

Tenure Statement

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During my first five years at George Mason, I have undertaken two interrelated research programs in history, one traditional and the other digital. The former involves historical scholarship focused on early modern Europe, where my main research interests are cultural history and the history of science and medicine. In this domain I have published a book, *The Expert Cook in Enlightenment France* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011) and am currently researching a second book that focuses on Enlightenment medical expertise in the colonial world. In my digital humanities research, I have served as principal investigator or director of numerous grant-funded projects (over \$3 million in funding) at the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media (RRCHNM). Although eighteenth-century Europe and the digital humanities may not immediately appear closely aligned, each has long closely informed the other in my research. The Enlightenment's overriding concern about ordering and disseminating a rapidly growing corpus of human knowledge provides much needed context for today's debate over the appropriate role of digital technology and sources in humanistic inquiry. At the same time, the digital tools and methods I seek to develop have offered me unique insight into the complexities of early modern society.

The Expert Cook in Enlightenment France argues that French cooks exploited rapidly changing medical theory in an attempt to transform a servant's occupation into a profession informed by science. Operating at the intersection of domestic service and occupational expertise, cooks worked particularly unstable ground. Nearly all labored as domestic servants without the guild oversight that regulated most other urban trades, and unlike almost every other occupation, cooks counted large numbers of both women and men among their ranks. In the face of this disorganization, cooks proposed to reconfigure their occupation as a professional trade. During the 1730s they introduced *la cuisine moderne*, or “modern cooking,” which aimed at establishing

cooks as expert arbiters of taste by fusing a new theoretical knowledge with existing mechanical skill.

Despite the audacity of this eighteenth-century project, most historians have neglected to study the cooks behind it, preferring instead to focus on food rather than people. In *The Expert Cook*, however, I show that *la cuisine moderne*'s most important contribution was not its recipes but rather its new cook: a "taste professional" who along with decorators, architects, and fashion merchants drove France's consumer revolution; a health practitioner who along with doctors, surgeons, dentists, midwives, and pharmacists advanced his professional status by capitalizing on the Enlightenment's new concern for bodily and material happiness over eternal salvation and the life to come. If today's historians have ignored cooks, contemporary critics most certainly did not, sparing no venom as they condemned these practitioners of *la cuisine moderne*. Some feared that cooks sought to exploit the possibilities of print in order establish an "empire of taste" over their masters that would extend far beyond France's borders. Especially alarming, cooks endangered social norms in gendered ways. Women threatened to unravel the moral fabric of the households for which they cooked: practicing seduction and theft, they corrupted residences from within. Male cooks in contrast jeopardized diners' health: through careless cooking, they poisoned the bodies and curtailed the lives of those who enjoyed their gustatory pleasures. I argue that this widespread wariness regarding cooks and their behavior exposes contemporary anxiety over the nature of taste, both in terms of physiology and culture. Perhaps most troubling, what was poised to become one of the central hallmarks of French high culture was in fact the creation of lowly domestic servants.

In addition to rethinking the creation and transmission of taste and fashion, *The Expert Cook* also forces a reconsideration of several other historical narratives. For example, I conclude that asserting "modernity" did not always constitute a successful rhetorical strategy. For cooks this claim backfired, and I argue that servants ultimately could not be "modern." I also contend that domestic servants were more dynamic and skilled than most historians have allowed.

Contrary to every other assessment of domestic servants, my research demonstrates that cooks, male and female, could typically read, write, and calculate. And yet, there was no cooks' guild to build, protect, or encourage the development and transmission of cooks' knowledge. My study of cooks thus contributes to our understanding of how expertise was developed and transmitted within the domestic sphere of labor, while at the same time rethinking traditional divisions between skilled and unskilled workers. Finally, by driving doctors and other critics into a public debate over the power of taste, cooks engaged in the same "politics of contestation" that ultimately undermined royal authority in the Old Regime.

Beyond its contributions to our understanding of work patterns and cultural practices, *The Expert Cook* draws on and contributes to the vibrant and growing literature on the eighteenth century's consumer revolution. Although historians invariably describe this revolution as involving both goods and services, existing scholarship nearly always focuses only on goods, often for evidentiary reasons alone. In contrast, *The Expert Cook* explores one of the period's most ephemeral services and thus advances our understanding of the varieties of consumption that emerged in the eighteenth century. Moreover, *The Expert Cook* offers tangible evidence of the motors behind the radical changes and rapid growth in consumer behavior.

