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SPEAKERS

Sara Grimme, Sarah Tegen, Ann Michael, Meredith Adinolfi

S Sara Grimme 00:06

Thank you so much for joining us today for our focus on scholarly publishing, career development, and COVID-19. I'm coming to you from my home in London, and I'm joined by my co-host Meredith Adolphe dialing in from her home in Boston. For those of you who are new to the podcast, this series aims to serve all facets of the scholarly publishing industry by bringing together insight, advice, and guidance from leaders and experts in the field. Today is the second part of a two-part series that looks at how publishers can support early-career professionals during a time of such upheaval. In part one, we focused on what Taylor and Francis, Wiley, and the University of Michigan Press are doing to provide support for employees during this time. Today, we're focusing on how publishers can help early-career publishers or those or any career stage with career planning and development. We will be joined by Ann Michael of Delta think and Sarah Tegen of ACS. Meredith, before we get started, what are you hoping to get out of today's podcast?

M Meredith Adinolfi 01:05

Thanks so much, Sara. It's great to be back talking to you again for Part Two. So our guests in Part One were so generous in sharing concrete things that their organizations are doing to support and look after employees today. I'm looking forward to hearing Sarah's and Ann's thoughts on specific ways that those who are early in their publishing careers can continue growing during a time that carries extra challenges for career development. I'm expecting to learn a lot from these discussions. So let's get started right away and move into our first interview. For this interview, I'm joined by Sarah Tegen, who is Senior Vice President for the Journals Publishing Group at the American Chemical Society. Sarah, thank you so much for taking the time to be here, and welcome to the podcast.

S Sarah Tegen 01:50

Thanks so much, Meredith. It's great to be here.

M Meredith Adinolfi 01:53

Let's start by having you talk just a bit about yourself and your role at ACS.

S Sarah Tegen 02:00

I've been with the American Chemical Society for almost exactly 15 years. I started at ACS as a managing editor for the brand new journal at the time, ACS Chemical Biology. In the past 15 years, I have worked my way up the ladder, doing a number of things in the editorial development group before taking on an operations role leading our peer review operations and help desk operations. More recently, I've assumed responsibility for the entire Journals Publishing Group, which means I have responsibility for the strategic direction for our entire portfolio of journals in chemistry.

M Meredith Adinolfi 02:36

That's great. So you certainly have a lot on your plate, which I'm sure will mean you have a lot to offer on this topic. I know it's been a difficult year in many ways. How would you say things are going in general at ACS?

S Sarah Tegen 02:48

In general, I think things are going pretty well for us. Like so many organizations in the middle of March, we sent everyone home. Our staff were tremendous and made the adjustment to working from home really rapidly and really professionally. We've been able to accomplish all of the goals that we have set for the year. They were aggressive goals to begin with, in addition to pivoting and adding some additional unplanned activities. From a staff perspective, they've done a remarkable job. I couldn't be prouder of the team. There are challenges in having everyone remote. The things about keeping staff morale high, and how do you increase interaction? How do you deal with Zoom fatigue? All those kinds of things weigh heavily on our minds. We're trying to do our best to ensure that everyone remains engaged, moving forward, and feeling healthy about their work-life balance.

M Meredith Adinolfi 03:43

That makes a lot of sense. Given all of that, what do you see as the unique challenges and concerns, particularly for early-career professionals?

S Sarah Tegen 03:53

Early-career professionals have it tough in any industry right now. If you are just starting a job or if you are only recently into a job, getting to know your colleagues feels a little weird and intimidating at this point. Specifically for early-career people, the networking opportunities, getting to know other people in the industry, or getting to know different parts of the industry,

that feels like there are different challenges to overcome in that respect. If I think back to my days earlier in my career, I think there are a lot of folks who are juggling tremendous family responsibilities with work responsibilities right now in a time when everything feels like it's uncertain. They have my sympathy, but also my support and my admiration really.

M

Meredith Adinolfi 04:39

I definitely agree with you on that one. Sarah, you mentioned this a moment ago, and I'm interested to know a bit more about it. How have you approached goal setting within your team this year? Specifically, how have you encouraged people to find the right balance between taking care of themselves personally and continuing to look after their goals and their careers?

