

**CLASSIFICATION APPEAL DECISION  
U.S. OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT  
CHICAGO OVERSIGHT DIVISION**

INCUMBENT:     **[appellant's name]**

POSITION NUMBER:     L-7829

AGENCY CLASSIFICATION:     Librarian, GS-1410-11

POSITION LOCATION:     Department of Agriculture  
                                  Forest Service  
                                  [appellant's installation]

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL  
MANAGEMENT DECISION:     **Librarian, GS-1410-11**

**OPM DECISION NUMBER:**     C-1410-11-01

This appellate decision constitutes a certificate that is mandatory and binding on administrative, certifying, payroll, and accounting offices of the Government. It is the final administrative decision on the classification of the position, not subject to further appeal. It is subject to discretionary review only under the conditions and time limits specified in Part 511, Subpart F, of Title 5, U.S. Code of Federal Regulations.

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FREDERICK J. BOLAND  
CLASSIFICATION APPEALS OFFICER

4/4/96

DATE

**DECISION TRANSMITTED TO:**

[appellant's name and address]

Ms. Evelyn M. White  
Director of Personnel  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Washington, DC 20250

[name and address of appellant's servicing  
personnel officer]

## **INFORMATION CONSIDERED**

- ▶ Appellant's letter dated November 27, 1995, its enclosures, and earlier correspondence.
- ▶ Agency letter of January 12, 1996, and its enclosures.
- ▶ Copy of the official description of the appellant's position, number L-7829.
- Statement of agency's evaluation of those duties, received January 25, 1996.
- ▶ Copy of the appellant's supervisor's position description.
- ▶ Copy of the appellant's performance standards.
- ▶ Telephone interview with the appellant on April 1 and 2, 1996, and with her supervisor on April 2, 1996.

## **EVALUATION CRITERIA**

- ▶ OPM *Librarian, GS-1410, Series* position classification standard, dated August 1994.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The appellant contests her agency's decision classifying her position, number L-7829, as Librarian, GS-1410-11. The position is located in the Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, [appellant's activity]. She believes her position description accurately lists her major duties, but feels her role as the Laboratory's resident authority on library matters, the independence with which she works, the lack of guidelines in some areas of her work, and her contacts with businesses, universities and foreign libraries (Factors 2, 3, 6, and 7 of the Librarian classification standard) warrant higher credit.

## **JOB INFORMATION**

The appellant provides reference and information services to Forest Product Laboratory scientists and staff, searches scientific and technical references to answer queries, catalogs materials for the library, recommends additions to the Library's collection, etc. The Library houses about 140,000 items in its collection and primarily serves Laboratory staff, but also functions as a worldwide information center for forestry and forest products utilization. The appellant, along with three Librarian Technicians in her unit, reports to a Supervisory Technical Publications Editor, GS-1083-12.

## ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### Series and Title Determination

The appellant's duties fall within the type of work covered by the Librarian, GS-1410, series, which includes work that primarily requires a full professional knowledge of the theories, objectives, principles, and techniques of librarianship. Such work is concerned with the collection, organization, preservation, and retrieval of recorded knowledge in printed, written, audiovisual, film, wax, near-print methods, magnetic tape, or other media. Typical functions include the selection, acquisition, cataloging, and classification of materials, bibliographic and readers' advisory services, reference and literature searching services, library management and systems planning, or the development and strengthening of library services.

The prescribed title for non-supervisory positions in the GS-1410 series is *Librarian*. A parenthetical title indicating a subject matter specialization or functional area may be added to the title at the discretion of the agency.

### Grade Determination

The Librarian standard is in Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. This system requires that credit levels assigned under each factor relate to only one set of duties and responsibilities. Under FES, work must be fully equivalent to the factor-level described in the standard to warrant credit at that level's point value. If work is not fully equivalent to the overall intent of a particular level described in the standard, a lower level and point value must be assigned, unless the deficiency is balanced by an equally important aspect of the work that meets a higher level.

