



**Name:** Sarah Wettstadt, PhD

**Position:** Science Writer

**Affiliation:** MicroComms GmbH

**Location:** Berlin, Germany

**Pronouns:** She/Her

Please briefly describe your current role in your position

*I write outreach articles about scientific topics or help companies strategise their outreach programs.*

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 only became aware of the job title of an online science writer during the last stages of my postdoc position. I was actively seeking for career opportunities within the communication area and only realised then that I could work as a science writer and communicator on all sorts of outreach projects. Since for me location-independence was very important, I decided to start my own business so that I could decide myself the projects I would take on.*

How did you end up working at your current affiliation?

*During my postdoc, I started my own blog writing about different scientific topics and looked for volunteering opportunities at scientific journals and organisations. Once I figured out what kind of writing and outreach projects I liked (and my contract ran out), I legally founded my own business, which was a lot of paper work. I then reached out to those organisations that I was volunteering with before and actively started to look for clients and projects..*

How long have you been working at your current affiliation?

*3+ years*

What type of position is your current job?

*Remote*

Is your role more a managerial or individual contributor role?

*Both, as I'm working on my own but also in collaboration with others.*

What are the defined roles of your position?

*Science writer, marketing, finances, sales, outreach, management, science communication coach.*

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

*I write articles or create science communication material, respond to emails from clients or collaborators, check social media, reach out to potential new clients, think about new fun projects, have meetings, strategise science communication plans for my own projects or my clients', interview scientists for articles.*



What do you like best about your job?

*The flexibility: I love having the freedom to work whenever and wherever, I can travel for longer time periods and can enjoy the day while working in the evenings. I set my own deadlines (if there are none from a client), I choose the projects that I work on, I create projects from scratch and execute them until the very end, I have exciting collaborations running that I enjoy working on, I enjoy the creativity of my work but also the logic and structure that comes to executing the projects. I love seeing how others are learning from my articles, posts or projects or how I get them excited about scientific or communication topics. I love being at the border between the scientific community and non-scientists working as some kind of translator between these two groups. I love that I can keep learning about scientific topics and while also sharing my newly acquired knowledge with others. I also enjoy helping scientists communicate what's in their heads but they struggle bringing it out clearly. I like that I my projects reach different kinds of audiences: from writing a children's book about bacteria, over writing blog posts for interested readers to writing articles on the careers of scientists for the scientific community.*

What do you dislike about your job?

*Finances and accounting, marketing myself to get new clients, scientists often don't take me seriously anymore (which is why this interview is great!), and I cannot access several scientific journals anymore.*

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

*Similar: being on the edge of human knowledge and keep learning about scientific topics, using my curiosity to solve questions, problem-solving thinking approach, always looking for a new question, project to tackle.*

*Different: I have no boss, I'm responsible for my own work, projects, income, location and time-independency, no colleagues who I see daily, I create my own schedule and do not depend on lab times, machine availability, bench space, etc., working completely online instead of in-person lab work, having the possibility to travel and move around for several weeks while working.*

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

*Scientific thinking, problem solving, project management, organisation, academic and scientific writing, publishing, understanding the scientific community, taking over responsibility for your own projects.*

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.)?

*Marketing, business leading and growing.*

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

*Stay open for all sorts of opportunities, try as many different projects as possible to figure out what you really like, check in with yourself regularly to see what resonates with you and what doesn't, reach out to people in your network and tell them what you want to do; something might come along.*