



## The careers of one scientific couple

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In 1982 Catherine arrived straight out of her PhD at the University of Rennes in France to start her postdoc at the Max-Planck Institut in Mainz Germany; Nick had arrived two years earlier and already completed a postdoc in the USA and three years of teaching in Canada. When she heard of this significant difference in career position, Lina Echeverria, a smart colleague who went on to become head of a Cornell Glass research lab, wisely advised Catherine not to publish with Nick to avoid having her work perceived as merely an offshoot of his. This practice worked moderately well; while we were in Mainz, and through our entire careers, although we work in related fields (geochemistry and petrology) only about 23% of papers have both of us as authors, with a sole two-author paper (way back in 1990).

In 1990 we both moved to the University of Rennes in France (Catherine's choice) where Nick took up a Professor position and Catherine, after a year of worry, finally landed a CNRS research position. Catherine, the geochemist, had access to a modest but reasonable geochemistry laboratory. We had two children that took up much of Catherine's time (Nick's excuse was that only she knew the French system) and this contributed to her having only a modest publication record during this period. Then, in 2000, we migrated to the University of Grenoble (Nick's choice), a move prompted by changes in the research emphasis at Rennes that departed from our interests. Catherine had hoped to build up a top-level geochemistry lab in Grenoble, but this never came about because it conflicted with the French national geoscience strategy. Only when Catherine moved last year to Paris did she finally have access to top-level equipment. Our two boys had left home five years earlier, and this finally allowed Catherine to fully develop her career.

This history illustrates several important points: 1) Catherine was several years younger and several years earlier in her career, and she contributed more to bringing up our children; this put her at a disadvantage. 2) We were able to manage two parallel careers in large part because of the flexible French system which, rather than putting up artificial barriers, actively seeks ways to allow two partners to work in the same institute. 3) A major barrier is access to scientific equipment - the needs of couples cannot always be fitted into departmental or national funding priorities.