



29 November 2017

Dr. Suzanne Smith
Search Committee Chair
History and Art History
Robinson Hall B, Room 359
George Mason University
4400 University Drive, 3G1
Fairfax, VA 22030

Dear Dr. Smith:

Please accept my application for the available position at George Mason University of Advanced Assistant or Associate Professor in the Department of History and Art History as well as Director of the Division of Public Projects at the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media. I am a digital and public historian of the modern United States and the world with a wide range of teaching experiences, an active research agenda, and extensive administrative experience as the co-founder of the Northwestern University Digital Humanities Laboratory. I also serve as a fellow at Northwestern's Center for Civic Engagement, where I helped to design and teach in the Graduate Engagement Opportunities program in the public humanities. My visiting position at Northwestern concludes this year and I relish the opportunity to join the faculty of the History and Art History Department and contribute to the Center for History and New Media.

My own research focuses on the intersection of popular culture, technologies of mass mediation, and issues of political and cultural citizenship, both within the United States and transnationally. My first book, *The Republic of Rock: Music and Citizenship in the Sixties Counterculture* (Oxford University Press, 2013; paperback 2017) revealed the civic dimensions of popular music during the late 1960s and early 1970s in two key locations: San Francisco and Vietnam. Drawing upon untapped archival sources, I argued that in spaces of countercultural leisure found in both the city of the Summer of Love and the country in which the United States waged war, rock music marked a fervent and often misunderstood democratic engagement with questions of American consumer capitalism and Cold War militarism. My current research investigates the folk music revival's encounters with technology in the United States during the twentieth century, tracking how various folk figures were not nostalgic antimodernists or anti-machine Luddites, but rather eager explorers of tradition through technological means. The project looks at folk revivalists such as Zora Neale Hurston, Frances Densmore, Alan Lomax, Charles Seeger, and Carl Sandburg, as well as those who are not typically included in the folk revival but should be, such as avant-garde composer Harry Partch and Afrofuturist bandleader Sun Ra. In place of contemporary rhetoric emphasizing "digital disruption" of all existing custom and practice, the history I explore suggests alternative configurations, both

promising and problematic, in which Americans sought to bring together cutting-edge technologies with cultural heritage in efforts to balance progress with the past.

I co-founded the Northwestern University Digital Humanities Laboratory at the Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities in 2011. As co-director of NUDHL, I have supported colleagues in digital research, brought in speakers, organized projects, applied and received fellowship and grants, overseen staff, and worked with faculty, archivists, librarians, technologists, and students on new initiatives for both curricular innovations and research advancement.

I also currently serve as an editorial board member for the international digital humanities project, *Trans@tlantic Cultures: A Digital Platform for Transatlantic Cultural History, 1700-Present*, which enables scholars in Brazil, France, Mexico, Senegal, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere to develop multimedia essays about Atlantic World cultural history both as individual authors and in teams. I helped to conceptualize a digital infrastructure for the project's international collaborations and I am currently preparing a multimedia essay for the project on folklorist Alan Lomax's transatlantic career in the United States and United Kingdom. Overall, *Trans@tlantic Cultures* seeks to address what a global digital humanities might become.

My teaching, research, and service increasingly take place at the intersection of digital and public history. I am currently collaborating with the Northwestern University Library to develop an interactive, Omeka-based website about the Berkeley Folk Music Festival, which ran on the University of California-Berkeley campus from 1958 to 1970. The Festival's archive was purchased by Northwestern and its holdings are currently being fully digitized thanks to a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Eventually, there will be a robust digital archive and curated website as well as a traveling exhibition and print catalogue that tell the story of the Berkeley Folk Music Festival and its significance. There is ample opportunity for both graduate and undergraduate students at George Mason to participate in this project.

My public humanities work also includes serving as a historian-in-residence and dramaturg for a Chicago dance company, *The Seldoms*, for whom I write program notes, help the ensemble conduct research, and facilitate "talkback" discussions and panels at performances. I have also participated as a panelist or organizer for public events on topics such as the career of folklorist Alan Lomax, the "culture wars" in the United States, and writing about contemporary dance and theater. As a journalist, I continue to write actively for publications such as the *US Intellectual History Blog*, *The Point* magazine, and the Op-Ed page of the *New York Times* as well as on my own blogs *Culture Rover* and *Issues in Digital History*.

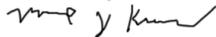
As a teacher, I have offered introductory courses in digital history and digital humanities as well as both halves of the US history survey. I also teach courses such as *The Computerized Society: A Cultural History of the Computer Since World War II*, *US Culture in Global Circulation*, *US Popular Culture*, *Consumerism in America*, *Community in America*, *US Popular Music*, and *The Americas: A Hemispheric Cultural*

History. An undergraduate research seminar, Digitizing Folk Music History, has students apply various digital methods to the study of the American folk music revival, culminating in a final audio podcast project based on original research. The Challenge of the Citizen-Scholar, held at Northwestern's Center for Civic Engagement, helps graduate students use digital means for connecting their specialized research to field studies and internships in the Chicago area. Another seminar, Cultural Criticism in the Digital Age: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives, allows students to pursue new forms of critical writing using online, multimedia approaches as they study examples of cultural criticism from the past and also meet with professionals in museums, journalism, and publishing to learn more about how history, writing, and digital competencies might lead to potential career paths in fields of culture work, broadly conceived.

All these courses encourage students to grapple with questions of identity and social position—issues of race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, region, nation, and the global—in relation to aesthetic form, economic structure, and political ideologies and practices. In addition to teaching these lectures and seminars, I have advised numerous students on their independent research projects and theses. I have also overseen student research assistants. A number of my advisees have won awards for their digital work and students at Northwestern have twice named me to the Faculty Honor Roll.

The opportunity to join the faculty in the History and Art History Department at George Mason and as Director of the Division of Public Projects at the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media is deeply appealing to me. I hope the search committee will give my application serious consideration. Please feel free to contact me with any questions, mjk@northwestern.edu or (847) 942-5182.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Kramer