

Classification Appeal Decision
Under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code

Appellant: [name]

Agency classification: Visual Archives Specialist
GS-1001-9

Organization: [branch]
[division]
[library]
[agency]
[city and State]

OPM decision: Archives Technician
GS-1421-7

OPM decision number: C-1421-07-01

/s/ Jeffrey Sumberg
Jeffrey E. Sumberg
Deputy Associate Director
Center for Merit System Accountability

3/7/2008
Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, this decision constitutes a certificate that is mandatory and binding on all administrative, certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting officials of the Government. The agency is responsible for reviewing its classification decisions for identical, similar, or related positions to ensure consistency with this decision. There is no right of further appeal. This decision is subject to discretionary review only under the conditions and time limits specified in the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

Since this decision lowers the grade of the appealed position, it is to be effective no later than the beginning of the sixth pay period after the date of this decision, as permitted by 5 CFR 511.702. The applicable provisions of parts 351, 432, 536, and 752 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, must be followed in implementing the decision. If the appellant is entitled to grade retention, the two-year retention period begins on the date this decision is implemented. The servicing human resources office must submit a compliance report containing the corrected position description and a Standard Form 50 showing the personnel action taken. The report must be submitted within 30 days from the effective date of the personnel action to the OPM office which accepted the appeal.

Decision sent to:

[appellant]

[servicing human resources office]

[headquarters human resources office]

Chief, Classification Appeals and Adjudication Section
Department of Defense
Civilian Personnel Management Service
1400 Key Boulevard, Suite B-200
Arlington, Virginia 22209-5144

Introduction

On May 1, 2007, the Center for Merit System Accountability, U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), accepted a position classification appeal from [appellant], who occupies the position of Visual Archives Specialist, GS-1001-9, in the [organization], in [city and State]. He requested that his position be classified at the GS-11 level. We accepted and decided this appeal under the provisions of section 5112 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.)

Position information

The appellant is responsible for maintaining the audiovisual information repository of the archives collection at the [library], the premier academic and research library of [agency] related information resources. He receives and processes incoming materials by inputting descriptive information into an archival database and labeling the items. He maintains materials in approved arrangements, reviews their physical condition, and determines the appropriate preservation action, reformatting options, handling policies, and digitization options, including data migration and conversion. He operates equipment used to reformat materials (e.g., film to digital tape or DVD, audiocassette to CD) or convert to electronic storage (e.g., scanning photographs and slides into a database). He provides reference and research assistance to patrons by making resources available and transferring materials to appropriate media for patron use.

We conducted an on-site desk audit with the appellant and a subsequent telephone interview with his supervisor. We decided this appeal by considering the audit findings and all other information of record furnished by the appellant and his agency, including his official position description (#Y744A) and other material received in the agency administrative report on June 5, 2007.

Series and title determination

The appellant's position is properly assigned to the GS-1421, Archives Technician Series. Archives technicians perform nonprofessional and technical work in accessioning, arranging, describing, preserving, using, and disposing of archives, non-current records, and related material kept in record and manuscript depositories, and providing associated reference services to agencies, organizations, and individuals. This fully and accurately represents the work performed by the appellant as described above. He performs technical work directly and completely covered by this series in describing, labeling, storing, arranging, preserving, and assisting patrons in using audiovisual archival materials.

The appellant's position is incorrectly assigned to the GS-1001, General Arts and Information Series. That series covers positions involving a combination of work characteristic of two or more series in the GS-1000, Information and Arts Group, or other work typical of this group for which no other series has been established. This group includes positions that involve professional, artistic, or technical work in: (1) the communication of information and ideas through verbal, visual, or pictorial means (such as public affairs, writing and editing, or language translation); (2) the collection, custody, presentation, restoration, display, and interpretation of art works, cultural objects, and other artifacts (such as museum curatorship, exhibit planning and

construction, or historic building preservation); or (3) a branch of fine or applied arts (such as interior design, illustration, theater or audiovisual production, photography, or musical composition.) Positions in this group require writing, editing, and language ability; artistic skill and ability; knowledge of foreign languages; the ability to evaluate and interpret informational and cultural materials; or the practical application of technical or aesthetic principles combined with manual skill and dexterity.

