

Alessandra Anzani, Editorial Director, Academic Studies Press



Course of study	MSc International Public Policy,
Year of graduation	2012
City / Region / Country	Italy

1. Tell us more about your job; an example of day-to-day work, average week, or a recent project (or how would you describe your job to a friend?).

As Editorial Director, I help shape the list of the press in terms of what is published. I manage a team that looks after new acquisitions in all subjects, as well as editorial tasks such as copy editing and preparing books for printing. In a typical week I have a lot of correspondence with my team, as well as authors (current and new), and with the marketing and sales team. My job involves much fundraising as well, and customer-facing situations like representing the Press at conferences and with new authors and institutional partners.

2. What attributes make someone successful in this job (or what skills are involved in your current role)?

People skills, determination and assertiveness, creativity in problem-solving, managing tight budgets.

3. What do you like most about your job?

I like the outward-facing part of my role, which is fundamental. I enjoy meeting authors and discuss their projects, and representing the Press at conferences and events. It's stressful but rewarding, and I get to meet people who are very passionate about what they do: you certainly need that in an industry without much financial gain compared to the amount of work you have! That's true of everybody from authors to colleagues. I am also lucky enough to work on a humanities and social sciences list, which matches my personal interests, so I can genuinely say I'm interested in (a lot of) the books we publish - that makes a big difference in any career.

4. What are the most challenging aspects (role or sector)?

I think financial constraints that academic publishing always seems to experience are a big difficulty, whatever role you're in. I'm constantly juggling a tight budget and very uncertain revenue from sales, and it's a field in constant change. Also dealing with authors is not always an upside to my role: there are some interesting personalities in academia and egos of all sizes - my diplomatic skills are put to the test constantly.

5. How did your degree prepare you for your current role (or are there any skills/knowledge you developed which you are using now)?

Even though my job is not obviously connected to my Intl Public Policy MSc studies at UCL, since I work within the humanities and social sciences it's very helpful to have a background in both (my BA is in literature). Of course what I learnt during my time at UCL has helped hugely in my career, as it prepared me to the mind-set of the highly-skilled professional work environment and its expectations as they are in the UK, which is not something I was familiar with, having grown up in Italy. Hard work, managing deadlines, juggling a busy schedule, dealing with new obstacles, having to learn new skills and apply them quickly - these are all priceless lessons I gained from my MSc.

6. How did you get to where you are now in your career (or what experiences helped you)?

I started with an unpaid internship with an academic publisher, where I then quickly managed to climb the ladder through a fast series of promotions. It certainly helped to be in the right place at the right time, as always, but it paid to have a genuine passion for reading and publishing and the strength of persevering despite the difficulties of finding work in a poorly funded field.

7. What advice would you give to current students about getting into / starting out in your sector? (e.g. relevant experiences, supportive people, necessary education)

Generally having a sound background in the subjects you're interested in publishing will certainly help, as well as having gained a range of experience within publishing through internship and work experience placements. Being resilient and unafraid of knocking on many different doors helps in all jobs, but particularly in publishing.

8. What is on the horizon within your industry that our students should know about? (positives or negatives)

This is the hardest question, particularly in publishing. Since I started my career 9 years ago the field has been in constant change and many presses have been in great difficulty. The advent of eBooks was considered the biggest new issue for a long time, but I think the main one now is the rise of Open Access (for academic publishing of course).

9. If you could give a current student one piece of advice on something you wish you'd have known prior to starting your career what would it be?

I would have gathered more information about the different subfields of publishing and tried to get more experience in all of them before choosing academic publishing, as it becomes increasingly difficult to switch when you become specialised.