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Chair Martha Newman, Ph.D.
Department of History
The University of Texas at Austin
1 University Station
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Dear Dr. Martha Newman and Select Members of the Search Committee,

Please accept this letter and accompanying materials as an expression of enthusiastic interest in the position of Assistant Professor of Instruction in Public History and Managing Editor of *Not Even Past* at The University of Texas at Austin. With a Ph.D. in History from the University of Missouri (2024), graduate certifications in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Museum Studies, and nearly a decade of teaching and public history experience, I bring a strong interdisciplinary approach and a commitment to fostering public engagement alongside a strong record of traditional research and writing. My scholarship, teaching, and editorial experience align closely with the department's emphasis on advancing accessible historical narratives and training the next generation of public historians.

My research explores the intersections of the history of science, communication and intellectual history, with a focus on transatlantic knowledge exchanges across the 18th and early 19th centuries. My book project, *Reciprocities Market: Ecology and Economy of John Bartram's Trans-Atlantic Botanical Subscription Service*, examines how John Bartram's (1699–1777) botanical exchanges with European naturalists and colonial agents commodified ecological knowledge, transforming natural resources into economic assets within the Atlantic world. Using digital tools like ArcGIS, NVivo, and Gephi to analyze the epistolary as much as physical landscape mapping the networks that underpinned Bartram's endeavors. My work similarly interrogates the role of appropriated Indigenous ecological knowledge and colonial labor systems in shaping early market economies across the Gulf South as much as Atlantic communities. This interdisciplinary project highlights the intersections of environment, economy, and intellectual exchange, contributing to broader conversations about resource commodification, knowledge production, and their socio-political implications. By integrating public history and digital methodologies, my scholarship demonstrates how complex historical narratives can engage both academic and public audiences while encouraging ample student opportunities to contribute.

My professional work bridges public history, digital humanities, and editorial leadership, emphasizing the creation of accessible and engaging historical narratives. As a project assistant for Bedford Freeman & Worth's *Fabric of a Nation*, I contributed to the development of a widely adopted AP U.S. History textbook, integrating diverse perspectives and refining content for both academic and public audiences. At W.W. Norton, I assisted in editing history textbooks, ensuring clarity and accessibility while maintaining scholarly rigor. Additionally, I co-edited and annotated *Legends of Mexico (1847)*, bringing attention to the cultural narratives that shaped early Mexican identity. These editorial experiences, combined with my public history projects—such as leading the Madison Historical digital archive—demonstrate my ability to manage teams, synthesize archival materials, and produce compelling content for diverse audiences. My interdisciplinary

approach, which integrates research, digital tools, and editorial expertise, positions me to contribute meaningfully to *Not Even Past* and its mission to bridge scholarship and public engagement.

As Managing Editor, I plan to bring a collaborative spirit and a clear vision to expand the publication's reach and impact. My experience writing and editing for public audiences and managing digital projects equips me to oversee *Not Even Past*'s content creation, editing, and outreach efforts. My leadership on the Madison Historical digital archive involved supervising students in oral history collection, metadata creation, and digital curation, generated a dynamic, publicly accessible resource. Building on experience, I envision introducing interactive features, such as virtual exhibits and multimedia storytelling, to make historical narratives more engaging and accessible. I plan to foster strong student involvement by creating opportunities for them to contribute research and content, aligning with *Not Even Past*'s mission of bridging academic and public audiences. I plan to expand the already sizeable corpus of educational resources, such as lesson plans and discussion guides, to help educators integrate *Not Even Past* content into their teaching. By advancing innovative features that connect academic research to contemporary conversations in history and developing its digital platform to expand engagement, I am eager to enhance the publication's role as a leading platform for historical scholarship.

In addition to my editorial expertise, my teaching experience reflects a strong commitment to interdisciplinary learning and public history. At the University of Missouri and McKendree University, I designed and taught courses that integrated public history projects through experiential learning projects to engage students deeply with historical narratives. In *Historical Methods: North American Borderlands*, students learned the skills of the historian as they employed a wide array of qualitative and quantitative analysis tools in small groups to explore the movement of people, goods, and ideas, linking their findings to broader socio-political and economic systems. In *Historical Methods: Between the Borderlands*, students learned the profession of the historian, curated and developed story maps, and combined archival research with digital storytelling techniques while generating a capstone project proposal. These projects equipped students with transferable skills, such as critical analysis, digital literacy, and collaboration, while connecting their work to public-facing historical scholarship.

My ability to guide students through public history projects as much as the research and writing process is informed by nearly a decade of mentoring undergraduate and graduate students in both academic and public history contexts. I have served as an executive member of my cities Historic Preservation Commission, and supervised undergraduate capstone projects that emphasize iterative drafting, source analysis, and research-based argumentation, helping students develop polished, original scholarship. As project lead on the Madison Historical a digital archive and encyclopedia, I worked closely with students to connect their academic research to public audiences through oral history interviews, digital exhibits, and outreach programs. These experiences have prepared me to mentor students at UT Austin as they explore careers in public history and contribute to the department's intellectual community.

The University of Texas at Austin's Department of History offers a vibrant intellectual environment for advancing my teaching and research while fostering public engagement through historical narratives. The position's dual emphasis on instruction and editorial leadership aligns with my professional experience. I am particularly excited about the opportunity to collaborate with students and colleagues to enhance *Not Even Past*. Thank you for considering my application. I am eager to bring my expertise in public history, digital humanities, and teaching to UT Austin, and I welcome the opportunity to discuss how my experiences align with the department's goals.

Sincerely,
Shannan Catherine Mason, Ph.D.