

2025

UNIVERSITY
**FACULTY AWARDS AND
RECOGNITION CEREMONY**

Celebrating Academic Excellence at
Eastern Kentucky University

Sabbatical Showcase



Pediatric Mental Health Services Using Technology and Telehealth: In Schools and Outpatient Settings



Dr. Dan Florell

Professor

Psychology – College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences

SUMMARY

The sabbatical oriented on gathering the materials and writing a book on pediatric mental health services that focused on the use of technology and telehealth. The initial portion was spent getting a book contract which was secured with Oxford University Press. I then set up a system to efficiently take notes using a variety of technologies including Zotero, Word, Dropbox, and various research oriented AI services. I had to do significant revision to my book proposal based on feedback from the publisher and the widespread introduction of Large Language Model Artificial Intelligence (AI).

HIGHLIGHTS

- Florell, D. (2024, July 4). Utilizing Wearable Technology in Assessment and Intervention. Workshop presented at 45th International School Psychology Association Conference, Riga, Latvia.
- Florell, D. (2023, July 8). Effective Delivery of School Psychology Telehealth Services. Workshop presented at 44th International School Psychology Association Conference, Bologna, Italy.
- Florell, D. (2024, July 10). Behave Robot: Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence. Invited speaker for Advanced Skills Institute webinar of National Association of School Psychologists.
- Florell, D. (2024, March 14). Keeping Up with New Technology: Intro to AI, VR, and Wearables. Webinar (90 min.) for Illinois School Psychologists Association Virtual Convention.
- Florell, D. (2023). Telesupervision. In Dennis J. Simon & Mark E. Swerdlik Supervision in School Psychology: The Developmental, Ecological, Problem-Solving Model, 2nd Ed., Routledge, 395-410.

IMPACT

The impact of this project on my field is increasing school psychologists' awareness of various technologies that can provide children and adolescents better mental health services.

CONNECTION

This project has allowed for better incorporation of AI into class assignments and to assist in preparing teaching materials. I was also able to serve as a consultant in my department regarding AI implementation.



Women in the Ancient World: Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome



Dr. Jackie Jay

Professor

History, Philosophy & Religious Studies – College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences

SUMMARY

This book traces the rise of patriarchy in late prehistory and compares the lives of women in four core Old World cultures: Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. After an initial chapter on prehistory, each chapter takes as its centering focal point specific women whose names survive in the ancient records: Enheduanna, poet and priestess of the god Nanna in Mesopotamia; Naunakht, resident of the ancient Egyptian village housing the workers who built the tombs in the Valley of the Kings; Aspasia, partner of the general Pericles of Athens; and Terentia and Tullia, wife and daughter of the Roman politician and philosopher Cicero.

At the core of the book lies the argument that there is no “one” form of patriarchy. The distinct forms of male-dominated social structure that developed in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome took shape in response to specific historical circumstances. Gender inequality is by no means a biological historical universal, but rather a phenomenon that came into being with the emergence of more complex forms of human society and evolved in different ways across space and time.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Patriarchy is a very recent development in the trajectory of human society. In Paleolithic prehistory, humans lived in egalitarian hunting-gathering bands. This pattern only changed with the development of farming in the Neolithic (after the last Ice Age).
- 2. Full-blown patriarchy did not emerge fully-formed with the earliest civilizations. It became more entrenched as time passed.
- 3. The nature of the relationship between men and women depends upon the specific historical circumstances of a particular society. For example, Greece and Rome developed in very different ways. Ancient Athens placed deep restrictions upon its elite women to protect the interests of inheritance and citizenship; in contrast, as Rome expanded into empire elite women were granted a significant degree of agency to act on behalf of their male relatives posted abroad.

IMPACT

My monograph is unique in bringing together women from four different Old World societies. I aim with my book to contribute to larger feminist projects by tracing the rise of patriarchy and historicizing specific ancient patriarchies. By examining the lives of Enheduanna, Naunakht, Aspasia, and Terentia in the context of the broader cultures in which they lived, we see how four specific women navigated the world around them. We also gain valuable insight into the rise of civilization and the emergence of power structures that continue to exert influence today.

CONNECTION

At ECU, I teach a research paper class for History majors on the topic of “Women in the Ancient World.” I envisage assigning my monograph in future iterations of this class.



Lilley Cornett Woods Center Re-Design



Shannon McCarthy

Associate Professor

School of Art & Design – College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences

SUMMARY

The redesign of the Lilley Cornett Woods Appalachian Ecological Research Station is actively transforming it into a modern, welcoming space that enhances tourism and learning. New, innovative, and interactive displays are being developed to highlight the area’s significance and history. Supported by LCW Manager Robert Brown, Associate Director of the Division of Natural Areas Dr. Kelly Watson, and Executive Director of the Institute of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and the Environment Dr. Stephen Richter, this project is elevating LCW as a vital hub for ecological research, aligning with ECU Natural Areas’ commitment to environmental studies and long-term forest composition research.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Engaged with design professionals to explore exhibition processes and subject matter.
- Visited regional natural areas and visitor centers for design inspiration.
- Spent time at Lilley Cornett Woods to gain deeper insight and collaborate closely with the team on development and ideas.

IMPACT

The completed project provides ECU with a refreshed, modernized Lilley Cornett Woods visitor center , enhancing its role as a hub for ecological research and education. For the community, it offers an engaging space to celebrate and learn more about Appalachia, fostering a deeper connection to the region’s natural and cultural heritage.

CONNECTION

This project showcases the full design process, providing students with a real-world model of research, collaboration, and execution. Insights from this experience will enhance classroom learning, reinforcing the importance of research, ideation, and communication in creating impactful design solutions.



