Studying the Humanities and (Still) Finding Work

Skill sets of the Humanities student:

Intellectual Ability: During your time in graduate school you have learned:
• to write clearly and to communicate/convey information concisely
• to collect, organize and evaluate ideas
• to critically analyze and assess complex concepts
• to summarize, argue, and debate about values
• to think logically
• to think creatively and problem solve

Social Ability: Think of your graduate studies not just in terms of the end product, but in terms of the experience it provides along the way.
• Adaptability: The Humanities student typically has good social and citizenship skills. Their multi-year dedication to becoming familiar with humanistic concerns (in literature: character types, cultural values, history, and critical theory) often provides them with greater emotional intelligence, empathy, cultural sensitivity, adaptability, and a greater knowledge of global, cultural concerns. They are, in short, typically much better than non-humanities students at thinking of themselves as global citizens capable of navigating trans-cultural economies and communication.
• Endurance: the ability to submerge oneself and focus on a long-term project is highly valued to many employers.
• Speaking Skills: Perhaps one of the most vital inter-personal skill is the ability to speak to groups and publicly. Chances are you’ve done quite a bit of this in your class presentations, oral exams, and at symposia/colloquia. Every opportunity to work on this in graduate school translates into highly desirable work skills.

Managerial Ability:
• Time Management: As a graduate student either taking multiple courses at once or working and studying, you’ve had to learn time management skills that you can parlay into a selling point to prospective employers.

Jobs and Careers UCD Humanities Graduate Students have pursued:
• Artist
• Museum/Curatorial work
• Arts Administration: gallery, for profit exhibition broker, independent curator
• Law
• NGOs: Bioethics centers, women’s centers, international NGOs
• Non-profits
• Public Policy: Colorado Center on Law and Policy
• Politics
• National Parks Service
• Government
• Renewable Energy
• Film Production
• Novelist
• Events planning
• Medical doctor

PhD programs UCD Humanities Graduate Students have pursued:
• Architecture and Sustainability Studies (University of Michigan)
• Philosophy (Marquette University, University of Chicago)
• Art History (UT Austin)
• Humanities and Liberal Studies (University of Dallas)
• Radio, Television, Film (Various)
• Communication (University of Michigan)
• English and Literature

Some Useful Web sites for exploring information about careers in Humanities disciplines:

  An awesome site with lots of links to other pages and information. Many of the links are to Philosophy department sites, but the ideas can be adapted to the general Humanities students.

• University of Kent, Great Britain: http://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/humanities.htm
  Although this is a British university site, I have found it useful for its information about skill sets the Humanities student brings to the work force.

• USA Today: College Section:
  A nice and positive voice about the value of a Humanities degree and how it can prepare you for a job:

• Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce:
  http://cew.georgetown.edu/
  An interesting site with several reports about regional workforce trends and the education these will demand.

• The Guardian:
  http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2007/nov/20/choosingadegree.highereducation
  Article about the value of a philosophy degree—substitute humanities!

• New York Times:
  http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/06/education/06philosophy.html?ex=1208318400&en=642a82177643705b&ei=5070&emc=eta1
  Ditto the above.