**Shannan Catherine Mason, Ph.D.**  
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**December 28, 2024**

Search Committee  
Department of History  
The University of Chicago  
1126 E. 59th St.  
Chicago, IL 60637

**Dear Members of the Search Committee,**

I am excited to apply for the Instructional Professor position in the Department of History at the University of Chicago. With a Ph.D. in History from the University of Missouri (2024), nearly a decade of experience teaching methodology and writing-intensive courses, and a strong record of mentoring students through independent research projects, I am eager to contribute to the Department’s thesis and capstone programs and expand its methodological course offerings. My expertise in digital humanities, public history, and collaborative research aligns with your mission to foster innovative and rigorous historical inquiry while preparing students for diverse academic and professional trajectories.

My research examines the intersections of environmental history, intellectual history, and economic history, with a focus on transatlantic knowledge exchange and resource commodification in the 18th century. My book project, Reciprocities Market: Ecology and Economy of John Bartram’s Trans-Atlantic Botanical Subscription Service, explores how Bartram’s networks of correspondents across Europe, the Caribbean, and the American colonies transformed ecological knowledge into economic assets. By employing digital humanities tools such as ArcGIS, NVivo, and Gephi, I analyze the material and intellectual dynamics of this exchange, situating it within broader themes of early modern market systems, labor economies, and colonial hierarchies. This interdisciplinary approach underscores my ability to integrate digital methodologies into historical research and teaching, offering students innovative frameworks for understanding historical processes.

In addition to the monograph, my publishing record includes editing and annotating Legends of Mexico (1847), a reprint that examines the cultural narratives shaping early Mexican identity. I have also contributed encyclopedia entries on industrialization and environmental history, including analyses of 19th-century industry and urban development, which highlight my ability to distill complex historical themes into accessible formats. A forthcoming book review in the Journal of Agricultural History further reflects my engagement with current scholarship and commitment to ongoing contributions to the field. These projects collectively demonstrate my ability to produce rigorous scholarship while engaging diverse audiences—qualities essential to mentoring students in their research and writing.

At the University of Missouri, I taught Historical Methods, a foundational course designed to guide students through the research process, source analysis, and historical argumentation. This role included mentoring students as they developed research proposals and capstone projects, providing structured feedback at every stage. At McKendree University, I designed and taught writing-intensive courses where students honed their research and communication skills through iterative drafting and peer review. These experiences reflect my dedication to equipping students with the methodological tools and analytical frameworks necessary to succeed in advanced historical research.

My work with Madison Historical, a digital archive and encyclopedia, further underscores my ability to mentor students in collaborative and interdisciplinary settings. As project lead, I trained and supervised undergraduate and graduate students in oral history collection, metadata creation, and digital curation. This hands-on experience not only prepared students to connect their academic research with public audiences but also emphasized professional skills such as project management and effective communication. These experiences uniquely position me to guide University of Chicago students through the thesis and capstone processes, fostering their growth as independent researchers and contributors to historical scholarship.

The University of Chicago’s emphasis on methodological innovation and its commitment to mentoring undergraduate researchers resonate deeply with my experience and values. I have consistently demonstrated a passion for supporting students’ intellectual growth, from supervising independent research to guiding collaborative public history projects. As an Instructional Professor, I would bring my expertise in teaching historical methodology and writing-intensive courses to enhance the Department’s thesis and capstone tracks. Additionally, my background in coordinating instructional teams and developing research-based assignments positions me to contribute meaningfully to the ongoing assessment and development of the undergraduate curriculum.

Thank you for considering my application. I am inspired by the opportunity to join the University of Chicago’s Department of History, contributing to its mission of fostering rigorous scholarship and innovative teaching. I welcome the chance to discuss how my experiences and skills align with the Department’s goals and how I can support students in their academic journeys.

**Sincerely,**  
Shannan Catherine Mason, Ph.D.