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October 8, 2024

History Program Coordinator, Francis Davies, Ph.D.  
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Warm Greetings Dr. Davies and Search Committee Members,

Please find this letter as an enthusiastic expression of interest in the tenure-track position of Assistant Professor in History at Florida Gulf Coast University. With a Ph.D. in History from the University of Missouri conferred in June 2024, graduate certifications in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Museum Studies, I bring a rich interdisciplinary approach to history. Generous experience in the material world of public history, geography, and teaching offered me the ability to finetune my research and teaching approaches, as I seek to integrate ecological, economic, intellectual, and transatlantic history into not only my research but the classroom. My work explores the intersections of these fields during the colonial and early republican periods and aligns with the departmental emphasis on interdisciplinary scholarship. I am thrilled by the opportunity to contribute to the field of history at FGCU while engaging students in experiential learning.

My book project, *Reciprocities Market*, examines the ways in which 18th-century transatlantic scientific exchange fueled a period of rapid early American economic and social transformation. Specifically, using ArcGIS, NVivo, Gephi, and traditional text-based analysis, I explore John Bartram's (1699-1777) 18th-century botanical subscription service to explore the collapse of hierarchical exchange systems and the rise of market-based transatlantic knowledge economies. Utilizing John and William Bartram's (1734-1812) epistolary record alongside publications, I explore how local scientific knowledge shaped colonial and European societies. This research contributes to a growing body of scholarship on the commercialization of knowledge, the commodification of natural resources, and the flow of knowledge and goods across the Atlantic. In my remaining time as a post-doctoral teaching fellow, I aim to complete my book proposal and secure a publisher. As I refine my incorporation of digital humanities tools such as ArcGIS and social network analysis using NVivo and Gephi, I trace transatlantic exchanges that shaped early American botanical, economic, and cultural landscapes. Previous publications include a co-edited annotated book project, a journal article, "Nature Much Improved: The Curation of a 19th Century Greenspace and Neighborhood," and four digital encyclopedia articles.

While at the University of Missouri and McKendree University, I built a robust teaching portfolio, teaching courses ranging from surveys to senior writing-intensive and capstone projects while creating lasting relationships with students. I prioritize experiential learning through methods-centered, source analysis, and student-led projects. In my environmental history course *Nature's Nation*, students work in groups analyzing environmental and cultural primary sources to generate podcasts and posters exploring the intersection of the environment to political economy. Mixed methods equip students with necessary skills like research, object handling, analysis, and proficiency in tools useful beyond the history classroom as much as an informed

lifelong appreciation of history. In *Between the Borderlands*, students use autobiographies, primary source images, and observational accounts to create digital story maps, demonstrating the complex relationships between geography, economy, landscape, and politics from precontact to early America in a visual narrative format and presentation.

Since 2019, I have taught survey to upper-division undergraduate courses at McKendree, which provided me with the latitude to practice and finetune my seminar, writing, and lecture style instruction. As their primary instructor of western and non-U.S. courses, I developed a dynamic teaching style, in which I emphasize specific topics alongside a bouquet of interdisciplinary approaches. I prioritize student initiative, direct engagement, and small group workshopping through low-stakes and cumulative assessments. I prize teacher-learner interaction and connect with students both in person and through LMS portals. The experience also provided me rich opportunities to coach and support students, writing letters of support for work and successfully assisting them through the graduate school application process.

My strong record of external funding includes fellowships from the Huntington Library, Winterthur Museum and Library, Florida Atlantic University, and the American Philosophical Society, which underscores my ability to secure financial support for research. I am confident in my ability to continue to self-fund at FGCU while engaging students in research projects that utilize in-demand tools and methodologies throughout my academic career. I look forward to the opportunity to mentor undergraduate students, guiding them in their research and approaches through consistent low-stakes check-ins, discussion, and assessments.

Beyond the classroom, I am experienced in archival, public history, and community outreach. Early experience as an archivist technician at the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, and later work as project lead for Madison Historical, a countywide digital archive, allowed for direct engagement with the public in preservation and education while honing my leadership skills. As I trained and supervised a team of four undergraduate and four graduate students in digital collection techniques and project management, this culminated in the processing of more than 70 oral histories and digitizing image collections for local museums and repositories. These initiatives led to the publication of digital collections, the organization of local history outreach and programming, and demonstrated my experience working with the public and public history.

I also hope to continue my community and university service roles in my position at FGCU. I currently serve on the UM History Department's Undergraduate Studies Committee and Speaking and Lecture Series Committees and as part of a team of four redesigned the learning objectives for the first half of the U.S. survey, sophomore seminar, and senior historical methods courses to align with new history program directives as part of the university accreditation and five-year review. I am also an active member of community development and service as an executive board member of O'Fallon, Illinois Historic Preservation Commission, where I contribute to historic landmark nominations and public outreach.

I look forward to bringing my varied experience to FGCU by fostering student involvement in community-based projects that combine historical research with public engagement. I welcome the opportunity to discuss how my research, teaching, and public history experience could benefit the faculty and students of Florida Gulf Coast University.

Sincerely,  
Shannan Catherine Mason, Ph.D.