S

Sarah Tegen 04:59

That's an interesting question. Each year our management team sets goals and objectives for the upcoming year. So at about this time, we are starting to sit down to say what is it we are going to do in 2021? We did that last year. We try to divide things up on a quarterly basis. We found that those kinds of things have really held true to form. Those goals and objectives that we set last year became everyone's personal objectives for the year. In terms of career development, we're trying to do other things. We're trying to give people opportunities to attend lots of seminars and webinars that are germane to their careers. We've tried to encourage people to do book learning or other resources that make sense, to try to focus on those. We're trying to do the best that we can, finding the right balance between taking care of yourselves and looking after their careers. I really think that a happy employee, a satisfied employee, is someone who is going to be in a better place in their career. Trying to figure out how to make that work-life balance feasible is tough. Recently, we, as a publications division, have had to have some norms setting about meetings. Instead of popping into someone's cube or office down the hall, can we schedule a Zoom meeting for this? Maybe those things don't need to be Zoom meetings. Thinking hard about other means of communication to keep interactions shorter, so people can get on with what they're doing. Letting people say that can't attend a meeting because they've got childcare responsibilities. Then the onus is on the people who are hosting the meeting to record it so that you can review it asynchronously later. Or shortening the duration of meetings from 60 minutes to 15 minutes so that people have a little bit of time to be able to get up and go refresh their coffee, go stretch and go outside, see the sun. I think that those things are all really important. Then also being real. My staff that have kids, I say do what you can. Lunchtime should be sacred, for anyone in our organization but especially if you've got little ones that you need to attend to. So go and do that, no questions asked. We're really fortunate that we've got a supportive organization who's encouraged our staff to do as much as they can work-wise, while also taking care of themselves and their families.

M

Meredith Adinolfi 07:23

Those are some great points about meetings. Times like this force you to look at what's important about when you have meetings, how long they last, and who is at them. And to try to think differently about your priorities.

S

Sarah Tegen 07:36

You fall into the trap of, well, I don't have to commute. I can start my day earlier and my work day can be longer because I wasn't in the car. That's okay, every once in a while, but it can't be something that's sustainable. We shouldn't be asking people to work more hours than what they were doing when they were in the office per se.

M

Meredith Adinolfi 07:54

That's a great point, something I'm definitely hearing as well. So on the flip side, there are some unfortunate business realities that happened during times like this. What advice would you give to anyone in the industry who might be worried about things like hiring freezes or possibly redundancies and the effect those things might have on their careers?

S

Sarah Tegen 08:14

It's certainly a scary time. As a young person, you sort of feel like "oh, my gosh, the world might be coming down if there are hiring freezes or my job is made redundant." Try to figure out how to make yourself really essential to your organization. If there are opportunities that are put in front of you, take them. It's an opportunity to learn. It's an opportunity to broaden your skillset and to be a much more well-rounded employee. When you have more skills, that means you are eminently more employable. I would say, don't always think about what's the most direct path to where I want to get. Taking more of a circuitous route might actually be more beneficial to people. You get some additional experience. You don't know exactly where the path might lead. Be open to new and different challenges. Never let an opportunity hang in there in front of you.

M

Meredith Adinolfi 09:07

That's great advice, focusing on what you can do and what opportunities you have, rather than worrying too much about things that you don't know whether they're going to happen or not.

S

Sarah Tegen 09:16

Exactly. You can only worry about the things that you can change. I certainly get myself down that rabbit hole being uptight and concerned about my staff's welfare, the state of the US, the state of the globe. There are only so many hours in the day for worry. I really should be focusing on the things that I can change, not the things that are just going to happen regardless of what I do.

M

Meredith Adinolfi 09:38

That's so true. You bring up an important point there, which is that as a manager, you carry the extra weight of worrying about your team as well. That is just inevitable but good to keep that in perspective.

S

Sarah Tegen 09:48

Every single day, my staff are the first people I think about. Make sure that they're going to be okay. What do I need to do as a leader to help them be okay?

