

Where Can UVic English Take You? An Interview with Sonya Chwyl (BA Hons, 2016)

What is your job?

Right now I work for a media production company in Victoria as a video editor.

What led you to pursue an interest in the film industry?

I had wanted to work in film since I was a kid, but growing up I didn't have a clear idea of the path to get there. Over the last four years I got experience on set and in post-production by doing volunteer projects in the indie film community, and eventually freelancing as an editor. I also built my portfolio through day jobs in communications, which sometimes allowed me to make promotional videos for the places I worked. With that experience behind me I was able to find a full-time job in post-production.



Sonya Chwyl

What does a typical professional day look like for you?

I work from home right now, so usually I roll out of bed and check my email, then get going. What I'm doing every day really depends on the stage of the project that I'm at—a lot of editing is planning, sorting, and selecting footage, which makes up the initial stage of a project. The company I work with produces mostly documentary films, which means this is extra important because of the sheer amount of footage that I get to work with.

Once that's done, I'll spend my days assembling everything into a rough draft, then cutting it down and fine-tuning based on the feedback I get from the director.

I also sometimes go into the office to review with the team or grab new footage that has been shot. A lot of my life is wrangling large amounts of data.

What's your favourite part of your work?

My favourite part is also my least favourite part, which is the time pressure of editing against a deadline. It can definitely be stressful, but I like being able to just plug in and go until something is done.

Another thing I both love and hate is how much freedom there is for storytelling. Especially with documentary, there are a million different ways you could potentially cut something, and none of them are necessarily right or wrong. A lot of it is just up to you and your instincts as an editor. That can be overwhelming if I think about it too much, because I haven't been in the industry that long. But creatively it gives you so much room to learn, grow, and try things.

How did UVic English help prepare you for this work?

I read a quote once that said editing is the final stage of writing, which is true in my experience. My BA in English taught me how to communicate ideas effectively, and the basics of structure, which are skills I use every day in my work.