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September 15, 2024

Corinna Treitel, Chair & Professor of History
Washington University | History Department
Busch Hall 113
One Brookings Drive
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Greetings Chair Treitel and Members of the Search Committee,

Please accept this letter as an expression of my enthusiastic interest in the tenure-track position of Assistant Professor in Environmental History at Washington University, beginning fall 2025. My Ph.D. in history from the University of Missouri earned in June 2024, complimented by graduate certifications in geographic information systems (GIS) and museum studies and near decade of teaching experience and record as a self-funded producer make me a strong candidate. My research explores the intersections of environmental, economic, and social-cultural history, using a transatlantic comparative approach to examine how networks of botanical and scientific exchange influenced economic activity and ecologies of early America. I bring a multidisciplinary approach to research and teaching and look forward to the opportunity to contribute to Washington University's campus community as much as student growth.

My research explores the physical and intellectual networks that shaped the Colonial and Early Republican periods through a close reading of ecology, cultural and scientific management. My dissertation, "Reciprocities Market: John Bartram's 18th-Century Botanical Subscription Service and the Seeds of Independence," explores deep-seeded interdependencies between local knowledge production, transatlantic communication networks, and economic transformations throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Through social network analysis alongside traditional historical methodologies, I argue colonials not only utilized the consumption of goods as a means of asserting independence but claim they embraced the mechanisms of the market alongside the consumer revolution. This academic year, I will finalize my book proposal, secure a publisher and complete the draft form of an additional body chapter which contextualizes John and William Bartram's mention of Indigenous ecological management and presence as evidence in favor of future settlement and economic potential for settler expansion.

My active external funding record and publication background likewise make me a strong candidate for this position. My research has been well supported through generous residential fellowships at the Huntington Library, American Philosophical Society, Florida Atlantic University, and the Winterthur

Garden and Library. I have a similarly proven record as a producer, through the publication of a co-annotated book project *Legends of Mexico* (2019), an award-winning article published in Lindenwood University journal *The Confluence* (2021), and contributions to high school and undergraduate pedagogy through longstanding projects with textbook publisher, Bedford Freeman and Worth (McMillan), creating testing and assessment content for the textbook *Fabric of a Nation*. While teaching at a small liberal arts college, McKendree University and the state of Missouri's flagship campus, the University of Missouri, I have successfully coached students through writing projects, research proposals, and historical methods. My courses employ a middling-out and bottom-up approach. Focusing on land, ecology, political economy, material culture, and diverse actor-agents, I continuously engage students with primary sources and diverse media elements, which contextualizes historical events as much as emboldens their understanding of the skills and methodologies of the historian by introducing them to the basics of GIS, qualitative analysis and data visualization alongside a reading of the historical record.

I look forward to the opportunity to train students in digital, public and environmental research methods. My teaching philosophy similarly emphasizes active engagement with primary sources, historiographical debates, and interdisciplinary perspectives. I have successfully taught a wide range of courses, from introductory surveys of U.S. History to writing intensive junior-senior-level courses on early modern Europe, as well as methods and environmental history courses such as "Nations Nation: Disease, Disaster and Ecology." My classroom centers content as much as experience, and the historical research process, which motivates students to delve into historiographical discussions early on. With years of experience working in special education and colleges across the St. Louis metro-east, I have a strong record of fostering an inclusive and vibrant learning atmosphere, one that prepares students for diverse careers in a rapidly evolving field through hands on experiences and site visits.

I similarly look forward to sharing my extensive experience in digital history and community engagement at WashU. These experiences reflect my dedication to making history accessible and relevant to broad audiences through sustained community engagement and service as I honed my skills in archival management, public history outreach, and digital humanities. I served as an archivist technician while at the U.S. National Archives, and as project lead of a team of four to eight undergraduate and graduate students for three years, at a countywide digital archive and encyclopedia where I published several entries on 19th century St. Louis area industrialization and mining operations. Since 2019, I have served as an executive board member of the O'Fallon Illinois Historic Preservation Commission in the promotion of local history preservation through landmarking and outreach. I also serve on the MU history department Undergraduate Studies Committee. In this role, I successfully redesigned the learning objectives for the department's sophomore level methods seminar and U.S. history survey to 1877 as part of the University of Missouri's five-year review and accreditation process.

Thank you for your consideration, I look forward to contributing to the history department and Washington University's mission of fostering inclusive, innovative and interdisciplinary scholarship.

Sincerely,

Shannan Catherine Mason, Ph.D.