M

Meredith Adinolfi 09:57

Exactly. I want to switch gears just a little bit here. But of course, with everything we've already talked about still in mind. I want to get your thoughts on a couple of things related specifically to job seeking and the recruitment process. So first of all, what general advice would you give to early-career professionals in the industry who are either seeking a new role or a new development within their current role at their organization, during this time?

S

Sarah Tegen 10:23

I think if you're looking for a new role, recognize that hiring is taking a little bit longer. All of the interviews and recruiting processes are taking place over Zoom or other video conference technology. In many cases, the nuts and bolts aren't changing. You are still going to have to interview, but it is not going to be in person. I think making sure that when you are interviewing, you have a really nice quiet space that has a nice background, whether that is virtual background or you got a space in your flat or your house that that works well for that. But to really put forward that professional look, make sure that you are dressed well. All the things that you would do in an in-person interview are just as germane in a virtual interview. I think too continuing of following up with thank you notes and how you can add value to the organization that you are seeking to work for are absolutely important. Those obviously need to be electronic communications now, not handwritten thank you notes. I certainly haven't been to my office since March. So I have no idea what's sitting in my snail-mail inbox. What was the second half of that question?

M

Meredith Adinolfi 11:42

It was basically just your general advice for people who are seeking a new role or development within their current role.

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Sarah Tegen 11:47

The other part that's really important is how can you help your boss succeed? That's an important thing for people to think about. So if you have great ideas, go to pitch them to your boss. Say, "here's a way that I think we can expand our remit." "Here's a way I think we can do things more efficiently." "Here's something that maybe you haven't thought about." It is basically coming forward to the folks in your organization with solutions and ideas. They might not be fully baked, but that is okay. It's showing initiative, and that is something that sits really

well with a boss. It's like someone who says, "I want to really help control my career." Versus someone who's sort of more passive and says, "Well, I'm just going to take whatever comes my way." You can be the arbiter of your own destiny.

M

Meredith Adinolfi 12:34

That's such a great point. That kind of answers another question that I was going to ask you. How can those who are early in their careers or maybe who even started during the pandemic time, how can those people stay on the radars of managers and leaders in their organization, when they aren't sharing physical space together? And I think you were just talking about a couple of ways to do that here and taking initiative.

S

Sarah Tegen 12:56

Yeah, that's absolutely part of it. The other things that I think that you can do in this realm are to be attuned to what is going on in the industry. Whether you are reading blogs, like the Scholarly Kitchen, or you are following different university developments, different policy developments, forward those kinds of things on to your manager. It shows that you've got some insight into the industry and what's important. It's also a way of getting in front of your boss so that it's not out of sight, out of mind. Use all the communication mechanisms that are open to you. If your boss has office hours, don't hesitate to drop in even if it's just to say hi and to see how things are going. If you've got questions, think about the alternate means of communication, such as Slack or IM or text or pick up the phone. Those things are all really great ways of staying in front of your boss. If there are opportunities within your organization to get together as we've done some virtual coffee hours, we've done some paint and sip kind of stuff, make sure that you are taking part in those activities too as you are able. If your personal and home situation says can't do it, that's okay. Figuring out ways of keeping your name in front of your boss are really important.

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Meredith Adinolfi 14:16

You had a lot of good tips in there. We don't have to think of it so differently than we do during normal times. We just have to kind of translate those thoughts into the current environment, which makes a lot of sense. I'm curious if you have any other tips about interviewing virtually.


S

Sarah Tegen 14:32

There are a couple of physical tips that I've got around interviewing. Make sure the lighting in your space is really good. You want to ensure that you've got light in front of you and some light behind you so that you don't have some weird shadows. So that you can really see people's faces. One of the things that we lose in a virtual environment is the real ability to make eye contact and to read people's body language. Give yourself the best advantage when trying to do that. If you can get a nice external camera, that's really helpful too. Your laptop camera is fine. If you've got even a slightly better external one, that can help too because the resolution is better. Think about what are the easy and cheap ways to upgrade your tech to put yourself in the best light.

