

ACA Recertification Process with a Disabled Perspective

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My name is David Spriegel. I'm a certified archivist with two, unrelated disabilities: central auditory processing disorder and mild cerebral palsy. Stated simply, my two disabilities, though mild, affect my ability to do basic tasks, such as completing the ACA recertification worksheet. Cerebral palsy, "is [a] group of neurological disorders that appear in infancy or early childhood and permanently affect body movement, muscle coordination, posture, and balance" (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke). Cerebral palsy affects my ability to "access [my] strong cognitive and academic functioning" (Physco-Educational Re-Evaluation). Central auditory processing disorder is a condition where the brain is wired slightly differently to process sound signals. For example, I have trouble with "recogniz[ing] subtle differences between sounds in words . . . tell[ing] where sounds are coming from . . . mak[ing] sense of the order of sounds . . . [and] block[ing] out competing background noises" (LDAmerica). Perhaps both conditions make my approach to completing tasks, such as the ACA recertification worksheet, overly literal; such as the ability to interpret and apply the directions in an orderly manner. Being overly literal and unsure when completing a self-directed task impacted the time and energy it took to determine what to include as my experience.

I believe that my disabilities make the recertification process harder than I anticipated; particularly the processing disorder. I'm writing this statement so that my experience might benefit others in similar circumstances.

What I found challenging when filling out the recertification worksheet was: 1) identifying and recording all my experiences from different personal records; and 2) quantifying and translating those experiences, using the official guidelines, into the correct point values. Both these issues led me to "become anxious when completing tasks that are unfamiliar and without delineation" (Physco-Educational Re-Evaluation). Working in the quiet, distraction free—environment of my kitchen assisted me in filling out the form. I found it easier to concentrate in familiar surroundings, with some music to increase my mood and energy; overhearing verbal conversations and

being around people (such as in coffee shops or public libraries) distracts me, and makes it more difficult to focus.

Recertifying by petition is a self-directed process; that self-direction increased my nervousness during the process. The structure for a self-directed assignment comes from within the individual; whereas I seek the structure for an assignment externally; for me the structure came through reading and rereading the guidelines, and making notes before entering data in the spreadsheet. Creating the structure by rereading the guidelines allowed me to absorb the finer points of each detailed section and then recalculate the point values. Similarly, making notes allowed me to see the calculations behind translating my freelance projects into the appropriate point values. The question of where and how to begin an unfamiliar assignment is a normal uncertainty for everyone, but my learning disability makes it more difficult. My mind conceives of instructions too literally, and thus the necessary quick abstraction to form new ideas and connections comes more slowly. Despite these two complicating issues, I was able to complete the recertification form and continue with the larger recertification process.

To complete the form, I created a Word document to track my professional activities, because it's immediately more familiar for me to use than an Excel sheet. I connected with a long-time Academy of Certified Archivists (ACA) member to review my form and help me fill things out. I e-mailed staff at the ACA to get confirmation on certain areas where I needed further clarification. I wish I had known to use the ACA spreadsheet from the beginning, so as not to have to transfer information from one place to another.

I would have loved the options of having a formal mentor help me through the process and of using alternate forms/worksheets. A webinar or instructional video would have made it easier for me to get confirmation for myself.

I've recently contacted the ACA's Regents to share my experiences and potential solutions. I appreciated their willingness to listen and move these issues forward.