

Examples of Versatile Career Paths

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Career paths are not often linear, with changes being dictated by personal circumstances or market forces as much as ambition. These examples are from editors/translators in the Netherlands. If you're thinking of change, you could do a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) of where you are now and of where you want to go.

Jackie Senior, BSc



Mother was a French teacher, father an engineer. I had a solid grammar school education in UK with an emphasis on English language, Latin, writing skills & accuracy. Was good at sciences & maths.

I have always maintained some freelance work alongside my other positions. Focus on academic and science editing with some translation.

1971 BSc in Geology, Bristol, UK (age 21), then 2 years' research.
1973 Moved to the Netherlands for husband's job, I began freelance editing for Elsevier Science Publisher.

1973-1974 Geologist at Shell International, The Hague.

1974 1st child born, full-time mother (part-time work was not possible at Shell! Dutch society frowned on working mothers in 1970s).

1975 Freelance editing for university and other clients. [Growing academic needs and expanding international businesses in NL in 1980s - English became the second language in Dutch society]

1985 4th child started school. Worked in the editorial office of an international geophysics journal as a jack-of-all-trades.



1989 **Founder member of SENSE**. Set up own business.

1990 Divorced, needed to earn more, worked for several translation agencies – all yielding insights into different types of language work and business cultures.

1991-1994 Science editor at Shell Research. Lost job in 1994 in a major reorganisation. Briefly, a business translator at Elf Petroland.

1995-2007 Part-time work in new Dept of Genetics, University Medical Centre Utrecht, for a professor I had worked for in 1975.

And 1996-2000 Editor at an international investment bank (also part-time). Working in both fundamental research and investment sectors made me feel schizophrenic! Resigned in 2000 at height of internet investment bubble and took up more freelance work.

2007 Science editor at Dept of Genetics, UMC Groningen. Moved with ambitious professor from Utrecht. Given a rare, permanent position. Research group leads its field internationally.

2012 Joined MET to attend Venice meeting.

2013 Started training Kate Mc Intyre as my successor.

2015 Turned 65, but will keep working part-time at UMCG.



SENSE and the workshops organized by Teamwork (NL) were instrumental in my becoming more professional in my editing work, but at each career step there were always new colleagues to learn from and new skills to master. I celebrate life-long learning and maintaining a long-term network.

Curtis Barrett, PhD



I entered the profession after 20 years of working as a biomed researcher, publishing my own papers and helping colleagues write theirs. I realized I have a talent for editing, so I quit research! It was the best career decision I ever made.

The variety is what makes my editing work so interesting: being able to balance a wide range of tasks, like teaching MSc students, meeting the CEO of a pharmaceutical company, or editing a client's text in my home office.

1991 BSc in Biology, Cornell University.

1991-1994 **Research technician** at the National Institutes of Health (Washington, DC).

2001 Gained PhD in Neuroscience & Physiology, University of Massachusetts Medical School.

2001-2007 Postdoctoral research at Stanford University.

2007 Moved to the Netherlands. **Senior researcher** at Leiden UMC.

2010- Owner, English Editing Solutions (Freelance editor, teacher and consultant).



One of the biggest hurdles I faced was moving from being a "salaried employee" who had never been without a job, to a freelancer. With a mortgage and 3 small kids, **it was a huge risk giving up my stable research job**. But my wife has a steady job & helped me take the plunge. The early days were slow, but once I'd done a few jobs and clients saw the value of my work, things picked up rapidly. I've been freelance since 2011, and I'm very pleased with how things are going.

Two key moves made all the difference in my new career: the first was **freelancing for a large US agency**. It taught me that I'm actually quite good at editing, and more importantly, that I *enjoy* it. There was plenty of work and it was an incredible learning experience. After my 200th paper for them, I felt ready to strike out on my own.



The second key move was to join MET and SENSE.

Both organizations opened up many opportunities for me both professionally and personally. Being active in such societies can make the difference between being a "hobby" freelancer or a full-time, well-paid professional. Of course, joining a society is only the first step; you need to be an active member to benefit most.



Virtually every career depends heavily on networking if you are to succeed, and editing is no exception!