



ScreenCraft Works Cross-Border Conversation: Paths to Becoming an Editor

**Conversation between Rachel Erskine, Sourath Behan and Christopher CF Chow BFE.
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Elizabeth McIntyre:

My name is Elizabeth McIntyre. I'm the co-director of ScreenCraft Works. We are an organization of cross-border mentoring, cross-border talks and cross-border networking, and we have a particular remit to support production and post-production talent that considers themselves underrepresented. A really big thank you to our supporters Genelec, and to Brunel University London who are the sponsors for our mentoring scheme. With no further ado I would like to hand to Christopher Chow.

Christopher CF Chow, BFE:

Hi everyone. Firstly I'll introduce myself. I am Chris - Christopher - Chow. I am a Chinese man in my 40s so my hair is getting quite grey and I wear glasses. I'm a film and TV editor based in London.

Rachel Erskine:

Hi. My name is Rachel Erskine. I live in Scotland. I am a white female with a short blonde bob, no grey hairs yet but I'm sure they'll be coming soon.

Sourath Behan:

Hi. My name is Sourath Behan. I'm a Muslim Brown hijabi woman. I am a film and TV editor and a colorist based in Karachi, Pakistan. I have been working in the industry for almost nine years, ten years, and I also happen to be one of the very few women editors in Pakistan.

Christopher:

Rachel, would you like to tell us about what you like about editing and how did you get in?

Rachel:

I got in via an apprenticeship which was really good. I got that through my university that I was studying in and I got a job as an apprentice assistant editor. I went through the route of assistant editor, assembly editor and then finally editor. It was a bit of a long journey but I got there in the end. I just instantly took to editing. I just loved that it was almost one of the final parts of the puzzle. Everything that comes to you, technically that's everything that you've

got and you just have to make the best out of what's there. I quickly realized other departments weren't for me - I'm not good at organizing other people, so that ruled out production, I much prefer being in a nice setting, I don't think I would enjoy being on set all day, and I just fell into it. The more I've done it, I've loved it. I loved being an assistant, I loved being an assembly editor, and now I'm absolutely loving being an editor, and I've enjoyed the journey as well, it's been brilliant. How about how about you, Chris?

Christopher:

It's weird how I got in, because I always thought myself more like a science person, so I did a psychology degree. Then one day I just woke up thinking that I want to be a filmmaker. So I went to film school and I feel like that's where my upbringing merged together the science background and the art. I feel that editing is where I can do all of that stuff - I can be techy and then I can be creative in telling stories. I actually wanted to be a screenwriter but it turns out I'm not as good a screenwriter but I'm a better editor, which kind of makes sense. Like you said, this last piece of the puzzle, the last part of the writing, so it kind of works out that way.

Rachel:

You just get to rewrite the scripts later on, in the edit.

Christopher:

Exactly. Especially in documentaries. I've done some documentaries and, with the amount of footage, you're literally just writing it as you go. So how about you, Sourath.

Sourath:

It's interesting, Chris, because I might have a similar story. I was a pre-med student when I was younger. I was this shy introvert kid, but I loved drawing and painting. I remember my dad one time said, "Why do you want to pursue medicine? Why don't you go into something that's close to what you do? Do something that's art-related." So I went to a film school in Pakistan and I did four years of filmmaking from there, and I really fell in love with the technical side of filmmaking, whether it be shooting with a camera or editing on Premiere. I was really lucky to get an internship right after I got out of film school. I started off as a post-production supervisor, so I got to work with an editor really closely, and my love for editing just grew by the day. Then I was promoted to a post-production supervisor on that same project, and later on, when the lead editor got busy with something, I was asked to become the second editor on that same film. I ended up spending a year-and-a-half. While I was doing that, for the same director who's also my mentor, I edited a lot of commercials and music videos. So even though I had the basics done when I was in film school, a lot of the stuff that I learned was on the job. People are always looking for acquiring a skill set, but you can always learn on the job. That's what I did.

Rachel:

Your dad was so encouraging.

Christopher:

Yeah that's what I was going to say. Most parents would really hang on to the pre-medicine.

Sourath:

My dad is really cool.

