

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION  
The University of Michigan  
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

Gabrielle Hecht, associate professor of history, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to professor of history, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	1992	University of Pennsylvania
M.A.	1988	University of Pennsylvania,
S.B.	1986	Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Professional Record:

1998 – present	Associate Professor, Department of History, University of Michigan
1998 – 2005	Associate Professor, Residential College, University of Michigan
1993 – 1998	Assistant Professor, Department of History, Stanford University
1992 – 1993	Acting Assistant Professor, Department of History, Stanford University

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Hecht focuses her teaching on the history of technology in its social, cultural, political, technical, and scientific dimensions. She approaches her teaching with a strong comparative and global dimension, particularly to the colonial and post-colonial world. She excels at engaging students in relatively small classes, but also at reaching them in the larger lecture format, especially in her new course on “Global Nuclear Proliferation.” In this course and in “Science, Technology, Medicine, and Society,” she teaches imaginatively from her specialism onto a wider canvass. Although the material is challenging, she wins students’ respect by the serious and informed inventiveness of her pedagogy. She is a superb trainer and mentor of graduate students, making Michigan a center for the history of technology.

Research – Professor Hecht is an internationally distinguished historian of technology. She is a pioneering interdisciplinary historian of science, technology, and society, whose work crosses French history, African history, labor history, the history of occupational health, comparative social science, and colonial and postcolonial studies. Her publications include a monograph that is forthcoming from M.I.T. Press, sixteen published essays and articles, a co-edited volume, and two book reviews. She has received grants and fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies, the National Endowment for the Humanities (twice), the National Science Foundation (several times), and the Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek. With her background in the natural and social sciences, further backed by cultural theory, she is a remarkably interdisciplinary scholar.

Recent and Significant Publications:

*Uranium from Africa and the Power of Nuclear Things*, M.I.T. Press, forthcoming 2012.  
“The power of nuclear things,” *Technology and Culture*, 51, 2010, pp. 1-30.  
“Africa and the nuclear world: Labor, occupational health, and the transnational production of uranium,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 51(4), 2009, pp. 896-926.

“A cosmogram for nuclear things,” *Isis*, 98, 2007, pp. 101-108.

Service – Professor Hecht has been an exemplary citizen, serving as associate chair for her department and in diverse other capacities, including three separate terms on its Executive Committee. She is a principal architect and mainstay of Michigan’s Program in Science, Technology, and Society (STS). While she was still appointed in the Residential College, she was a valued citizen who served on various review committees, on the Planning Committee for the STS program, and on the Study Abroad Committee.

External Review:

Reviewer (A)

“...Professor Hecht’s current research and the substantial corpus of work published since she was promoted to Associate Professor ranks with or above that of any publishing scholar I am aware of at a comparable stage in their career – and in many cases far past that of many senior scholars.”

Reviewer (B)

“...her forthcoming book will generate prizes and accolades throughout the profession. Indeed, I still consider her one of the top three or four historians of technology of her generation... Let me put it this way: if I were setting out to create a top-notch program in the history of technology, the first person I would try to recruit would be Gabrielle Hecht.”

Reviewer (C)

“Like all interdisciplinary scholars, Hecht works in several different fields simultaneously. She is an historian of technology, yes, but also a specialist in the 20<sup>th</sup> century history of France and several African nations; she is also a theoretically keen cultural and political historian who has trained her sights on one of the crucial multinational industries of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the nuclear industry, both military and civilian.”

Reviewer (D)

“Moreover, she has chosen a very broad geographical scope, and her work can be characterized as transnational history or global history. To accomplish this she has had to retrain herself in African history and she has pursued research ‘on four continents, in nine different countries and 27 separate archival and documentary collections’, as she writes in her Research Statement. This is truly an extraordinary research effort...”

Reviewer (E)

“Hecht is a leader in her chosen field and a marvelous asset to any history department that values interdisciplinarity and intellectual border crossings. ... I cannot forego this opportunity to mention what a wonderful professional colleague Hecht is. ... She is an enormous asset to academia, a person who embodies the highest ideals of what I believe this activity is about.”

Reviewer (F)

“The new book on Africa will be an award winner. It takes the ‘networks’ notion so popular in history of technology to its logical, compelling conclusion. ...she has transformed our understanding of the nuclear order, and even our understanding of where ‘Africa’ sits in the

technological order. ... The book even (somewhat surprising) has the potential to reach a broad audience. It is theoretically informed, but it is also vivid and direct, accessible to those who are not in science studies or history of technology.”

Reviewer (G)

“...this book is going to confirm her growing reputation as one of the most innovative and imaginative historians of technology writing today. The book lays out an entirely novel problem of research. It poses a question not about the history of nuclear power as such, but a history of what it means to be nuclear. The study goes on to show how the designation of a technology, an industry, a production site, or a state as nuclear denotes not a fixed category, but a historically shifting set of properties that have been shaped by history and geography, empire and colonialism, race and radiation, and much more.”

Reviewer (H)

“Her book, *The Radiance of France*, and her notion of technopolitics broke new ground in a fascinating interdisciplinary area which had perhaps become a little stale. ... She has transformed her field – and several others en route. ... Her work is proof of the university’s (and the history department’s) claim to be a home for people who do interdisciplinary work. She could easily go elsewhere. If she did, she would be irreplaceable.”

Reviewer (I)

“...Hecht’s contribution is as original as it is enormous. Keenly aware of the critiques of globalization...Hecht both adds to that debate and destabilizes it. ... In as thorough research as I’ve seen from anyone, ever, Hecht makes three critically important contributions to African history. ...to African labor history, to history of occupational health, and political history.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Hecht is one of the preeminent leaders in her field. She is also a dedicated and challenging teacher with an excellent record of service. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Associate Professor Gabrielle Hecht be promoted to the rank of professor of history, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



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Terrence J. McDonald  
Arthur F. Thurnau Professor,  
Professor of History and Dean  
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

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