

Northern European Studies – and then what?

A video series on career prospects by j o l n e s

Transcription Episode 7: Freelance publishing editor/Norwegian lecturer and translator

Magnus Enxing, Alumnus Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster

My name is Magnus Enxing, I'm 46 years old and I'm a Norwegian lecturer here at the Westphalian Wilhelms University in Münster, and I also work as a publishing editor, lecturer and editor and translator. I studied, also here in Münster, as chance will have it, but not only that, I also spent a year in Tromsø in Norway. And Scandinavian Studies was my main subject, my first minor subject was Comparatistics and my second minor subject was Ethnology.

WHAT WERE THE REASONS FOR YOUR DECISION TO STUDY SCANDINAVIAN STUDIES?

Since I found out that a degree in literary studies was best for me, or seemed best to me, I simply combined my already existing private interest in Scandinavia with this career intention, and of course, there was also the idea of doing something that not everyone does. So the conscious decision for a niche definitely played a role in the decision.

YOUR CAREER FROM STUDYING TO WORKING AS A PUBLISHER'S EDITOR?

After a longer stay abroad in 2006, I started a traineeship in a publishing house in Darmstadt. That wasn't quite finished when the next traineeship was due, namely in a Berlin literary and non-fiction publishing house, after which I started my own business as a publishing editor.

WHAT ARE THE TASKS OF YOUR WORKS AS A FREELANCE EDITOR?

Well, it starts when I'm asked by an editor in a publishing house, a full-time editor in a publishing house, whether I would have time to take on a project at a certain time, a certain time slot, because actually such an editing job is usually a project today. You don't just take care of the text and fish out any spelling mistakes, so I get a manuscript and later it should result in a legible book. And I also work a lot with guidebook publishers. Often there is also picture editing. A lot of communication is necessary with the respective author. Manuscripts go back and forth. So it takes a lot of different forms until a book is finished.

ARE THERE ANY NORTHERN EUROPEAN REFERENCES IN YOUR WORK?

In my publishing and freelance work, there have always been and still are references to Northern Europe, some of which arise by chance, but some of which are specifically initiated by me.

WHAT COMPETENCES AND SOFT SKILLS FROM YOUR STUDIES HELP YOU IN YOUR WORK TODAY?

That's quite a lot, it has to be said, so: giving presentations, for example, that you have to present things that you learn in your studies, that you give smaller presentations on certain topics, that you create a lecture. That happens to you all the time in your professional life. Because you constantly have to present something, promote something, let's say, that you're passionate about. Another key point is information procurement. So how do I get specific information on specific topics and issues and bundle it accordingly and then prepare it, of course, goes without saying. Then, of course, cooperation with other people is very important, which is essential when you are studying, when you are working in a group or, for example, when you are preparing a joint lecture. Especially for publishing and editing, scientific work is very important. It's about editing books: how do I edit correctly, how do I create references and how, in my case for example, do I structure a book from beginning to end, from the introduction to the logical conclusion. And that's what you have to do with every term paper. And finally, I would say that a big point is self-organisation in general.

WHAT TIPS WOULD YOU GIVE TO STUDENTS WHO WANT TO WORK IN THE PUBLISHING BUSINESS?

So, the biggest challenge right after graduation is certainly getting your foot in the desired door in the first place. This should be seen less as a specific point in time and more as a process that begins well before graduation. You should seek career guidance as early as possible and look for work experience, in whatever field, and if, for example, a position is available in a publishing house, I don't know, in accounting or something, and you can find a job there, at first or just a part-time job, whatever. Then I would say that you should also take it if it appeals to you in some way. Because through such activities, which at first sight seem to be quite unrelated, there are so many overlapping areas through which you can learn and, above all, you can make contacts. These contacts, I would say, that you make in such internships or the like, also carry you far into your profession later on. Therefore, I would say that the biggest challenge is to build up a good network during your studies and that starts with your fellow students, that you simply don't let the contact break off there, but keep it up and active.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF STUDYING A RARE SUBJECT LIKE SCANDINAVIAN STUDIES?

The advantages of a rare subject like Scandinavian Studies are that it serves a niche existence. In any case, you learn something that not everyone can do. Of course, we should not forget

that as specialists in Scandinavian studies, we automatically acquire language skills for three countries at once, even if some of them are only passive, but these skills are often worth their weight in gold for professional life.

Credits

The interview was conducted on April 29 2021 via Zoom.

Interviewed by:	Anja Ute Blode, Anne-Katrin Heinen
Cinematography and Editing:	Anja Ute Blode, Anne-Katrin Heinen
Transcript by:	Anja Ute Blode
j o l n e s – Design:	Heide Matz
Produced by:	University of Cologne, Department for Scandinavian and Finnish Studies