Christopher:

I think a lot of parents don't understand what we do, in terms of editing or just anything that is behind the scenes. Unless you're on screen, like an actor, they don't care.

Rachel:

Honestly, that's amazing. My parents did the opposite. They were like, "You should do science." It's interesting hearing everybody's different journeys. There is no the right way to do it. Like you said, I think learning on the job is just so much better.

Christopher:

Especially nowadays. It's so easy to research online, and watch YouTube tutorials. You will learn while you're on the job and then doing your own research in your free time and learning constantly. Then it just keeps getting better and better.

Sourath:

I think one drawback for me was that I never got a chance to work as an AE, as an assistant editor, so while I was asked to work on that film as an editor, a lot of times I used to get stuck because I was very creative but my technical knowledge wasn't that great. So there was a lot of trial and error involved in the process and I learned through that. There were a lot of times when I used to get stuck. "Oh my God, what am I going to do?" But it eventually used to work out. I think that's okay. Everyone has their own journey. I think for me, whoever is working with me, under me, I try to tell them whatever it is that I've learned, so that I can make their lives easier, because I don't want them to go through the same pain that I went through.

Christopher:

I didn't start off my career as an assistant editor. When I started, I couldn't get any work in post-production, so I started doing more filming so I could have something to edit. Then I got hired as a camera operator making some short documentaries and then I would edit them as well. So then I'd start building my portfolio.

Rachel:

That's amazing, though - just getting yourself out there. You couldn't get any editing jobs so you literally created your own. That's amazing.

Christopher:

In terms of the internet, we're talking about 16 years ago, so there were not a lot of jobs being posted online, you don't know where to look for work, and I didn't know many people. Coming out from film school, I didn't really know that many people so it took a while to get the momentum.

Rachel:

Absolutely. I've found as well, stepping from role to role, you end up being really established as an assistant editor, you could be quietly confident that work would come, but then when you step up to the next role, you're not starting again but you're having to reinvent yourself in this new role and start putting yourself out there again. That's one thing that I've found tricky. But if you guys didn't have to make that jump, that's perfect.

Sourath:

I personally feel that I also missed out on the opportunity of learning from someone experienced, and learning from their experience. Because otherwise I would have avoided going through that trial and error method. Sometimes it would just give me a lot of stress on

the job, for instance, if I'm the only person in my team and there's nobody else to look up to. I think it has its own benefits but I guess it is what it is.

Rachel:

Absolutely. Even just having somebody else there to bounce ideas off just makes such a difference, just some moral support. I've definitely been very fortunate to learn from some very very good editors, so I have been lucky, and my apprenticeship I was trained up quite well as an assistant, I feel, so I had a very good base which was lucky. Starting in Scotland, there wasn't as much work 10 years ago, but now it's looking up as work is moving out of London and more into the regions as well, which has been very good.

Christopher:

I think that's really good timing - Rachel, maybe you can show your clip and then talk about how you got into the industry at the beginning.

[*Supernova* film trailer - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l4Vk0CVcDts>]

Rachel:

This was a very important job for me. This was the first time I was ever hired as an assembly editor on a full job. Previous to this I'd been hired for a week or two weeks just to cover people, but this was the first time I was hired to do the whole job. So it was very scary. We were out in the Lake District doing it and it was brilliant. This was the moment where I realized that it's time to try and step up and slowly start to leave the assistant editor work behind, to try and get more assembly work and then start progressing towards editing. But I think because I've really enjoyed each job as I've done it, that's why I've taken so long to move to the next role. But I think that's a really important part of the journey. I think a lot of people, when they're in certain roles, are just looking to the next role, looking forward all the time, instead of enjoying where you're at. But this was a moment where I thought I need to keep pushing and keep moving forward with the editing just for me. So that was a very important job for me.

Christopher:

How did you find like going from assisting to assembly editing? What's the difference that you found?