My study contributes to our understanding of how taste became a relevant cultural marker by focusing on the very individuals who sought to establish a new scientific and medical model of taste with themselves as its ultimate arbiters. Eighteenth-century cooks and physicians saw no clear line separating their spheres of influence, and *The Expert Cook* makes no such distinction either. By exploiting the early modern understanding of cooking as a branch of medicine (in the form of dietetics), cooks crafted a rhetoric of the kitchen that both captivated the public imagination and provoked the ire of the formal medical community. My study thus necessarily spans disciplinary boundaries between cultural history and the history of science and medicine. On a more theoretical level, my study grapples with the Enlightenment's central preoccupation over the barriers between theory and practice, and the supreme benefits that might

result from their elimination. By weaving a new theoretical knowledge into their existing practices, cooks sought to profit from the period's fascination with the codification and theorization of occupational practices.

As I concluded the research for *The Expert Cook*, I became increasingly interested in the wider experience of occupational expertise and health in France's overseas colonies and trading entrepôts. At the same time, I remained convinced that there was more to be said about the medical aspects of diet, a contentious topic of debate during the eighteenth century that has remained largely unexamined. My current research project satisfies both of these interests by exploring medical practices in the eighteenth-century French colonies and trading outposts. Well over a century before germ theory gave rise to "tropical medicine," a consensus on the health challenges posed by warm climates emerged among physicians, surgeons, apothecaries, and quacks, with many blaming intemperance and debauchery for exacerbating the effects of a radically different environment. How did the devastating effects of tropical disease refine or challenge the humoral, mechanical, and chemical models of health vying for attention among European medical practitioners? Why did diet become the critical lever for regulating health (and the passions) in the tropics?

I have been fortunate to be able to formulate and explore these questions during two years of research leave from 2010-2012. Although I have been based in Vietnam, which comprises part of my study on early tropical colonies, during this time I have also conducted extensive research in France at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (French National Library) and the Bibliothèque interuniversitaire de Santé (Interuniversity Health Library), both in Paris, as well as at the Archives nationales d'outre-mer (Overseas National Archives) in Aix-en-Provence. In May 2012, I will present my latest findings in a conference paper "Diet for the Debauched: Preventive Medicine in the Eighteenth-Century Tropics" at the annual meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society in New Orleans.

The general questions raised by my traditional historical research -- the Enlightenment's production and classification of human knowledge, and how fringe characters contributed to this monumental effort -- inform and propel my digital scholarship, where I focus on the new research challenges that confront scholars in a digital age. Thanks to a broad range of formal and informal digitization efforts, today's historians confront a problem of abundance unlike any before.

Although archives and libraries have always been sites of abundance, researchers were traditionally limited by the twin constraints of time and space, which led to scarcity of access. This era has already come to an end for many fields, and historians of all stripes must prepare themselves and the students they supervise to conduct research in an environment where rapidly expanding access to source material threatens to overwhelm and curtail reflection, analysis, and scholarly communication.

As Director of Research Projects at RRCHNM, I have focused on how historians can use technology to refine -- and in some cases transform -- their research practices to accommodate the torrent of source material that is now available on demand from nearly anywhere in the world. My most important digital project is Zotero, a software platform for collecting, organizing, citing, and sharing research. Although it was initially conceived by Dan Cohen and others before my arrival at George Mason, I began co-directing Zotero at its launch in 2006 and assumed full day-to-day management of the project in fall 2007. Zotero has since grown to become one of the largest and most successful digital humanities projects ever launched. It has been downloaded many millions of times, is used daily on over 300,000 devices, and boasts an interface that is available in over forty languages. Under my direction Zotero has recently moved in two key new directions: transformation into a general purpose research platform and guaranteeing long term financial sustainability. To achieve the first goal, over the past eighteen months we have steadily exposed the entire architecture behind Zotero's website and synchronization services to any developer who wishes to work with Zotero data without having to use Zotero software or the website. Everything that Zotero functionally does internally is similarly accessible from the

outside. The implications of this shift are huge: at one end of the spectrum, bloggers can easily embed a bibliography or a CV that draws its content directly from the Zotero cloud; at the other end, software programmers are now building and offering customized Zotero apps for mobile devices. As a result, today it is no longer even necessary to download and install Zotero to use it. Instead, "Zotero" has shifted toward a set of web-based services that enable scholars to collect, analyze, share, and disseminate their research. This open architecture sets a new standard in the digital humanities, where most research tools are of limited use and rapidly grow stagnant.

