

resources of the Five Civilized Tribes, the Dawes Commission, state and territory rolls, she also touches on the practice of slavery among the Five Civilized Tribes, which many Americans may not realize occurred.

In conclusion, Berry's book is a wonderful primer for family history researchers to have in their personal libraries. Those new to genealogy will find it most helpful, but more experienced researchers will also find her tools and information helpful and worthy of frequent reference for topics in which they may not be well-versed. A beginner can read it cover to cover, but a reader with a basic foundation in genealogical research will appreciate that each chapter can be studied individually, as needed. Berry's writing is easily comprehensible, not at all overwhelming even though it contains a wealth of information. She is careful to define terms that a beginner may not know. Her personal research anecdotes make the book very relatable and entertaining to read.

Credentials for Genealogists: Proof of the Professional

By Paul Gorry. Gorry Research, Baltinglass, Ireland, 2018. ISBN 978-1-9164480. 232 pages. €16.00. Available at blessingtonbookstore.ie/buy-books-online/local-history/credentials-for-genealogists.

Reviewed by
Paul K. Graham, AG, CG, CGL

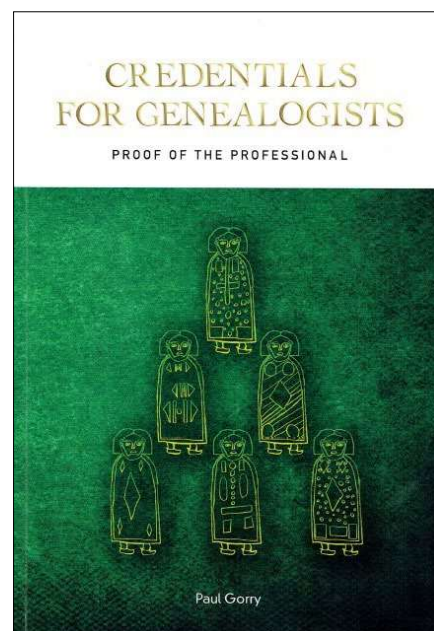
I expected *Credentials for Genealogists: Proof of the Professional* by Irish genealogist Paul Gorry to be a thorough-yet-rote account of the history and process of credentialing. I didn't expect to discover a strong defense of credentials that also describes the modern genealogy world

inclusively, discusses "shifting sands" in genealogy, and expresses what it means to be a professional genealogist. The book creates starting points for conversation through untempered opinions and is an enjoyable read.

Section One contains a genealogy of the genealogy profession. The pace is slow and tedious but necessary to provide context for everything that follows. Things pick up with a discussion of tensions around the introduction of the US-based concept of forensic genealogy, and the rest of the book reads much faster.

Section Two outlines parallel developments in standards of evidence (primarily from the United States) and academic programs for genealogy. It explores how credentialing and academia serve as barriers to entry as a genealogy professional. Section Three offers Gorry's professional biography and describes at length the characteristics of professional genealogists. Section Four contains survey responses from genealogists (delivered anonymously) who offer their own perspectives on credentialing's place within the profession. This is followed by a fifth section in which Gorry summarizes his own views.

By focusing on common themes, the book provides a welcome internationalized view of our profession. A consistent theme is Gorry's rejection of barriers to entry in professional genealogy. Genealogy is a "broad church" and benefits from those coming to it from a variety of disciplines and experiences. It's important that academia and credentialing bodies serve their distinct roles—imparting knowledge and testing competence, respectively. Requiring a specific academic degree (as is the case to be admitted to the Register of Qualified Genealogists) serves to devalue the role of credentials in the field, as does the creation of niche credentialing organizations (like the Council for the Advancement of Forensic Genealogy).



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Experience is another major theme. No amount of classroom participation, reading, or researching our own family history will prepare us fully for the requirements of professional research—an idea not unique to our field. Gorry sets a reasonably high bar for incoming professionals, suggesting they have "a number of years" experience and "ironed out any deficiencies" in their research, writing, and business skills before hanging out their shingle. Credentials are unique and valuable because they test the results of that experience, as opposed to just academic study.