Rachel:

It was very strange having an assistant editor and I found it hard asking someone else to do things for me, just because I knew how to do it myself. You didn't want to bother anyone or ask anyone to do things for you. But when the rushes start coming in and you're drowning in scenes, soon you quickly leave that behind and start asking for support when you need it. But it was good. You're just thinking of everything in a different way. Like you said really nicely earlier, it's kind of like a mix of science and art. The assistant editor is very technical. You're making sure everything's set up for the editor, you're also making sure everything's technically okay. As the assembly editor, you still need to keep an eye on all of this but your focus is what's been shot. Have they covered the scene? Do we need anything else? Do we have to report back to set? So it's just a bit of a mindset change. It was a good thing for me.

Christopher:

I absolutely loved the film. I think it's like the end of the trailer, saying that they wish the journey wouldn't end, I feel I wished the film wouldn't end because it's just such a lovely film.

Rachel:

It was a really good experience working on it. I loved it, I really did.

Christopher:

Sourath, do you want to introduce your clip. We'll play and watch it.

Clip: *Unbeatable*:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0t7RhUhnB7s&ab_channel=UNWomen

Christopher:

That was amazing.

Sourath:

Thank you. I think the reason I wanted to show this particular clip is because it's very true to my editing style which is very experimental and non-linear, and because it's also my thought process. There's always so much going on in my mind, so many ideas. I just feel, when you're working on something, you want to make it extremely emotional and impactful. I'm always looking for different approaches. How can I make it more impactful? How can I make it more emotional? This PSA came out at a time when there was this statement that was released by a group of people back in 2015, 2016, where they said that it's okay to beat women slightly. Women in Pakistan got really offended. What do you mean by that? So this PSA was an answer. Yes, beat us, but beat us at stuff that we're good at. I can also relate to it because, even when I started off as an editor, I did face a lot of discrimination because I'm a woman. I didn't have a lot of women editors to look up to. I had my own share of struggles. So this particular project, I just gave it my all. That's why I wanted to share this clip.

Christopher:

Your style is very experimental. In terms of this, what did you experiment on?

Sourath:

We had linear structures as well, but it's like a lot of jump cuts and those flashes. I think this piece was supposed to be in color. Then acting on edit we decided that we'll make it black and white. We were doing a lot of things that were not on the storyboard or that were not on the script. My director has been very welcoming and he has been very encouraging, he was always very encouraging. So if I had an idea, he would always support it and encourage it. So instead of going for a linear narrative, there's a lot of back and forth. You start with one clip and then you see it later again in the segment as well. The non-linearity happened later on in post.

Rachel:

It was very impactful and very well done. I'm just curious. As your career has gone on, have you noticed that there's more women in post-production or would you say it's just the same as when you started?

Sourath:

Definitely. When I started off, I knew two women who were primarily directors but I had always heard that they edited their own stuff, so they weren't primarily editors, they were directors. I didn't have any women editors to look up to. Recently I've seen more women coming in the field and I'm so glad, but I think we still have a long way to go. That's why I just decided to stick around. Maybe you'll inspire more women to enter this field. I think there's this idea that I think we all have that women are not technically sound. I think I also believed that for a very long time until I went to film school. Because I was shy and because I was

introverted, it was very difficult for me to ask people for help. So what happened was I ended up picking up my own camera, I ended up editing my own stuff, and I really enjoyed the process, and I thought to myself, this is possible, this is doable. Then I had to unlearn that whole idea that no women can learn technical stuff. I think I'm still more creative and my technical knowledge is not as sound, but I have become better with time and I think we're always learning.

Rachel:

Absolutely. Like we said before, you have to keep looking forward. Chris, I'm very curious about what clip you have to show us.

Christopher:

This is a clip from the indie feature film I cut a couple years ago. It's called *White Colour Black*. It premiered at the London Film Festival and we had a second screening on the closing night and both screenings were completely sold out. It's absolutely one of my proudest works.

[Clip from *White Colour Black* - <https://www.peccadillopod.com/film/white-colour-black/?popup=true>.]

Christopher:

Specifically this film as a whole is very interesting because there were maybe 20, 30 lines of dialogue in the whole film. It's all very visual and quite experimental and it's very low budget, very indie. The director took a team to Senegal and filmed it. I think the first scene is quite an interesting scene where there's only two or three cameras and then two or three shots and then you just have to try and create something, create a relationship, create the emotions from there. Often as editors we always like cutting dialogue if we're doing like TV or film, but how do you do convey that story without dialogue?

