

eReviews

By Cheryl LaGuardia

CAREER CRUISING

Ananca Technologies;
www.careercruising.com



CONTENT Career Cruising is an online career guidance and planning system designed to help users find the right career, explore their education and training options to prepare for it, and build their own employment portfolios. The system includes self-assessment tools to determine skills and aptitudes, hundreds of detailed occupation profiles (each including a job description, working conditions, potential earnings, a sample career path, links to related occupations, and multimedia interviews), tools for locating appropriate education and training, job-interviewing resources, and tips for being successful once you are hired.



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USABILITY The main screen has a toolbar at the top with the buttons Main, Assessments, Careers, Schools, Employment, Portfolio, Search, i (helpful information), Español (Spanish/English and French/English bilingual versions are available), and Logout. At screen left is a column that contains a large box for Portfolio Login and smaller boxes to Explore Assessments, Explore Careers, Education and Training, Employment, Career Quiz, Upcoming Events, and Previous Weeks' Features. To the right of that column, taking up about three-quarters of the screen, is This Week's Features, which contains an Interview (today's was with a welder), a Photo File (showing images of people on the job; this week's: a medical transcriptionist), and a Career Focus section (today's: careers for fans of food).

I started by going right to the Assessments button in the top toolbar. My click got three different ones: Career Matchmaker ("Answer questions about your likes and dislikes to find careers that match up with your interests"), My Skills ("Rate your level of skill in 45 key areas to see how your skills match up with the careers that you are interested in"), and Learning Styles Inventory ("Discover

how you learn and retain information and find tips on how to improve your study habits to suit your learning style"). The Career Matchmaker is superb (it quite rightly identified "beekeeper" as a possibly appropriate career for me, something I have long thought myself), the My Skills section is very practical, and the Learning Styles Inventory showed me things about myself no other system has, all in very clear, understandable terms.

On to Careers, where I could search an alphabetical index for a certain career or by school subject to see toward which careers each leads. I could search among 16 occupation clusters and explore the careers within them, look at military careers, or use the Career Selector tool to search for careers on the basis of a variety of criteria (e.g., school subjects, career clusters, type of education, core tasks, earnings, and working conditions). *Practical, down-to-earth, accessible, logical, clear*—these adjectives come to mind about the organization, content, and delivery of this information.

Back to the toolbar buttons: Careers let me Search for Schools by name or state, Search for Programs to find schools that offer what I want to study, Compare Schools side by side, use the School Selector to find schools matching my chosen criteria, develop a Planning Timeline (priceless!), and find Financial Aid to help pay for it all.

Under the Employment button is an Employment Guide designed to show "how to conduct an effective work search and read our advice for your first days on the job." It includes excellent sections on Work Search, Resumes, Letter Writing, Interview Skills, Job Offers, and On the Job, as well as a Job Search section that lets you "search for postings on thousands of job boards and company websites at once." I tested it and found some very interesting jobs listed in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, ARL.org, JobThread, the ALA Job List, and more.

The Portfolio button lets you create a new portfolio or log in to the one you have already created on the system for storing all the information you've gleaned along the way. It's easy to use and extremely clear.

Naturally, the Search button operates via keyword. When I first used it, I

couldn't understand why it was tucked away at the end of the top toolbar. Having put the system through its paces, I now see why: users definitely profit from exploring this product along the paths the designers have laid out, specifically that top toolbar (for those of us trained to look there) and the left-hand column (which will catch the eye of those who respond to visual cues). Initially, I might have quibbled over the amount of space This Week's Features takes up, but I see how it draws users into the system overall.

PRICING For public and academic libraries, annual subscriptions to the complete Career Cruising guidance system start at \$595 a year for the English-only version and \$695 a year for a bilingual version (English/Spanish or English/French). This fee includes remote access to the product, plus training and support. Large library-system pricing is based on populations served, and pricing in Canada is slightly higher. Multi-year contract discounts are available.

BOTTOM LINE Vigorously recommended to public, school, and community college libraries. I've seen other products do some of the things Career Cruising does, but nothing does it all at this price as well as this remarkable product. In fact, its reasonable cost makes me wonder why any library serving job searchers would not own this product. A clear ten, Career Cruising packs an enormous amount of top-quality material, and it will well serve a variety of users; it's all about discovering your options, choosing well, working toward goals, and attaining them. Finding your bliss? Yep, Career Cruising gets it. For free trials, go to <http://www.careercruising.com/Public/ProLibTrial.aspx>.

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