

Sarah Thrift, Digital Marketing Manager at Agatha Christie Ltd



Course of study	English Literature
Year of graduation	2012
City / Region / Country	Suffolk

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?).

My job encompasses plenty of exciting challenges. I manage the official Agatha Christie website, email newsletter and social media channels. I write articles about her works, curate reading lists and quizzes for the site and then share these with our two million fans via Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. I run a year-long reading challenge, choosing a book to explore in detail each month, and host a chat at the end of the month to talk to readers about their impressions of the story, the characters and themes. I work across our film, tv, theatre and publishing schedules to bring the community the latest news, and insight into all the Christie projects we're working on. Every day is different, but it's always a lot of fun.

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

Being confident in your writing abilities is a must, but it all comes with practice - the more you create, the more you understand your audience, and what they want from the brand and channels, and how best to speak to them. I take a lot of photographs of our products, so it helps to be creative, and enjoy messing around with framing photos, using unexpected backdrops and small props to make each picture stand out (this has been a real challenge, as I usually get to do this in an office full of books, but now am creating everything from a small London flat).

3. What do you like most about your job?

The freedom to be creative, to explore Christie's books in details, and come up with imaginative ways of reaching first time readers, as well as devotees.

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

Working across so many different types of entertainment can be challenging. Publishing calendars can change suddenly, but are planned far in advance. TV and film on the other hand requires a lot of last minute work, and flexibility. You must learn to plan, but also to act quickly when things change, and adapt your content schedule accordingly.

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

I think the time management involved in reading, researching and writing an essay really helped prepare me for my current role. If I know I want to create a selection of seasonal Christmas content, I have to do preparatory reading in advance, group together the titles I want to focus on, and reach out to expert and influences long before the piece is due. I also think that re-reading books was encouraged throughout my degree, and is something I really see the value in at Agatha Christie Ltd. I read a book when it is being talked about for a new project, then again when we have a script of that project, then again once the project has been made, and once more before I have to talk about both on our platforms. There's plenty of different things to spot at each stage, and I really value revisiting titles again and again in this way.

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

I have worked in four marketing roles now, and each one taught me more about what I enjoy about my day job. I started in a small publisher, managing the websites, social media and email, and found I really enjoyed this kind of direct interaction with consumers. When it was time to move on, I looked for a role that encompassed these things, but allowed me to focus more on visuals, as I was particularly interested in that.

Whilst working for a big publisher for a couple of years, I learned more about my strengths and how much I enjoyed creating imagery to make books stand out. So for my third role, I went to a position where creative collaboration between the team was really encouraged, and we got to work on photo shoots and filming. I also got to reduce the amount of channels I managed, which really helped me to focus on growing the ones I was responsible for - sometimes less is more!

My move to my current role two years has allowed me to use all the skills I've learned to determine how we manage our channels, what content works, and how stand-out visuals can help. I have loved each job I've done, and I have followed the areas I found out I was interested in whilst working, dismissing preconceived ideas I had had about the sort of role I should do. Exploring lots of different aspects of the industry (working across politics, cookery, children's books etc) really helped me to decide what I enjoyed, and I would highly recommend it.

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)

I think it's important to explore all areas of the industry you are interested in. There are so many roles within publishing (as well as TV and film) so do your research and find out what jobs entail. Follow people on Twitter or Instagram who work in the industry or contribute to it (this might be authors, speakers, publishing professionals, book bloggers, podcasters etc). Explore what they are posting about, what intrigues you most about their output, and help build a picture of what you'd like from a role. Then apply for the paid internships and schemes which will introduce you to the industry. Sign up for initiatives (like the Spare Zoom Project) where you can have a virtual coffee with people working in the industry, to help make your first steps. If your interested in writing, marketing, PR or sales, there are plenty of ways of showcasing that interest before you get your first role - using a blog, or Instagram feed to review books, share adverts you like or your own writing.

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

Book publishing has remained buoyant during this difficult year, as people will always want stories to escape from reality. TV has continued to be filmed, in increasing difficult circumstances this year too. Film and theatre have suffered most, but the creative industries remain committed to a positive return, as soon as they are able. Look into what changes have had to have been made owing to covid, and be inspired by the resilience that has been shown.

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?

You don't have to know what you want to do. When you start any job, there will be things you love, and don't love, about it. Your career can shift and change with these interests, and you can seek out roles that include aspects you most enjoy. You have to get started to understand these aspects.

Any final comments for current students?

Always include a social media handle on your CV (Twitter or Instagram) to showcase your personality and interests.