Rachel:

I love storytelling with not too much dialogue. Something that an editor once told me was that, once they've assembled a scene, they watch it back mute, just to see what's being conveyed with the eyes and the emotion and stuff like that. That's something that I've taken forward and I've started watching things back mute. If you're not getting a sense of the emotion with no dialogue, then something's not quite right. That was a lovely scene scene, Chris. You can tell so much. Like you said, no dialogue. It's the kind of storytelling that I that I enjoy.

Christopher:

It's one of the earlier feature films that I cut, so my style has changed over time as well. I can imagine if I go back to do the same film and then re-cut it from from scratch, it will be completely different. I think that's what I like, the beauty of editing, where every editor would cut things differently, including yourself. If over time you've changed and then you come back to it, you'd do it differently.

Rachel:

Adapt to the situation as well. I feel like a lot of editors get pigeonholed - they only do this, they only do that - but I think a good editor is is able to adapt to any kind of storytelling. People seem to only work in documentary or only work in film and it's a shame because I think people miss out on the kind of variety of projects. I think that's kind of changing a little bit more now. I see a lot more crosses between the genres, which is good. I hope that I can

work across different genres and different types as well. It seems like you guys have both done a little bit of both, I think.

Sourath:

Yeah. I have done documentaries and films and with a bit of commercials and music videos. I think I'll just add to that point where you need to adapt to different kind of stories. I think I learned it the hard way, because initially when I started working, all the kind of work that my director used to work on it was all very experimental, and I used to love working on them. I remember I was working on this one project and this person had given it to me and he's like - we just want you to do whatever it is that you like. I said okay, sure. So I completely sidelined the script and then I tried to come up with something different, and I remember that person looking at that cut and he was a little taken aback. He said thank you and then he left. I was a little confused. I was like - why did that happen? But then I also realized that, when you're trying to tell somebody else's story, as editors it's our job to help the director tell his vision, and you have to do it their way. It's something that I learned after a very long time, because I was very fortunate to have a director whose narrative style was very similar to my narrative sense. I think I wasn't really open to experimenting with the linear side of narrative filmmaking, but later on I learned. I think you should always be open to experiment with different storytelling styles.

Christopher:

I was born in Hong Kong, and I grew up watching a lot of Hong Kong films, and at the same time a lot of American films, so I feel like I get a lot of influences from the western and then also the Asian culture. Then I grew up here and then started watching more Japanese films as well, and then they have a different style. When you watch a film, it doesn't matter what the people look like, you know the filmmakers they are from different backgrounds, different culture.

Rachel:

I worked on a film called A House in Jerusalem, which was shot entirely in Palestine. That was an area that I didn't really know too much about and I wasn't really sure if the style was going to be different or the way things were approached would be different. I just did my research on the area and stuff beforehand and I think that helped me understand the culture a little bit more as well. I think if you're working on something like that, you just have to be honest, and if there's something that maybe doesn't land with you or you're not sure, just ask the people who are there.

Sourath:

I personally think that our emotions really drive the story and I think that's what we connect with. It doesn't matter where the film is from. For instance, if you're watching A Separation from Iran or you're watching In The Mood For Love, you don't know the language but even if you watch the film, they make you feel something. I think emotions come into play. I think when the culture - I think the influence is there but I think it's the emotion that drives the narrative. For me I think that is where the connection comes from.

Christopher:

Do you think there is a reason for a certain style from different cultures? As an example, like if you specifically watch Japanese films, a lot of them are either very intense octane kind of crazy editing, or everything's really slow, really dragged on. I never quite understand why this is such a distinctive style.

Rachel:

I'm not sure what drives that actually. It's a very good point. Something I've never really thought about much before. I suppose it's one of these things that, if there's a film from a certain region or country that's a success, I wonder if people, other filmmakers and editors, maybe just mimic the style and then it just becomes a common trait.

Christopher:

Sourath, would you like to introduce your next clip?

