

***"The Professional's Voice"***

June 2013

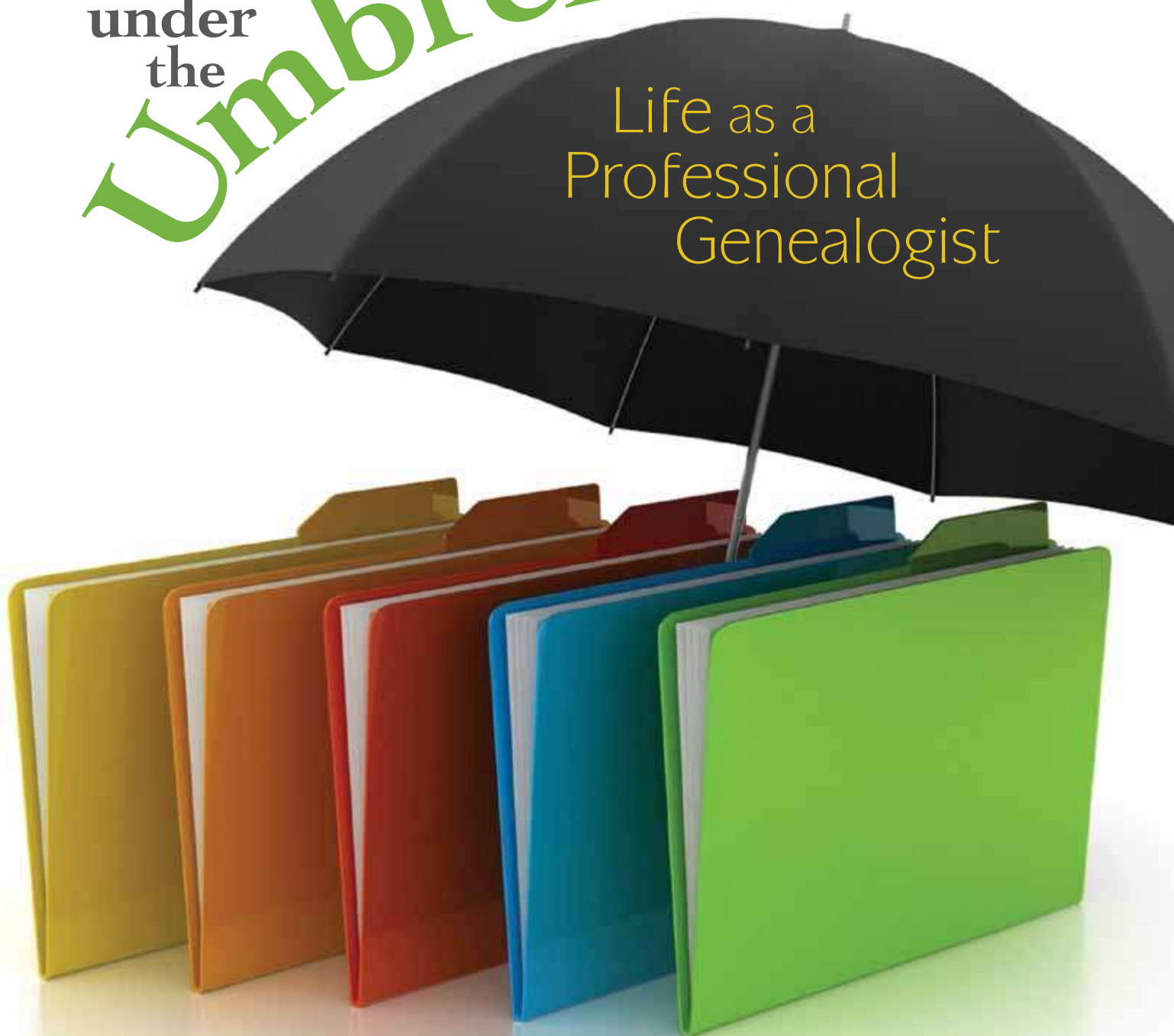
Association of Professional Genealogists