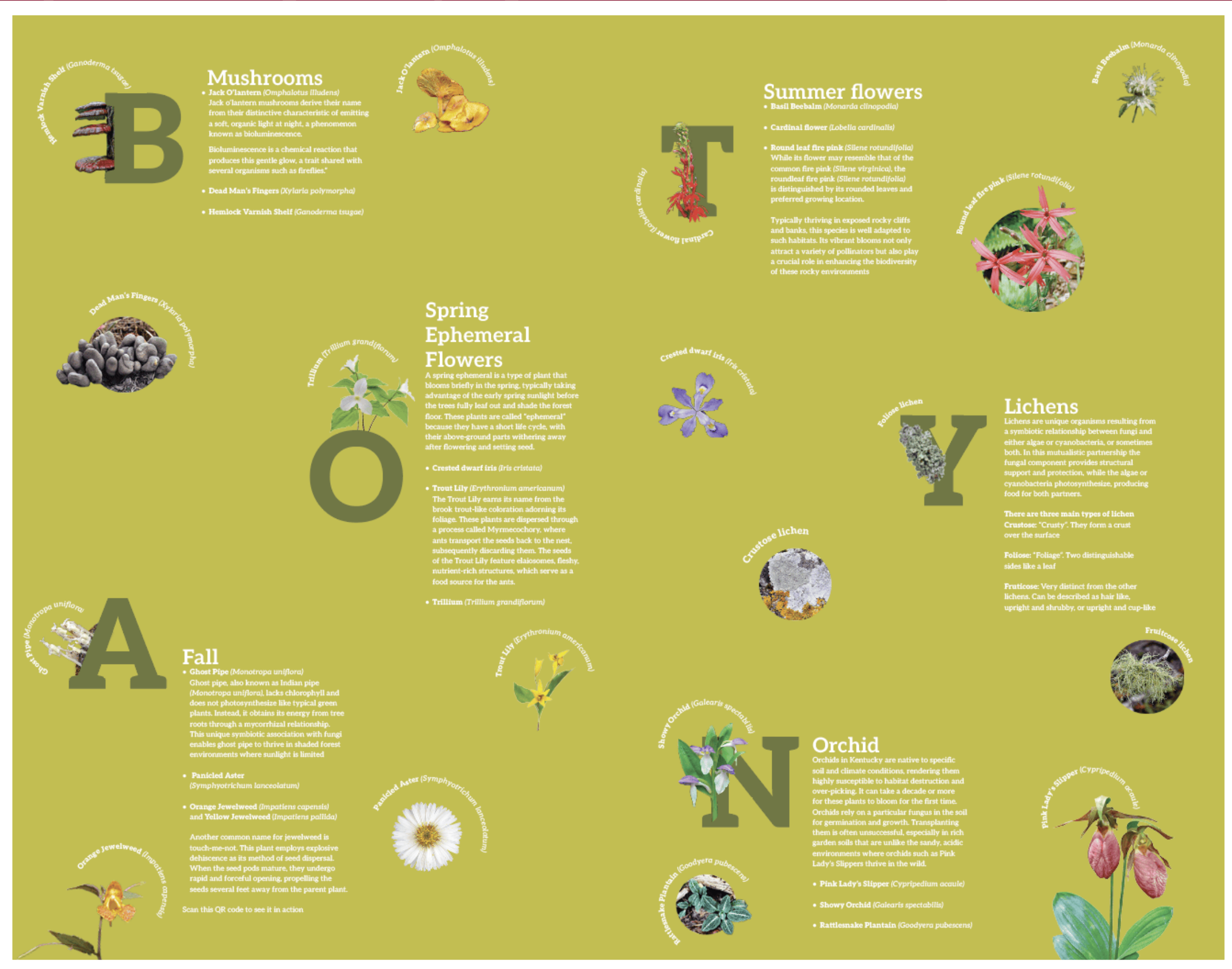
Lilley Cornett Woods Center Re-Design



Shannon McCarthy

Associate Professor

School of Art & Design – College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences



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'Always Sure Commodities': Sales of Enslaved People in the Colonial Lower Cape Fear



Dr. Bradford Wood

Professor

History, Philosophy & Religious Studies – College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences

SUMMARY

I started new research on the history of slavery in Colonial North Carolina. The most important piece of my research was an essay about the local sales of the enslaved in the Lower Cape Fear region of North Carolina. I was able to complete most of a thirty-five page essay in Spring 2024. My manuscript is the most detailed local study of sales of enslaved people that has been written for a place in Colonial British North America. I hope it will be an important first section of a book about slavery in Colonial North Carolina.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The most important discoveries were the times when I was able to reconstruct more of the experience of specific enslaved people across different documents.
- I also found it valuable to work out when enslaved people were being sold into larger or smaller enslaved communities.
- Finding out how far enslaved people were likely to move after they were sold was challenging but I was able to put together enough evidence.

IMPACT

My project will lead to a better understanding of the local sales of enslaved people in Colonial America and of how those sales were experienced by the enslaved.

CONNECTION

My research helps me to stay engaged and rethink many of the issues that are important in my teaching.



Comparative Analysis of Trumpet Pedagogy: United States vs. Central and South America



Dr. Joseph Van Fleet

Professor

Music – College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences

SUMMARY

My research explored the distinct pedagogical practices in trumpet education across the United States, Central America, and South America. The U.S. approach is more structured and gradual, while methods in Central and South America emphasize immediate performance and practical application. The less mainstream ideas, which are more commonly used outside the US, can be an extremely valuable addition to the established methodology we use here. This is especially true when applied on a very individual basis, according to each student’s needs.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Many of the “fringe” pedagogical concepts, which are often dismissed in the US, have been proven very effective elsewhere. Cultures with less structure, where students often find their own way, have produced many amazing musicians. This is especially true of their physical approach to playing the trumpet.
- The U.S. system focuses on structured academic learning and gradual performance experience, while Central and South American pedagogy emphasizes immediate performance and practical skill application.
- Institutions in Central and South America resemble conservatories and place a strong emphasis on real-world performance experience very early in the student’s development.
- In many countries, the materials we consider traditional pedagogical resources in the U.S. can be hard to find and prohibitively expensive.
- Mariachi trumpet playing is considered a completely separate discipline in Latin America, with separate schools. Even more so than jazz and classical in the US.

IMPACT

Educators can benefit from integrating aspects of both traditional pedagogical methods with more experimental approaches. These systems compliment each other very well and greatly benefit students.

CONNECTION

For my personal application, I will strive for more unique and individualized teaching strategies. And explore more non-traditional ideas and methods especially when helping students working towards overcoming difficult and persistent challenges.



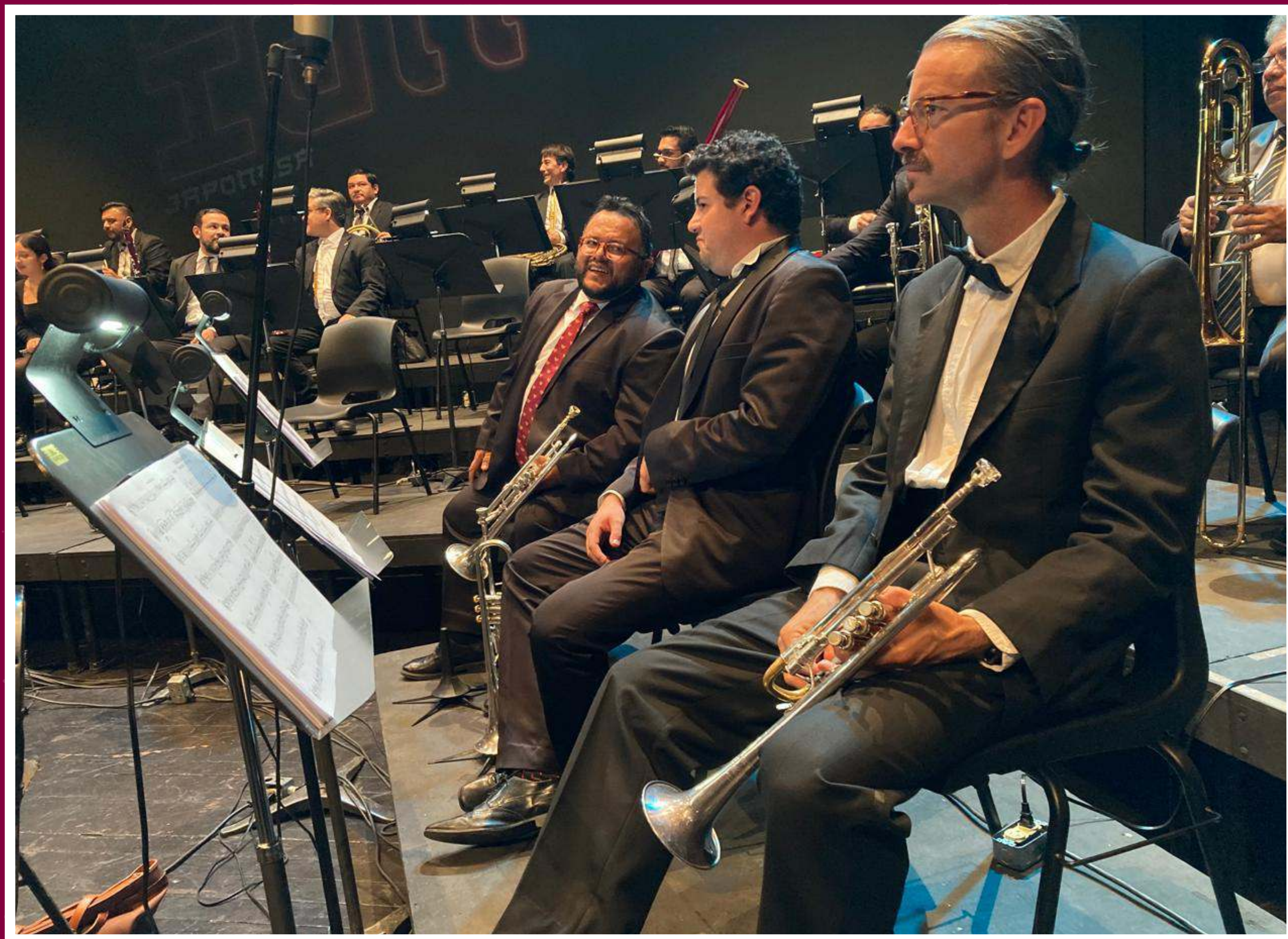
Comparative Analysis of Trumpet Pedagogy: United States vs. Central and South America



Dr. Joseph Van Fleet

Professor

Music – College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences



Distorting Democracy: The Forgotten History of the Electoral College and Why It Matters Today



Dr. Carolyn Dupont

Professor

History, Philosophy & Religious Studies – College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences

SUMMARY

For this project, I examined the origins of the Electoral College in the debates that created the US Constitution, and I followed this system as it changed during the course of American history. I also analyzed the impact of the Electoral College on our elections and political system today.