Sourath:

I'll just give a brief intro about this documentary. This documentary I worked on with a very dear friend of mine last year, and it's about climate change and how people who have been living in those areas that are affected by climate change and floods, how it affects their livelihood and it also affects them mentally. This little sequence, I remember, was a very important one, because when I was listening about this sequence in the interviews, the character talks about how they are always looking out for disasters, and they're trying to minimize casualties. For example, if there are chances of a flood or an avalanche, they have to evacuate right away. So there are a bunch of people who are always looking out during the night. But for this particular sequence I didn't have enough footage, there was no footage at all, the only footage that I had was the one with people with torchlight. I felt that this was a very important sequence for the film. How can I make it work? After a couple of days, I then realized that I had a lot of B-roll that's there, and it was daylight footage, and I was like - maybe I can make it work with a bit of sound design and day for night, graded in a way that it's like day for night footage. That's what I did, and my director was really happy and she's like - you made it work. I was like - yeah. So I think, as editors, most of the times we have to have that solution-oriented approach. We always need to look for solutions, because sometimes you will not have enough stuff and you need to figure out how can you make it work with the limited footage or material that you have.

[Clip from *The Sky is Far, the Earth is Tough* - <https://tv.ismaili/watch/voices-from-the-roof-of-the-world-the-sky-is-far-the-earth-is-tough>.]

Rachel:

You would never know that most of that was B-roll. It all looked very intentional.

Sourath:

Thank you.

Rachel:

Do you seek out projects that are important topics for you, or has it just kind of happened that way?

Sourath:

I think I've just been very lucky because I think the kind of people who come to me know what kind of projects appeal to me. So I think that's the kind of project that I get. I think I've just been very fortunate.

Rachel:

I've only done scripted. I feel nothing has a more powerful message really than a than a documentary. I'd love to watch that one.

Sourath:

I on the other hand started with scripted, and I did four years of scripted, and then I switched to documentary. I personally never thought I would get into documentary editing. I wasn't really fond of documentary editing. I didn't like it very much. But I think, five years later, when I started doing it, I was like - oh, I absolutely love documentary editing. Here I am, I'm doing a little bit of both.

Christopher:

Do you have a preference?

Sourath:

Not really. I think if you had asked me this question a couple of years ago, I would have definitely said scripted, but I think I absolutely enjoy both of them now.

Rachel:

Depends on the story, doesn't it, I imagine.

Sourath:

For sure, it's definitely the story.

Rachel:

I can imagine there's nothing more powerful than working on a topic which is really important to you personally.

Sourath:

Yes, for sure.

Christopher:

I think people often talk about people can't really tell what's good editing, because you don't know what they went through behind the scenes to make that scene work, make that film work. What you just talked about, how you made that, and taking on the challenge of doing something that wasn't there and then creating it, I think that's just magic.

[Clip: Trailer for the BBC series *Vigil* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XRW0kfI2As>]

Rachel:

I was also the assembly editor on on this job as well. I chose this clip because it's so different to *Supernova*. As you can see, it's a TV drama, so you have to think about other episodes and what other editors are dealing with as well, and think of it as a whole, a whole piece, or a whole section of pieces, rather than just one contained film. Definitely not as emotional as *Supernova*, so you know a different cutting style. This job was all about looks, red herrings, suspicion, which was great. I enjoyed that as well. But a very different style and you just adapt to it.

Christopher:

What I'm doing lately now is more for TV, because it's taken me a long time to get to now being editing for TV. Again, it's the same thing as at the beginning where I couldn't get into TV. It's just impossible. You always have to have your first job in order to get a second one, but if you never manage to get your first step in there, you can't get in. So a couple of years ago I stepped down as an assistant to work on a TV show, and then that allowed me to then continue working for a couple more TV shows in the UK. Then finally last year I was able to get an agent and then started getting work for TV.

Sourath:

I think it's very interesting because I feel when we're talking about influences and cutting styles, I think most of the times it's the story that dictates the style on the editing table and what's the best way to tell a particular story.

Rachel:

It's great that you weren't afraid to, I don't like using the term like step down, but step to the side and into another role in order to get to where you want to be. I think that's very admirable. A lot of people wouldn't want to do that and I think it's a brilliant way to approach things and I know a few other people who've managed to do that as well. Just work as an assistant editor for a few years to get those connections to then be able to step back up to edit. I'm glad that worked out for you.