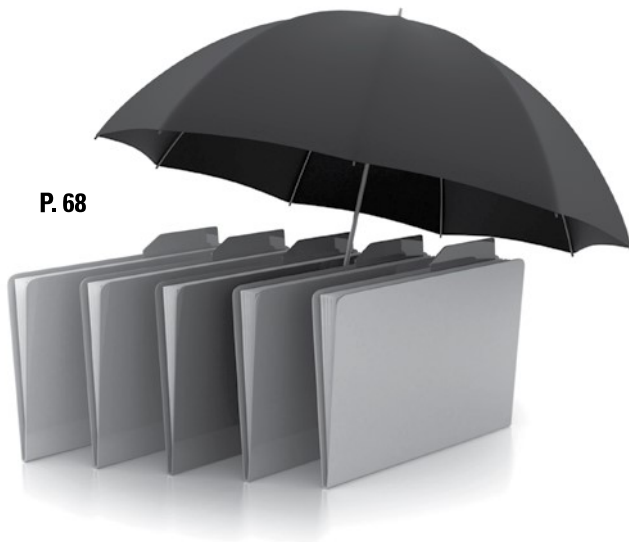
# QUARTERLY

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A  
Peek  
under  
the  
Umbrella

Life as a  
Professional  
Genealogist





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Paul K. Graham, CG, AG

# *Certification, Accreditation, and the Genealogy Career*

Obtaining credentials has played a significant role in my genealogical development and career. Both credentialing bodies promote standards that I aspire to, and they provide a structure against which my work can be judged. Clients recognize them as a mark of achievement. Credentialing also connects me with others who support high standards in their daily work, which is fundamental to my ongoing professional development.

I made the decision to pursue genealogy professionally ten years ago—not quite two years out of college—and certification was first on my to-do list. It took five years to develop the skills and experience needed to apply successfully, which I did in August 2008. I was granted the Certified Genealogist credential from the Board for Certification of Genealogists (BCG) in January 2009.

Accreditation from the International Commission for the Accreditation of Professional Genealogists (ICAPGen) came in September 2012. Only four years had passed since submitting my certification portfolio, but the experiences fell at very different points in my career. In the intervening years, I pursued a graduate education and made the move to Salt Lake City to join ProGenealogists, the research division of Ancestry.com. I would have waited much longer to seek accreditation had I not moved close to a testing location.

I had overlapping motivations for pursuing the credentials. Fundamentally, they gave me a way to pit my abilities against tests developed by leaders in the field. As a young professional competing for clients against seasoned genealogists, certification allowed me to publicly demonstrate my skills. During accreditation my primary goal was to introduce myself to a varied

approach to a similar subject matter. In both cases, I wanted to learn how leading professionals approach the creation of quality genealogical work.

I was also drawn to accreditation as a second credential because of the type of test ICAPGen has produced. I always thrived in a writing environment, much preferring term papers to timed multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank tests. Writing was part of what appealed to me about certification, particularly the compilation of a complex-evidence case study. The accreditation exam's test of my instant-recall and timed-research abilities was a unique and challenging experience.

Together, the credentialing processes have benefited my career in three clear ways. First, certification helped develop my abilities in genealogical problem solving and presenting complex evidence, and accreditation improved how I approach timed research and reporting. Second, clients generally recognize the value of credentials, even when they are not familiar with the exact process.

Now that I have laid a strong foundation for my career, the third benefit of credentialing has become more important to me. The credentials connect me to a community of professionals devoted to promoting high standards of professionalism in the field. That community provides a unique source of support for continued development that cannot be found elsewhere.

I wholeheartedly recommend that anyone pursuing a professional career in genealogy obtain one of the credentials. You will become a stronger genealogist, your clients will recognize the achievement, and you will join a passionate community of professionals. Pursuing both credentials will provide a broad professional perspective that neither process achieves alone.