

Origin Story: Denise Kuo

It's clear that there is no one path to a career or role in scientific editing and publishing. Origin Stories was created to capture the circuitous routes of these careers and the interesting stories of the twists and turns along the way. The editors encourage readers to email your origin story to scienceeditor@councilscienceeditors.org.

Attending college in the 1990s, my focus was financial independence and the possibility of travel funded by my employer. I believed the best route to both was in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and therefore I obtained a Bachelor's degree in computer science. Entering the workforce in 1994 with knowledge and skills in software development worked out well.

While working for consulting firms that specialized in custom software development and traveling weekly to some fun locations (Toronto, ON, Canada) and some less-fun locations (Warsaw, IN, USA), I also relocated to Jackson, Mississippi, USA. Most of the friendships I developed while living in Jackson were with people I met through my spouse, and most of them worked at the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC), including Gerry McAlpin.¹

In 2003, when my software consulting job ceased to exist,* Gerry had an idea for my next position. In her role as the managing editor of *Hypertension*, an American Heart Association (AHA) journal, Gerry was in the midst of a transition to use BenchPress for online peer review. Gerry made the case to the Editor-in-chief, Dr. John Hall, that someone with strong computer skills was just what the journal needed to develop and maintain the configurable letter templates. It only took a couple of weeks working part-time to set up the templates, and then Gerry was eager for help in clearing the backlog of email in the journal inbox. Answering email was surprisingly satisfying. Problem-solving and strong communication skills acquired in my previous

career were immediately useful. This task also required that I poke around the submission system to find the information needed for responses. I do enjoy learning a new app!

After one year with *Hypertension*, it was time to relocate again as my spouse accepted a position in industry. Gerry preferred not to lose someone she had just spent a year training in peer review, so she worked through the logistics for me to continue working on the journal remotely from Massachusetts. Continuing in the same job despite relocating 2200 km away and working from home? I was hooked. And it did not hurt that I avoided the outrageous expense of daycare for a 1-year-old. In 2004, remote work for an AHA journal was rare and was only possible because I transitioned to a contract position (i.e., self-employed) and was paid via UMMC.

The flexibility in hours, variety of tasks, and steady, although modest, income was enough to keep me at *Hypertension* for several years. As the kids reached school age, I started to wonder about other opportunities. Simultaneously, there was a shift in the operational model of AHA journals. The new approach offered me the opportunity to continue with *Hypertension* as a full-time employee of AHA (with benefits) and the growth opportunity to step into the Managing Editor role while a new Editor-in-Chief onboarded. This allowed me to return to the coveted work-sponsored travel. I went to Glasgow, Scotland, to meet the new EiC Prof. Anna Dominiczak. The trip to Glasgow was the first of many fun international trips for *Hypertension* over the next 8 years.

Denise Kuo is Editorial Consultant/Managing Editor, Origin Editorial, LLC.

References and Links

1. <https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/HYPERTENSIONAHA.119.14365>
2. <https://www.thestreet.com/dictionary/d/dot-com-bubble-and-burst>

Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the Council of Science Editors or the Editorial Board of Science Editor.

<https://doi.org/10.36591/SE-D-4602-04>

*Those familiar with history may recognize the time frame as roughly aligning with the dot-com bubble and subsequent burst. What Was the Dot-Com Bubble & Why Did It Burst?² provides a nice summary for those interested in a history lesson.