Erin Wayman

Magazine Managing Editor at *Science News*

What is your current occupation?

I am the magazine managing editor at *Science News*, which means I oversee the production of our biweekly print magazine. I assign, edit and copyedit stories, plan the magazine's news section and book reviews, manage fact-checking and proofread pages. I also collaborate with the design department on art and layouts, supervise writers and commission work from freelance writers, editors and fact-checkers.

What is your educational background?

I have a bachelor's degree in anthropology from Beloit College, a master's degree in anthropology from UC Davis and a master's degree in science writing from Johns Hopkins University.

A key message for students is that the geoscience workforce is dynamic, and boundaries between sectors and occupations are fluid. How has this been true in your career?

While I was a graduate student in anthropology, I realized research and teaching wasn't what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. At the time, I was an editorial associate for an anthropology journal, and one of my duties was to write about recent scientific research. Once I realized that people did this sort of thing *as a career*, I switched paths. Specific subject-matter knowledge can be extremely helpful to carving out a news beat or niche in science journalism, but just having a basic background in science can enable you to work even outside of your area of expertise. Understanding how scientific research is done, where to look for studies, how to read scientific

paper, knowing who to contact for an interview, critical-reasoning skills, etc. is useful for any area of science communication, whether it's in journalism or working in a press office at a government agency, university or nonprofit organization.

Where do you see your sector moving in future years? How would you advise students to prepare to be competitive job applicants and successful employees?

Obviously, the rise of the web has rapidly changed journalism in recent years. Basic reporting, writing and editing skills are still essential, but jobs in digital journalism today might also require basic coding knowledge, familiarity with web analytics, video production skills and social media savvy. Data journalism is a hot area, and the ability to understand datasets, analyze them and develop visualizations from those data is a great asset that someone from a scientific field might be able to offer.

What is the role of networking in your sector? Do you have advice for a student who is just beginning to build their network? What is the best way for students to get their foot in the door?

Networking is very important, especially for freelance writers and editors — the more people you know, the more potential leads you'll have on assignments. A great first step in the networking process is to join a science writing organization, such as the National Association for Science Writers. NASW also has lots of useful information and tips about getting into science writing: https://www.nasw.org/ & https://www.nasw.org/articles/new-to-science-writing
The Open Notebook is another valuable resource: https://www.theopennotebook.com/
And there are many local/regional science writing groups: https://www.nasw.org/local-science-writing-groups

What does a "typical" day of work look like for you?

My days vary based on where in our two-week production schedule we are. I'm usually working on many different parts of production on any given day—lots of editing, working with writers and designers, responding to lots of email(!), etc.

What is the best part of your job?

I work with wonderful colleagues who are very curious about all areas of science, and we get to talk about new scientific studies and discoveries all the time. Through such informal conversations, as well as through the editing and reporting I do, I am constantly learning new things and staying up to date on many areas of science.

Do you have any other comments or advice for students looking to enter your sector of the geoscience workforce?

As soon as you think you might be interested in science writing or journalism, look for opportunities to gain experience. Some science students may opt to go straight into journalism

and look for relevant internships, but employers and editors will typically be looking for writers who have experience. One option is to see if your university's press office or your school newspaper has any writing opportunities, or if your university offers any journalism classes. Another option is to apply for the American Association for the Advancement of Science's Mass Media Science & Engineering Fellowship program, which places undergraduate and graduate science students in media organizations across the United States every summer. https://www.aaas.org/programs/mass-media-fellowship

Another opportunity is to pursue a master's degree or other formal education in science writing, where you'll get training and numerous networking opportunities, including access to internships.

Connect:

https://www.linkedin.com/in/erin-wayman-15824230

Learn More:

https://www.sciencenews.org/author/erin-wayman