concurs. "A counselling model is one that would suggest a therapeutic model," she feels, "a diagnosis. It suggests there's something wrong and now we have to do an intervention. For me, career development means working together with clients on something that's important to them. Not to do problem-solving, but to figure out what a preferred future would be."

Career development as an instrument of public policy

Canada is known internationally for its high calibre of innovation in career and employment products and programs. Experts from government and education are in demand around the world and often work as consultants to countries as far afield as Oman, Romania and Chile, providing outside expertise to practitioners learning to manage their own national workforces.

UBC's Norm Amundson is one of the growing number of specialists who often work outside the country. “You realize when you step outside of Canada,” Amundson says, “even to the United States, that much of the work we're doing is leading, cutting edge.”

As professionals in the field have developed ways and means of measuring the effectiveness of the counselling process, the role of the profession has been raised in the hierarchy of labour market strategies.

“In the 1980s, counselling was seen by many people at the top of organizations as being something to improve the fairness of society, something to deal with disadvantaged workers, with those discriminated against in some way,” says Hunter. “It was very difficult to sell it as something that would promote the efficiency of the labour market that would mean that people found jobs better and faster, and that jobs got filled better and faster than they otherwise would.”

In the mid-1990s, however, the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) put forward the view that specific labour market policies such as job search assistance, job clubs and counselling were effective in reducing long term unemployment.

“The trend moved away from training and job creation,” says Hunter. “There’s a recognition that counselling can increase the efficiency of the labour market at the same time as it is increasing the fairness of the labour market.”

Accurately documenting outcomes can help improve the field's standing, says the University of Lethbridge’s Kris Magnussen. “Counsellors have not taken enough responsibility for documenting their impact,” according to Magnussen. “They don't know how to do that very well…It’s a political process but it’s also a professional obligation. We have to become much better at documenting how we do a job, how effective we are. We have to be able to say, as a result of the work that I did, there were another fifty students who stayed in school.”

Growth and development in Canada's career counselling community has occurred along three main streams of activity: service delivery, information and product development, and the training of professionals.

Service delivery

As the 21st century gets underway, a range of employment and career services is available across the country, many in the public sector, in government and community career and employment counselling centres, in schools, colleges and universities. Some services are available in the private sector, as well. And it is here, suggests Edmonton's

David Redekopp that the greatest potential for future growth can be found. “It's almost entirely untapped,” he says. “At a rough guess, 90, maybe 95 percent of career counsellors work with the 6 percent of workers who are unemployed. Maybe 5 percent of counsellors actually work with the employed. I want to see that ratio change almost entirely. The opportunities are endless on that front.”

Career information, products and tools

Canada's library of career-related information is extensive and much of it is available on-line including occupational databases, career assessment products, labour market information and sectoral studies. For example, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI) is widely used by career counsellors to help clients identify their personality and temperament. Several of the country's innovative career products—such as Career Explorer and The Real Game, a curriculum based on a board game for career exploration, originally developed by Newfoundlander, Bill Barry, for his daughter's grade school class—have built strong reputations around the world.

Having sophisticated products such as these at our disposal is “something of a mixed blessing,” observes Bryan Hiebert of the University of Alberta. “When you have good quality products,” he notes, “if people aren't careful, they can be seduced by the product and they end up thinking that their job as career facilitator is really just to take the products and let them do the work.”

Information can be distracting, as well, says Redekopp. “Sometimes it sets up an illusion of having something that actually isn't really there. It’s great for statisticians and labour market analysts, and people who want to keep track of the economy as a whole…that type of information has no life, no context, no meaning and at best serves a sort of introduction to what's going on in the world of work.

“If you look at a hierarchy of data, information, knowledge and wisdom, information has its place. So does data. But information and data aren’t knowledge or wisdom. There's a million ways to get knowledge and wisdom and counselling is one of them.”

The 20th century provided career counselling with many challenges and opportunities upon which to hone its craft.

Early tools which became available in the 1970s to prioritize skills, knowledge and values—such as the card sorting system entitled Career Values, developed by Dick Knowdell based on Howard Figler’s work—have now been replaced by more elaborate methods of data collection and analysis.