HIGHLIGHTS

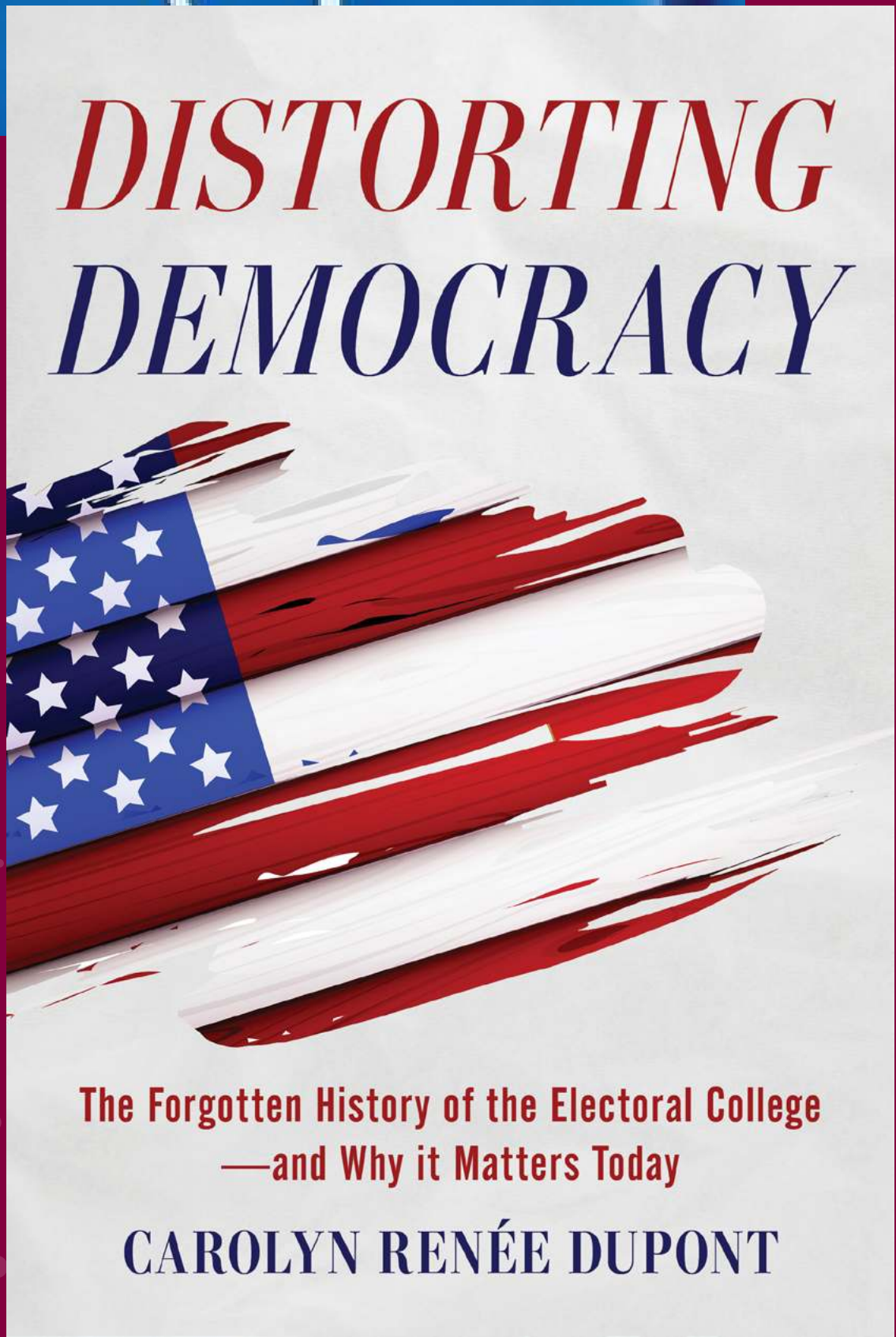
- 1. The framers chose an electoral college system, not to fulfill a set of high-minded principles, but because they could not agree on any other option.
- 2. Over the course of American history, political operators have manipulated the electoral college system so that it no longer operates according to the plan laid out in the US Constitution.
- 3. Today's Electoral College distorts our system and fulfills no democratic purposes.

IMPACT

This project has equipped me to educate fellow citizens about the Electoral College, how it has changed over time, and its impact on our democratic processes.

CONNECTION

This project has made me a more effective teacher of the US Constitution and of the process that created it.



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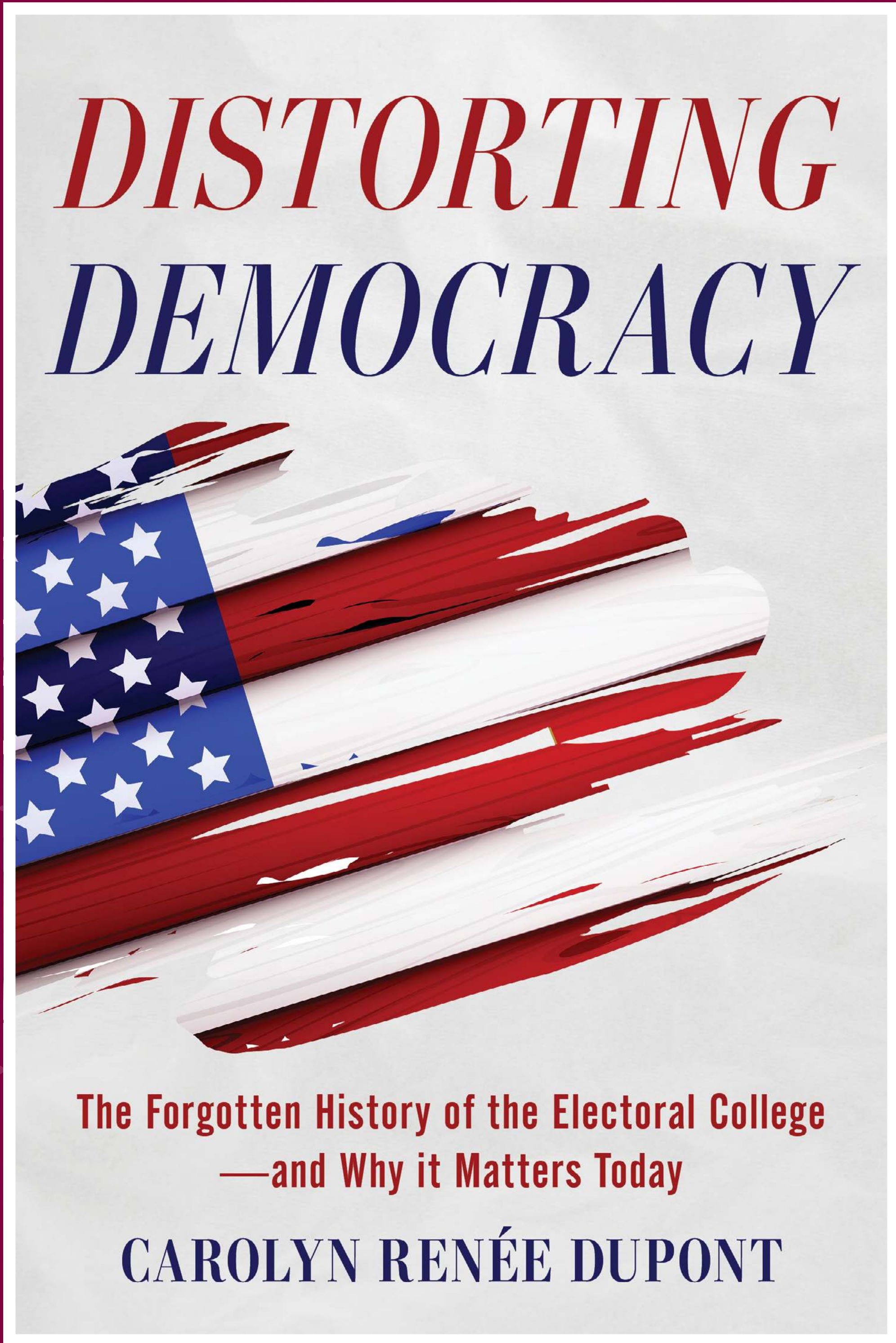
Distorting Democracy: The Forgotten History of the Electoral College and Why It Matters Today



