

Career Opportunities in Scientific Publishing

Moderator:

Diane Scott-Lichter
American Cancer Society
Atlanta, Georgia

Presenters:

Judy Jansen
Society for the Study of Reproduction
Madison, Wisconsin

Louise Page
HighWire Press
Palo Alto, California

Barbara Meyers
Meyers Consulting Services
Adelphi, Maryland

Reporter:

Devora Mitrany
Casemark
Scottsdale, Arizona

“The publishing industry is projected to grow slowly through 2010”, stated Diane Scott-Lichter. “Although changing technology means thousands of jobs are disappearing, new types of jobs are being created. As editors, we need to be prepared to find our niche as the industry evolves.”

Barbara Meyers urged people to define their individual goals—What do you really want in life?—and then to analyze their potential and promote themselves. To help job-seekers, Meyers wrote a booklet for the Association of American Publishers (AAP), “Explore the World of Professional and Scholarly Publishing”. The panelists gave personal answers to some of the questions posed in the booklet.

When asked how fast she wanted to move up the ladder, Scott-Lichter replied, “I like new challenges and the opportunity to make a difference. When I can’t contribute toward making positive change any more, I start to look around.” As you move up the ladder, she noted, “It’s a two-way

street. Your employer should also contribute to your growth and development.”

Meyers follows her dad’s advice: “When you don’t want to get up in the morning, it’s time to move on.” It’s easy to stay in the same place, because change isn’t easy; it can be terrifying and terrific at the same time.

Meyers’s handout for the session offered lists of career-planning steps, her top 10 self-assessment books, Internet job-search strategies, and job-success skills. To receive a copy, e-mail her at mcsone@erols.com.

Besides the self-assessment questions mentioned above, the 16-page AAP booklet provides information about the scholarly-publishing field; types of jobs; job-search resources; sources for education, training, and internship; membership organizations; and key industry publications. The booklet is available as a PDF file at www.pspcentral.org (click on “Publications”).

Meyers urged job-seekers to analyze potential employers by using Web research and to network within professional societies. But, finally, “Follow your gut. If it doesn’t feel right, don’t do it.”

Louise Page shared her career path, noting that in her early career she preferred an established field. As she became more competent and experienced, she looked for new challenges at the forefront of technology. She climbed from editorial assistant at Oxford University Press to journal manager at HighWire Press. At John Wiley & Sons, Page worked on site in New York and then telecommuted from California. “Never burn your bridges”, she cautioned. In her current position at HighWire Press, Page manages the journals of Oxford University Press, the company with which she started.

Judy Jansen shared the wide-ranging skills needed to run member-, conference-, and publications-related activities at the Society for the Study of Reproduction.

She and her small staff handle

- Member recruitment and retention, promotional information, newsletters, and Web pages.
- Conference program development and promotion, abstract submission and management, registration, program proceedings, and abstract book.
- Journal peer-review support, preacceptance and postacceptance processing, and production.

Her most valuable skills are effective communication by e-mail and telephone and face to face. Customer service is important: “Be a gentle advocate”, Jansen advises. Overall, she strives “to ensure that the science will speak in its most articulate voice”.

Jansen enjoys being involved in so many aspects of society management. With her small staff, she encourages applying principles learned elsewhere and cross-training both to cover co-workers’ jobs when needed and to bring a fresh perspective to the task.

Predictably, the audience posed many questions. The panel touted internships as a good route for breaking into the industry—one that is beneficial for both employers and interns. Meyers added that many certificate, undergraduate, and graduate educational programs are available now.

Panelists split on whether science or language skills are more important. Meyers felt that it is easier to teach a scientist to edit; Jansen advocated the need for someone with a strong sense of language.

One thing is certain in today’s business climate: Regardless of education, career path, or current position, nearly all of us will be called on to exercise our job-seeking skills at some time in our lives. This session offered solid support and good advice. 🗨️