Canadian consultant and career self-management advocate Barbara Moses has created a number of tools including a Career Planning Workbook, which is now used widely in corporate culture around the world. Her books include *Career Intelligence: Mastering the New Work and Personal Realities, Career Intelligence: The 12 New Rules for Work* and *Life Success.* Additional resource materials have been developed by Youth Employment Service’s Director Nancy Schaeffer including Good Job: A Young Person’s guide to Finding, Landing and Loving a Job.

Training and professional development

In the academic community, not surprisingly, expectations of levels of education are generally clearly defined. At times, these are established by provincial guidelines; at other times, they are set by the institution or school board. Within the educational system, a master's degree is generally needed to work as a career counsellor or a career educator.

For many within the career counselling and career development community embracing similar expectations would have significant implications. The belt tightening of public sector funders during the latter part of the century had pushed the concept of fiscal accountability onto the front burner of all service providers (not-for-profit and profit) seeking to provide federally funded fee-for-service programs. Programs were evaluated more rigorously, with particular emphasis on tangible, measurable outcomes, in terms of client placement and program delivery standards. This climate served to raise once again within the career practitioner community the issue of credentials as a way of increasing the credibility of the profession (and to strengthen a proponent's case for a fee for service relationship or the potential receipt of public funds). Should such credentials be established as a standard in other sectors? Some feel strongly that they should. Others disagree. One of the dilemmas the profession faced in addressing this question was what some saw as its greatest strength: the diversity of backgrounds and special interests and expertise of the career practitioner. In fact, there was no one single environment in which a member of the profession could be found, nor one direct educational path that took them there. This variety of settings (government, community agency, educational institution, private sector) and backgrounds of the counsellors themselves (from members of the clergy to psychologists) made accreditation a challenge. In addition, some counsellors and practitioners are not convinced that their personal credentials determine and/or impact client outcomes.

Despite the dedicated efforts of people like Frank Lawson to encourage the availability of professional development, however, there remains a dearth of graduate or post-graduate studies. The most active training programs for those in the field are found in community colleges, either as full-time diploma or certificate programs, or part-time courses through continuing education and distance learning. Opportunities for graduates are expanding, says Bill O'Byrne, of Sir Sanford Fleming College in Peterborough, which offered one of the first employment and career counselling programs in the country. Students in the class of 2000 have all found work in the field, he reports with considerable satisfaction.

Many career counsellors who identify themselves as professionals are, in fact, without graduate training and do outstanding work, says outplacement pioneer, Murray Axmith. "The common ground is who the counsellor is as a person…A person who has a lot of sensitivity, who reads people well, who is genuine, who has a quest to know and understand, who has empathy and who is nonjudgmental—these are the counselling skills that underpin everything."

A Canadian chapter of the International Association of Career Management Professionals was established early in the 1990s. "One of

the things that has developed is a move toward certification of professionals in the corporate area," Axmith points out. "And that involved taking in special programs and conferences, writing papers and building experience. In order to get certified, people had to have specific experience, but they also had to contribute to the field."

Emphasis on academic credentials is a concern of both profit and not-for-profit counsellors and practitioners who continue to focus on client outcomes and program delivery, rather than on the credentials of individual counsellors or practitioners. The CFC's Elizabeth McTavish put forward a view in the 1980s that reflects Murray Axmith's view today: "Varied and rich life experience, intelligence and the ability to learn from that experience, coupled with rapport with the client are surely the essence of counselling," she said.

Implications of technology in career development as a profession

Technological advancements have had an enormous impact on the practice of career counselling. The availability of the Internet and e-mail make job searching much more comprehensive for job seekers and facilitate the easy review of applicants by potential employers. On-line job banks, specialized web sites and the plethora of information available can be overwhelming. The presence of the technology has also required career counsellors to be specially trained, so that they, in turn, can assist their clients in accessing what the Internet has to offer.