The second new direction for Zotero has been my focus on achieving financial sustainability. The development of Zotero from concept to popular research software has been costly, with well over \$2 million of grant funding since 2005. Most funding agencies, however, prefer to fund new projects and development over sustaining existing ones. To ensure Zotero's long term viability, it was necessary to begin replacing less predictable grant funding with a more stable revenue stream. Over the past two years, I have directed Zotero's transformation from a wholly grant-driven project to one that is fully sustainable through revenue generated by the sale of services related to the software. Zotero now draws a rapidly growing annual income projected to top \$300,000 this year. This revenue will cover all ongoing costs associated with the project, including developer wages and infrastructure, while still allowing the software to remain free. The sustainability plan proposed by Zotero offers a successful model for other projects, which risk withering away once grant funding ends.

Beyond Zotero, I have directed and contributed to several other high-profile projects at RRCHNM. I used text mining algorithms to code a proof-of-concept that found and grouped similar JSTOR articles. This work inspired *Scholarship in the Age of Abundance: Enhancing Historical Research With Text-Mining and Analysis Tools*, a project I led with Dan Cohen which provides a deep understanding of how historians are actually using digital technology and how they imagine it might enable them to do more. In partnership with teams in the UK and Canada, our project *Data Mining with Criminal Intent* combined text-mining tools and digitized archival

data to shed new light on centuries of criminal justice records. I directed development and delivery of two content-driven sites, one on diplomatic and the other on global history. I programmed several plugins for ScholarPress, a suite of blogging tools that enable academics and instructors to distribute reading lists, organize assignments, and network with other scholars. I am currently directing a strategic partnership between PressForward, RRCHNM's open-access publishing initiative, and OpenEdition, a \$9 million project to build an international open-access publishing platform launched by France's CNRS (Centre national de la recherche scientifique).

My work in the digital humanities has not been limited to George Mason University. In 2009, I founded the nonprofit Corporation for Digital Scholarship along with Dan Cohen, Tom Scheinfeldt, and three outside academics. This corporation ensures the long term sustainability of two of RRCHNM's highest profile projects, Zotero and Omeka, by selling a range of associated services and using the proceeds to finance development. Since 2008 I have served as a project director and edited over 500 articles for *The Encyclopedia of Diderot and d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*, which collects, edits, and publishes English translations of this important (and massive) Enlightenment text. Hosted at the University of Michigan, the *Encyclopedia* provides invaluable primary source teaching materials on Enlightenment philosophy, technical information, and everyday life with articles ranging not only from "Absolute monarchy" to "Zeal, religious" but also from "Arsenic" to "Zenicon" (another poison).

I teach a range of undergraduate and graduate courses that focus on early modern European and colonial history. Developed along with colleague Mack Holt, my undergraduate survey "Old Regime and Revolutionary Europe" fills a critical gap in the university course catalog that had long remained untaught. I regularly lead a senior thesis seminar on the French Revolution where I particularly enjoy working with history majors to make the shift from consumers of history to producers. Two particularly innovative courses are my upper-level "Taste, Fashion, and Consumption in Early Modern Europe" (a.k.a. "the history of shopping" and cross-listed with Art History) and a graduate seminar on early French empire which explored

early modern colonialism in a global context rather than the more common Atlantic approach. I also teach graduate courses on the Enlightenment and on the French Revolution which offer unique perspectives of cultural impact beyond Europe and in the lives of ordinary people. My teaching combines traditional methods — I am committed to the power of close reading and organize my courses around lectures, primary source reading, and discussion — with regular use of digital tools such as Zotero to distribute materials and to collect bibliographies and student responses. My thesis students create and organize their research bibliographies online, often in collaboration with each other.

My service to the university and to the broader academic community has been wide-ranging. I have served for several years on the Research Committee for the Department of History and Art History. Outside the university, I have spoken on digital humanities and academic technology issues in the U.S. (Council on Library and Information Resources, American Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies) and internationally (University of Bern, European University Institute), raising the profile of RRCHNM, the Department of History and Art History, and George Mason University. At the same time I have focused on forging relationships between my institution and peer organizations across Europe. The collaboration between PressForward and OpenEdition is one of the first important outcomes of strengthening these bonds. I have served on the technology committee for the Society for French Historical Studies. I evaluate peer scholarship and participate in scholarly dialogue in a variety of venues, having acted as an NEH grant panelist, manuscript reviewer for Cornell University Press and the *Journal of Social History*, and book reviewer for the *Journal of Modern History*, *French History*, and the Society for French Historical Studies (H-France).

With rich opportunities for independent research as well as intensive and productive collaboration, my first years at George Mason University have been deeply rewarding. I look forward to an exciting future of continued research, teaching, and service in history and the digital humanities.