

Jessica Houghton

Marketing Executive

**Royal
Geographical
Society**
with IBG

Advancing geography
and geographical learning



Job title: Marketing Executive

Organisation: Esri UK

Location: Aylesbury, UK

How did you get to where you are now?

With a lot of hard work! At first, my experience of geography was extremely limited. I didn't study it at GCSE, but after being inspired at a college open day I chose to jump into the deep end with a geography A Level. Having thoroughly enjoyed it, I decided it was the subject for me to study at university. Although I didn't know exactly what career I wanted, I knew that geography is an incredibly diverse subject and would give me lots of options for the future.

Studying BA (Hons) Human Geography at Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) was absolutely brilliant, as I had the choice of a wide variety of interesting modules. It was in my second year that I got the opportunity to study Geographic Information Systems (GIS). I hadn't heard of it before and thought I'd give it a go...never would I thought I'd now be working for one of the largest GIS companies in the world!

After finding my new passion in GIS, I successfully applied for the two-year Graduate Programme at Esri UK in my final year of university. I was warmly

welcomed into a variety of departments and got to experience a range of roles from working on-site in Professional Services and aiding with technical issues in Technical Support, to curating our global data repository as Data Curator! Esri UK helped me develop my career in the areas I was interested in.

After completing the programme, I took responsibility of the Media Maps team, who are dedicated in making maps for national news to raise Esri brand awareness. This was such an exciting role and a highlight for me was seeing my map live on BBC Breakfast with an audience of over two million! Fast forward a year later and I have progressed my career along a more traditional marketing route. I am now a Marketing Executive where I build and deliver campaigns about Esri products.

Was there anything particularly useful that helped you get into this role?

As graduate schemes can be particularly competitive, I knew I had to shine not only through my grades, but also hold some real-world work experience.

During my first year, I worked on a Q Project. This was a great initiative created by Queen Mary University that helped me gain work experience with formal support. I was placed with another QMUL student and we both carried out statistical research on behalf of the NHS on how effective a new initiative was in a local doctor's surgery in Bethnal Green.

Over the summer in my first year, I worked as a Camp Councillor at a YMCA Camp in North Carolina, USA, through Camp America. This was an incredible experience where I made friends from all over the world and built confidence – I found this was always brought up in interviews which was a great conversation starter! I learnt so many transferable skills (team work, leadership, communication) that I could apply. With some experience behind me, I thought I needed some more 'formal' work experience related to GIS if I wanted to pursue a career in

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that field. So during the summer of my second year, I applied and was accepted for the 'Bright Minds Research Internship' at Microsoft Research. Here I did GIS work in their computational ecology and environmental department. It was great fun, and gave me the enthusiasm to work for a tech company.

What do you do as part of your role?

From technical to traditional marketing, I now build, manage, and deliver campaigns about Esri capabilities and products. I'm currently running a spatial data science campaign, which is very interesting as Machine Learning and AI are very topical at the moment. I recently ran a successful webinar where I had Spatial Data Scientists from Sainsbury's and Geolytix showcase their spatial data science work.

Esri UK hold an Annual Conference where over 2,500 geospatial delegates have the opportunity to network and see fantastic speakers from across the UK. Rather than presenting, I now work with the speakers behind the scenes to help them build a compelling technical GIS story. Overall, my role is very diverse! One day I can be launching a training tutorial video and writing social media posts, to getting my head stuck in spreadsheets analysing huge amounts of marketing data.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I love working for Esri UK. Their ethos, care for their employees, and friendly atmosphere has been wonderful to work in. It is not surprising I have many colleagues that have been working here for over 25 years! My job allows me to have lots of creativity as I design social posts, ads, banners, emails, graphics, and other marketing content. I enjoy that what I'm doing has a real impact within the wider business and I get to work with many different people. And I love GIS! It's important to work for something you're passionate about.

What advice would you give to someone wanting to go into this career?

Be passionate about GIS and do some relevant work experience (to test if you like the career!). Work experience isn't necessary, but would be a huge bonus in helping you start a career in this field. When I was applying for GIS graduate schemes I often found that other candidates had

a Master's qualification, which I didn't, but having work experience helped me stand out.

Network with people with GIS related jobs, go to GIS career fairs, or even speak to our Education team if you're thinking about it. Many companies will offer a week or longer for work experience if they don't offer a formal summer internship. Going the extra mile will look great on you CV.

Why did you choose geography? Why should others choose geography?

For me, geography is the best subject. Especially at university, it gets you thinking about the world differently and challenges your perceptions of society.

Everything around us is related to geography, it is such a powerful subject to understand. Brexit, one of the biggest political challenges of our time, is inherently geographical. Climate change is geographical.

Speaking in academic and career terms, geography has many transferable skills. Even if you don't know what to do, it is a great choice that will give you options, rather than box you into a specific career. I graduated from Queen Mary nearly four years ago now, and not two people from my classes have the same job – we've all taken something from our geography degree and applied it to a career we're interested in.

One of a series of profiles of staff and students from Queen Mary University of London.



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