Christopher:

Yeah, luckily. I got to a point where I was depressed. My career wasn't really progressing the way it was, and also a couple of jobs fell through, so that was the point where I knew I had to change and do something else. And again it was purely by chance that a job came up. They were looking for an assistant who had drama experience. It was a documentary but they were looking for drama experience, and I had both. That's why I managed to get the job.

Sourath:

I have a question, Chris. Do you think getting an agent helped you with getting better projects, because that's something that I've been hearing a lot. Even people in the US, they have agents. Because this is something we don't have in Pakistan.

Christophyer:

Yes, definitely. In the UK, I think if you have not had a lot of experience or you don't have a lot of credits, you really need an agent in order for productions to take you more seriously.

Elizabeth:

Hello conversationalists, popping back in to continue with a few questions that we're getting through from the audience. Do you think that working virtually on a project, if you're working on an international project for example, does that help with an understanding of different cultures and how we might perceive each other's cultures? Is that helpful when there are those virtual connections between international teams?

Rachel:

I think certainly the virtual aspect has opened more doors to people working internationally and with different cultures and that kind of thing. Just going back to A House in Jerusalem, that was done entirely remote and I don't think it hindered the final product at all. It maybe hindered the speed a little bit. We could have maybe shaved a week or two off the edit if we've been in the room. I think when you connect on a project, any kind of cultural barrier just goes away.

Elizabeth:

How does it work when editing only some episodes of a television series? How do you maintain a consistency between the editors?

Christopher:

I edited two episodes of Casualty last year. The whole series the series is about 30 something episodes and there were many many editors who were working on it. That's the

first time I experienced how all of that worked out. We were helping each other out in terms of behind the scenes, whether we needed something or we were having questions about certain characters, because obviously we don't know what happens before or after. We don't have the script for them and so you're just focusing on your own episode. The execs, the producers, they were really really clear. For example, one scene where I was using close-ups, because it's a very intense scene I was using close-ups, but then the producer came back after viewing and said that maybe we need to hold back, don't use a close-up there, because the character's journey is not over yet, there's further for his emotions to go in the future episodes, so we want to just keep it back a little bit. That was very interesting. I didn't think. Okay, now I'm really part of the bigger team and what I do affects them and they affect me. That was fascinating.

Elizabeth:

What is the difference in workflows when you are working on documentaries and fiction?

Sourath:

That's a very good question. I remember when I switched from scripted content to documentaries, I remember when I was given footage and I was told that this is the footage and you have to come up with a narrative on the timeline. I think that for me was a little nerve-wracking in the beginning. I think the workflow itself is pretty similar however for documentaries. You don't really have a script and also sometimes there's a paper edit that you are given by the producers and directors, but most of the time you are the one rewriting the story on the edit. You're going through a lot of transcriptions that are provided to you. It's always interesting that you're trying to come up with a narrative as you go. With the script you have everything there, so you just have to put it on the timeline, but with documentary, you're figuring things out. You just put everything and then you try to find an item within all the material that you have.

Christopher:

I worked on documentaries where we had paper edits and then also the ones that haven't. I think I enjoyed starting with a paper edit because I know what I'm looking for, also knowing that things can change drastically. Especially with documentaries, you're constantly discovering material. You're always looking for stories. Then sometimes what someone else's sees might not be what you think, and then you might find something that is really interesting, fascinating, but people forget about it. So you start rebuilding a whole storyline that works with everything else. In the same way, I think, with scripted and documentaries, as an editor you need complete understanding of the entire story. It feels like a whole network of all of these story points, emotions, and how do they work together seamlessly and enhancing each other. From that aspect I think it's exactly the same.

Sourath:

I agree. I think I remember one editor mentioning this somewhere. He said always go for emotion before information. You need to make sure how the audience feels about whatever sequence it is that's there. He said that you know whenever you're going through the footage, make notes of how certain footage or a clip made you feel, and that might really help, it might move the audience. That for me was very useful advice.