 Meredith Adinolfi 15:24

Do you think that there are ways that early-career professionals could use the virtual environment of 2020 to their advantage in seeking out new roles?

 Sarah Tegen 15:33

It's interesting. Early in the pandemic, I was thinking about what I going to use this time to do. I emailed a bunch of my women publishing friends and said let's get together for a monthly happy hour. We have been doing that for the past six months or so now. It's been awesome. At the happy hour that we had last week, one of my colleagues admitted "I'm getting to know people that I didn't know." This is just because I took a little bit of initiative and put together some people that I knew. I didn't realize that they didn't know each other. How can you use the existing network that you've got to develop a richer network? The other thing that I think I've really seen is sitting on webinars and conferences, it feels like there is a great democratization that has happened. Everyone's just another square on the Zoom meeting. We don't have the happy hours or the coffee breaks at a meeting where you could go up to talk to people. I know when I was early on in my career, it was tough for me to feel like I could break into a conversation with someone that I wanted to get to know or I had some questions for, especially if they were more senior to me in the industry. I feel like now because they're just another square on Zoom, I can go ahead and email them and ask them. So for me, it's been really kind of liberating. To be able to do that I've gotten to meet some people that I hadn't met before because I didn't feel intimidated. That's pretty awesome.

 Meredith Adinolfi 17:07


Yeah, that's such a great point that the environment sort of naturally puts everyone on an even playing field. If you think about it that way, it gives you an opportunity to approach people you might not have otherwise, that's great. So we've covered a lot of ground here, Sarah, I'm curious if you have any other thoughts that we haven't gotten to or haven't covered that you'd like to share on this topic?

 Sarah Tegen 17:27

I do. As an early-career professional, one of the things that is really important for you to remember is that you are your own best cheerleader. You are the person who knows you and your strengths and your opportunities for growth and your aspirations best. Don't assume that your boss or your colleagues know precisely where you would want to go. Make sure that you are putting your best foot forward. Make sure that you are staying in front of your boss and your colleagues. Do everything that you can. Take part in every opportunity that makes sense for you. Basically, be the person who directs your career. Don't be the person who stands back and waits for opportunities, but figure out how to make your own opportunities. Be curious, be adventurous, and you'll go great places.



... 15:30:05

 Meredith Adinolfi 18:25

That's an excellent piece of advice to end on. I think it overarches everything else you said. With that, I want to say, Sarah, thank you so much for being here and for the time and thought that you put into your answers and insights. I know it's going to be really helpful for our audience. You offered some really specific things for anyone who's looking to continue their growth during an unusual year. So thank you so much and best of luck to you in navigating the rest of the year with your team.

 Sarah Tegen 18:50

Thanks so much, Meredith. This was a lot of fun. I'm really glad to be able to impart at least a little bit of advice to early-career professionals.

 Meredith Adinolfi 18:59

Absolutely. Thank you.

 Sara Grimme 19:00

Thanks so much, Meredith. And thank you, Sarah, that was a fantastic interview. A couple of pointers that I took out of it were to figure out how to make yourself essential. I thought that was really important and to take every opportunity that comes your way. I also loved what Sarah said about making sure you are your own cheerleader. So don't assume that your boss or your colleagues know what you want. Be the person who really directs your career. I also loved how she said not to assume that your boss or your colleagues know what you want. And of course, she ended by saying that we should all be curious and be adventurous. I don't think there's any better advice. Meredith, was there anything that really resonated for you?

 Meredith Adinolfi 19:45

I really liked all of the specific and concrete tips she gave about interviewing. Especially I liked the overarching theme that we don't have to so dramatically change our point of view on how we approach things like interviews or meetings or conversations. You can still do those things in a similar way in terms of the way you dress, how you present yourself, what you have going on in the space. There are some things you can use to your advantage even in a virtual environment.

