

Name	Jackie
Age	45-60
Degree	Archaeology
Year	2
Full-Time/Part-Time	Full-Time
Disability	Dyslexia

When I went to school they did not really understand dyslexia, they just noticed that I could not spell. I went to a secondary modern school because I did not pass the 11 Plus exam. Whilst they were helpful, they said that as I could not spell I could not do GCEs, I did City and Guilds instead. I went into catering for many years and then on to fund raising. I thought that if I do not have to cope with paperwork, I would be alright. Then I became involved in the WI and ended up in a leading role. I had to develop a strategy of how to cope with reading and spelling. Spell-checkers on computers make it easier, but there are words that are not there and you have to add them to the computer's dictionary. When I did public speaking I would just practice and practice until I could say the words by heart. But sometimes I had to 'cold-read' something and I find that very difficult. If it is something straight forward, I am usually alright. If it is something with complicated words, I have to have time to read it out loud to myself. If I can do that, I can cope with it.

I have done quite a lot of excavating, a variety of prehistoric sites and even excavated mammoth bones. It is magic; you clean back an area and see something that has not been seen for thousands of years. I can see things fine and have no problem with excavating. When I am writing reports, I know what I want to say, but it is difficult. That is what takes me time, I wish it did not, but I cannot see how I can do it any other way. I did go abroad on a dig, although with some reservations initially. I have travelled abroad before, but this was living on a campsite with students and a group of Russians. I was quite surprised how friendly I got with people, despite the age gap and the language barrier. They always included me in whatever was going on. They were great and I learned a lot from them. It has also given me more confidence to ask how to do something. Before, I always thought that they do not want someone their mother's age asking them things. They were very supportive.

With computer skills, the younger people do it so quickly and I have never had to in my life before, producing graphs and charts. I have a friend who works in a college and he has showed me how to do things. Once you know the system, it is alright.

The library was a problem to start with. When I did life-long learning before going to University, I could not see the secret of how the books were numbered. They were very helpful and found the books for me. But I thought that I could not spend three years doing it this way. So, I made myself go there, giving myself plenty of time to find the books and got into the habit of knowing where they are, that certainly helped. I think I went a lot by the shapes and colours. They moved them over Christmas and when I went back I had a blind panic because I could not find anything. When they showed me where they had been moved to, I found that I could go back and cope again.

I do not know if I could find a job in archaeology, I am not sure that I will go on with it professionally, perhaps a bit difficult at my age. If I had done this sort of thing when I was at school I would have probably gone and worked for a museum. But I did not know that then, there was not the support that there is now.