



Name: Kyle Frischkorn, PhD

Position: Senior Editor

Affiliation: Nature Microbiology

Location: New York City, NY, USA

Pronouns: He/Him

Please briefly describe your current role in your position

I evaluate articles for publication in Nature Microbiology, manage peer review, commission and edit Reviews and Perspectives, and represent the journal at conferences.

What is your terminal and/or current position in academia?

Postdoc

How did you hear about your current position? Was it a career option that you were aware about during your educational process?

I met an editor at a conference while I was a graduate student. Many early career academics don't know that you can be a full time, professional manuscript editor. This seemed like a perfect fit for my interests, so as soon as I learned it was an option, that's what I wanted to do.

How did you end up working at your current affiliation?

Editorial positions have a tendency to be few and far between. Each job is tailored to a fairly specific research expertise that covers the type of manuscripts the editor will handle, and the editor must have a PhD in that (or a closely related) subject. After finishing my PhD, I started a post doc and kept my eyes peeled for an open position in my expertise (marine microbiology and biogeochemistry). My first position at Springer Nature was the biogeochemistry editor on the Earth Team at Nature Communications. From there I moved briefly to Nature Geoscience for a temporary position (also handling biogeochemistry), and then I moved to my current position at Nature Microbiology, where I handle environmental microbiology, ecology, archaea, phage and CRISPR.

How long have you been working at your current affiliation?

5 years

What type of position is your current job?

Hybrid (Remote & In-Person)

Is your role more a managerial or individual contributor role?

Individual contributor

What are the defined roles of your position?

The bread and butter of my position is assessing the suitability of submitted research articles for publication at the journal--I decide whether or not we should send manuscripts out for peer review, select peer reviewers, evaluate peer review reports, help authors with revisions, and edit accepted manuscripts so they read well and meet the Nature Microbiology style. I also commission and edit our magazine content: News and Views, Review articles and Perspective pieces, and write editorials. I also travel to conferences and visit universities to represent the journal and keep my finger on the pulse of the most cutting edge science.



What are your day to day tasks that you perform in your position?

The main part of my job is reading submitted manuscripts, writing summaries and assessments and discussing them with my colleagues as we come to a decision about whether or not the research represents the sort of strikingly novel and exciting microbiological advance that our journal would seek to publish. Each day, my fellow editors and I are discussing the papers--both submitted manuscripts and what other journals are publishing. At any one time, I have around ~60 manuscripts at various stages from submitted to near-accepted--I am communicating with authors, finding and chasing potential peer reviewers, reading reviewer reports, and looking at revised manuscripts. I work with the art editors to make figures look polished and professional. There are a lot of emails!

What do you like best about your job?

I love that every day I learn something new, and that I am among the first person to read about new discoveries--other than the scientists who actually did the research!

What do you dislike about your job?

The journal can only publish an extremely limited number of research articles per year, so that means we have to pass on many of the excellent work that is submitted to us--sharing news of rejection with my authors is my least favorite part of the job.

If your job is outside of academia, what is similar and what is different about your current job and your terminal position in academia?

Being an editor is very much interwoven with academia--that's where the research is being conducted, and the vast majority of our authors and peer reviewers are professors, post docs, researchers, and graduate students. I spend most of my time thinking about research--what are the newest discoveries, how to make them more exciting, clearer and most impactful for the community--but I am no longer doing my own research, and most of what I do is "behind the scenes".

How did your microbial ecology education prepare you for your current position?

The papers that I handle are in microbial ecology, so I rely heavily on my undergraduate degree (microbiology) and my PhD education (microbial ecology and biogeochemistry). I need this background to understand the techniques used in the papers I handle, how the results are interpreted, and the broader implications of the conclusions.

What skills do you wish you learned during your educational process that would better prepare you for your current role (e.g. machine learning, management skills, etc.)?

Conflict resolution

Do you have any recommendation and/or tips for early career microbial ecologists looking for jobs similar to yours?

Cast a wide net--the skills you develop as a researcher and as a grad student prepare you for a multitude of jobs...go after a career you think you'll love, and I bet you'll find that your expertise can be spun to suit that role.