

Peggy Pritchard Interview

MS. PEGGY PRITCHARD: My name is Peggy Pritchard. I'm the Academic Liaison Librarian for Engineering, Chemistry, and Physics of the University of Guelph in Ontario [Canada]. The book is called Success Strategies for Women in Science, a Portable Mentor, and it's published by Elsevier Academic Press in 2006.

Yes, it's a mentoring manual for women in science that was published in 2006, a collaborative book project that was funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The topics contained within the chapters in the book are really those kinds of complementary skills that help young scientists to stay focused on their science, skills such as mentoring, networking, mental toughness, managing time stress, understanding aspects of career development, so they can make appropriate choices and transitions.

My graduate students at the university. Several years ago, I was teaching at Queen's University in Kingston, Canada, and most of my graduate students in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology were women, and they had many, many excellent questions about their careers in science.

Now, I'm not a scientist, myself, and my thought was: the best way for them to get this kind of information is to ask the scientists--female scientists--who are working in contexts that would be comparable to the ideas that they had for their own careers. But I found I couldn't get my students to go to the scientists, so I thought, if I can't get my students to go to the scientists, why don't I bring the scientists to the students? And that was the inspiration for my book project.

I was teaching a graduate level communication skills course, and that course was actually team-taught. We looked at people across the institution and brought together experts from eight different units on campus. It was really an excellent introduction to my work as the editor for this book project because it was really a collaborative project.

I interviewed over 350 scientists across North America, the U.K., and Europe, and actually traveled to the U.K. to do some of those interviews, and then, I had e-mail conversations and telephone conversations with people beyond that. And through that pool of interviewees, I found 18

collaborators, and they're from Canada, the United States, and Europe.

They are all women scientists, yes. Absolutely, but not only the university students. I found that some senior scientists, female scientists, have said that they wished that they had had a book like this when they were training.

In fact, Rita Caldwell, who was, at the time of my interviews, the Director of the National Science Foundation, wrote a very supportive quote on the back, and she said that had she had access to this book, this mentoring advice, really, she would have found that her own experience would have been helped, so it was wonderful to have that kind of support from her.

But certainly, parents and grandparents of young girls who are interested in science have purchased the book for their own young people, hoping to encourage their interest in science.