The section which describes a "true professional" is one of my favorite parts of the book. It outlines nine areas of knowledge, skill, and experience

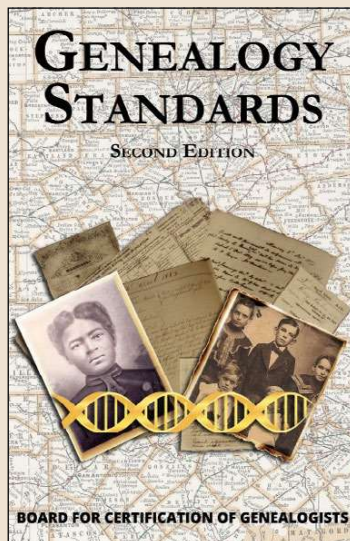
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required to be a genealogist for hire. Gorry discusses the obvious needs for specific research skills, working knowledge of broad topics, non-genealogy skills such as computer usage and writing ability, and fundamental “basic competence.” Although he primarily writes about the value of education and practice, Gorry does give a nod to natural talent, or “the genealogy instinct.”

The book's broadest theme is the struggle to define where to strike the balance between barriers and a free-for-all situation, and even Gorry doesn't clearly define where he falls on that spectrum. On the one hand, credentials are valuable tools to “test the competence and experience of applicants,” but on the other hand they should “not [be] elitist or limiting, but rather *enabling*.” He worries about the growing ratio of non-credentialed to credentialed genealogists, while at the same time suggesting that “quality rather than quantity would be a good motto.”

Because Gorry offers such deliberative and thorough commentary throughout the book, misconceptions related to US credentialing and standards stand out. He classifies the Genealogical Proof Standard (GPS) as a “formula for evidence and proof” that tries to codify “instinct, knowledge, experience and judgement.” His description suggests a misunderstanding of the GPS, which articulates a framework for making sound arguments but makes no claims on intuition and creativity. Gorry also describes the process for five-year renewals with the Board for Certification of Genealogists as the same as first-time applications, which left me wondering if existing renewal requirements already meet his recommendation for lower barriers.

As someone credentialed by two organizations, I found much to agree with, a good amount to disagree with, and even more food for thought. The

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reactions Gorry elicits from the reader make the book fun to read. Everyone will find unique points of agreement and disagreement. I recognized my own points of view in the book but they were often situated among alternate or diverging perspectives.

Gorry has done a service to the genealogical community. His work encapsulates the history of modern genealogy and positions current professionals within the milieu of the rapid changes during the last two decades. He advocates strongly for the value of credentialing in our field, but without sugarcoating problematic issues. Those who wish to understand professional genealogy today will find *Credentialing for Genealogists: Proof of the Professional* a must-read text.



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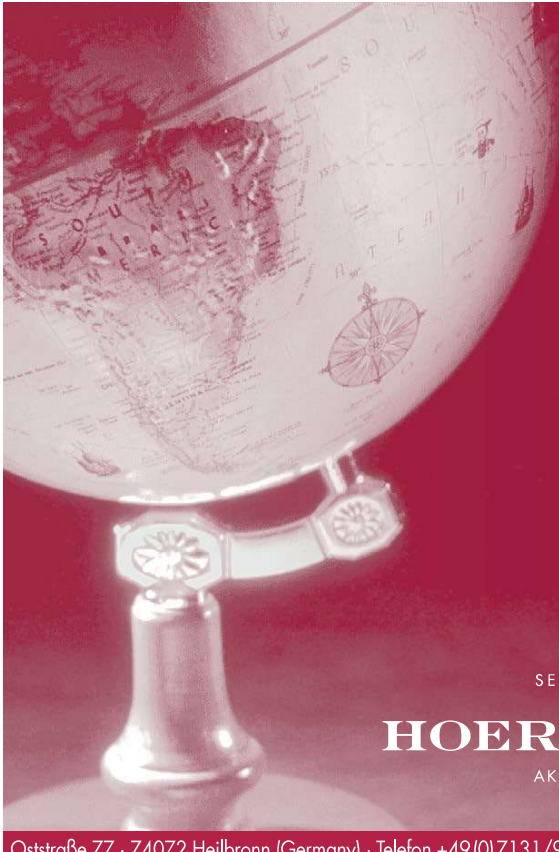
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