Alumni Highlight: Science Writer
By Jingting Han

Name: Adelaide Ulricke (Ulli) Hain, PhD.

Job Title & Company: Science writer at Palladian Partners, Inc

Degree/Department from JHSPH: Graduated with a PhD in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology in 2014

1. How long have you been a scientific writer?
1 year and 10 months.

2. I have heard there are different types of scientific writers. Is this correct?
Yes, there are three types of scientific writer:
   - Technical writers: write or edit technical documents such as manuscripts, FDA applications for drug companies and instruction manuals for devices and kits.
   - Public information officers (PIOs): write newsletters, web content and press releases for academic and government institutions or other science-related institutions.
   - Science journalist: write articles or blog posts for newspaper, magazines and other news organizations (freelance and staff writers). Provides the most freedom since you can pick your own topic, narrative approach and pitch to a journal/newspaper.

2. What’s your favorite part of being a scientific writer?
The schedule of a scientific writer is very flexible. I can do my job whenever I want to. I travel a lot just for fun, and I can still write while traveling. Also, I really like the company that I work for. It is flexible, caring and they treat their employees well. I went on a vacation last year to Germany. I worked while I was in there and got paid. Furthermore, I like science, but I do not want to focus on one project for several years. Being a scientific writer, I can have a broad knowledge about different fields.

3. What is the hardest part of transitioning into this career?
The hardest part is learning to avoid the academic language or jargon you have learned during your training. Also, it can be difficult to get into scientific writing. Most people in scientific writing field obtain a Masters in Science Writing or Science Journalism, and they learn the science as they write. Since I already have a PhD, I did not want to get a Masters. I was able to break into the field without one of these degrees so it can be done.

4. What skills or experiences are important to break into the scientific writing field?
Before trying to get paid to write, it is essential to gain experience. First, I started a blog. Then while completing my postdoctoral fellowship, I volunteered in the press office of my university in my free time. I wrote some articles for their website, as well as interviewed several scientists and wrote about their research.

5. Is there anything you wish you would have done differently while you were at school?
I should have done more career investigating during my PhD training.

6. Do you have any additional advice?
I think the best way to try a career out is through a fellowship. Even if the money is not great, you learn a lot. I did the Research America! Fellowship. It is actually for science policy. I would go into the White House and capital to talk about medical research and why researches need funding. Other training opportunities of interest are the AAAS Mass Media Science and Engineering Fellows Program and Science News Internship. There are many more that you can google. A fellowship will allow you to try out a career path of interest and help you determine if it is the right job for you.