

# Jack Blumenau

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**The Economist Group**

June 3, 2015

Dear Sir or Madam,

Please find attached my application for the position of Data Editor at the Economist.

Over the past year I have worked extensively on data-focussed coverage of the 2015 UK general election. As managing editor of the general election blog for the London School of Economics, I was responsible for pitching ideas for data-driven election stories, sourcing and analysing data relevant to the election, and writing feature articles that explained complex statistical findings in an accessible manner. In this role I also commissioned election-relevant research from academics across the world, and worked with them to produce high quality analyses and visualisations in our house style.

In addition, I worked with the team at [electionforecast.co.uk](http://electionforecast.co.uk) to produce a forecast of the election result which featured daily on the BBC's Newsnight programme. Most relevant to this application, this job involved producing novel visualisations of the forecasting model, and writing a large number of articles explaining the forecasts, and their implications for the election campaign. My work was republished or reported in a variety of media outlets during the election, including in the Financial Times, the Guardian, the Washington Post, and the New Statesman.

These positions afforded me a rare opportunity to bridge the gap between academic and journalistic writing on political events. The big data era is likely to be revolutionary for both of these sectors, and I believe that publications such as the Economist are ideally placed to combine the strongest elements of both forms of writing. I am excited about the prospect of playing a role in this change, and particularly in further developing the use of statistics and data in the journalistic sphere.

My academic background makes me a strong candidate for this position, as it has provided me with a combination of statistical knowledge and substantive political expertise. My tertiary education began with undergraduate and master's degrees in political science (with a specialism in European politics). During my postgraduate education, I have taken statistics and data-analysis courses at the LSE, Harvard, MIT and Oxford, and my PhD uses advanced quantitative methods to examine questions of legislative politics. While my extensive statistical training means I can quickly and effectively collect, clean and analyse data, my background in politics means that I have a deep understanding of the substantive issues featured in the Economist. My research background also means that I am confident in developing expertise in specific areas over time, and has given me the skills to plan and execute ambitious long-term projects. I believe that the synthesis of my quantitative skills and substantive understanding mean that I am ideally suited for a position with the data team at the Economist.

I have significant experience of webscraping and producing high-quality visualisations, including interactive graphs, maps, and infographics. I also am well-versed in a variety of traditional data

sources, including government statistics, social and political surveys, and economic indicators. My PhD thesis also uses large amounts of less traditional, unstructured data, which I use to create new indices and measurements of important social phenomena. I am particularly interested in the burgeoning field of quantitative text analysis. I am highly proficient in the R and STATA programming languages.

Finally, I feel that one of my key strengths is as a communicator. I have significant experience of explaining complex statistical concepts and findings in a clear and accessible way, and of helping others to improve their analysis and presentation of statistical results. I take great pleasure in working with others to deliver important findings in a way that makes few demands on the prior statistical knowledge of the audience.

This position would offer me the opportunity to build upon my previous experience and to work creatively to investigate a wide variety of interesting data-centric stories. I would relish the chance to work in a dynamic and forward-thinking organisation such as the Economist, and feel that I have much to contribute to the data team.

I appreciate your consideration of my application and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

**Jack Blumenau**