 Sara Grimme 20:15

We'll now hear from Ann Michael, CEO of Delta Think. Hi, Ann, thank you so much for joining us today. I'm really looking forward to our conversation. I wanted to quickly start by asking you to briefly run through your career for some background information for our listeners

 Ann Michael 20:22

A Ann Michael 20:55

Basically, I view myself as having two careers. The first one, the first half of it was really around technology development. I worked in companies like AT&T and basically did business analysis, project management, and program management. Around 2000, I wound up within publishing working for Wolters Kluwer, first as their Director of Project Management. Then, very much involved in their digital transition, working as the Executive Director of Electronic Strategy and Product Development. After being there for about five years, I started a consulting company. For the last 15 years, except for two little breaks, worked as the founder of Delta Think focused on change and change management within publishing. My first break was with Really Strategies. I was the President of Information and Media around 2008 or so. Recently, up until a few months ago, I was the Chief Digital Officer for PLOS.

S Sara Grimme 21:41

It sounds like we actually need to bring you back at some point to get you to talk about the twists and turns that your career has taken. That's a fantastic background. Thank you so much. So this year is obviously been a bit of a strange one. It's been a very difficult year, in many ways. How do you perceive things going in general in the publishing industry right now?

A Ann Michael 22:01

Well, I think we went through a brief period of shock. I'm happy to say that after a couple of months of understanding a little bit about the uncertainty we were going to be facing over the next months and potentially even years, I think that we've started to adapt. People have started to understand where they are and what they're doing and what's important. I think that in many ways. I hate to say this, because of course, the pandemic is horrible. I don't want to say anything positive about the pandemic. But a positive impact has been that the industry and organizations within the industry have taken a good hard look at what they do and how they do it. They are more willing to change than they had been prior to this upheaval.

S Sara Grimme 22:51

That's a really interesting point and one of the first times I've heard that said. Is there anything specific that you're seeing the publishers are more willing to do or adapt to?

A Ann Michael 23:05

A very basic thing is to think about process. What happens over time is that you had a way of doing things and new needs come along, new products, new market needs, and you adapt what you've always done in order to meet those needs. Sometimes when that happens, it's almost like you have a Picasso painting of a process versus an actual clearly concrete definable process. Over time, you end up introducing inefficiencies. In order to adapt to an immediate need, you don't always do it in a way that optimizes the whole process. What I've seen, and this is definitely true from my time at PLOS this year, but I've seen it with other publishers too, is they're more willing to say, "Wait, this is insane. Why do we do this like this?" Or "it made a whole lot of sense when we started, but now we need to figure out a way to do this better."

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Sara Grimme 24:04

Yeah, I think I think that's a really valid point and, hopefully, that continues. One thing that we're very focused on with this podcast is, of course, early-career professionals. What do you see as the unique challenges and concerns that are facing early-career professionals this year?

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Ann Michael 24:21

I gave some thought to this because I think when you look at an early-career professional coming into any industry, what they don't have, right from the beginning is a network. They don't necessarily have a support system. They don't have connections. That's the unique challenge of an early-career person. For those of us that have been in this industry now for 20 years, we have a whole lot of shoulders we can lean on. People we can ask for input on various different things that we might be doing. Even places for some kind of camaraderie and sympathy. I think that's particularly challenging. Not that I don't think it's something that can be managed and overcome. But I think that might be a challenge for an early career, feeling a little bit less connected than some of their colleagues that are farther along in their careers.

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Sara Grimme 25:13

Firstly, I think it's a really important point because I know that people are struggling mentally throughout this as well. But secondly, do you have any ideas? Or did you think of any ideas for how people can start to overcome that virtually?

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Ann Michael 25:26

So I started to think about where I was sitting as someone who's not an early career and thinking about the fact that even with a network, there are fewer options to interact with people and everybody has Zoom fatigue. I started to think about if I took that back and I didn't have these connections. How do I stay in touch with people I know? How do I reach out to new folks that I think are interesting that I might want to meet? I think early careers, there's a little bit of an advantage that some have. I don't want to go through generalities. But for the most part, I think a lot of early careers are much more adept at social media. It didn't exist when I was an early career. One of the things that I would do, if I was early career, is to not hold back and to not be shy about reaching out to folks, even people that I don't know especially through tools like LinkedIn. Participate as much as they can to find areas that are interesting to them. Follow things on Twitter. Look at different posts, and not be afraid, or reluctant, to make comments or to get involved, or to tap people on the shoulder. One of the things that occurred to me, as I was thinking about this, is do you know how many meetings I've been in over the last half a dozen years, with industry organizations, with companies, with publishers talking about how do we engage early careers? How can we help early careers? How can we encourage and develop them? So I think an early-career person should recognize, if they haven't already, that they're actually in demand. They are the future of the industry. Everybody at the 360 view of the industry wants to engage them. For example, with me, I get people that reach out to me on LinkedIn, often. I enjoy interacting with them. First of all, just connecting with them on LinkedIn, and then a lot of times having calls. There are also programs at SSP,