Elizabeth:

How do you change your approach in the edit suite when you go from assistant to editor? How do you read the room as an assistant? How do you then read the room as an editor? What are those key differences within the role tonally? I'm very fascinated with any job when

you go from one position to another and how you reinvent yourself, how you reposition yourself, it's a very interesting topic to get that right.

Rachel:

One thing that I had to focus on was just not jumping back into the old role because I could do it. Something would come up, I would just be like - oh, I can do that - and I'm like, no, I can do that but there is somebody else who can also do that. So I had to get really used to delegating tasks to the assistant editor, because you want people to see you editing, you don't want them to see you assisting yourself. This is something that I was speaking to my mentor about, making sure you're acting like the the head of department role that you're in. I think it's just embracing it, because as an editor people come to you with questions. The producer comes to you with questions, the director, and as an assistant when these questions would come to you, if I couldn't answer them I'd immediately be like - oh, I'll just go and ask the editor, I'll go and get that answer for you. Now they come to you and you just have to embrace it. People are looking to you for advice as the head of department. We've all come up through different training and backgrounds and stuff, but we all know it, and I think you just have to be confident and just embrace it really.

Elizabeth:

Sourath, obviously your route, you've spoken about having to learn on YouTube, that it was very difficult for you to enter the industry as a woman when predominantly men weren't supporting, so you were self-taught as well as college and then on the job. How did you find going up the ladder? Was it different from Rachel's experience?

Sourath:

I think for me it was very interesting. I think it happened very naturally for me, because when I was working at my previous place and I had worked for them for four years, then I felt that things had become really stagnant. I had learned a lot from them but I think it was time for me to move on. Then I got a call from my second boss and she wanted me to come in. When I was working on my previous job, I was single-handedly working, handling the post-production department, and I had a one friend who used to help me every now and then. But then when I went to do the other job, they had an entire edit team, and she wanted me to come in as a senior editor. I didn't realize - even I forgot at one point - that I am coming with an amount of experience. At that time I had worked in the industry for a good four or five years. It took me time to get used to it, because when I went in there and I used to work on projects, and there were a lot of times when we had technical issues and I knew the answer because I had faced it before. I was like - oh, that's not a problem, we'll just fix it this way. Then I realized that, if I have been given this opportunity to lead a team, it's because I have worked in the industry for so far, and I come with experience. Sometimes you have to tell yourself that you have earned it, you have worked long enough to earn the role of the head of a department, for instance. Also be willing to help, and also don't be shy of asking for help if you get stuck at some place. It doesn't matter if you're the head of the department. I have had amazing editors, junior editors, working for me, who have helped me with stuff. For instance, if I got stuck somewhere, they would come up with a solution. I was like - oh, thank you so much, I had no idea that this was possible.

Elizabeth:

I like that very much and I think we're learning and teaching throughout our entire careers, aren't we. I have to say, if your passion and dream is to become an editor, there are a number of routes to achieve that and then continue to grow and learn. That's so vital when people can feel frustrated if they don't feel that they are managing to achieve that ambition.

Christopher:

I think on that point with, Sourath, what you were talking about earlier that there are very few women in Pakistan who are editors. I think, personally, in the UK there are very few East Asians who look like me who are editors in post-production. That's why I founded the BEAM Network to connect more people from my background who work together to support each other. I think it's near impossible to be doing it by yourself if you are not like the majority of people who are out there working. You have to work together with each other and support each other and that's really important.

Elizabeth:

I agree. That's BEAM. Could you give the website details for people to be able to contact?

Christopher:

Yeah. If I remember correctly, we are <https://www.facebook.com/groups/wearebeamnetwork/>

Elizabeth:

How do you build a portfolio of work in order to get experience as an editor when you don't know any directors, when you want to showcase your work in order to get that foot in the door?

Rachel:

I don't have an awful lot to show from my editing, even though I now have two feature film credits, because they're not out yet, I have nothing to show. A lot of people go down the short film route and edit an awful lot of short films, and you can use that as your portfolio, but I didn't. I really focused on the assembly editor work, but that means that the final edit's not yours, so again you can't really put that on your portfolio. I would say, try and join groups in your area. There's lots of Facebook groups you can join for filmmakers. Start putting yourself out there as an editor, because even though you're an editor who doesn't know any directors, there'll be plenty of directors who don't know any editors. I think it's just trying to immerse yourself in those in those groups, whether it's in person or online. In Scotland there's a Scottish filmmaker's Facebook group and all sorts of other ones, assistant editors London, all these groups. I would say get on there and say that you're willing to edit for people, and hopefully you'll get some hits.

