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Wendy Lucas, Ph.D.
Search Committee Chair
Department of History | University of Central Arkansas
Irby Hall 105 | 201 Donaghey Avenue
Conway, AR 72035

Dear Dr. Lucas and Members of the Search Committee,

I am thrilled to apply for the tenure-track Assistant Professor position at the University of Central Arkansas. With a Ph.D. in History in 2024 from the University of Missouri, graduate certifications in Museum Studies and Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and extensive experience in public history, teaching, and interdisciplinary research, I am eager to contribute to UCA's mission of fostering excellence in teaching, research, and community engagement.

My professional focus centers on the intersections of public history, economic history, environmental and social history and community outreach. Over the past decade, I have worked extensively in public history, directing projects that connect students with local communities while preserving regional heritage. As the project lead for Madison Historical, a countywide digital archive, I supervised undergraduate and graduate students in oral history collection, metadata creation, and digital curation. This initiative resulted in over 70 digitized oral histories and public-facing source collections on industrial and cultural history, enriching both community access to historical resources and student experience in applied history. These projects emphasize my ability to bridge academic research with public engagement while equipping students with essential skills in research, collaboration, and public communication.

Similarly, as an executive member of the O'Fallon Historic Preservation Commission, I contributed to the addition of a building to the National Register of Historic Places, such as the Victorian style Tiedeman House, as well as local landmarking like the recognition of the Hillesheim Building, a 1950s box style gas station as well as other local landmarks and memorials for the midwestern city of O'Fallon, Illinois. As team lead for Madison Historical and member of the Preservation Commission I created public educational workshops on architectural preservation and archival digitization, as well as produced video documentaries showcasing architectural and cultural history. Such experiences taught me how to build partnerships with local organizations, while teaching students how to recognize and amplify community voices and engage active public audiences with historical narratives. At UCA, I envision creating similar collaborative opportunities that allow students to explore Arkansas's environmental and industrial history while engaging with the community and regional archives.

My teaching portfolio spans U.S. history surveys, world and western surveys, historical methods courses, upper-division seminars and writing intensive courses, integrating experiential learning and interdisciplinary methodologies. At the University of Missouri, I taught *Nature's Nation: Disease, Disaster, and Ecology*, where students used digital tools to analyze environmental change from early America to the 21st century, linking ecological change to political and economic systems while creating digital exhibitions. In *Between the Borderlands*, students combined archival research with digital story mapping to trace cultural and economic

exchanges across contested geographies. These assignments honed students' critical analysis, digital literacy, and collaboration skills—abilities essential for historical research and public-facing work.

Teaching historical methods has been a core component of my teaching experience. At McKendree University, I designed and taught a capstone seminar where students engaged with primary sources, developed research proposals, and produced long-form papers that connected local history to broader national contexts like the role of community activism and nuclear waste cleanups across the St. Louis Coldwater Creek area. These projects prepared students for graduate study and public history careers by fostering analytical, technical, and communication skills. I look forward to bringing this approach to UCA, offering methods courses and mentoring students through public history initiatives that emphasize hands-on learning and practical application.

My research examines the intersections of environmental, intellectual, and economic history, focusing on the transatlantic exchange of ecological knowledge. My book project, *Reciprocities Market: John Bartram's 18th Century Botanical Subscription Service and the Seeds of Independence*, examines the commodification of ecological knowledge in the 18th century, exploring how natural landscapes became part of global networks of economic and scientific exchange. In 2024, the research project was awarded *Top Dissertation in the Humanities* by the University of Missouri Distinguished Dissertation Award Committee, it contributes to broader conversations in environmental history about the commercialization of nature, the evolution of knowledge economies, and the role of ecological exchange in early American society. My research provides a framework for analyzing regional patterns of land use, cultural development, and environmental history relevant to Arkansas's past. I am eager to develop courses that explore the ecological, social, and economic transformations of Arkansas and the broader Gulf South, drawing on local archives and oral histories to help students connect state history with broader historical contexts.

My publishing record similarly reflects a commitment to advancing scholarship in environmental, intellectual, and public history. I have published an award-winning journal article, "*Nature Much Improved: The Curation of a 19th Century Greenspace and Neighborhood*," that examines the intersections of urban environmentalism and cultural identity, as well as co-edited an annotated book project. Additionally, I have authored four digital encyclopedia articles and a forthcoming book review in *Agricultural History*. I look forward to maintaining an active researching and writing agenda at Central Arkansas.

In addition to my teaching and research experience, I have contributed significantly to departmental and institutional service. My current role builds on two years of master's level coursework in Special Education. As a postdoctoral teaching fellow at the University of Missouri, I co-led a curriculum redesign for U.S. history surveys and methods courses, aligning learning objectives with updated accreditation standards and enhancing their relevance to contemporary pedagogical goals. As a member of the Speaking and Lecture Series Committee, I organized interdisciplinary events that connected faculty, students, and public audiences around shared intellectual themes. These experiences underscore my commitment to fostering inclusive academic environments that support both student success and community collaboration.

The University of Central Arkansas's emphasis on accessible education, regional history, and community partnerships aligns closely with my values as an educator and public historian. I am excited about the opportunity to join your department, where I can mentor students, develop dynamic courses, and create partnerships that connect the university with Arkansas's rich historical heritage. Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to discussing how my teaching, research, and public history experience can contribute to the goals of your department.

Sincerely,
Shannan Catherine Mason, Ph.D.