Dr. Carolyn Dupont

Professor

History, Philosophy & Religious Studies – College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences



Jeanne-Élisabeth Chaudet and Expressions of Female Artistic Agency during the First French Empire



Amanda Strasik

Associate Professor

School of Art & Design – College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences

SUMMARY

French painter Jeanne-Élisabeth Chaudet launched her career in post-revolutionary Paris, where opportunities for women artists reached new heights. After the violence of the Revolution, the artistic motif of the innocent child was an important symbol of hope and profitable subject matter, and Chaudet’s imagining of this theme resonated with imperial audiences, especially Empress Joséphine and Princess Caroline Bonaparte Murat. My research explores these “matronage” networks that were at the center of artistic invention in early nineteenth-century Paris. Genre portraits became spaces for women to engage with specific notions of artistic representation, female identity, and enter into political conversations about women’s roles without overtly defying gender expectations as defined in the 1804 Napoleonic Code that codified separate spheres for the sexes.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Conducting primary research in museums and archives in Paris, especially the “Salon du dessin” (Drawing Collections) at the musée du Louvre
- A private tour of Napoleonic galleries and conversation with Frédéric Lacaille, Curator of XIXth Paintings at the musée national des châteaux de Versailles et Trianon
- A private tour of Napoleonic art and conversation with Christophe Beyeler, General Curator of Heritage at the château de Fontainebleau
- Italy was an important site for artistic study and Napoleon created satellite kingdoms for his sisters in Rome, Florence, and Naples. I traveled to Rome and Florence for the first time to experience important art collections in those cities.

IMPACT

No comprehensive study of Chaudet and the historical significance of her artistic identity and oeuvre exists, even though the painter was connected to the Napoleonic court, which understood the power of art to educate and persuade. My research demonstrates that although gender barriers existed, they were permeable as women were culturally and politically active and influential as artists and patrons.

CONNECTION

I weave my research themes, methods, and discoveries into my curriculum. My focus on gender and women’s equality in art history invites ECU students to understand their own identities more deeply and participate in debates on feminism that are happening today. During my sabbatical, the opportunities to personally examine artworks with my French colleagues and immerse myself in historical and cultural environments renewed my energy and passion, which I enthusiastically share with my students.



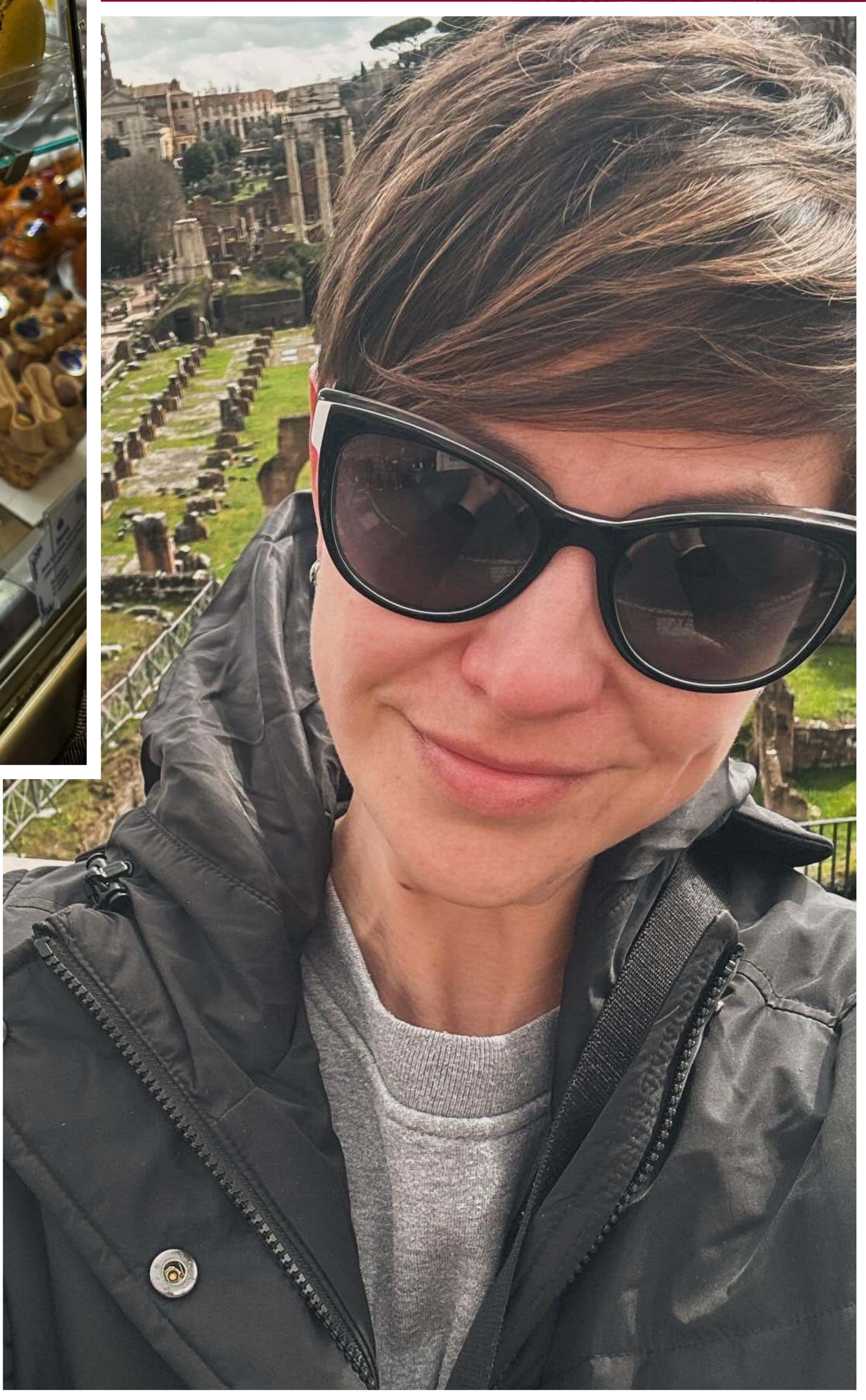
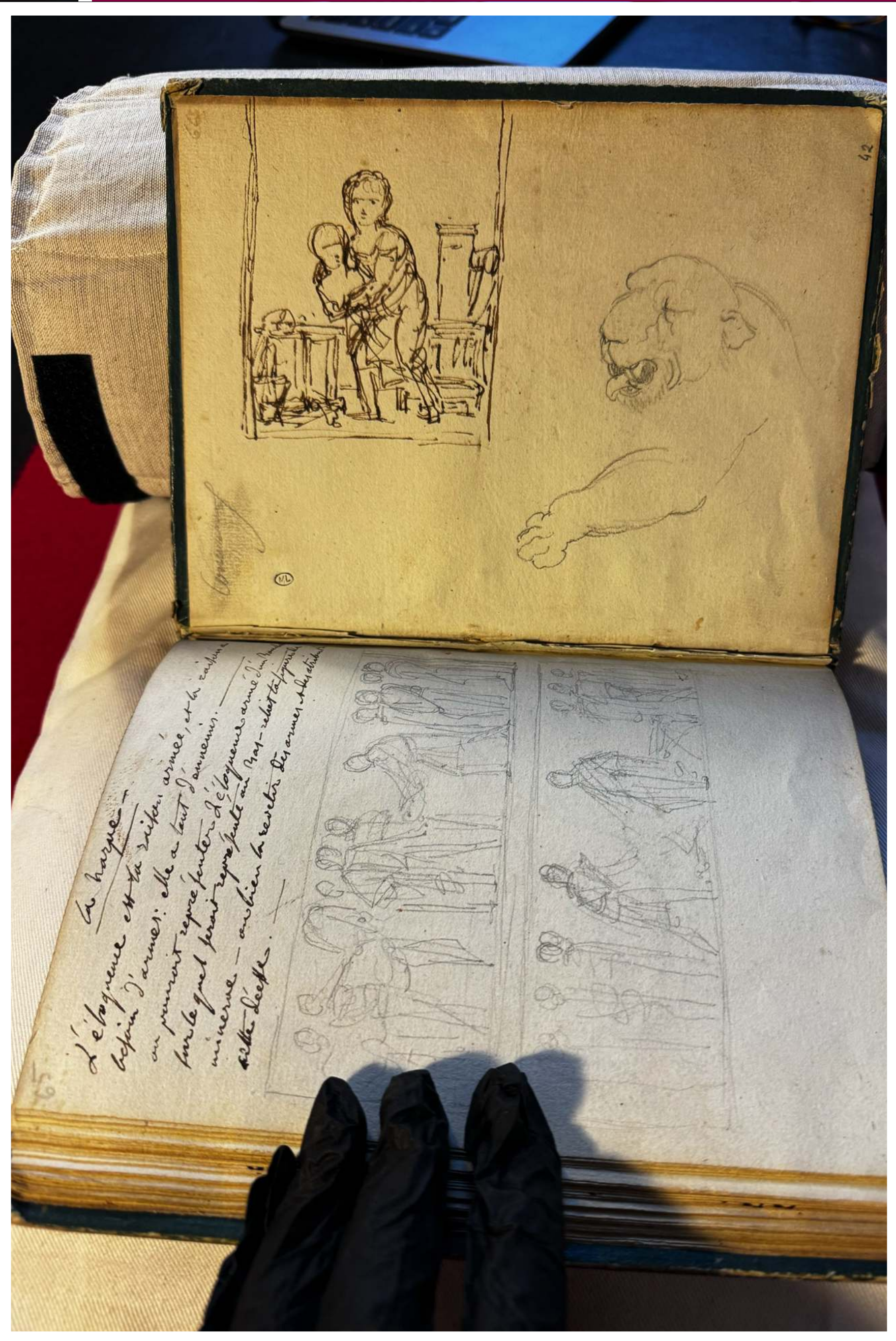
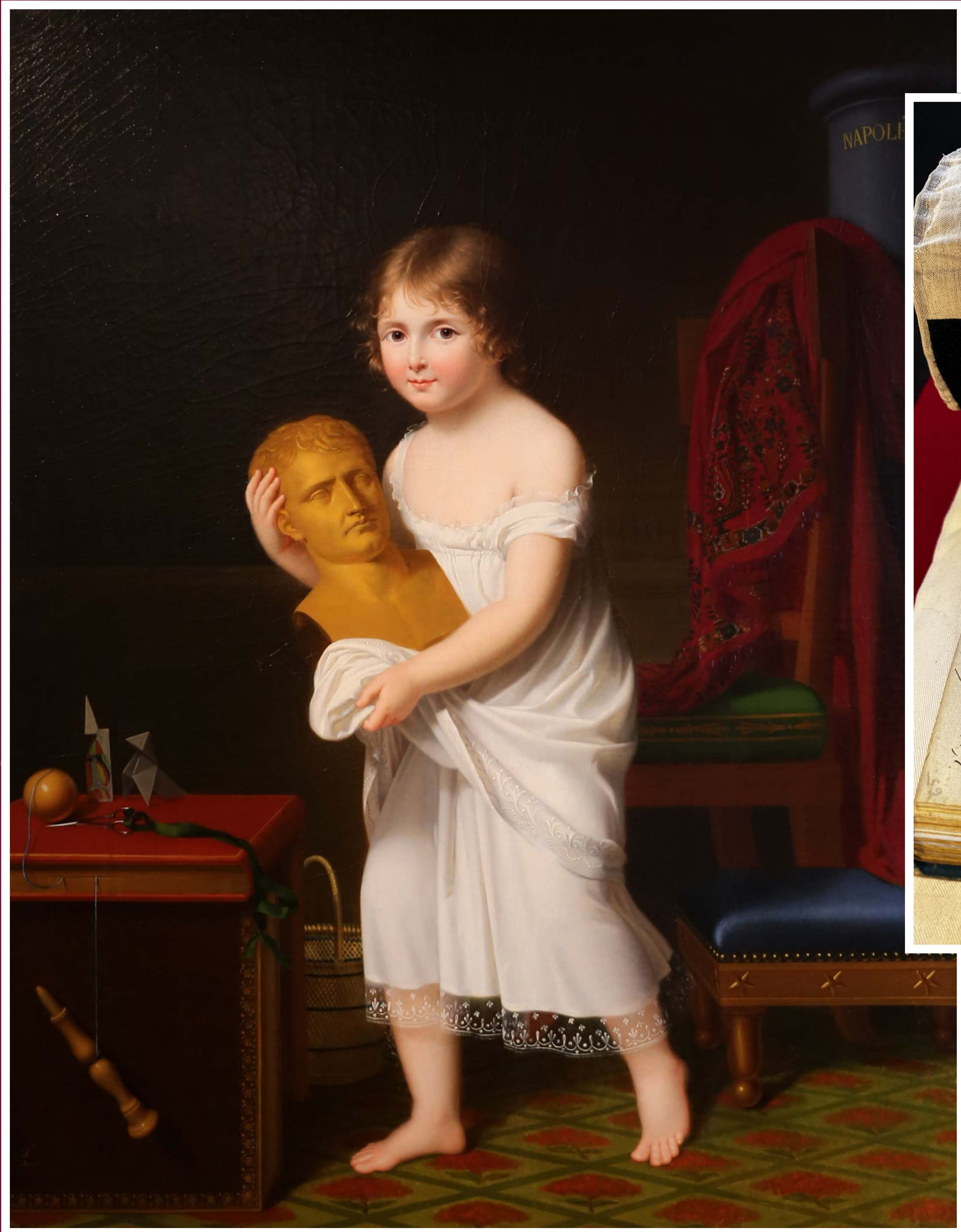
Jeanne-Élisabeth Chaudet and Expressions of Female Artistic Agency during the First French Empire



