

CHELLE GENTEMANN | Senior Principal Scientist, Remote Sensing Systems (gentemann@remss.com)

Degree: When, where, what, and what in?

I received a BS degree in earth, atmospheric, and planetary sciences from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1995. After four years of Boston winters, I went straight to graduate school in California. I completed my MS in physical oceanography in 1997 at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of San Diego. In 2003, while still working in California, I went back to school for my PhD, which I completed in 2007, at the Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, University of Miami.

Did you stay in academia at all, and if so, for how long?

I was only in academia during my MS and PhD programs, for a total of about seven years.

How did you go about searching for a job outside of the university setting?

After finishing my master's degree, I knew that I wanted to work in satellite remote sensing, which I had really enjoyed during my undergraduate years. I did this through an MIT program that offers great opportunities for undergraduates to try out a number of different fields by working with professors on research topics. I programmed submersibles, worked on ocean core samples in a basement lab, and finally ended up working with Carl Wunsch and Detlef Stammer on data analysis of satellite measurements of ocean surface height. This program gave me valuable research and work experience that was influential in landing my first job. I didn't really look



for a position specifically located out of academia. I was looking for any position that seemed interesting, and the first job advertisement I found happened to be in a private company.

Is this the only job (post-academia) that you've had? If not, what else did you do?

Yes, this job is the only one I have had post-academia.

What is your current job? What path did you take to get there?

I am a Senior Principal Scientist at Remote Sensing Systems (RSS), a small research-oriented company based in Santa Rosa, California. I started at RSS basically as a research assistant, but also began developing my own research interests. One advantage that my position at RSS had was that, even though I only had a Master's, I began helping others with grant writing and then moved on to write my own grants far earlier in my career than if I had stayed in academia. When I decided to go back and study for my PhD, I was also working full time on my own research grants. Having worked for several years outside of academia, I was much more motivated to really get

everything I could out of the opportunity to return to school.

What did your oceanographic education (or academic career) give you that is useful in your current job?

Research colleagues. Because I work at a very small company, I really have to make an effort to keep informed about developments in my field, and I don't have a large pool of colleagues in the same building, to stimulate new avenues of research.

Is the job satisfying? What aspects of the job do you like best/least?

My job is essentially similar to a 100% soft money research position. Although much of my time is taken up with writing grants, progress reports, and committee work, I really enjoy the aspects of working at a company where there is little to interrupt research. The downside of a small company is that I miss all the interesting seminars and the intellectual diversity found within a larger academic department.

Do you have any recommendations for new grads looking for jobs?

Gaining experience in your chosen field is invaluable. For academic positions, choosing the right advisor, completing your degree in a reasonable period of time, and publications will matter. For the private sector, experience is often weighted heavily. I found my current position advertised in *Eos*, the weekly newspaper published by the American Geophysical Union. Attending conferences, giving talks, and meeting people is often a great way to learn about new opportunities. 📧