### Factor 1: Knowledge Required by the Position

*This factor assesses the nature and extent of information or facts that employees must understand to do acceptable work (e.g., steps, procedures, practices, rules, policies, theories, principles, and concepts) and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply those knowledges.*

At Level 1-7, the appellant has already been credited with knowledge of a wide range of Library concepts, principles, and practices, such as would be gained through extended graduate study or experience, and with skill in applying that knowledge to difficult and complex work assignments. She does not challenge her agency's assignment of this level, but her technical authority claims under Factor 2, if valid, would also demand higher credit under this factor. However, to receive Level 1-8 credit and to be considered a technical authority or expert under the standard, a Librarian's work must require mastery of a broad Library function (e.g., cataloging in general, versus a narrower specialty, such as cataloging forest products). Positions at Level 1-8 regularly resolve highly complex problems. Such a level of knowledge might be demonstrated in a narrower field like appellant's if correspondingly more complex subject areas were involved. As it is, though, the problems the

appellant regularly faces lack the requisite complexity. She sometimes advises other catalogers both within and outside the Forest Service on subject headings, indexes, thesauri, and similar matters. Foreign libraries may inquire about starting a thesaurus or index and she may advise other Librarians on the cataloging schemes she has employed, but she answers such inquiries and resolves problems in these areas by using or adapting accepted professional methods and practices, rather than by devising novel approaches as at Level 1-8. Her decisions and recommendations typically are limited to her own library. She intercedes with the National Agriculture Library on policy decisions that would affect her own operation, but unlike Level 1-8, her actions do not significantly change or influence important policies or programs, e.g., those affecting entire library systems. She performs original cataloging requiring interpretation, judgment, and creation of headings specific to the Forest Product Laboratory's needs, by applying and adapting accepted professional practices, as at Level 1-7.

We evaluate this factor at Level 1-7 and credit 1250 points.

## **Factor 2: Supervisory Controls**

*This factor covers the nature and extent of direct and indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the employee's responsibility, and the review of completed work. Controls are exercised by the supervisor in the way assignments are made, instructions are given to the employee, priorities and deadlines are set, and objectives and boundaries are defined. Responsibility of the employee depends upon the extent to which the employee is expected to develop the sequence and timing of various aspects of the work, to modify or recommend modification of instructions, and to participate in establishing priorities and defining objectives. The degree of review of completed work depends upon the nature and extent of the review, e.g., close and detailed review of each phase of the assignment, detailed review of the finished assignment, spot-check of finished work for accuracy, or review only for adherence to policy.*

At Level 2-4, the appellant has been credited with the full independence typically exercised by experienced Librarians. It is an appropriate and normal level of supervision for professional positions at the GS-11 through 13 grade levels. She bases her claim to higher credit upon the classification, cataloging, and reference work for which she is responsible, the discretion she exercises when interpreting and implementing policy, her role as a technical expert, and the recommendations she makes, which are referenced as authoritative in her position description. In addition, she reports to a Supervisory Technical Publications Editor, GS-1083-12, who is not a professional Librarian by training.

Lacking a supervisor trained in her professional discipline, the appellant exercises greater independence than usual for experienced Librarians. Level 2-5, however, requires significantly greater independence *and* responsibility than Level 2-4. The appellant's responsibilities are no different than that of other experienced Librarians at Level 2-3 who direct a library or provide comprehensive reference and research service. The policy and technical issues she deals with are not of the complexity and scope found at Level 2-5. For example, the standard indicates that at this level

Librarians exercise considerable discretion and judgment concerning the interpretation and implementation of policy and in making technical decisions that form the basis for major library policy and operational decisions and that they make extensive unreviewed technical judgments. Considerable judgement and discretion might come to play in significant policy decisions affecting regional library systems or the like, rather than the narrower scope of the appellant's operations. Extensive unreviewed technical judgements at Level 2-5 must involve the technical complexity indicative of Level 1-8, discussed in the previous section, rather than technical judgements made at lower levels. Similarly, Level 2-5 refers to the acceptance of the Librarian's work as technically authoritative in the sense that Factor 1 uses it (an authority sought out by experienced professionals because of one's mastery of the profession or a broad aspect of it), rather than the appellant's sense (a resident authority to non-professional staff and less experienced professionals).

We evaluate this factor at Level 2-4 and credit 450 points.