Telecommunication technology has also enhanced career counselling services. Where distance separates clients from counsellors, teleconferencing can be used to great advantage. For some provinces, for instance Newfoundland where the provision of services is made almost impossible to outlying areas, teleconferencing has been able to bring services to Canadians across the province. This, together with the Internet, has permitted the development of telecareer development, bringing a challenge of its own, as counsellors themselves must adapt to the effects of the new global economy and to the impact of technology in the workplace.

Keltie Creed, one of the first full-time e-counsellors says, "Ironically, although counselling is a profession that teaches people how to understand and cope with transition and change, a significant number of us have been resistant to introducing technology into our practice. Perhaps this is the ordeal, the test that will temper us and bring the field from an unformed childhood to maturity."

In 1997, Canada was the first country to fund employment and career counselling via the Internet. The Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work offered free e-counselling using chat technology for anyone who did not have access to a counsellor in person. Although initially conceived as a service for individuals with disabilities who were isolated, it quickly became evident that the general public also wanted this option. People who live in the north or other rural areas preferred being able to talk directly to a counsellor without travelling; homemakers with children did not have to arrange childcare; some youth were more comfortable expressing themselves through keyboards; and there was a great demand for assistance from people hoping to immigrate or return to Canada.

There were also requests from the U.S. and Europe to train counsellors in how to adapt their counselling techniques to the medium.

However, most counsellors were apprehensive about the concept. Although many worked from cubicles rather than private offices or in group settings, they worried about hackers and confidentiality. The majority wondered about lack of non-verbal cues, feeling that they could not communicate solely through text. Still others were intimidated by technology and stated simply that the day they had to use a computer would be the day they would seek a career counsellor themselves.

Yet within a few short years, most counsellors routinely refer clients to use on-line job banks and to research companies using the Internet; they are gaining comfort using it themselves. With more than a million resumes being added to databanks on the Internet each month, counsellors need to be able to advise job seekers on the pros and cons of various formats for electronic resumes and portfolios. This includes attachments, submissions through company web sites, and helping clients critique their home pages or CD ROM portfolios. Requests for help with hypertext resumes (live links on web sites or disc) have increased on a daily basis since 1998. We are growing past the era of resumes and entering into the age of personal marketing.

"Counsellors will also be working with more clients who are very comfortable with web-based communication such as instant messaging and text messaging via cell phone or pagers. They may be using these mediums for e-mentoring, networking or information interviews. In some professions, they are already doing their proficiency tests online and having pre-screening or initial interviews via chat, web-cam or telephony (telephone via Internet). This is partially to test technical skills of the applicant but has also become part of some corporate cultures. Counsellors and coaches need to be prepared to increase computer literacy and our skill sets to keep pace with the corporate world," says Keltie Creed.

> "Let's forget about the legal implications for a moment and focus on the quality of counselling through electronic means. How effective can your relationship be with your client if you never see their face? (This presumes you do not have video conferencing…) Think about all the nuances of facial expression and body reactions that you may never catch. Considering the power of non-verbal cues, this would be a real detriment to interpretation and bonding."
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> Mark Swartz MBA, Author and Consultant, "Cyber Counselling: Panacea or can of worms?" in *Technology and Career and Employment Counselling: A Compendium of Thought*, published by The Counselling Foundation of Canada, January 1998.

Marc Verhoeve, cybertraining consultant, agrees. He predicts a need for "more techno-literate counsellors to service clients who are already there; increased demand for us to increase our literacy in standardized testing, either 'bark-based' or web-based (e.g., JVIS.com); increased emphasis on EAPs (Employee Assistance Programs) to service employees/associates in large firms, ideally web-based to provide the service to all international branches; and more e-conferenced professional development to allow helping professionals to tap the expertise of consultants without having to invest the time and money to travel to grow professionally."

Both Creed and Verhoeve recognize the need to update our ethics guidelines and to educate both the counselling field and the public about safeguards and precautions when working on-line. However, similar concerns were voiced when professionals first began communicating with

clients via the telephone and it soon became evident that the benefits far exceeded the risks.