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Accessible Appalachia: An Open-Access Introduction to Appalachian Studies



Dr. Lisa Day

Associate Professor

English – College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences

SUMMARY

In December 2020, I distributed a call for submissions for an open-access anthology of chapters focusing on Appalachia from an introductory, interdisciplinary perspective. I intended this collection to serve the first of its kind, and my goal was to provide instructors and students in Appalachian Studies with comprehensive, up-to-date coverage of cultural, historical, and natural development in the region. The sabbatical enabled me to maintain focused, productive energy in the editing process and to submit the final manuscript to the library in April 2024.

HIGHLIGHTS

- I hired Jacob Johnson, an undergraduate History major and Appalachian Studies minor, as my work-study student, spent a semester with him as my editorial intern, and credited him as my co-editor after his graduation from ECU due to his meaningful contributions to the project.
- The editorial board and I reviewed over 60 submissions and sent acceptances to most of the authors. We received and published nineteen chapters.
- Most of all, I learned the importance of persistence. Beginning the project at the beginning of the pandemic created many challenges, including loss of editorial board members to job changes and greater demands in teaching as well as delayed submissions of chapters.
- Collaboration was key. Not only did I form a close working relationship with my co-editor, I also received excellent assistance from the library faculty and staff with publication details and with bibliographical editing. I also worked with a former colleague on a chapter about the Tennessee Valley Authority, which allowed me to conduct historical research and oral history about the Black population of east Tennessee in the 1940s.

IMPACT

Since the textbook is an open electronic resource, readers all over the world can use the textbook at no cost. The collection has received 520 unique visitors in the eleven months of its publication, and I am still receiving queries and accepting proposals for additional chapters.

