Computer Science Coop Report

To: Sandra Stark

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# Introductory Summary

During the period of May 1st to August 19th, I worked at Versaterm Inc. in the Ottawa region. During this work term I worked under the supervision of Ivan Joseph who is a programmer at the company. I have learned many different things during this work period and really enjoyed my work term. In this report I will talk about the company, my position, my environment, skills I used and acquired and end with an evaluation of my work-term.

# Employer Description

At Versaterm they don’t use the vendor-customer relationship. They build partnerships with clients and focus on constantly communicating with them. It is by communicating with their partners that they get valuable feedback and continue to build the best possible product for the entire customer base. Versaterm offers two main products. The first one is the Records Management System (RMS) which is a system that allows police agencies to store data about any information they need to collect. The second product is the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) which is a system that helps to offer accessibility to information for the dispatchers in emergency services. It displays and organizes the information they need and they can perform advanced commands with that information.

# Position Description

During my work term, I worked as a programmer. While some students were assigned one large task to work on during the summer, a few of my colleagues and I were assigned multiple tasks to work on. I tackled one task at a time, and updated my progress on their source control called JIRA. I would update my progress based on the phase I was in such as analysis, development, review and testing. Once the task was done, I would assign it to my supervisor for review and then get started on the next task. Some of the tasks I worked on included:

* Enhancing forms in the RMS to better translate between English and French.
* Implementing an autocomplete on those forms.
* Create a search assist which helped the users build search expressions with different operators.

There were no set daily tasks. I was assigned a task and it was up to me to separate my task into sub-tasks, prioritize and manage my time in order to efficiently get a task done.

# Technical Environment

My technical environment consisted of working with a dual monitor setup and a Windows 10 operating system. The programming language that I used at Versaterm is Genero which was coded in a PuTTY window which is like a command line. They used an Informix database during the beginning of the summer, but later changed over to a postgres which both use SQL. I also used CISCO Jabber which is a messaging software used to communicate with other people in the office.

# Skills Used and Acquired

There were many skills that I have acquired at Heritage College which came in handy during my coop work-term. The most useful skills I have learned are soft skills. Skills such as communication, being a good team player, managing time, organization, etc. are the skills that were the most useful. I did not use the languages that I had used in my two years at heritage, but I was able to quickly learn Genero due to being exposed to those different languages beforehand. There are some properties that transfer between languages which made learning Genero so much easier. In fact, Genero is very similar to PL/SQL which I learned in fourth semester. Another important skill I acquired from school was testing my code. It was very important that I test my code to make sure that I didn’t break any existing functionality. It also helped me numerous times to identify a bug in the code which needed to be fixed.

During my coop term, I was able to improve both my soft skills and technical skills. Since I worked in an open office area, I was able to easily communicate with my co-workers and improve my interpersonal skills. I was also able to better my team work skills since I had to work with some other programmers on certain tasks. I also had a coop presentation to do during my last week and I participated in a lot of office events such as their trip to calypso. In terms of technical skills, I got familiar with command line coding which I had never done before, and I learned a new language called Genero. I also got to learn about different database types such as Informix and postgres and I improved my testing skills by picking up on some tips and tricks from experienced programmers.

# Evaluation of co-op experience

Overall, I felt very well prepared for this co-op. As I mentioned earlier I did not code in any of the languages that I have previously learned at school, but having learnt those languages made learning Genero much easier. They are very nice and helpful here which also made the first two weeks go by very well until I was good on my own.

I really enjoyed my work term at Versaterm so there are many highlights. I really enjoyed the trip to calypso with the office. It was really fun to socialize with all of my co-workers outside of work. In terms of my actual work experience, the best highlight is when I finished working on my final task which I had been working on for about a month. It consisted of a search assist which users can use to build search expressions in the RMS. It was very satisfactory to see the final product and to know that clients will be able to use my tool to help them search through the system from now on.

In terms of suggestions to be better prepared for this co-op, there isn’t really much that you need to do in order to be better prepared. You could try getting familiar with Genero by reading up their documentation, but everything you need to know is mostly learned in the first two weeks of work and everything is easy to pick up on. Other than that, school prepares you more than enough for this job.

# Conclusion

In conclusion, I had a great experience here at Versaterm. I felt like I was very well prepared by my program to do this job and had fun learning a bunch of new things including a new language. The people here were very friendly and the work atmosphere was great. I acquired some valuable skills which will definitely help me in my last two semesters at Heritage College. I hope to return to this company once I graduate from my program.