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Professor Akela Reason, Search Committee Chair
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Warm Greetings Chair Reason and Search Committee Members,

Please find this letter as an enthusiastic expression of interest in the tenure-track position of Assistant Professor in History and Museum Studies at the University of Georgia. 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, and considerable experience in public history and interdisciplinary research, I believe I am well-equipped to contribute to UGA's Museum Studies certificate program. I am excited by the opportunity to develop new elective courses, teach required courses such as Introduction to Museum Studies, and mentor students while fostering connections with museums both within and beyond UGA.

My scholarly research centers on the intersections of material culture, public history, and early American history. My book project, *Reciprocities Market*, examines the ways in which eighteenth-century transatlantic scientific exchange fueled a period of rapid economic and social transformation in early America. Through the integration of ArcGIS and NVivo alongside traditional text-based analysis, I explore John Bartram's (1699-1777) eighteenth-century botanical subscription service to illustrate the collapse of hierarchical exchange systems and the rise of market-based knowledge economies. In utilizing the epistolary records of John and William Bartram (1734-1812), I focus on how local knowledge shaped colonial society and the commodification of natural resources. This research contributes to the growing body of scholarship on the commercialization of knowledge, the history of collections, and the flow of knowledge and goods across the Atlantic. During my remaining time as a postdoctoral teaching fellow, I aim to complete my book proposal and secure a publisher for *Reciprocities Market* while also finalizing an article based on the third chapter of my dissertation. Additionally, I am eager to further integrate digital humanities and community primary source drives into my research and teaching to deepen students' understanding of the spatial and social dynamics of museum collections.

I have extensive experience in teaching history having developed and taught courses ranging from general surveys to specialized topics in early American history, public history, and material culture. During my time at the University of Missouri and McKendree University, I developed a teaching philosophy that prioritizes experiential learning through student-led projects, source analysis, and hands-on interaction with historical artifacts. In my environmental history course, *Nature's Nation*, students worked collaboratively to produce argumentative podcasts and posters that mirrored the voice of

historically significant activist organizations. In *Between the Borderlands*, students curate object and narrative driven digital story maps that highlighted the relationships among geography, economy, landscape, and politics from pre-contact to early America. I intend to bring these pedagogical approaches to UGA to further enhance the Museum Studies certificate program and involve students in dynamic, project-based learning.

Since 2019, I have taught survey to upper-division undergraduate courses at McKendree University, which provided me with opportunities to refine my seminar, writing, and lecture-style instruction. As the primary instructor of Western and non-U.S. courses, I emphasized specific topics through an interdisciplinary lens, integrating the history of collections and museum ethics into broader discussions of historical methodology and public engagement. I value direct engagement with students through in-class discussions, LMS portals, and small group workshopping, which facilitates the completion of sophisticated research and writing projects. Moreover, my experience in writing letters of recommendation and successfully guiding students through applications to graduate school and Fulbright positions has equipped me with a deep understanding of mentorship.

My experience in museum and archival settings is extensive. I served as an archives technician at the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, where I was responsible for the preservation and digitization of historical documents. Later, as the project lead for Madison Historical, a countywide digital archive, I supervised a team of four undergraduate and four graduate students in digital collection techniques, resulting in the processing of over 70 oral histories and the digitization of image collections for local museums. These initiatives were instrumental in enhancing local history outreach and programming, and they highlight my dedication to public history and my capability to foster partnerships with museums and cultural institutions.

I hope to continue my involvement in community and university service at UGA. I currently serve on the University of Missouri's Undergraduate Studies Committee and the Speaking and Lecture Series Committees, where I have contributed to curriculum redesign and the organization of academic programming. Additionally, I am an active member of the O'Fallon, Illinois Historic Preservation Commission, where I contribute to historic landmark nominations and public outreach. My commitment to public history and community engagement will allow me to actively contribute to UGA's goals of interdisciplinary research and academic innovation. The University of Georgia is an ideal environment for my continued scholarship and public history initiatives. I am particularly enthusiastic about UGA's commitment to fostering interdisciplinary and public scholarship, and I look forward to the possibility of developing partnerships with local and regional museums in Georgia. I am eager to involve students in experiential learning opportunities such as museum internships and community-based research projects, which align with my commitment to bridging the gap between research and public engagement.

Thank you for considering my application for the position of Assistant Professor in History and Museum Studies at the University of Georgia. I look forward to the opportunity to further discuss how my research, teaching, and public history experience can contribute to the academic community at UGA.

Sincerely,
Shannan Catherine Mason, Ph.D.