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All views are my own.

**What does your job entail on a day-to-day basis?**

I might be commissioning manuscripts, that is, identifying ‘hot’ topics related to drug discovery that would make good topics for a review manuscript, and potential authors who would be best placed to write such an article.

A large part of my time involved developmental editing of manuscripts; this involved editing the text of manuscript for structure and scientific content so that the content was as informative and as clear as possible for a people who might not be familiar with the topics discussed in the manuscript.

I also did some language editing; ensuring that the meaning of each sentence was as clear as possible.

I also kept an eye on the scientific literature (at least the top tier journals – it would have been impossible to keep track of everything!) so that I could identify ideas and topics for manuscripts as well as ideas for news stories.

Another part of my role involved writing short news stories, for example, related to clinical trial results or patents, this also involved identifying suitable people to interview (by phone or email) for quotes in the stories.

I also did what I call routine manuscript handling – identifying and sending manuscripts to external referees, liaising with internal subeditors and artists, and proof reading.

**What qualifications are required?**

A PhD or relevant experience, plus some editing experience was desirable. I used the experience I had gained previously compiling a departmental science-focused newsletter as evidence of editing when I applied for the role.

**What other transferable skills do you need?**

Excellent written communication skills; for example you need to know how to communicate complex scientific information to people with different backgrounds. And you need to be able to identify ways of improving manuscripts that have been written by authors. You also need diplomacy when editing, because you are changing what someone else has written, and to be able to explain why you have suggested changing their work - even though they could be the key expert in their field.

The ability to work to deadlines was crucial, as most journals have a monthly or weekly deadline where items have to be sent for web or print publication – and this deadline is not flexible! You also needed the skills to convince other people (authors etc.) to work to this deadline. But I actually found the deadlines useful, as it helped me prioritize my work.

**Are there opportunities to widen your knowledge of other areas in your field?**

In terms of ‘field’ as subject areas, I would say that the topics I covered where so broad that I didn’t have a field! I worked on manuscripts covering for example, cancer, pain, drug delivery, medicinal chemistry, immunology, regulatory aspects of drug discovery, stem cells, ion channels and so on. Some journals — especially research journals — are more subject-focused though, and may require expertise in a particular are (cancer cell biology, cognitive neuroscience etc.) so working for one of these journals may be more appealing to people who crave detail.

If we think of ‘field’ as editing, then I had the opportunity to regularly test my writing skills, as well as designing posters and online animations.

**Is training continual? Career Progression?**

Most of the training I received was ‘on the job’ but I did attend some formal training courses on writing and related to personal development. Career development as an editor at Nature Publishing Group was assistant editor, associate editor, senior editor and then chief editor, but there was a ceiling effect, in that there could only be one chief editor on a journal.

**What do you enjoy the most in your job?**

The diversity! The topics that I covered were so diverse that I never got bored. And I liked the balance between editing and writing. I liked being involved with science without actually being in the lab doing the science.

**What challenges do you have to overcome?**

The diversity! It could be hard to have to suddenly get my brain to switch topics. For example, in a meeting, I could be presenting 5 papers each on a completely different topic.

Editing is very much a behind the scenes job – when a paper is published, the reader has no idea how many days or even weeks work by an editor went into getting the manuscript into its final format. Not that I was looking for fame, but it was quite a strange concept.

**Any advice for those interested in a position such as yours?**

Read lots – and while you are reading work out what you like and what could be improved about what ever you are reading – be it a scientific manuscript, a poster at a conference, a newspaper article, a blog post, a novel etc.

If you are applying for such positions, be sure to check out how much editing versus manuscript handling (see question 1) is involved in the role.

**What sources did you use to find out about the job vacancy?**

It was the rather traditional route of looking in the jobs section of New Scientist

**Is there anything that you miss about being in the lab (if you were previously a lab-based scientist)?**

I miss being up and about and walking around; sitting at a desk all day can be tough – I had to have training on how to sit correctly by a physiotherapist when I moved to a desk job!