The appellant's position does not involve performing these or any other related categories of work, nor does it require the types of knowledges associated with this occupational group. It does not require writing or language ability, artistic skills or aesthetic sensibility, or historic or cultural interpretive abilities. His work consists of performing well-defined technical functions in handling, describing, and processing archival materials. It requires knowledge of nonprofessional archival methods and procedures and skill in operating media transfer equipment. This work and the knowledges and skills required to perform it are directly associated with the GS-1421 series.

The authorized title for technician positions in the GS-1421 series at GS-4 and above is Archives Technician.

The GS-1421 series also covers related positions typically found at GS-9 and above, titled Archives Specialist, which require administrative or other highly specialized qualifications in addition to an expert knowledge of the technical aspects of archival work. The duties of these positions typically include such work as providing liaison with program officials of other Government agencies to ensure that agency needs are met; evaluating records, maintenance, and disposition programs and practices in other agencies; providing technical assistance to program officials of other Government agencies relating to files management and records disposition (e.g., conducting surveys or workshops); performing liaison with the scholarly community to encourage research use of the records; exercising program direction of a records depository; and overseeing administrative and managerial functions such as personnel, budget, space, and data processing.

The appellant's position does not involve performance of these or any other comparable functions. His work is confined to the immediate archives collection and does not involve the conduct of liaison or other program interrelationships with other Government or outside agencies. He does not direct a depository program or have responsibility for the major administrative functions associated with the depository. His work is technical rather than administrative in nature and is consistent with the typical duties performed by archives technicians as described above.

Grade determination

Evaluation using the GS-1421 series standard

The GS-1421 standard provides grade-level criteria for archives technician work only up to the GS-7 level since this grade range adequately covers the work typical of the occupation. The standard notes that positions above GS-7 involve work which resembles in many respects that

performed by professionally trained archivists. Positions of this kind most frequently occur in situations where the work requires a highly technical, broad, or intensive subject-matter knowledge of the field represented in the content of the records involved; the work is very specialized and requires an intensive quasi-professional knowledge of one or more of the functional areas of archival work; or the work is of an administrative or supervisory nature and closely parallels that performed by professionally trained archivists.

None of these situations applies to the appellant's case. His work is not comparable to work performed by archivists, nor does it require a high degree of subject-matter knowledge related to the content of the records or an intensive knowledge of archival functions. Professional archival work consists of such functions as determining the relative or continuing value of materials in terms of their disposition; developing records classification and arrangement schemes and planning the scope and content of finding aids such as inventories and catalogs to facilitate reference services; deciding the action that should be taken to preserve records through repair or transfer to other media; and performing reference services when these require knowledge of archival, library, and other research resources and of the subject matter and the substance of the inquiry to provide specific information about the records in response to inquiries and professional research support, advice, and consultation.

In contrast, the appellant works under the direct supervision of an archivist who makes all relevant decisions related to the retention, disposition, arrangement, and formatting of the records. The appellant's role is to implement these decisions by, for example, labeling and storing items according to a predetermined system, compiling lists of holdings, and transferring items to other media as instructed for permanent retention. The appellant does not have independent authority to determine the materials to be retained, the system to be used to classify, arrange, and facilitate their use or retrieval, or the preservation actions to be taken. He does not provide the type of in-depth reference assistance normally done by archivists, but rather makes archival records available to patrons and then copies requested records to the desired format. He does not perform work that constitutes limited aspects of the work of professional archivists and could thus be considered quasi-professional in nature and beyond the scope of the grade-level criteria provided in the GS-1421 series standard.

The GS-1421 series standard is written in a narrative format with grade level criteria expressed in terms of two factors – Nature of Assignments and Responsibility. Nature of Assignments measures the area of assignment or functional area of work; the kind of work; the scope, depth, and special characteristics of the assignment; and the kinds and degree of knowledges, skills, and abilities required to do the work. Responsibility measures the way in which the work is assigned and the degree to which it is supervised; the nature of instructions, guidelines, references, etc., their applicability, and the degree to which these control the work; the extent and degree to which initiative and originality are required; and the type of responsibility exercised, what is involved, and the degree of accountability for the work.

