Careers at Scientific Societies
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American Society for Human Genetics
September 23, 2014
ASHG: An Introduction

• Professional society for human genetics specialists worldwide
  • About 8000 members in research, academic, and clinical settings
  • Variety of careers: researchers, educators, clinicians, laboratory professionals, genetic counselors, nurses, and students
  • Part of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB)

• Goals
  • Better understand the language of the genome and human variation
  • Improve clinical practice and promote public health
  • Cultivate the next generation of genetics professionals
ASHG: What we do

• Primary Activities
  • Provide forum to share research results through an annual meeting and the *American Journal of Human Genetics*
  • Educate students (K-12 and beyond), health care providers, policymakers, the media, and the public about human genetics and its clinical relevance
  • Advocate for research support and responsible social and scientific policies

For details on ASHG initiatives or to join the society, visit [www.ashg.org](http://www.ashg.org)
My Responsibilities

• Organize all Annual Meeting education events (April → Nov)
• Staff liaison to Training and Development Committee
• Trainee initiatives outside of the Annual Meeting
• Run annual DNA Day Essay Contest
• Develop/maintain genetics education resources
• Genetics education research
• Provide input and contribute to other core Society functions
My Typical Day

• On a regular basis:
  • conference calls with committees/collaborators/presenters
  • meetings with other staff

• Occasionally:
  • represent ASHG at external meetings (NSF, AAAS, NHGRI)
  • travel to external conferences (NABT)
  • participate in local science education events (science fairs, career days)
  • answer public inquiries

• One week each year:
  • manage all ASHG education events at Annual Meeting on site
To do my job, you need to...

- Be detail-oriented **without** loosing sight of the big picture
- Think strategically and be mindful of your audience
- Take initiative, run with the ball
- Work well with a team; no lone wolf attitudes
- Communicate well, both in writing and orally, and know how to have difficult conversations professionally
- Be professional
  - No free T-shirts/cargo shorts/Chuck Taylors
  - Write professional emails – full greeting and sign-off, signature with additional contact info, informative subject line
  - Have a good handshake (seriously, work on it)
- Solve problems on the fly
My Career Trajectory

• Undergrad: NIDCD
• Grad Student: UCSF
  – Turned volunteer work into a paid internship
• (Paid) Intern: Science Health and Education Partnership
  – Cc’d Bruce Alberts on email inquiry
• Senior Program Specialist: Smithsonian Science Education Center
  – Good old fashioned job hunt with a side of it’s a small world
• Educational Programs Manager: ASHG
Jobs in Science Education

- Scientific societies (ASHG, AAAS, APS, ACS)
- Science education research (within forward-thinking science departments or at think tanks like AIR, RAND, Fordham)
- STEM education non-profits (HHMI, Carnegie Institute)
- Professional development for scientists (OITE, academic institutions)
- Curriculum/resource development (Discovery, National Geographic, Carolina Biological, Bio-Rad, BSCS)
- Science museums (Koshland Museum, Museum of Natural History, Maryland Science Center)
- Administration of grants, systemic programs (NSF, NAS, individual NIH institutes, private foundations)
- Teacher, all levels (public, private, charter schools)
- Teaching positions in higher ed (community colleges, primarily undergraduate institutions, small liberal arts colleges, large universities)
Advice

- Having a PhD is (sometimes) necessary, but not sufficient

- Start now – volunteer, get involved in organizing events at NIH, through your professional society, through another leadership organization, etc.

- Do informational interviews with people who have the job you want, then keep in sporadic contact (connect on LinkedIn, etc.) to grow your personal network

- Create and maintain a good LinkedIn account → recruiters really do use LinkedIn
Job Hunt Resources

• Idealist.org

• Bookmark “career” pages for organizations you want to work for and check them regularly
  • Much easier than trying to find good matches on aggregate sites

• USAJobs.gov

• Tap into your personal network – you never know who knows about a job that’s perfect for you