CONNECTION

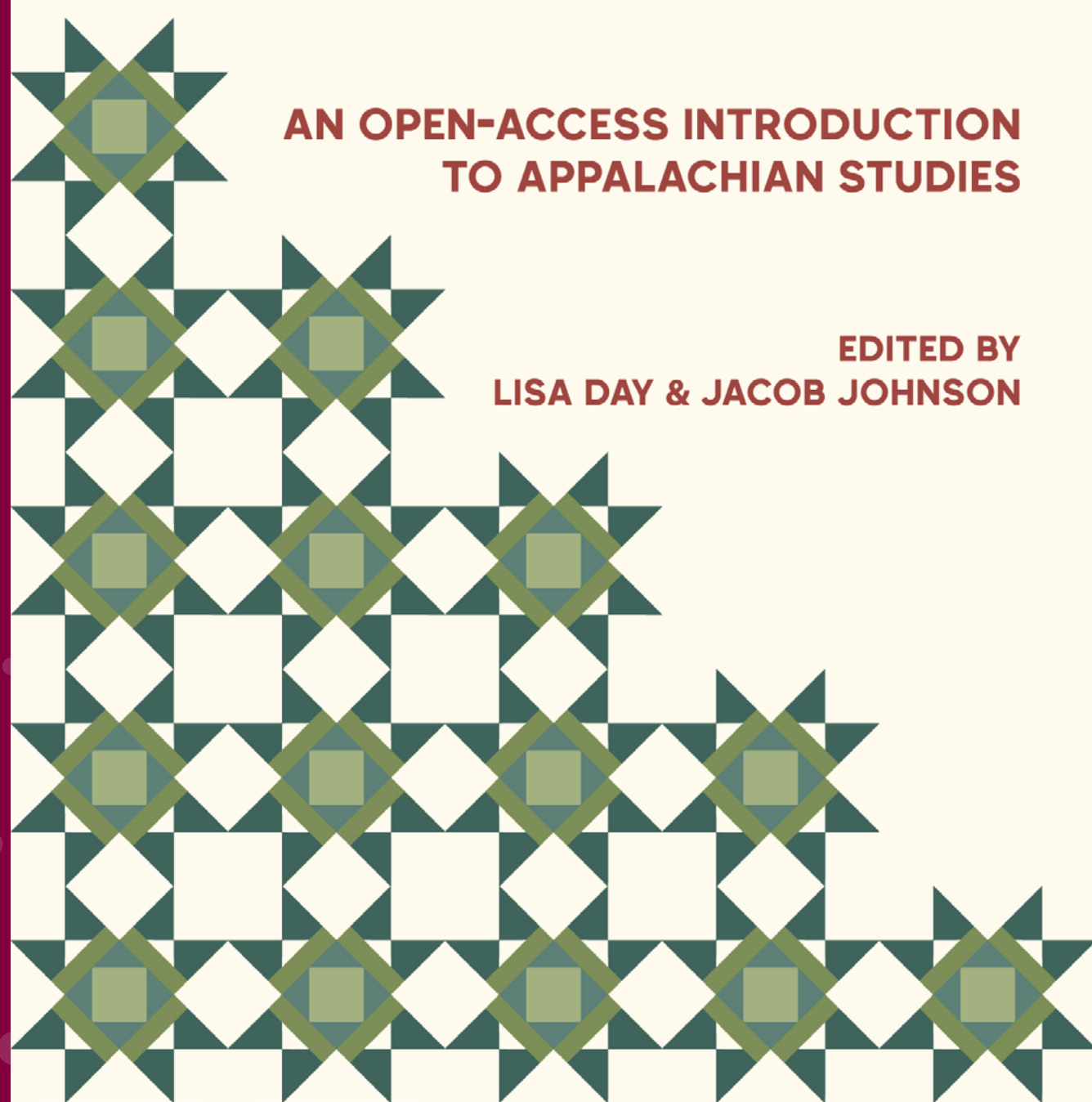
The creation of this textbook was my second collaboration on open electronic resources with the ECU Libraries and my first experience with the Manifold publishing platform. As a result, I could easily translate these experiences into a course in editing and publishing, especially involving open electronic resources.



*ACCESSIBLE
APPALACHIA*

AN OPEN-ACCESS INTRODUCTION
TO APPALACHIAN STUDIES

EDITED BY
LISA DAY & JACOB JOHNSON



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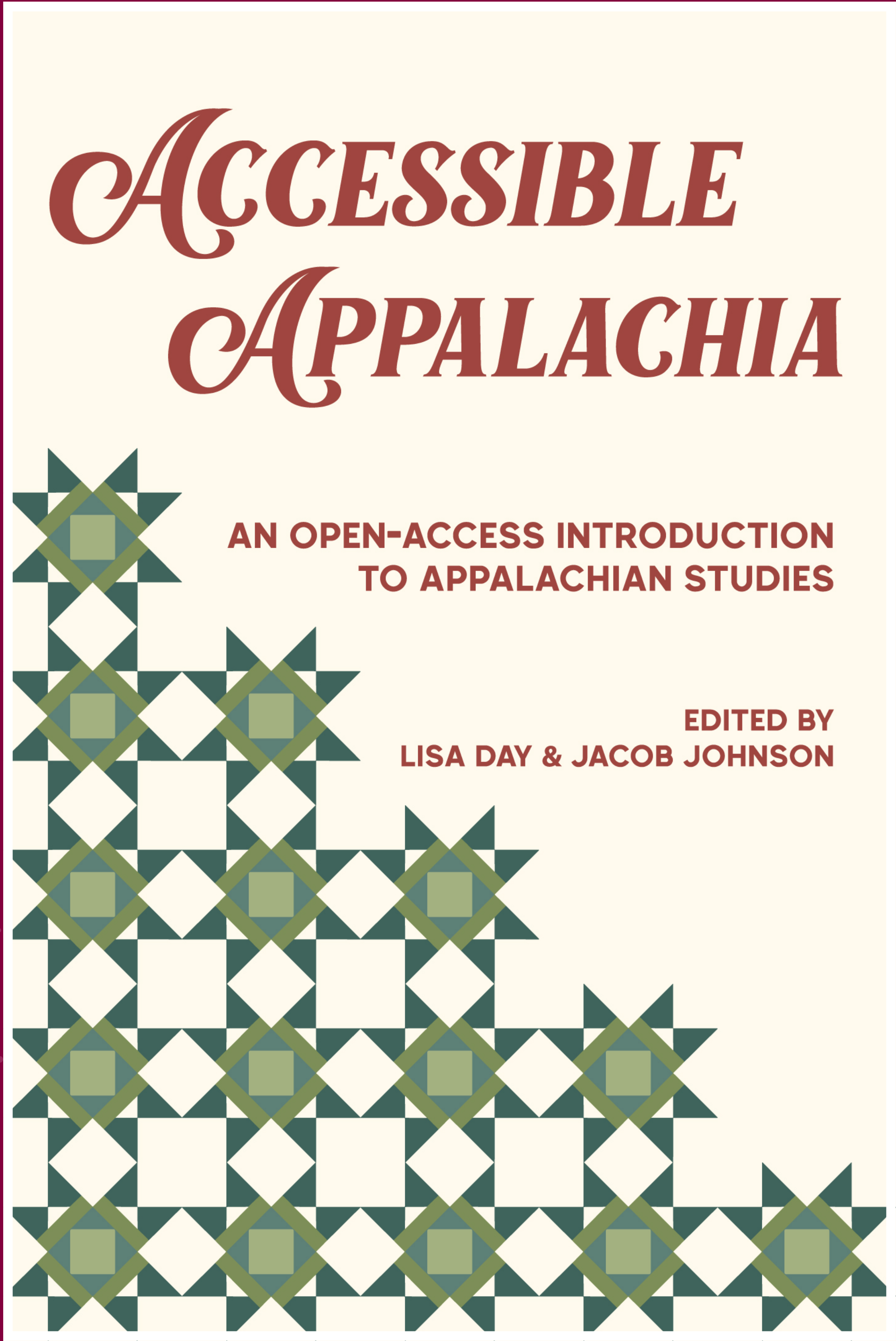
Accessible Appalachia: An Open-Access Introduction to Appalachian Studies



Dr. Lisa Day

Associate Professor

English – College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences



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Gone Fishin’: Assessing the Feasibility of Outdoor Programming and Wilderness Training for Youth and Young People in Eastern Kentucky

Dr. Stephanie McSpirit

Foundation Professor

Sociology – College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences

OUR RESEARCH QUESTION

We were interested in understanding what were the opportunities and what were the challenges in offering more outdoor experiences and more recreational activities for families and youth in eastern Kentucky. This emphasis was driven by regional efforts to provide positive outdoor experiences to young people so that they may develop a sense of leadership, pride of place, community-connectedness and an appreciation for the outdoors. “*The Pathfinder Initiative*” as it has come to be known, has been working to provide meaningful outdoor experiences so that EKU youth have something to say “YES” to. Subsequently, with these more positive community offerings, Youth will be more inclined to avoid the negative influences of substance use and misuse that has been rampant and has ravaged many eastern Kentucky rural communities. Our team has partnered with the *Pathfinder Initiative* to explore the potential for expanding outdoor recreation opportunities for families and kids in eastern Kentucky.

RELEVANT RESEARCH

The research continues to accumulate on the positive mental health, physical health and prosocial benefits of outdoor sport, recreation and simply outdoor time on children, youth and families. Harrison, et al. (2023) provides a synthesis of some of the research on nature-based interventions and concludes that such outdoor activities may serve to address health inequities, by improving physical, mental and even financial health.