Elizabeth:

How can you get a foot in the door as a remote editor if you have no direct TV and film experience?

Christopher:

I did a lot of corporate videos and commercial work. Most of it I was editing from home. They would send you a drive. So I could have been anywhere. The only downside was that you have to be close enough so they can send you a drive cheaply, that's the only downside for remote editors in terms of commercial space. In TV and films it's different. You can work a certain amount remotely and then people just want to see you.

Sourath:

I think I'll just add to it because I was attending a conference some time ago and this editor said that, more than your resumes and your portfolios, I think word of mouth works the most, because people need to know that they are able to trust you. There are all these sessions and conferences happening all the time, by American Cinema Editors, British Film Editors. You can always go online. There are these seminars that happen by the name of Sight and Sound. You can always go online and network with people, let them know, and till you have

time, you can work on your skills - learn Premiere, learn Avid. You can learn all these skills on LinkedIn. While you have that time, work on your skills, and just reach out to people. They respond. But I think you have to keep reaching out to people, because everyone is so busy. But you never know, one of them might just respond, and perhaps you can come in as an editor, as an apprentice, and then you can work your way up.

Elizabeth:

How did you find work as an assistant editor working on film and TV drama? Was it through word of mouth, picking up on that theme, and emailing lots of people? How did you progress? Did it make you feel nervous when making the jump to assembly editing? So I think that is for you, Rachel, but it's reflecting those themes of the capacity of word of mouth.

Rachel:

Yeah, a lot of it is word of mouth. I was really fortunate that the first job that I managed to get onto was a school drama called Waterloo Road. What's really good about a setup like that is that there are so many editors. It's like what Chris was talking about earlier with Casualty. It's really good to try and get in somewhere where you'll meet five, eight editors and directors. It's quite a fast turnaround, so I met a lot of editors very quickly that way. I was really fortunate that one or two of them were willing to put up with me again and take me onto some other projects. In the beginning it was hard. There were times where I couldn't get any work, and I just kept trying to keep in touch with people, being willing to do one or two days cover at short notice, the night shift, the dreaded night shift, all of these things. I definitely was scared making the jump to assembly editor, because I was so comfortable as an assistant editor, I was in my element. Most things that came my way, one way or another I would be able to sort them, and I enjoyed the job. I was definitely very nervous when I made the jump. But I think a bit of nerves is good for you sometimes. You don't want to get too comfortable, which I definitely was.

Sourath:

I think reach out to other editors, because I think editing is more of a community. You're not competitors, you're more of a community. At one point I had one man who denied me the mentorship, but I had other amazing male friends who would help me out. They were just always a call or a text away. Even my mentor, my director, who gave me the opportunity. Always reach out to other people, other co-editors, and learn from each other's experiences. You never know, for instance, if you're not available, you can always send the work somebody else's way, help out each other.

Christopher:

I found the editing community is probably the most friendly and supportive community out there in the filmmaking world. Everyone's online, they're very supportive. I think, like I said earlier, you can't make it by yourself, you have to be part of a community. You need that support, and then in turn you will give the support to someone else. So, for me, definitely go out there online, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and reach out to people and exist. You have to exist in that space for other people to know you exist. Then even though you might talk about virtual working, because they know you through your internet presence, then you might get some work through there. You never know.

Rachel:

I would say enjoy the stage that you're at now. Even though everyone's looking forward, even if you're not in the dream job, just try and take the good from it, because I think if people see you in that positive way, they're more likely to try and help you make the next step.

Elizabeth:

That's a that's a wonderful note to end on. Thank you very much indeed for attending this evening.

Christopher, Sourath and Rchel:

Thank you.

Elizabeth:

Please look out the ScreenCraft Works newsletter and social media for our next events, but thank you very much indeed.