Nature of Assignments

At the GS-7 level, the work requires the application of a substantial specialized body of technical and quasi-professional archival knowledges and skills and the application of this knowledge to a

very broad range of functions in a major subdivision of the records depository. For example, the work may involve organizing, arranging, preserving, or maintaining a major body of records, including providing the necessary reference and research services from this body. Assignments at GS-7 cover either a broad span of activities or a relatively narrow specialized and intensive activity. In either case, the work is complex and difficult and requires the application of an intensive knowledge of specific records, record systems, and record keeping programs, and the application of a thorough understanding of how the different bodies of records and the record systems involved relate to one another. Many assignments involve highly technical work, e.g., assembling, correlating, and analyzing information in connection with reference requests; screening, organizing, selecting, arranging, and rearranging of records; or collecting and correlating data and information derived from a number of sources. For example, a GS-7 archives technician may perform complex and difficult work in maintaining a major body of records, including either the preparation of cross-references, finding aids, and related instructional material, or providing adequate reference service from these records. In this case, the records represent a number of activities of a major department of the Federal Government and are arranged according to several record keeping systems.

The nature of the work performed by the appellant is consistent with this level. The appellant's work requires substantial specialized technical knowledge of the archival methods and procedures used in the organization and maintenance of audiovisual materials, coupled with a thorough knowledge of the overall contents of the audiovisual archival collection. This knowledge is applied to the performance of a broad range of functions in this major subdivision of the archive, including accession, description, arrangement, preservation, and reference work. This includes inputting records into the archival database; arranging and continually maintaining the collection in accordance with approved plans; preparing inventories, cross-references, and location registers; assessing the physical condition of materials and making basic repairs or recommending preservation or migration to another format; and responding to requests for information, access, or copies of audiovisual materials. His position corresponds to the GS-7 example described above in that he is responsible for performing all functions associated with the maintenance of a major body of records consisting of a variety of audiovisual materials (film, DVDs, photographs, slides, audiocassettes, and CDs) arranged according to differing record keeping systems reflecting the content of the materials or the time periods they represent.

Responsibility

At the GS-7 level, the work is performed under the general supervision and administrative direction of an archivist. The work is reviewed for conformance to policy and regulation (in relation to the handling of unique, special, or precedent cases) rather than for technical content. The employee is responsible for the technical accuracy of his work and for the development of information where finding aids, precedent situations, or instructions are inadequate or unavailable.

Similarly, the appellant works under the general administrative supervision of an archivist. He performs the technical aspects of his work independently in accordance with the established record keeping system and plans. His work is reviewed only from an overall standpoint for

general conformance to these requirements. He is responsible for the technical accuracy of his work and for determining the most appropriate practices to apply to new situations.

The appellant performs technical archival work fully subsumed by the GS-1421 occupation. This technical archival work is fully covered by, and does not extend beyond, the grade level criteria provided in the GS-1421 series standard.

Evaluation using the GS-350 standard

The appellant operates a variety of media transfer equipment. This work would be best evaluated using the standard for the GS-350 Equipment Operator Series. This series covers positions that involve the operation of microfilm equipment, peripheral equipment, mail processing equipment, duplicating equipment, and copier/duplicating equipment requiring a knowledge of the operating characteristics of the equipment and controls, the skill and knowledge to set up and adjust the equipment and controls to produce acceptable products, and the skill to perform normal operator maintenance. Although the types of equipment operated by the appellant represent more recent technology than those specifically addressed in this standard, the basic knowledge and skill requirements are the same; i.e., the ability to set up, operate, adjust, and monitor the operation of machines where the actual machine function is performed by an internal automated process rather than by the operator. Correspondingly, the appellant monitors the operation of the media transfer equipment but the equipment functions themselves are largely automatic.

The highest level work described in the GS-350 standard is graded at GS-4. Therefore, this work cannot affect the grade of the appellant's position and so is not evaluated in this decision.

Decision

The highest grade level of work performed by the appellant is GS-7. The appellant's position is thus properly classified as Archives Technician, GS-1421-7.