

# JENNIFER GIBBONS

Postdoc Department – Pathology and Lab Medicine  
Interview Date, 4/2/08

**Title:** Staff Scientist

**Institution / Company:** SuperArray Biosciences

## Describe a typical day?

*A typical day involves highthroughput labwork- using 96 or 384 well plates. So, I set up experiments, and then spend a good portion of the day analyzing the data. The only small scale labwork that is done is the initial and final stages of a project- to get things started, and at the end to test possible applications for the successful product.*

*However, since this company has approx. 60 people, we interact with the other departments often. For example, I may be asked by Marketing to help write up technical literature on my subject of research. Or, when a product is almost finished I may work with Production to ensure a smooth transition for the scale-up process.*

## What do you enjoy most?

*The regular work hours. I may occasionally need to work longer hours- as scientists we all know that labwork can be variable. However, I am not expected to work the long hours that are common for a grad student or postdoc. In addition, people are happy and friendly- this is not always common in academia, where people are frustrated and not managed well.*

## What are some of the challenges?

*My supervisor is somewhat distant, so I am still learning what is expected of me, and was expected to be independent pretty much from my second day of work on. Otherwise, the other challenges are the usual labwork challenges- not everything works, as we all know.*

## What is the biggest misconception about your career field?

*That scientists in industry don't work very hard, and are not as good of scientists. The opposite is actually true- people work harder here, with fewer stops to chat and surf the net (of course, chatting still happens). In addition, people here are quite intelligent and innovative.*

## How did you find out about your current position?

*Well, I originally applied for a different position that was listed on monster.com. But, when the company looked at my CV they called me and asked about my current position instead.*

## What strategies or resources did you find most helpful during your job search?

*Speaking to OPA about what to expect in an interview was good to do. Otherwise, I was pretty lucky, so didn't need any other resources. My husband had been in the job hunt for months, so he was able to give me advice that he had learned to get started. My only other help was salary advice from my graduate thesis advisor.*

## How long was your job search?

*Not very long- my first attempts at a job were to send out 4 resumes- two to SuperArray. I was called two weeks or so after that for a phone interview, and then e-mailed for an in- person interview a week or two after that. So, within two months of starting my job search I had accepted this position.*

## Looking back on your time as a postdoc or your job search, what do you wish you would have done differently?

*I wish I could have worked more efficiently in my postdoc to get more accomplished before I left. However, due to the current funding situation I just don't think that was possible. As for the job search, I actually didn't want a job so quickly. However, I of course took it- over that two months I sent out 10-20 other resumes as well, I had phone interviews for two of those positions, and declined an in person interview for one of those. However, those were the only nibbles- if it wasn't for SuperArray I would probably still be in the job search- I think I was just in the right place at the right time.*

**What career planning and/or job search advice do you have for current postdocs interested in your career field?**

*Try to branch out from your comfort zone- the more skills you have, the more jobs you can apply for. I asked the president of my company, Li Shen, what she looks for. She said that she looks at the time in science vs. the publication record to decide on who to call for a phone interview. Since this company is a small biotech, in the business of making kits, in my phone interview she asked basic science questions, to make sure I understand how the kits I use work. Many scientists don't remember their chemistry, and don't know how the tools they use truly work- Li told me that many people fail this 'litmus test' in the phone interview.*