



# European Association of Geochemistry



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## Q&A WITH REBECCA NEELY, GOLDSCHMIDT2019 NON-ACADEMIC CAREERS PANELLIST



A series of discussion forums were held at Goldschmidt2019 (18–23 August in Barcelona, Spain) to give students and post-docs the opportunity to find out more about pursuing careers outside of academia. We interviewed some of the panellists who took part, and, in this issue of *Elements*, we hear from Rebecca Neely, whose career path took her away from the laboratory and into the world of scientific publishing.

**Rebecca Neely**, Associate Editor at *Nature Geoscience*

**What does your job involve?** My primary responsibility is assessing manuscripts and managing the peer review and publication of papers, broadly in the field of geochemistry.

**How did you get your job?** It's probably an oversimplification to say that I saw the position advertised and thought, "Why not?!" Looking back, I spent a lot of time during my PhD unwittingly developing transferable skills: I read (and edited) almost every paper and PhD thesis written by my colleagues and was responsible for a conference abstract volume. These experiences were certainly useful when it came to the job application, but they also made me realise that I consistently prioritised the work of others' over my own. Acknowledging my skills, and where I chose to put my efforts, was an important step in deciding to leave research and pursue other opportunities.

**What advice do you have for PhD students who are thinking of leaving academia?** Gosh, there are so many things I could say. But, for me, the most important thing to remember is that you can use your scientific training in an infinite number of ways. From the inside it can appear as though no one ever leaves academia. But we know that's not true. So, don't be afraid to ask what other people have gone on to do. Finally, don't underestimate your skills. Too often our academic resumes are limited to technical expertise and a few conference abstracts or papers, but research is so much more. It's communication, graphic design, budget planning, risk assessments, quantitative reasoning, international collaboration, and decision making. You have so much to offer. So, take a breath, reach out to people, and remember that you are highly skilled in a number of different ways and people would be lucky to work with you!

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