

A Career in Science Editing: Katja Brose
Editor in Chief, *Neuron*

What are your responsibilities as editor?

“Currently I'm the editor of *Neuron*, which is a journal that is a part of the cell press family of research journals and we've been around, next year will be our 25th year in business...”

“...I'm also executive editor at cell press which is a position that involves being on the senior management team at cell press. And the two components of my job are running *Neuron*, the journal, and, in that capacity, I both manage a team of editors and I'm also heavily involved in editing, reading, reviewing papers myself and the second component of my job is as a part of the senior management team of cell press and there I get to play a role in developing journal and company strategy for publishing papers in the neurosciences.”

How did you choose a career in science editing?

“My career has been anything but a straight line. So my undergraduate degree is actually in evolutionary biology and ecology and I came to college thinking actually I might do either biology or arts, so even that was a departure. And at the end of college I went to be a technician in Boston at MIT to learn molecular biology, and four or five years into that, I decided to go to graduate school and wound up in a neuroscience lab. I worked for Mark Telsalaveen at UCSF and I think the progression to editing was not something I had on my radar early on, but I think came from that kind of a mindset of openness to other opportunities and other interests along the way. So towards the end of graduate school in thinking about what I wanted to do next, academic science, for various reasons, just didn't hold the appeal that it had early on and I just started looking around both at things that I was good at and things that I liked to do and the opportunities that existed. And doing something related to writing, publishing or editing seemed appealing and at the time there was a job at *Neuron* and I decided to apply. And I've been there ever since.”

What does a typical day at work look like for you?

“...it involves a lot of reading so there is [are] papers coming to us every day. We receive hundreds of submissions a month. Nowadays most of that review process happens in an online forum so we're doing a lot on the computer. There is a lot that involves kind of one on one communication either on the phone or by email or at a meeting like this in person with other scientists and so communicating with the scientific community is a big part of my day. Right now in my capacities as executive editor-in-chief for this team, a lot of my job is hiring, training and managing members of my team. So I have seven editors who work on the *Neuron* team and the journal really is a collective project and we work together every day and that's also really enjoyable.”

What excites you most about your work?

“I think what excites me and what keeps me going is two things: the science, because the science right now in neuroscience is just fantastic I can't think of a better field than life sciences to be in terms of technology, big questions, little questions, importance for the human race. That's what we're doing here so it's just a really exciting field to be a part of and the scientists. In my job, a lot of what I do is interacting with scientists on their papers and so we're certainly focused on the content of the papers and the data and the conclusions but science is also a very human endeavor and so much of what I do in engaging with scientists either authors on the paper or reviewers on the paper, members or editorial board and members of the community who are trying to learn how to get their paper published and they're on. I think it's just fun to meet people [and] engage with people who are also passionate about the science.”

What advice would you give to neuroscience trainees interested in pursuing a career as an editor?

“...one general piece of advice that I'd give young people is there are some people out there who know probably from the day they are born what they want to be and that's what they will be and they are laser focused on that goal and I think many of us think that that if you don't have that laser focus or that sort of clear 'this is my passion' that you're not a passionate person or you're not a career driven person. I think one piece of advice I'd give people is to, don't get too locked into that mindset. Find the things that you're good at, the things that you like to do and look for opportunities that would allow you to expand on that and if it doesn't work, go do something else, there are lots of things to do. People often ask me what they can do to prepare to be an editor. There are some things that will make you a better editor but there really there isn't a school to being an editor, I think it's about being interested in science, interested in scientists. I think having a critical mind, all the things that you'd be doing in a PhD anyway. Neuroscience in particular is hugely broad, that's not even a word, but neuroscience is very broad and learning both the areas that

you know deeply in your specialized field but also learning about other areas of neuroscience I think is something someone can do in graduate school if they wanted to be an editor.”

How can practicing neuroscientists transition to a career in science editing?

“...there are a lot of jobs within the publishing industry. There are jobs like mine at primary research journals where you're really managing papers going through the peer review process but there are also jobs at review journals where you're acting in more of an editorial development capacity. There are also book editors who are involved in books acquisitions. There are multimedia editors, science journalists. There's a lot within publishing and journalism that would be accessible to especially mid-career scientists. As a mid-career scientist, you're usually bringing a range of expertise and your network of contacts, you know, and also many times kind of a maturity that can be really beneficial so really there's no reason why publishing needs to be for people straight out of graduate school or post doc or entry level. There are many opportunities to come in at mid or later stages to the career and I'd really encourage people to see it as an option.”

For more information about various career path choices, please visit www.sfn.org. Continue the discussion and network with other neuroscientists on [NeurOnLine](#)