Society for Scholarly Publishing, and ALPSP for mentoring. I believe STM has a mentoring program too. Granted, they are limited, there might only be 20 to 25 spots. But I think that reaching out and trying to get involved and making those connections, attending conferences, looking who's talking in the chat boxes, and reaching out to people is something that I would really encourage them to do.

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Sara Grimme 27:58

So on that point, especially in terms of reaching out and making new contacts, what advice would you give to anyone worried about hiring freezes or redundancy and the effect that this might actually have on their career?

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Ann Michael 28:09

I guess my underlying philosophy of life is that worry is only useful to you as much as it's a motivation to act in some way. So sticking to the word worry, things are going to happen. There are only so many things that you have control over. The best you can do is to prepare yourself for what might be ahead. So looking back to the previous question, networking, connecting with people, doing the best job that you can do, understanding where you are and the burdens that might be upon you. For example, if you have small children, or any children, where you are having to help in their education, now, when you maybe didn't have to do that before. First of all, give yourself realistic goals. Try to set aside some time, every single day, or at least every single week, to do something that's not within your normal work environment or to reach out to someone. Set a goal to reach out to a new person at least once a week. Because at the end of the day, when you talk about hiring freezes, redundancies, there are going to happen or they are not going to happen. But the best thing you can do is to be developing your connections in the industry. So if they do happen, and they impact you, you have already started to build other avenues you could pursue. Don't be afraid to be a little non-traditional. As the founder and co-owner of a consulting company, I can tell you that we're getting some folks that have had redundancies impact them that we are putting to work either temporarily or exploring longer-term things that's work in the industry. Maybe it's not another full-time job. But there are things out there you can do.

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Sara Grimme 30:09

So don't be afraid.

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Ann Michael 30:11

I know that sounds trite, and I don't mean it to sound that way. Fear is only helpful if it's not paralyzing. If it causes you to be prepared, it's a wonderful thing. If it's paralyzing, I'm not even sure how to counsel someone out of that.

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Sara Grimme 30:30

To change target a little bit, you run a company, you've recently worked at BLOS, what have

to change tangent a little bit, you run a company, you've recently worked at PLOS, what have you observed to work well this year in terms of developing people, and what's been less successful, given that we're all now basically virtual.

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Ann Michael 30:44

Ironically, I was always part of the remote workforce at PLOS. I was never based in San Francisco or in Cambridge. I started to work that way, with my folks, from the very beginning. I did spend time there. But then most of what we did was regular meetings. From a development perspective, what I was trying to focus on with folks at PLOS, and even Delta Think, is that this is an opportunity. We're still very busy. This is an opportunity to think about the skills that you would like to improve. There are so many resources. Almost every organization is doing some kind of webinar or informational sessions. You could take a webinar every single day, I firmly believe without a problem, you could do that. One thing I was doing at PLOS and at Delta Think is encouraging people, not only to participate in things where they have an area of interest but then to bring that back to the group. At Delta Think we have a meeting every two weeks where we share information about what we're doing. This is a perfect opportunity for people to tell us what they've learned at different webinars and to try to stimulate and get some thought going. Ironically, for some folks, I almost believe they're having more touch time with some of their managers and colleagues than they did before. Everybody's so worried about its reduction, that it seems to me that we are in meetings eight hours a day.

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Sara Grimme 32:27

So we're all going a little bit into overkill to make sure we don't under. What advice would you give early-career publishers who are either seeking a new role or looking to develop within their current role during this very odd time?