They also predict that counsellors will need to prepare themselves for a more global clientele, so cultural sensitivity and diversity training will need to be included in our own continual learning. Probably there will also be a demand for more emphasis on holistic career/lifestyle counselling and stress management, especially factoring in the eldercare mandate.

Technology is having a profound impact on the working life of Canadians, which in turn causes the counselling paradigm to shift. There will always be a demand for individual assistance, but it may not always be restricted by location. High speed Internet access has already made teleconferencing and web broadcasting much easier and more affordable. Software advancements make building and editing web-based portfolios and resumes as easy as word processing. Data retrieval services and search software offer information on careers and industries that was previously inaccessible. Disability, age and geographic location become unique qualities rather than barriers. Time becomes more elastic, as both synchronous and asynchronous communication options are available. Resources appear to be unlimited. Technology may been seen as an ordeal, a functional tool or an exciting adventure. However, it has also been a catalyst moving the counselling profession through the coming of age into maturity.

The role of government

Although government funding has done much to help build the field, a number of knots in the public purse strings have tended to thwart it as well. Funding patterns changed dramatically during the 1990s. Despite a growing understanding of the demands of a knowledge society and a learning culture, educational budgets were cut, along with career and employment programs, materials and staff.

Community-based programs tend to be insecure. Government funds come packaged in yearly contracts. At the same time, funding policies are subject to change—changes in human resource management strategies, changes in political regimes and philosophies and changes as internal problems restructure government bureaucracies. Nor are government programs always flexible enough to deal with some of the deep problems of the people on the outer fringes of Canadian society.

“In our drive—some would say obsession—for accountability, we've designed programs that don't work for marginalized people with multiple barriers,” says Martin Garber-Conrad of the Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation.

Garber-Conrad is the motivating force behind Edmonton's landmark program for severely-at-risk youth, Kids In the Hall. Many of the people he works to help do not fit well into traditional employment or social programs, he says, because their needs are “complex, deep and long-standing. It's not wrong to expect measurable outcomes. But we define them in the broad mainstream kind of categories and it's very difficult to ‘succeed’ with people with multiple barriers to employment.”

Success for government-sponsored employment programs general-

ly has been defined in fairly simplistic terms, a tally of the number of "placements," without an attempt to assess the quality and longevity of those placements. Faced with the need to "place" people in order to continue receiving funding, program developers tend to stay away from marginalized people like street kids, says Garber-Conrad. "The higher the risk, the more problems they're likely to have, the greater the difficulty there is in succeeding."

Decisions made at national headquarters or regional headquarters tend to be "one size fits all," according to employment service historian John Hunter. "The decision-making is getting pushed down," says Hunter, who views the devolution of labour force training and development to the provinces and communities as a positive move.

"What you really want to have is a bundle of measures that you can employ and pick and choose among, depending on the need," he says. "Flexibility will be the ultimate result. If you have a layoff in a mine where the ore has been depleted, you need different kinds of measures than you do if a company is temporarily shut down because of excess inventory. Training and other services are being devolved to the levels of the country where reasonable decisions can be made by people who know the best mix of labour market measures to deal with labour market problems." However, the jury is still out on the impact of the withdrawal of the federal government from providing the extent of national leadership they had in the past in this field.

An evolving national community

In this period of transition, as the federal government continues to offload many of its training, employment and career services to the provinces, the career counselling community must struggle to adapt. Some career practitioners complain that devolution has left the field fractured and suffering from a loss of national leadership. And yet, as funding cuts have made direct services harder and harder to provide, technology has in many ways enhanced the abilities of the profession to provide reliable career selection information by way of the Internet.

Some applaud the creative initiatives underway to advance the field, perhaps in spite or because of the withdrawal of the federal government. Conflicting realities such as these are part of "an era of paradox," in Norm Amundson's view. "No longer are we saying either-or; we're saying both. There is this interaction going on and it can't be either one or the other, but it needs to be some creative integration that pulls both sides together."

