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April 9, 2025

Professor Christopher J. Phillips, Chair  
Carnegie Mellon University | Department of History  
5000 Forbes Avenue | Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Dear Chair Phillips and Members of the Selection Committee,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic interest in the one-year Visiting Assistant Professor position in the History of Science and Technology at Carnegie Mellon University. As a historian of science, communication, empire, and political economy, my work bridges Atlantic and early American history through interdisciplinary methods drawn from historical geography, sociology, and environmental and material cultural studies. Currently a Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow at the University of Missouri, I earned my Ph.D. in 2024 and was honored with the university's Distinguished Dissertation Award in the Humanities. My teaching and research explore the material, political, and cultural dimensions of science in both public and private life. With a growing publication record, demonstrated digital humanities expertise, and a collaborative and inclusive pedagogical approach, I am eager to contribute to CMU's intellectually expansive and innovative department.

My book project, *Natures of Exchange: Communicating Natural Knowledge, Commerce, and Empire in John Bartram's Early America*, examines how American botanists leveraged commercial exchange to challenge imperial hierarchies of science. Centering on Bartram's subscription service, the project explores how scientific labor, often obscured within traditional patronage systems, was reframed through emergent market logics. Using archival research, GIS mapping, thematic coding, and social network analysis, I trace how knowledge circulated and accrued material and epistemic value across transatlantic networks. This research contributes to scholarship on the political economy of science, communication, colonial epistemologies, and the commodification of nature, offering new ways to conceptualize the roots of American independence through scientific and commercial exchange.

This project forms the foundation of a broader research agenda exploring the entanglements of ecological change, economic culture, and scientific practice in the early modern to modern world. Drawing from training in museum studies, GIS, and digital humanities, I examine how local landscapes, Indigenous knowledge systems, and Enlightenment-era commercial practices coalesced to shape knowledge production. A peer-reviewed article drawn from this research is currently in preparation, and I will submit my full book proposal for review in 2025, remaining research-active throughout the visiting year. Fellowships from the American Philosophical Society, the Huntington Library, Winterthur, Florida Atlantic University, and the Kinder Institute on Constitutional Democracy have supported this work.

I have a decade of teaching experience in higher education in history and geography courses. My teaching philosophy is grounded in interdisciplinary, student-centered, and public-facing pedagogy. At the University of Missouri and McKendree University, I have taught courses in the history of science,

environment, world geography and technology, as well as U.S., Atlantic, and global histories. My course design emphasizes experiential learning through archival literacy, digital storytelling, and public history methods. In *Nature's Nation*, a U.S. environmental history course students explored the intersection of ecology and technology (agricultural and industrial) in dramatically shaping American development. In *Between the Borderlands: Science, Trade, and Culture*, a course centered significance of scientific intellectual exchange across transcultural spaces students generated mixed method research projects.

I would be especially excited to teach Technology and Society at CMU, which I would approach through the lens of infrastructure, labor, and ecological imaginaries, integrating global and local case studies. In all courses, I emphasize inclusive, high-impact learning practices and scaffold assignments to meet students at varied experience levels, a skill sharpened through my work with dual-credit and first-generation college students as well as the completion of two years in master's level Special Education coursework. CMU's institutional commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration, particularly across technology, society, and environment, deeply resonates with my own scholarship and teaching. I welcome opportunities to contribute to cross-departmental initiatives or develop courses that engage with digital humanities, STS, or environmental studies.

My professional experience also includes extensive work in public and digital history. As project lead for Madison Historical, I trained and supervised student researchers while curating more than 70 oral histories and archival site collections. At the Campbell House Museum, I curated an online exhibit exploring the role of natural motifs and material culture, while at the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), I contributed to preservation workflows and digitization of mixed-media collections. These experiences reflect my commitment to collaborative research, archival stewardship, and community engagement—values that align with CMU's emphasis on socially relevant scholarship.

My publication record reflects this orientation toward bridging academic and public scholarship. I am the author of an award-winning article "Nature Much Improved," and a co-author/editor of an annotated book reprint of the 19th-century serial *Legends of Mexico*. I have also contributed four digital encyclopedia entries accompanied by exhibits on the environmental legacies of industrial operations like the Standard Oil Company in Illinois, and the cultural history of baseball in East St. Louis. Additionally, I've supported the development of U.S. history curriculum through multi-year contributions to the *Fabric of a Nation* AP textbook series.

In March, I joined the masthead of *The Journal of the Early Republic* and *The Panorama* as the social media editor. In this three-year commitment, I lead strategic communications and public scholarship initiatives that expand access to research beyond the academy. At the University of Missouri, I currently serve on the Undergraduate Studies and Lecture Series Committees and aided in a curriculum and major redesign while growing our scholastic community through successful lecture and speaker series events. These service commitments underscore my dedication to institution-building and fostering vibrant, inclusive intellectual communities.

Please find my CV and other required materials attached.. I would be honored to contribute to CMU's dynamic teaching and research culture at the intersection of science, society, and public life.

Sincerely,  
Shannan Catherine Mason, Ph.D.