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Ann Michael 32:47

Thinking about this odd time, I would take a step back and say, What would you do normally? The only thing you can't do now, that you could do before, is to see people in person. You can't go into the office. You can't go to a conference. So the question becomes, what can you do? Well, basically, everything else. I don't want to sound like I'm beating this drum here. It really is all about connection. It's all about expanding your network. It used to be that network and networking had a very negative and almost self-serving type of connotation to it. That's not what it is at all. It's really about connection, it's really about understanding who you are, how you fit in, and understanding what options might be open to you. The time to seek out people that have the job you want or have a progression of the job you have. Talk to them about what they've done and how they've done it. Reach out to them on LinkedIn. You don't have to know people. For the most part, yes, we're all getting inundated with requests. The requests that go to the top of my list for returning are the requests from people that are just trying to figure out what they might want to do next, and how things fit together. There are folks like myself. There are so many people out there that you have seen on a speaking circuit. Get their names, connect with them on LinkedIn, and ask them. Go look on LinkedIn. I am a constant LinkedIn searcher. Look for people that have titles that you think might be interesting, and ask them. Most people will want to tell you about their job and what they do. They'll be very happy to share with you.

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Sara Grimme 34:37

What I really like about everything that you're saying is things have changed, but not that much has changed. You can do all of the things that you could do before just in a slightly different context. I think that takes a lot of the fear out of it for people knowing that there's still a huge amount of certainty even within the uncertainty.

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Ann Michael 34:53

Absolutely. Or I would even, Sara, say it another way and that is your career, all things being equal, is filled with uncertainty. I used to talk to people, they would talk to me about starting a business. They would say, "oh, you must be a risk-taker." My response was no, I'm a risk mitigator. That is really what this is about. This is about from a career perspective, from your career development, as an early-career professional, thinking about what are the risks to your career. How do you mitigate them? What do you do to minimize either the chance that the risk occurs if possible or the ramifications or consequences of the risk if and when it occurs?

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Sara Grimme 35:36

Given everything you've said, do you think that there are ways early-career publishers can use the virtual environment that we're in now to take advantage of in seeking out new roles or career progression?

A

Ann Michael 35:47

I think in many ways. I don't want to sound like a broken record. But the only way you're going to have ideas about what you can do and how it fits together is to get a lot of input. We've discussed some of the ways to get that input. For example, I mentioned that there are many organizations that are looking for the input of early-career professionals. Why not take it upon yourself to pull together other folks that you find that are early professionals, like you, and just talk about and brainstorm what can you do. How can you provide value back to the industry in a way that may or may not be connected to your day job? I think it's a time to be creative. By being creative, what I mean is to look at what you believe the constraints are that you are working within. Poke them hard to see if they truly are constraints, or maybe they are things that you're just reluctant to do, or you think you can't do, or someone told you once you shouldn't do that. This is the time, I really do believe for people to try and find creative ways.

S

Sara Grimme 37:00

Like contacting someone on LinkedIn instead of going up to them at a conference. Either are okay, but you might be more reluctant to do the former because the latter seems safer.

A

Ann Michael 37:09

Ann Michael 37:05

Right. You bring up a really great point. Another thing I was thinking about was, normally in an in-person environment, the advantage goes to the extrovert. Now, I think the playing field has been a bit leveled for the introverts out there, of which you can tell I am not one. I do empathize. It's a lot easier to send someone a LinkedIn request, to tweet about something, a direct message on Twitter, or to comment on the blog post, which might be a little scary, depending on the blog. I think it's easier for someone to do that. They get to think about what they're going to say. They get to prepare. It's an interesting point that this might just be the time for the introverts to really rise up.

S

Sara Grimme 38:02

I absolutely love that. This is such fantastic advice. Given that hiring is still going on at the moment, how can early-career professionals successfully interview and make an impression given that a lot of recruitments taking place virtually.

