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MY STORY

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THIS CAREER PATH?

I chose Food Science because it built on the skills acquired in my mother's farm kitchen and had a diverse selection of career opportunities. During my postgraduate studies I honed my laboratory and writing skills, which motivated me to work as a freelance academic editor. I also enjoy bringing people together which lead me to become a symposium coordinator. With these skills I hope to assist in the knowledge transfer from students to the rest of the world.

WHAT IS A TYPICAL DAY LIKE FOR YOU?

As an academic editor my duty is to **streamline the reading experience of food science manuscripts to create a good first impression**. Language editing, **formatting and references** are some of the areas that are focused on to ensure the research is presented in a clear and consistent manner. As a symposium coordinator and secretary, I assist the convener to plan and organize the Vth International Symposium for Pomegranate and Minor Mediterranean Fruits to be hosted by Stellenbosch University under the auspices of the International Society for Horticultural Science (ISHS) from 14-22 February 2022.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST?

It gives me great joy to add value to someone's life through my work. Creating an organized structure and seeing it take form out of a jumble of plans or words is immensely satisfying. I find learning new things very stimulating, like finding a new word and looking it up in one of my big heavy dictionaries.

What particular skills, talents and qualities are essential to be effective in this position?

The skills needed for any editor include a love of reading, attention to detail and a good grasp of the English language, punctuation, and grammar. Academic editors usually have a postgraduate degree and experience in the field for which the paper is written. To organize a symposium takes just over a year to plan and involves a lot of administrative duties. The person would need to be organized, good at recordkeeping, planning, contacting suppliers and following-up on queries.



WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF THE FIELD IN TERMS OF NEW AND EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES?

Research and technology will continue to evolve to make life easier and keep texts interesting to edit. During the pandemic times were uncertain and many events were being held online, therefore it is important to incorporate the possibility of hosting symposia online.

What type of person / personality would enjoy this kind of career?

Academic editing will suit introverts who like to work on their own without needing to see people every day. Someone who likes organizing events and administrative tasks will enjoy being a symposium coordinator.

CHALLENGES

Being a 'late bloomer' is not always easy. People have previously tried to rush me to 'move forward' in my life. I was unemployed for a while and tried my hand at teaching, before returning to the academic field. Sometimes the best way to know if you like something is to try it. I spent two years in Germany when my husband received a job offer in Hamburg. Although this may sound exciting, the reality of it was harder, since I was unemployed, had to adapt to a foreign country, learn a new language, and make new friends.

What advice would you offer learners who are interested in pursuing this career?

Start shadowing people from a young age to see what kind of work they do and if you would like the daily routine. Volunteer at as many types of companies during your holidays as a student. Start organizing events for a student association at your school or university if you think of becoming a symposium coordinator. If you are interested to work as an academic editor, I would recommend writing a thesis, enrolling in an editing course, and reading as many books as possible.

HIGHLIGHTS

Completing my MSc Food Science degree was one of the hardest yet most rewarding challenges I overcame; it took a great measure of endurance and support from friends and family to pull me through. Another proud and scary moment was when I resigned my position as a product developer at a corporate retail company to explore what kind of job would suit me and my personality. This and moving to a foreign country really helped me grow as a person. And lastly, I remember the thrill of editing my first paying client's thesis, realizing the satisfaction it gave me.

