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Greg Dow

Research Manager

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**Royal
Geographical
Society**
with IBG

Advancing geography
and geographical learning



Job title: Research Manager

Organisation: Blizard Institute, Queen Mary University of London

Location: London, UK

How did you get to where you are now?

I studied Human and Physical Geography at undergraduate at the University of Reading. After graduating, my first job was at the Royal Geographical Society where I worked as the Grants Officer, managing the RGS's varied grants programme. Having developed a good knowledge of grant funding, I then moved to the Royal Society, managing a grants programme focused on engineering and physical sciences. After this I worked for the UK Research Councils in Brussels, advising UK universities on how to successfully apply for European research funding. I've since worked for UK universities in research support roles, working at the Liverpool and London Schools of Tropical Medicine and Queen Mary University of London. My current job is within the medical school of QMUL, helping our research scientists to apply for funding mainly from funders such as the Medical Research Council, the Wellcome Trust and the National Institute for Health Research, among others.

W: www.rgs.org/geographyprofessionals

What do you do as part of your role?

As Research Manager in the Blizard Institute (part of the QMUL medical school) I am responsible for coordinating research activity within the Institute. My job is to support scientists by helping them to identify and successfully apply for funding. This year I have helped to secure around £26 million of research funding, with an average grant size of about £270k, from a wide variety of funding agencies. I am also responsible for research strategy and for reporting on research activity to outside bodies. This requires careful reporting of research income and activity. Alongside this I also organise our monthly seminar series.

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

One of my most useful training experiences was a short presentation skills training course I undertook while working at the Royal Society. Since doing this training, I have found that being adept at public speaking and delivering presentations is a great help in getting ahead in your career. This skill led directly to my work in Brussels, which involved traveling the country and giving presentations on EU funding to UK universities, which in turn greatly aided my future career.

How does geography feature in your work/ what difference does it make?

It was geography that set me on the path to my current role, but I have since branched out to many other areas, finding myself now in a medical research institute. I would say that geography gives me a natural curiosity about the world, which has aided me when working with researchers from diverse backgrounds in different fields of science. In addition, we have a successful Global Health unit where geography is more directly relevant. I help these researchers to plan and implement research into health

provision in LMICs, utilising my geographical knowledge and experience gained at the Liverpool and London tropical medicine schools.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

By far the most rewarding part of my job is working directly with practicing scientists. I have always found that learning about new and developing research is a fascinating experience, and the passion and commitment of scientists is inspiring and infectious.

What skills and characteristics do you need for this role, apart from geographical knowledge?

My role is principally advisory. I coach and advise academics at different career stages, helping to identify how to get to the next stage of their careers, or to enable their research. A lot of my job is talking to academics about their research goals, and helping them to find the correct route to funding their research and developing their careers. Communication skills, presentation skills and critical thinking are essential. I also need an in depth knowledge of the UK research funding landscape and a deep understanding of UK higher education and research.

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

Research support is a surprisingly varied and interesting career that many would not necessarily consider. Universities and research funders are excellent employers, with good pensions, leave allowances and training opportunities. Look for entry level 'officer' type jobs via university websites, or www.jobs.ac.uk which is the main site for academic related jobs.

How do you maintain your knowledge and interest in geography outside of work?

I attend RGS-IBG lectures whenever I have the time, travel as much as I can, and attend RGS-IBG Explore every year. I read a lot of travel writing and love to run, walk and cycle outdoors as much as possible.

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

Geography is a subject that touches on almost every aspect of life, including history, politics, economics, environmental issues, health and many others. A natural curiosity about and awareness of the people and places of the world is what is needed to be a true citizen of the world and geography is the only subject that embraces this.