Moreover, there is an emerging literature, premised often on the Icelandic Prevention Model (IPM) (Sigfusdottir, et al. 2020), that demonstrates additional benefits of outdoor recreation and outdoor sport. When tied with strong family, school and community supports, youth outdoor activities can serve as an effective intervention against the onset of substance use, misuse and addiction (Kristjansson et al. 2021). In fact, a variant of the IPM is already being developed in Appalachia across several West Virginia communities, strengthening community supports and recreational opportunities as a primary protective factor against the onset of substance and alcohol use and abuse (Kristjansson et al. 2015; Kristjansson et al. 2021; Davis et al. 2025). Increasingly, spending time outdoors is more than just “spending time outdoors.” Overall, there is increasing scientific evidence to suggest that outdoor time and outdoor recreational activities provide a host of physical, psychological, social and societal-wide benefits to communities, families and kids.

METHODOLOGY

From 2023 through 2024, we conducted a series of focus groups with local and state leaders in the field of outdoor education and outdoor recreation. These leaders included private sector outdoor outfitters, environmental educators working at both the state and local levels, governmental and nongovernmental officials working in the area of conservation education as well as university faculty (especially from Eastern Kentucky University), working on community-rooted, outdoor recreation and environmental projects. Our participants included persons building hiking trails, promoting mountain biking and mountain bike parks, hosting horsemanship clinics, organizing river cleanups and canoe trips and a whole host of other persons working to provide outdoor recreation opportunities for families and youth in eastern Kentucky. Along with a majority of participants working in the eastern Kentucky region, there were several participants who were working outside the region, but we thought their insights and contributions would be invaluable to these focus group conversations and invited them to join our conversations.

The focus groups were held through ZOOM and lasted approximately one hour. Total, we conducted 16 focus groups with over 50 individuals and asked each of them a series of questions regarding their 1) favorite memories of working with youth in the outdoors, 2) the challenges they face in getting families and kids outdoors, 3) the opportunities and potential that exists for expanding outdoor experiences and activities for families and youth and finally, 4) their suggestions and directions for building out the outdoor recreational infrastructure for families and youth in eastern Kentucky.

ANALYSIS

All focus group conversations were transcribed using the transcription software, Otter.ai. Transcriptions were checked for any errors and then imported into MAXQDA, a qualitative software program for analysis. Rather than an open-coding method, transcripts were coded based upon the following themes: Place, Opportunities, Natural Assets, Community Assets, Challenges, Barriers and finally, Directions Moving Forward and Action Items. Coding according to these themes, would allow us to work from a “community-capitals framework” (Emery and Flora, 2006) and would allow us to begin to identify the key strengths and clear barriers facing communities and the eastern Kentucky region in promoting outdoor experiences for youth and families.

Once transcripts were coded according to the above themes, summaries were generated for each theme through MAXQDA. These large summary reports on each theme were then analyzed in CORAL.AI to further summarize, identify, categorize and compare subthemes, especially with regard to Challenges and Opportunities. Tables 1 and 2 show some of the results of our analyses. The tables compare key challenges and key opportunities for building out hiking trails and promoting our watersheds. To produce these results, we had held two focus group sessions on building out trails in local communities and two other focus group sessions on promoting watershed education and water activities. The challenges and opportunities discussed in these focus groups (and the corresponding generated summary reports) were then analyzed in CORAL.AI to identify major subthemes. The results of this AI analysis are presented in the following tables. Not only is this methodology efficient in combing through reams of coded conversations but also produces a less-biased assessment.



TABLE 1: The <i>Challenges</i> facing Families and Children in Enjoying Trails and Waterways in Eastern Kentucky: A Comparison of Concerns	
TRAILS	WATERWAYS
Accessibility and Transportation: Many families and youth lack access to outdoor activities due to transportation barriers, especially in rural areas. Kids often cannot travel to trail systems or activities without parental support or school provided transportation. This is compounded by the lack of connectivity in mountainous regions, which makes it difficult to establish accessible trails close to communities.	Engagement and Communication Barriers: In low-income areas, families are preoccupied with basic necessities like keeping the lights on and may view outdoor activities as low priority. Communities are often skeptical of external organizations like universities or government entities, making it difficult to establish trust and engagement. Attendance for programs that were previously popular has significantly decreased since the pandemic.
Funding Challenges: Limited funding, particularly large-scale federal funding, hinders the development of outdoor recreation infrastructure. While grants are an option, the process is lengthy, and the piecemeal approach often results in insufficient resources to create impactful projects. Comparisons are made to states like Colorado and Utah, which have dedicated funding pools for recreation.	Fear and Misinformation: In areas like Letcher County, fear of water due to past flooding and PTSD prevents families from engaging in water-based activities. Parents often project fears of water contamination onto children, discouraging them from participating in outdoor or water-based activities. Many parents who grew up being told to avoid creeks due to pollution or danger pass on that mindset to their children.
Economic Barriers: Many families in underserved areas cannot afford expensive outdoor equipment, such as bicycles, or the associated costs of activities. This economic disparity limits participation in outdoor experiences.	Access and Infrastructure Issues: limited access points to waterways. Public access to streams and rivers is often inadequate, with only a small percentage of watersheds accessible to the general public. Poorly maintained access points further deter use. Poor or unsafe conditions: Streams in some areas are littered with trash, syringes, and pollutants like fecal coliform, making them unsafe for families and children. Local governments often fail to invest adequately in recreational facilities or professional help to create “destination-worthy” outdoor sites.
Awareness and Communication Issues: A lack of awareness about available outdoor activities and resources is a significant barrier. Poor communication infrastructure, such as limited internet access in rural areas, prevents families from discovering opportunities. Additionally, bulletin boards and other traditional communication methods are not always effective.	Resource and Funding Limitations: Underserved communities struggle with the technical and time-intensive process of writing grants to access available funding. There is frustration over funding, like in fees for coal severance money, being spent outside the area most in need of investment.
Community and Stakeholder Engagement: Local governments and stakeholders often lack understanding of the value of outdoor activities. Advocacy and education efforts are needed to secure support from city councils and other decision makers for funding and infrastructure development. Additionally, limited staffing resources make it difficult to push these initiatives forward.	Program-Specific Challenges: Social engagement often requires incentives such as food, T-shirts, or organized activities to motivate participation. There is a gap in after-school programs for middle school students, even though demand exists. Despite significant planning and collaboration, family-oriented events often see low turnout.
Safety and Risk Management: concerns about safety, liability, and risk management dissuade organizations from organizing outdoor activities. Issues such as navigating homelessness near trails, crime, and general safety concerns add complexity to managing outdoor spaces.	Environmental and Cultural Challenges: Logging, sedimentation, and siltation have destroyed riparian ecosystems, reducing the appeal of outdoor areas. Ineffective local governance, influenced by “good ol’ boy” politics, perpetuates environmental neglect, such as allowing trash dumps and straight pipes to pollute streams.
Environmental and Geographical Challenges: The rugged topography in regions like Kentucky requires creative solutions to connect trails and neighborhoods. Flooding and other environmental issues further complicate efforts to maintain and expand outdoor activities.	

