

<b>Name</b>	<b>Pauline</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>45-60</b>
<b>Position</b>	<b>Museums Development Officer</b>
<b>Disability</b>	<b>Impaired vision, Diabetes, Dyslexia</b>

I am a part-time, very mature, student towards the end of my PhD research. I also work full time as a Museum Development Officer. My first degree was in English and then I did an MA in English and then an MA in Museum Studies. That is how I got into archaeology as a museum curator. I was working with a particular collection which I became very interested in because there was no literature associated with it. Mostly as an attempt to get my head around the collection, I started doing a PhD. My fieldwork is different from normal fieldwork in that I am a Buildings Archaeologist. My fieldwork is done in terms of things such as collections and checklists, so no actual digging.

I have impaired vision due to diabetes and I am also dyslexic. I am one of the generation that went to school being called lazy and stupid. Then I found out that I had a very differently wired brain. I can look at buildings and say 'I understand that'; whilst other people just see a pile of bricks. It does not affect my day-to-day activities a great deal in that I can still see fairly well in good light. I have some colour distortion and cannot see green anymore. It is very bad in low light levels. For the work I need to do, both in my day-to-day job and in my research work, it does not have a major impact. It has been mostly working with geological maps. I cannot interpret them because I cannot see variations of greens. Sometimes I cannot see what I am looking at with geological maps. One of my research questions is comparing buildings to the underlying geological substrate which has been a problem. However, most of the problems have not been so much the fieldwork but at academic things, not teaching, but conferences. Things are not presented properly. They will present things with small lettering in a dimly lit room. If I am really unlucky, there will be green lettering on a green background.

It has been really interesting doing research work for myself. In my day-to-day job, it is always for somebody else. I design databases and you are always thinking about potential audiences and users. So there is something quite selfish about the research work. The wider academic community will be interested in my results, but it is really me who is interested in asking these questions. There is a feeling of self-indulgence about doing research, as well as a feeling of achievement. It is really nice when I see results coming through from the analysis.

There is either a feeling of surprise at unexpected results, or satisfaction at seeing things falling into line when the expected results come up.

Career-wise, I used to be a curator working with collections, very much hands-on work. I really had to decide that it was no longer a career option because I could not do the quick visual checking of collections which is an essential part of the job. When I decided to make the move from curator to career development work, my eyes were very unstable and I did not know how long it would be before I had very limited sight. They are actually stable now, but I did not know that would be the case at the time, so I changed to a job that I can do with very little vision. Working with collections, especially as a curator doing condition work, it is necessary to have a fair amount of sight, at the nose-end level at least. I have always found tactile skills and smell and taste useful in this sort of work. I can taste the difference between wood species and what has happened to different pieces of wood. But I would not recommend tasting museum artefacts, it is not a good thing to do really.

My condition is stable at the moment and has been for some years. I radically changed how my diabetes is treated and that seemed to stabilise things. The adaptations and adjustments that have been made, I did myself with the career shift. Also, the internet is a great help in that with digital geological maps you do not need to be able to see in colour. It is much easier.

I think that being disabled has helped me enormously in doing my research. I have always been fairly aware and active on the political side. A lot of the theoretical stuff at both MAS and PhD levels was very familiar, although I did not realise this before I started. It was a series of recognitions. Throughout my working life, because of my interest in disability politics, it has led me into working with other areas such as ethnicity and gender. This means that, with regards to research on the archaeology side, things which appear to many students to be very theoretical and perhaps irrelevant to what they are doing, to me the connection between practice and theory is there in my own life. It is not the divide that it appears to be for many people.