

Shannan Catherine Mason, Ph.D.
University of Missouri | History Department
615 Locust Street Building | Columbia, MO 65201
Shannan.Mason@mail.missouri.edu
618-616-9717

October 18, 2024

Search Committee Chair
University of North Georgia | Department of History, Anthropology, and Philosophy
Gainesville Campus | Oakwood, GA 30566

Warm Greetings Search Committee Members,

I am writing to apply for the tenure-track position of Assistant Professor of Public History at the University of North Georgia (UNG). 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, I am eager to bring my expertise in historical research, teaching, and public history to UNG. I am particularly enthusiastic about contributing to the development of the new Public History emphasis at UNG, and helping to shape an engaging and forward-thinking program for students.

My research explores the intersections of science, technology, and economic development in the eighteenth century, with a focus on the rise of market-based knowledge economies. My book project, *Reciprocities Market*, investigates how eighteenth-century transatlantic scientific exchange fostered significant economic and social transformations in early America. By examining the networks of correspondents and patrons involved in John Bartram's (1699-1777) botanical subscription service, I highlight the commercialization of knowledge and its broader societal impacts through digital tools such as, Nvivo and ArcGIS. This research contributes to the growing scholarship on the history of science, the history of economic thought, and public engagement with science, which I believe aligns well with UNG's mission to foster leadership and community engagement.

I am particularly drawn to the University of North Georgia's emphasis on leadership development, community engagement, and providing accessible education in a student-focused environment. Throughout my teaching career at the University of Missouri and McKendree University, I have developed a diverse and adaptive teaching portfolio. I have extensive experience in delivering content across different modalities, including in-person, online, and hybrid formats. As the primary instructor for Western and non-U.S. history courses at McKendree University, I refined my seminar and lecture-style teaching approaches, emphasizing student-led learning and critical engagement with primary sources. I prioritize small group collaboration and experiential learning, fostering an environment where students can develop sophisticated research skills and gain confidence in their historical analysis abilities.

In my public history courses, I encourage students to engage directly with historical sources, communities, and public spaces. For example, in my course Nature's Nation, students conducted local archival research to produce curated exhibits on regional environmental history. This experiential approach allowed students to explore the historical connections between local places and broader environmental changes, fostering both critical thinking and community engagement. I am eager to develop similar courses at UNG that leverage the rich historical and cultural resources of Georgia, empowering students to connect their academic work with the broader community.

In addition to my classroom experience, I have a strong background in public history and archival work. As an archives technician at the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, I helped preserve and make accessible historical collections, broadening public engagement with historical materials. Later, as the project lead for Madison Historical, a countywide digital archive, I trained and managed a team of undergraduate and graduate students in archival techniques, resulting in the successful digitization of over 70 oral histories and local museum image collections. These initiatives emphasized public-facing scholarship and provided me with valuable experience in both leadership and community outreach—skills that I am eager to bring to the Public History emphasis at UNG.

At the University of North Georgia, I am excited about the opportunity to assist in building a dynamic and engaging Public History program. I am particularly interested in developing courses that incorporate digital historical methods, museum studies, and community partnerships, providing students with the skills they need to succeed in both academic and public history careers. The emphasis on diverse teaching fields, especially outside of Western Europe and the United States, resonates with my own experience commitment to broadening the scope of historical inquiry and fostering a global perspective among students with years of experience teaching non-US courses at McKendree University.

Service is an essential part of my academic and personal life. Currently, I serve on the Undergraduate Studies Committee and the Speaking and Lecture Series Committees at the University of Missouri, where I have played a role in curriculum redesign and the organization of academic events. I also serve on the executive board of the O'Fallon, Illinois Historic Preservation Commission, contributing to historic landmark nominations and community outreach. I look forward to engaging in similar service roles at UNG, helping to support departmental initiatives and contribute to the vibrant academic and local community.

Thank you for considering my application for the position of Assistant Professor of Public History at the University of North Georgia. I am enthusiastic at the prospect of contributing to UNG's growing Public History program and would welcome the opportunity to discuss further how my experience in historical research, teaching, and community engagement can benefit your department.

Sincerely,
Shannan Catherine Mason, Ph.D.