TABLE 2: The <i>Opportunities</i> facing Families and Children in Enjoying Trails and Waterways in Eastern Kentucky: A Comparison of Concerns	
TRAILS	WATERWAYS
Utilizing Donated Resources: Programs like NCA (National Intercollegiate Cycling Association) reutilize donated bikes, particularly outdated 26-inch models, making them accessible and appropriately sized for kids. This initiative can be expanded through community bike trailer excursions to distribute bikes and jumpstart biking activities in underserved areas.	Stream Cleanups and Incentives: Supplementary Environmental Programs (SEP) provide funding to incentivize community participation in stream cleanups. These events often include rewards like T-shirts and food to attract families and youth. Junior ROTC programs and high school groups have successfully participated, leading to long-term commitments to watershed planning.
Volunteer Engagement: Encouraging volunteers to participate in trail building and maintenance fosters a sense of ownership and connection to the outdoor spaces. This strategy helps sustain long-term buy-in from the community.	Recreational Initiatives: Activities like snorkeling programs in Kentucky creeks aim to engage families by showcasing biodiversity and fostering a connection to local waterways. Converting low-head dams into outdoor recreational facilities such as surf waves and water slides to encourage youth involvement.
Trail Development and Accessibility: Systematic planning for trail development includes mapping public lands, considering proximity to communities, and targeting areas with potential for seven to ten miles of high-quality trails. This approach aims to integrate outdoor activities into daily life, offering accessible opportunities for families and youth to hike, bike, and engage with nature.	Community-Based Events: canoe and kayak paddling events organized as family-friendly outings with a focus on enjoying the water rather than solely cleaning it. Educational programs integrated into recreational activities, such as stream paddling combined with learning about water quality.
University and Community Involvement: Universities can play a significant role in supporting outdoor programs through asset mapping, training, and funding. For example, Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) uses opportunities to replicate successful models like those at West Virginia University by training individuals to assist rural communities in building outdoor recreation infrastructure.	Integration with School Programs: Transportation funding enables schools to take students to nearby streams for hands-on environmental activities. School-based field trips provide opportunities for water quality education and outdoor experiences.
Tailored Programming: Programs that meet people where they are—by addressing income disparities, transportation issues, and other barriers—are particularly effective. For instance, hosting family-friendly activities like full moon hikes and creating customized outdoor programs has successfully engaged diverse communities.	Tourism and Local Economic Development: Promoting fishing tournaments, hiking trails, and biking trails as multi-dimensional destinations tied to waterways. Kentucky’s abundant creek miles offer opportunities for diverse activities beyond fishing and boating, such as simple observation, walking along creeks, or sitting near riffles.
Youth Exposure and Skill Development: Introducing young participants to activities such as climbing and archery fosters new passions and skills. Many youths, who otherwise might not have access to such opportunities, develop a lasting interest in outdoor recreation.	Using Decommissioned Railroads: Transforming old railroad paths near streams into walking or biking trails for family-friendly outdoor experiences.
Collaboration and Networking: Building partnerships with local organizations and leveraging existing systems, like Arkansas 4-H’s integration with schools, can enhance outdoor programming. These collaborations can ensure educational benefits and increase participation rates.	Highlighting Positive Environmental Areas: Showcasing high-quality streams with exceptional biodiversity to encourage family visits and provide educational opportunities.
Summits and Conferences: Creating platforms for stakeholders to gather, share knowledge, and discuss strategies—such as annual summits or conferences—can strengthen the collective effort to promote outdoor activities.	Collaborations and Storytelling: Linking waterway development with broader tourism activities like hiking trails to create multi-dimensional destinations. Promoting storytelling about Kentucky’s natural resources to engage families and youth in appreciating and preserving waterways.

SUMMARY

Challenges: Both documents reveal significant challenges in rural Kentucky related to funding, community engagement, accessibility, and environmental degradation. However, the “trails” focus groups focus more on physical infrastructure and recreation, while the watershed focus groups emphasize public health concerns and ecological preservation. Both sectors suffer from political and bureaucratic barriers that hinder progress (CORAL AI Generated Summary).

OPPORTUNITIES: The watershed and trails focus groups reveal overlapping opportunities, with both emphasizing community engagement, economic development, and environmental conservation. However, while the watershed discussions focus heavily on water quality, education, and enforcement, the trails discussions are more centered on connectivity, recreation, and physically active engagement. Both initiatives highlight the critical role of partnerships and the need to tailor opportunities to local contexts (CORAL AI Generated Summary).

NEXT STEPS

Having now developed our method for analyzing our transcript data, our next step is to compile our findings to share with our community partners and project affiliates. Our first priority though is to write a specific report identifying the many current strengths and future opportunities that EKU and EKU faculty possess, based upon our focus group conversations with various faculty. In fact, many of our focus group sessions ended with commentary and prompts for EKU and EKU faculty to facilitate more conversations and bring more people together, on a regular basis, to address the outdoor needs of families and youth in our region.

TEAM EFFORT

Project Team:

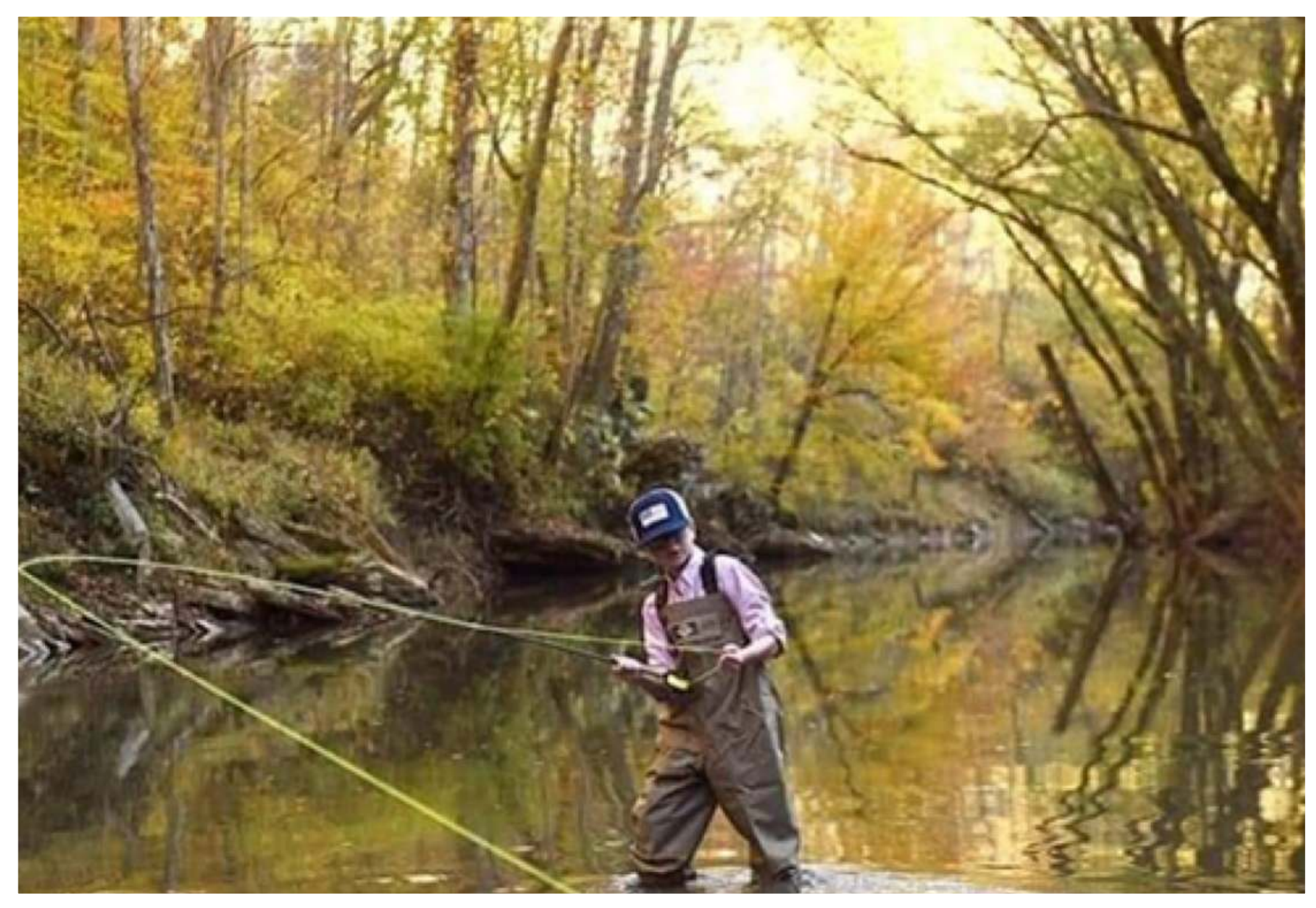
- Brian Clark, Department of Parks, Recreation, Exercise and Sports Science, EKU
- David Fifer, Center for Wilderness and Outdoor Public Safety, EKU

Project Affiliates:

- Stephen Richter, Division of Natural Areas, EKU
- Max Hammond, Pathfinders Initiative
- Ben Braman, Pathfinders of Perry County
- Desi Jarrell, Pathfinders of Perry County
- Ken Cooke, Friends of Wolf Run
- Andrea Drayer, Kentucky Water Research Institute
- Dan Renfrow, Middle Tennessee University
- Danny Twilley, Brad and Alys Smith Outdoor Economic Development Collaborative, WVU

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