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Ravi Gupta, History Department Chair

Utah State University | Department of History

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Warm Greetings Dr. Gupta and Search Committee Members,

I am writing to apply for the tenure-track position of Assistant Professor in the History of Science at Utah State University. With a Ph.D. in History from the University of Missouri conferred in June 2024, as well as certifications in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Museum Studies, I am eager to bring my expertise in the history of science and teaching excellence to USU. My experience, which spans public history, archival research, and interdisciplinary scholarship, equips me well to contribute meaningfully to the department's commitment to quality education and diverse research methods.

My research explores the intersections of science, technology, and economic development across eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with a particular focus on the rise of market-based knowledge economies. My book project, Reciprocities Market, investigates how transatlantic scientific exchange in the eighteenth century fostered significant economic and social transformation in early America. By examining the networks of correspondents and patrons involved in John Bartram's (1699-1777) botanical subscription service, I highlight the collapse of hierarchical exchange systems and the broader commercialization of knowledge. This research contributes to our understanding of the history of science and the development of knowledge systems, with implications that resonate well with USU's emphasis on research productivity.

My teaching philosophy centers on active student engagement, critical thinking, and the integration of historical research into the learning experience. For example, in my course ‘Nature's Nation,’ I encouraged students to engage deeply with primary sources and develop arguments that connected environmental changes with broader social and political shifts in early America. In ‘Settlers, Science and Change’ students examine texts to understand the extractive relationships between colonialism, knowledge acquisition andcultural landscapes. My goal is to bring these methodologies to USU, fostering an environment where students learn to analyze complex historical problems and develop their own research skills.

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—which aligns well with USU's focus on diverse teaching methods. My role as the primary instructor for Western and non-U.S. history courses at McKendree University allowed me to refine my seminar and lecture-style teaching approaches. I prioritize student-led learning and small group collaboration, fostering an environment where students can develop sophisticated research skills, enhance their writing abilities, and gain confidence in their understanding of historical content.

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, aligning with USU's mission of community engagement and outreach.

At Utah State University, I am eager to contribute to interdisciplinary initiatives and foster collaborations within the History Department and across other programs, such as the Public History emphasis and the Global Peacebuilding Certificate. My expertise in the history of science would be valuable in creating new courses and projects that blend historical research with broader disciplinary perspectives, providing students with a comprehensive, practical education that prepares them for a variety of career paths. The emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration and community outreach at USU aligns perfectly with my own commitment to making historical research accessible and engaging to broader audiences.

I hope to continue in my service commitments at Utah State. 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 USU, helping to support departmental initiatives and contribute to the vibrant academic and local community.

Thank you for considering my application for the Assistant Professor position in the History of Science at Utah State University. I am excited about the possibility of contributing to USU's dynamic academic community and would welcome the opportunity to discuss further how my experience in the history of science, interdisciplinary research, and community engagement can benefit your department.

Sincerely,  
Shannan Catherine Mason, Ph.D.