### **Factor 3: Guidelines**

*This factor covers the nature of guidelines and the judgment needed to apply them.*

The appellant claims the highest level of credit allowed under this factor, Level 3-5, which is characteristic of the most senior professional positions within an agency. She indicates that most of the guidelines applicable to her work do not cover forest products in any detail and need to be fleshed out. She claims to do many of the things called for at Level 3-5 and cites statements from her position description about deviating from established procedures, serving as an authority in one or more major library functions, and developing and interpreting guidelines for widespread use. She indicates that she is an authority in cataloging and classifying forest products materials and in reference work on forest products. In further support, she cites her involvement in ensuring that a Forest Service database conformed to national cataloging guidelines so information could be easily searched and transferred from one computer system to another.

The appellant has been credited at Level 3-3 with using judgment in interpreting and adapting professional guidelines for application to specific problems and applying standard practices to new situations. This applies to most of her cataloging and research as well as her direction of the library. Her claim to Level 3-5 credit is based largely upon her role as the Forest Products Laboratory's resident authority on library matters. The standard, however, uses authority more strictly, as discussed under Factor 1, in reference to one who provides guidance on highly complex issues and problems that resist resolution by experienced Librarians using accepted professional methods, rather than the difficult and complex problems the appellant resolves by using or adapting accepted methods. She does not work solely from broadly stated and non-specific guidelines, like basic legislation, regulations, and principles requiring extensive interpretation, as might the Level 3-5 head of a library system who interprets and revises policy and program guidance for subordinate libraries. Nor does she develop novel professional methods, criteria, or policies, as typical of Level 3-4, because standard guidelines and approaches are incapable of addressing the subject matter or information requests. Specific examples of her work where guidelines are lacking include such actions as devising

procedures for E-mailing reports and forms via the Internet to speed interlibrary loans and ensuring that the FS Info database, a Forest Service information resource, conforms to national cataloging guidelines. While her introduction of Internet exchanges may be new and highly beneficial to the libraries involved, such exchange of information is not a novel development in librarianship and is properly characterized at best as an adaptation of practices having ample precedent. Though she indicates she is one of only two catalogers in the Forest Service when the FS INFO database was implemented, her knowledge of its particulars and involvement in its development fall significantly short of Level 3-5, which requires developing and interpreting guidelines concerning major library functions, e.g., guidelines applying to cataloging in general. Ensuring the FS INFO database conforms to national guidelines also is not equivalent to significantly deviating from the guidelines, which Level 3-4 requires.

We evaluate this factor at Level 3-3 and credit 275 points.

#### **Factor 4: Complexity**

*This factor covers the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of tasks, steps, processes, or methods in the work performed; the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done; and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work.*

The appellant has been credited with Level 4-4 and does not claim higher credit. Level 4-4 work is characterized, as is the appellant's, by, among other things, unusual circumstances, variations in approach, and incomplete or conflicting data that contribute to the complexity of decision making. Examples of work at this level include interpreting bibliographic standards and rules and identifying and reporting problems in their application with suggestions for change; performing original cataloging and classification of serials, determining the best method of identifying subsequent changes in such elements as title, issuing body, and frequency; utilizing general and specialized databases, interlibrary loan and other diverse sources of information, and library cooperative arrangements to meet immediate and ongoing information retrieval needs; and making the necessary modifications to vendor-supplied software to link it to existing integrated library system modules.

Her work does not fully meet Level 4-5 criteria, which, unlike her assignments, include, among other things, regularly originating new techniques, establishing criteria for regional or component-wide activities, or developing new information sources. Work at this level is complicated by the novel or obscure nature of problems or by major areas of uncertainty in approach, methodology, or interpretation, as might be found in developing network services for a library system or researching and evaluating the suitability of esoteric information required by scientists. Such work requires a more substantial depth of analysis than experienced Librarians typically employ and is uncharacteristic of the appellant's work.

We evaluate this factor at Level 4-4 and credit 225 points.

## **Factor 5: Scope and Effect**

*This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work (i.e., the purpose, breadth, and depth of the assignment) and the effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization. Only the effect of properly performed work is considered.*

As at Level 5-3, the purpose of the appellant's work is to apply established practices and techniques to investigate and analyze a variety of frequently encountered library problems, questions, or situations. Also like Level 5-3, the appellant's work enables the Forest Product Laboratory to accomplish its mission more effectively.