A

Ann Michael 38:17

So a long time ago, many, many millennia ago, and some people out there that are very much not early careers will remember this, you used to get a job by going to the New York Times. You would go to the back of the Times, and there would be all of these ads. Somehow, you needed to stick out. I know the question is about the interview itself. But I would argue that the real hard thing has not changed. Now you are subject to the search engine looking for key terms. The hardest part is getting in front of someone. The reality is whether you're on Zoom, or whether you're sitting there, you're still in front of someone. I was on a board for five years for a company in Canada. The entire interview process, although they wanted it to be in person, was done virtually. You're still in front of someone. I think that it's actually the process of getting to the point where you have an interview that's really difficult. Again, what does it go back to? It goes back to connections. You see something you're interested in, the first thing you do is go and say, Where is this? Who do I know there? Oh, I don't know anybody? Who do I know that knows somebody? How can I figure out what it's like to be in this place? What their culture is like. If there's anybody there I can talk to that might know who the recruiting manager is. I think it's that upfront piece, not the interview itself that's more challenging.

S

Sara Grimme 39:55

I think that is a fantastic point. Just one final question. Do you have any closing thoughts that we haven't covered?

A

Ann Michael 40:01

I think I might have actually hit on most of these things during your questions. The closing thought, I understand that this is a crazy time in our history. It's not even just about COVID. There is political unrest in places. If you're on the west coast of California, you're dealing with fires. There are natural disasters. Things are going a little crazy. But this is our world. This is the world that we're sitting in. We don't get to change those very large things in an immediate

fashion. We have to figure out what our action plan is for managing our lives within them. It's normal to lament the past or to worry about the things that you might have lost. It's really helpful to try and to focus on the things that you can do, where you can make an impact. Where you can meet new people, contribute to a cause, or do something like that. That is what is going to pull you through to whatever the other side looks like. If there is another side versus a slight change in direction. We don't know what's going on in the future. The reality is, although what we're dealing with now is maybe more severe, we never knew what was going to happen in the future. So take a deep breath and figure out just how you want to approach the next weeks, months, and worry about the years a little bit less. I would say try to fix your gaze a little bit on the six to 12-month timeframe versus five years from now. Just to give yourself a little less stress.

S

Sara Grimme 41:45

I would like to end on that because I think that is the perfect point. Ann thank you so much for your time today and your thoughts. Perhaps we'll be able to have you back on to talk about your career and the many paths it's taken in the future. Thank you.

A

Ann Michael 41:58

Thanks, Sara. It was really wonderful to be here.

S

Sara Grimme 42:04

That wraps up our interviews for today. Meredith, what stood out for you from Ann's interview.

M

Meredith Adinolfi 42:09

Sara, I really enjoyed hearing from Ann. Two things stood out to me as great points of advice. I really liked what she said about mentoring as a way that early-career professionals can continue making connections in a virtual environment. That's such good advice. Because mentorship is something people can still take full advantage of virtually during this time. It can be a great way to grow your networks in your connections as well as just get guidance and advice in real-time. I also really loved her point that the virtual environment levels the playing field, in terms of the advantage extroverts might have in an in-person environment.

S

Sara Grimme 42:44

Thanks, Meredith, I very much agree on that final point about the advantage that extroverts had. I think one of the key takeaways I actually pulled out from this is that I know it has been hard for many early-career publishers who may not have a great deal of confidence yet. Linking to your comment about mentorship, and actually some of the earlier podcasts that we recorded, where we talked about ways to find a mentor, I do really like what Ann said about taking this opportunity and not being afraid to reach out, particularly via LinkedIn.

M

Meredith Adinolfi 43:12

I definitely agree, Sara. In today's episode, we heard many practical and concrete ideas for how to remain career and development focused right now. These conversations complemented each other really well. I think together they provide something for everyone in terms of takeaways that can be applied right away and built on right away. One point that both Sarah and Ann made is that although things are very different right now, much of what early career professionals need to do for their growth remains unchanged at the core. The framework of all of this as an evolution or progression rather than a dramatic change or approach is incredibly helpful and comforting. With that, we want to say a big thank you to Sarah and Ann for their time and insights. Thank you to all of you for listening. We'll be back soon with a new episode featuring an interactive panel of early-career professionals.