

Interview with Cleodie Swire



Fiona Jenkinson

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ABSTRACT

Former Chief Editor, Cleodie Swire, shares with us some of her experiences while working on Young Scientists Journal. Cleodie is now studying Medicine at Clare College, Cambridge. We wish her all the best for her future.

What would you say is your biggest personal contribution to Young Scientists Journal (YSJ)?

When I first started, we did not have very many editors and there wasn't an Editorial Team Leader as such. So I think that there has been a revamp of the way the editing works since I've been working on the journal as I was the Editorial Team Leader at that time. Now we have more editors and there is a lot more communication between the Leadership Team and the editors, whereas, earlier the editors would upload the articles back themselves, we now do it through the Editorial Team Leader so this keeps a check on the quality and the time scale and making sure people aren't slacking.

Describe your role as chief editor for young scientists journal

It's probably easier if I describe it in comparison with the Editorial Team Leader. Head of Editorial Team deals with the beginning of the Editorial system: The articles when they come in and sending them out to the editors. The Chief Editor is the one who ties up all the ends not just with articles but with everything else, checking everything has been properly done. I am currently the one who gives the articles a final check before they are sent to the publishers and then check the proofs when that comes back from the publishers – tying up the ends, just chasing people up.

Do you think you have gained anything from it?

One of the most important things that I've learnt is how to deal with people when you need to get something from them. For example, when we need to get photos etc., from authors, the way you need to show them how it could benefit them, in fact, to help you by making them aware of the benefits of publishing their own article. The best way to approach it is to make it clear that it's serious but still being polite because you don't want to be the one bossing them around.

What would you say is the hardest thing about being chief editor?

Probably the fact that whenever there is loads of work, it happens to coincide with lots of work at school—the whole thing of balancing time. Another thing I've learnt is how to manage while working on the journal; probably that's one of the hardest things.

Could you estimate how much time you spend working on young scientists journal?

Before there was the Editorial Team Leader and the Chief Editor, and the Chief Editor wasn't local so it was very difficult to work with her. I was doing most of the roles of the leaders—a lot of time! Whereas now, probably in a normal week, I'd spend an hour and a half that we do on a Thursday and probably an hour in addition to that, and then when it is getting

towards the publication time, I'd probably spend two hours each day on YSJ.

What advice would you give then to help organize your time for ysj as you evidently are very busy at times?

Well, for me, instead of taking breaks, I kind of have different types of work. For example, Maths is quite different than doing a more comprehension-type Chemistry homework and I compartmentalize it like that. So I do a bit of homework, then a bit of YSJ, then when I'm fed up of YSJ, I go back to homework. I find that each type of work uses your brain and your energy in a different type of way!

You just got gold standard in duke of edinburgh award; do you think your work on young scientists journal helped contribute to that?

It definitely has because I used it as a service. It wasn't really something we used to do when I first joined the journal. We do a lot more outreach now—actually going to schools and finding the editors other than waiting for willing people to come to us because it seems that when people can ask questions face to face, they seem a lot more willing to become editors. A lot of these people did actually know about the journal before and were aware that we were recruiting editors but it seems that actually being there persuaded them that it was a good idea. So that's what I used as my service part of my Duke of Edinburgh award.

Would you assign any particular qualities to the sort of people who may benefit from getting involved in the journal?

For someone who is heavily involved, someone who is naturally organized would be at an advantage—that's not to say it's something you necessarily have: If you're not organized, you must be aware of that and be willing to compromise by making lists, etc. Also, you must want to do it (for whatever reason) because it does involve commitment and time when you would rather be doing something else. Furthermore, you're working as a team and in some ways, if you're the one slacking; you're letting the whole team down.

About the Author

Fiona Jenkinson, Current Chief Editor, is 17-years-old and goes to The King's School Canterbury where she is currently studying for her A Levels. She is studying Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Further Maths and has already taken as French. In her free time she enjoys art, music, photography, and reading. She wants to study Natural Sciences at the University.

Do you think young scientists journal is potentially something that would look very good on a UCAS form or CV?

Yes – I put it on my University application form. I wasn't actually asked about it in the interview but I think it is a very impressive thing to do and there are some people who have gone to the University and told people there that they work on it and they have actually recognized the name. So I think that more and more it is something that Universities do know about, and even if they don't, it is impressive to have experience in the areas that you handle during your time working on YSJ, and if you can explain it, it shows that you are actually very involved.

In retrospect or if you had more time working on the journal, is there anything more you would want to do?

Definitely—because I was organizing the editing system, I do feel that I, as a Chief Editor, was over my ears in this and haven't contributed so much to the other aspects of the journal. Obviously the articles are the main feature, so that is what I focused on at that time but there are other things that I think could have exploited more such as the media like videos and blogs. There are local schools that do interesting projects and we definitely could have pushed to have some good blogs on there. Also, commissioning of artwork, which is something I have attempted every now and then, that definitely could have more of a push I think.

How do you think you will contribute to ysj when you go on to become a young iab member?

Initially, I will definitely liaise with the people who have taken up the leadership roles following me because I have been working on the journal for quite a long time and there are things that I've been naturally doing and perhaps have never told anyone but are necessary to do, and if little things start to fall through, I'm definitely willing to help and show people what it is that I've been doing.

Have you learnt a lot from the articles we publish?

It's always interesting learning about what others of our age find interesting in Science. The majority of the best original research articles we receive are from abroad; they quite often have the most original ideas.