Her work does not fully meet Level 5-4 criteria. Although the purpose of her work also includes investigating or analyzing unusual or specialized conditions, problems, or questions in a subject-matter area, unlike Level 5-4, it does not directly affect a wide range of library functions within Agriculture or other libraries that might emulate or adapt practices, programs, or reference tools developed by the appellant. Her input on policy issues to higher organization levels only indirectly affects other libraries within the Forest Service, should her recommendations be adopted.

We evaluate this factor at Level 5-3 and credit 150 points.

## **Factor 6: Personal Contacts and Factor 7: Purpose of Contacts**

*The Librarian standard treats Factors 6 and 7 together. Contacts credited under Factor 6 must be the same contacts considered under Factor 7. Factor 6 (Levels 2 to 3) includes face-to-face contacts and telephone and radio dialogue with persons not in the supervisory chain. Levels of this factor are based on what is required to make the initial contact, the difficulty of communicating with those contacted, and the setting in which the contact takes place (e.g., the degree to which the employee and those contacted recognize their relative roles and authorities). Factor 7 (Levels B to C) addresses the purpose of personal contacts, which may range from factual exchange of information to situations involving significant or controversial issues and differing viewpoints or objectives.*

### **Personal Contacts**

The appellant feels Level 3 credit is due because she deals with library personnel and professional associations outside her organization and her agency. She cites contacts with the National Agricultural Library on matters of policy and collection development and her establishment of exchange agreements with foreign libraries to support her claim. She also claims contact with industry and Congress. She indicates the purpose of these contacts is to motivate or influence clientele to fully utilize programs and services and to resolve problems concerning issues like hours of operation or access to stacks and databases.

Level 3 credit is warranted where nonroutine contacts outside the agency occur in moderately unstructured settings, i.e., the purpose, role, and authority of each party is identified and developed



during the course of the contact. In contrast, the appellant's internal and external contacts are typically routine and structured, as at Level 2. That is, they are generally established on a routine basis and usually at her work place, although respective roles and authority may at first be unclear. Her telephone contacts with industry or Congressional staff are typically to provide information to the requesting party and are routine.

We evaluate Personal Contacts at Level 2.

### **Purpose of Contacts**

The purpose of the appellant's internal and external contacts is typically to provide information or advice on noncontroversial reference or research issues and is equivalent to Level B. Her contacts with Laboratory management, researchers, and exchange libraries, however, also entail persuading others to adopt or comply with policies governing the exchange of reference material, the use of collections under other organizations' control, subscribing to or acquiring materials that will enhance the library's usefulness, etc. The purpose of these latter contacts equates to Level C.

We evaluate Purpose of Contacts at Level C.

We evaluate these factors at Level 2-C and credit 145 points.

### **Factor 8: Physical Demands**

*This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed upon the employee by the work assignment. This includes physical characteristics and abilities and physical exertion involved in the work.*

Level 8-1 work is sedentary and presents no special physical demands, though there may be some walking, standing, bending, and carrying of light items. Level 8-2 work involves considerable walking, stooping, bending, climbing, etc., or long periods of standing or recurring lifting of moderately heavy items. The appellant's work is sedentary and free of special physical demands. Like Level 8-1, it involves some walking, standing, etc., but unlike Level 8-2, it does not *require* long periods of standing or the like, as the appellant is free to sit or rest when necessary. Occasional lifting of a box with books is required, but rarely is recurring lifting of boxes ever required.

We evaluate this factor at Level 8-1 and credit 5 points.

### **Factor 9: Work Environment**

*This factor considers the risks and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings or the nature of the work assigned and the safety regulations required.*

Level 9-1 work is in an office setting. Level 9-2 work involves moderate safety risks or discomforts that require special precautions. The appellant's work is performed in an office-like setting and requires no special safety precautions.

We evaluate this factor at Level 9-1 and credit 5 points.

### **FACTOR LEVEL POINT SUMMARY**

Factor	Level	Points
1	1-7	1250
2	2-4	450
3	3-3	275
4	4-4	225
5	5-3	150
6 & 7	2-C	145
8	8-1	5
9	9-1	5
	Total:	2505

The table above summarizes our evaluation of the appellant's work. As shown on page 8 of the standard, a total of 2505 points falls within the GS-11 grade range (2355-2750).

### **Decision**

The proper classification of the appellant's position is Librarian, GS-1410-11.