In the career counselling community, creative integration to pull the field together can be found in national forums. NATCON has become increasingly important as an annual meeting place for practitioners, theorists and program developers from across the country. The Canadian Career Information Partnership, established in 1992, now meets several times a year, bringing together representatives from the provinces, territories and the federal government to work on product development and national initiatives.

Many challenges ahead

Accountability. Outcomes. Professional standards. Devolution. Funding restrictions. Skill development. International collaboration. New technologies. These are some, at least, of the issues a new generation of Canadian career practitioners will have face in the years ahead.

To meet challenges of this kind, new understanding will be needed and new learning. The field will have to accept the risks and opportunities inherent in this critical moment of growth and development and find ways to coalesce around collective directions, in order to move ahead as a profession.

To the many people in the field who have seen this and recognized the significance of the moment at which the field now stands, this means a new awareness, an evolution in understanding as individual practitioners and as a community. Devolution, the need to deal with one's own thinking about skills, the role of funding, the value of contributions from each of the sectors within which counselling occurs, communication, and the quality of the thoughts that are exchanged—all of these factors will determine the degree to which the profession will be able to work together and develop the field.

Perhaps the greatest opportunity for the profession is the introduction of technologies that may make cyber-counselling more commonplace. As a means of finding labour market information, referring clients and matching skills with requirements, the electronic highway presents career counselling with a whole new realm of possibilities. Perhaps one of the principal benefits the Internet brings—as seen through the success of Contact Point—is the value of creating a virtual meeting place, where career practitioners from every setting and background can share insight and experience with the larger career development community.

The future

We leave the final word to some of the people in the field:

"There's excitement in this field," says Barry Day. "When you're in a relatively new discipline, there's an excitement about innovation. And everybody gets involved."

"Together," as Laurie Edwards puts it, "we can do much more work than we can as little islands."

"Certainly we have developed, in many ways, a much more sophisticated perspective," according to Vance Peavy, "and certainly things are better in some ways than they were but I don't like the concept of maturation too much. I don't think career counselling or any counselling ever will be mature. I hope not. What I hope is that there is a continuing, evolving reflection on itself, making itself better, changing as society changes, as the lives of people change. When the lives of people change, then things like counselling must also change, in order to be appropriate and sensible in the new context."

"There's been this increase in the esteem of the field," says Bryan Hiebert, "but also in the pride that people feel working in the area. I

think it's because now we've got a critical brain pool. And so we've got a certain amount of synergy happening. And when creative people get together, magic happens."

"Increasingly, more and more practitioners are utilizing online learning and networking tools to assist them in the work they do," states Rizwan Ibrahim, Executive Director, Contact Point. "Finding a balance between their hectic workloads and beneficial easy-to-access online tools will be their challenge in the years to come."

Mark Swartz, Career Consultant, speaker and author concurs: "The possibilities are, in fact, very exciting – for those who embrace the technologies and use them appropriately."

"Career counselling is a journey," comments Wendy Woods, in her capacity as President of the Ontario Association of Youth Employment Centres. "Over the next few years, it will be imperative that counsellors servicing young people be knowledgeable of the difficulties encountered in a changing economy and work environment, responsive to client needs and creative in applying counselling processes." Further, Woods urges that, "as we continue the journey, we need to revel in the diversity of the young people we meet, as well as the diversity of the processes that we apply, so that we are equipped to assist clients in reaching their goals."

"We are on the cutting edge of recognizing that what we do is critical to the future of Canadian society," says Robert Shea, founding editor of the Canadian Journal of Career Development. "I believe the future of career development is creating and disseminating new knowledge about careers research in Canada. We must partner with all sectors involved in the Canadian career community. We're on the cusp of something great."

"Our future at The Counselling Foundation of Canada will include continuing to look at the barriers that keep individual Canadians from attaining their full potential," envisions Donald Lawson, Chairman of the Foundation. "We will continue to seek out new and creative approaches to providing career counselling and make the necessary investments to make things happen."

The 20th century provided career counselling with a myriad of challenges and opportunities upon which to hone its craft. The future will no doubt bring a new set of challenges and opportunities, upon which the profession is equipped to capitalize.