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Dear Dr Insley,

I am writing to apply for the position of Lecturer (Teaching Focussed) in Modern British History at the University of Manchester.

I am a historian of modern Britain, with interests in environmental history, the history of science, and media history. I am currently about to begin a Junior Research Fellowship at Jesus College, Cambridge, where I am pursuing a research project about the popularisation of agricultural science in the twentieth century.

I recently completed my PhD in History at the University of Cambridge, under the supervision of Prof. Peter Mandler. My dissertation is concerned with mass-media representations of the natural world in interwar Britain, focussing principally on non-fiction film and radio. Across the five chapters of my dissertation, I uncover accounts of ‘ordinary’ people watching films or listening to broadcasts, using evidence from local and national archives, sociological surveys, newspapers, and periodicals. I also examine how and why scientists became involved in making films and radio programmes, and their interactions with producers, directors, and writers. Advancing a fresh approach to environmental history, I make the case for viewing modern mass media as a key site for studying how ideas about the natural world were formed in the twentieth century. I am working on turning this PhD research into a monograph, with the provisional title of *Mass Media and the Science of Everyday Life in Britain, c. 1900-1960*.

My current research project is entitled *Cultivating Media: The communication of agricultural knowledge in Britain and its empire, 1880-1960*. Adopting innovative interdisciplinary methods from history, media studies, and history of science, my research will show how the empire and its networks served as the prime vehicle for the circulation of agricultural knowledge in the British world. My aim after completing the two-year teaching position at Manchester would be to apply for major grant funding to continue this research, seeking support from funders like the AHRC or the Wellcome Trust, ideally as part of a collaborative team involving other scholars and heritage institutions such as the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL).

I have begun to build a track record of high-quality publications. My article in *The British Journal for the History of Science*, which was named runner-up for the Royal Historical Society’s Alexander Prize in 2021, demonstrates that natural history films were a key part of the public culture of science in interwar Britain. The peer reviewers for this publication commented that it was “a very valuable contribution to the history of science in public”, and it remains one of the journal’s most-read articles online to date. I have also written a review article entitled ‘Cultural History and Modern Science’, which was published in the *Historical Journal* this year*.* My most recent article, ‘“Accustomed to female domination”: Women, mass media and animal intimacy in interwar Britain’, appeared in *Environmental History* in January 2022. In 2021, I was also awarded the Stearn Essay Prize by the Society for the History of Natural History, and came runner-up in the Science Museum Group Journal’s annual essay competition, for articles which will appear later this year.

My teaching experience to date makes me exceptionally well-qualified to fulfil the duties required by the position. Supervising undergraduates has been one of the most rewarding and stimulating aspects of my time as a PhD student. At Cambridge, I have supervised students taking Papers 6 (*British Political History since 1880*) and 11 (*British Economic and Social History since 1880*). I have also led seminars for the *Historical Argument and Practice (HAP)* paper (roughly equivalent to Manchester’s ‘History in Practice’ module), and I have delivered revision lectures for Paper 11. Although I have not yet had the opportunity to teach at graduate level, this year I supervised an undergraduate dissertation about wartime broadcasts on the BBC. I also plan to develop a graduate-level course, ‘Environmental Histories of Britain’ during my Junior Research Fellowship at Cambridge. So far, I have completed 137 hours of teaching, including one-on-one supervisions, seminars, and lectures. I have consistently received positive feedback from my students. One of my students wrote in feedback that “you’ve been incredibly patient and helped so much with my progress”, while another said that after two terms under my supervision they had “learnt to enjoy studying history”.

I have spent much of my time as a teacher helping students adapt to university-level learning. This academic year I supervised incoming students taking part in History Faculty’s transition programme for first-year undergraduates, which involved a sample supervision and a series of seminars focussed on reading, note-taking, and essay writing. The specific needs of first-year undergraduate students are often poorly understood by teachers, and I strongly believe that reconsidering how we teach students at this level can have a lasting impact on the individual experience of students as well as helping to address wider problems such as barriers to higher education faced by minorities or people with disabilities.

At Manchester, I would enjoy the opportunity to continue my teaching in Modern British History. I am confident in my ability to deliver lectures and seminars for the Level 1 courses ‘Imperial Nation: The Making of Modern Britain 1783-1902’ and ‘Capitalism in Historical Perspective 1700-1913’, as well as the Level 2 course ‘Winds of Change: Politics, society and Culture in Britain, 1899-1990’. These courses align closely to my existing teaching experience, and the longer timeline of both courses is also in line with the new undergraduate Part I Tripos options on offer at Cambridge beginning this academic year, which I will contribute to teaching. I am also excited by the prospect of building my experience as a graduate teacher, and I would propose to adapt my graduate-level course on environmental history in modern Britain to teach during my second year at Manchester.

As evidence of my commitment to becoming a thoughtful and engaging teacher, this year I have completed the Teaching Associates’ Programme (TAP) offered by Cambridge’s Centre for Teaching and Learning, which will accredit me as an Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (AFHEA). This has enabled me to test new teaching techniques as well as reflecting critically on my current methods. As part of the course, I have developed my teaching philosophy, which is based on recent pedagogical literature, my own teaching practice, and a series of peer observations. Motivation ranks high on my list of priorities as a teacher, and I encourage my students to find ways to engage meaningfully with their work, while also helping them to set their own goals. I also treat feedback seriously: every week, my students complete an online form together with their essays, where they reflect on how they have tried to implement comments from their previous essay. I have found this to be an especially effective tool in improving students’ work over the course of a term.

I am a committed public historian, and at Manchester I would continue my efforts to make my research accessible to a range of audiences. During my PhD I created an online resource ([www.secrets-of-nature.co.uk](http://www.secrets-of-nature.co.uk)) based on my research into the interwar film series *Secrets of Nature*. I have recently been awarded a grant from Cambridge’s Public Engagement Starter Fund to collaborate with schoolteachers to adapt this resource for classroom teaching. Moreover, in November 2021 I designed and directed an outreach project for which I was awarded an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Development Grant, as part of a funding call coinciding with the COP26 Climate Summit and in collaboration with Cambridge University Widening Participation. This project saw a group of local teenagers make their own film about climate action, led by expert filmmakers, and informed by my research into the history of science communication. The film was screened at the Arts Picturehouse in Cambridge in February 2022. I have also volunteered for the Cambridge History for Schools programme, where I presented a session about the BBC’s centenary. Finally, my collaboration with the Babolin Youth Theatre was performed at this year’s Cambridge Festival. My extensive experience working with young people would be especially valuable to the university community, and one of my priorities during my time as a Lecturer in the department would be to work closely with the University of Manchester widening participation team.

I feel there is a clear match between my teaching, research and public engagement interests, and the needs of the university. My ability and enthusiasm to teach a wide range of courses at undergraduate level would benefit the History department considerably and will add to the existing strengths of the current History staff. I am excited to work alongside Aditya Ramesh, Eloise Moss, Laure Humbert, Jack Webb, and Charlotte Wildman, with whom I share research interests in areas like environmental history, the history of sexuality, and media history. During my time as a Lecturer, I would also represent the university by engaging with the wider historical community in Manchester and beyond by participating in seminars, delivering lectures, and attending conferences.

I hope you will consider my application for this post, and I look forward to discussing it further with you.

Yours faithfully,



(Max Long)