



Recommended Readings for Public History Courses *Museums*

Prepared by the NCPH Curriculum and Training Committee, November 2020

Note: Recommendations are for graduate level. Readings that are also suitable for undergraduate level are indicated by (UG) at the end of the annotation.

Museum Exhibitions/Curation/Collections Management

Buck, Rebecca A. and Jean Allman Gilmore. *Museum Registration Methods, Fifth Edition*. Washington, DC: AAM Press, 2010.

“MRM5” encompasses all that needs to be known and done when a museum accessions, measures, marks, moves, displays, or stores an object or artifact of any kind. “MRM5” includes expert advice from more than 60 acknowledged leaders in their disciplines. New with the Fifth Edition are special teaching sections that challenge students and seasoned staff alike with questions about the process and procedures of accessioning and caring for objects. Contains bibliography, glossary, and multiple sample forms. (UG)

Lord, Barry and Maria Piacente. *Manual of Museum Exhibitions, Second Edition*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.

Drawing on years of experience and top-flight expertise, Barry Lord and Maria Piacente detail the exhibition process in a straightforward way that can be easily adapted by institutions of any size. They explore the exhibition development process in greater detail, providing the technical and practical methodologies museum professionals need today. They’ve added new features and expanded chapters on project management, financial planning, and interactive multimedia while retaining the essential content related to interpretive planning, curatorship, and roles and responsibilities.

Serrell, Beverly. *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.

Beverly Serrell presents the reader with excellent guidelines on the process of exhibit label planning, writing, design, and production. One of the museum field’s leading consultants and label writers, Serrell’s 1996 edition of *Exhibit Labels* has been a standard in the field since its initial publication. This new edition not only provides expert guidance on the art of label writing for diverse audiences and explores the theoretical and interpretive considerations of placing labels within an exhibition, it also features all new case studies and photographs and thoughts about interpretation in digital media. *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach* is a vital reference tool for all museum professionals. (UG)

Museum Studies

Alexander, Edward P., Mary Alexander, and Julie Decker. *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.

A complete introduction to the history of museums, types of museums, and the key roles that museums play in the twenty-first century. (UG)

Burns, Andrea. *From Storefront to Monument: Tracing the Public History of the Black Museum Movement*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013.

Today well over two hundred museums focusing on African American history and culture can be found throughout the United States and Canada. Many of these institutions trace their roots to the 1960s and 1970s, when the struggle for racial equality inspired a movement within the Black community to make the history and culture of African America more “public.” This book tells the story of four of these groundbreaking museums: the DuSable Museum of African American History in Chicago (founded in 1961); the International Afro-American Museum in Detroit (1965); the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum in Washington, DC (1967); and the African American Museum of Philadelphia (1976).

Dickey, Jennifer W., Samir El Azhar, and Catherine M. Lewis. *Museums in a Global Context: National Identity, International Understanding*. Washington, DC: AAM Press, 2013.

Museums reflect a nation's character, as well as define it. Museums around the world have been shaped by globalization, and in turn have shaped a global public's understanding of local, regional, or national identity. Essayists consider the politics of museum interpretation in the global context, issues of cultural patrimony and heritage tourism, the risks of crossing boundaries and borders to present controversial subjects, and strategies for engaging audiences and communities. International case studies from Germany, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, South Africa, Niger, and Vietnam underscore the common motives and sensibilities, as well as the challenges, of the world's museums in their efforts to educate and inspire.

Eichstedt, Jennifer L. and Stephen Small. *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002.

How is slavery presented at the public and private plantation museums in the American South, almost 150 years after the Civil War? Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small investigated this question in Virginia, Georgia, and Louisiana by touring more than one hundred plantation museums; twenty locations organized and run by African Americans; and eighty general history sites. Their findings indicated that the experience and legacy of slavery was inadequately presented within the larger discourse surrounding race, racism, and national identity.

Genoways, Hugh H. and Lynn Ireland. *Museum Administration 2.0*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.

Wondering what a museum director actually does? About to start your first director's job? Looking for guidance in starting up a museum or working with a museum director? Hugh Genoways, Lynn Ireland, and Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko have taken the mystery out and put common sense and good guidance in. Learn about everything from budgets and strategic

planning to human resources and facilities management to collections and programming. They also help you tackle legal documents, legal and ethical issues, and challenges for today's 2.0 world. Case studies and exercises throughout help you review and practice what you are learning, and their extensive references will be a welcome resource.

Gordon, Tammy S. *Private History in Public: Exhibition and the Settings of Everyday Life*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2010.

In small community museums, truck stops, restaurants, bars, barbershops, schools, and churches, people create displays to tell the histories that matter to them. Much of this history is personal: family history, community history, history of a trade, or the history of something considered less than genteel. It is often history based on the historical record, but also based on feelings, beliefs, and memory. It is neglected history. *Private History in Public* is about those history exhibits that complicate the public/private dichotomy, exhibits that serve to explain communities, families, and individuals to outsiders and tie insiders together through a shared narrative of historical experience.

Handler, Richard and Eric Gable. *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1997.

The case study, conducted by anthropologists Handler and Gable, raises pertinent questions about the value of first-person interpretation, the weight of an institution's own past, and relationships among historians and other on-site personnel. The research and resulting publications leading up to and including this book generated heated debate and discussion. It is useful to pair a reading of the book—or selected chapters—with Cary Carson, "Colonial Williamsburg and the Practice of Interpretive Planning in American History Museums," *The Public Historian* 20, no. 3 (1998): 11–51

Harker, Richard J. W. *Museum Diplomacy: Transnational Public History and the U.S. Department of State*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2020.

The Museums Connect program stands at the intersection of transnational public history and international diplomacy. Sponsored by the US Department of State and administered by the American Alliance of Museums, this program partners US museums and non-US museums in projects designed to foster community collaboration and engagement. *Museum Diplomacy* focuses on three Museums Connect projects arranged between the United States and South Africa, Morocco, and Afghanistan, respectively. Utilizing a diverse range of oral interviews, Richard J. W. Harker explores how museums negotiate national boundaries, institutional and local histories, and post-9/11 geopolitical interests. Working in different political and professional contexts, museum partners have built community-driven collaborative exhibitions and projects that tell transnational stories.

Henderson, Amy. *Exhibiting Dilemmas: Issues of Representation at the Smithsonian*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 1999.

A collection of essays presenting the perspective of multiple curators offering viewpoints on how to interpret challenging topics and materials. The book provides wonderful case studies ready-made for engaging students in discussions of interpretative strategies.

Johnson, Anna, Kimberly A. Huber, Nancy Cutler, Melissa Bingmann, and Tim Grove. *The Museum Educator's Manual: Educators Share Successful Techniques*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.

The second edition of *Museum Educator's Manual* is a practical update for the evolving field. The authors address programming, staffing, and funding as well as the nuances of how people learn in the museum environment. This hands-on guide featuring experienced and innovative professionals is an inspiring contribution as we address dramatic changes in how museums and audiences interact. (UG)

Lewis, Catherine M. *The Changing Face of Public History: The Chicago Historical Society and the Transformation of an American Museum*. DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005.

Spurred first by the civil rights debates of the 1960s and 1970s, then by the culture wars of the following decades, the Chicago Historical Society (CHS) increasingly sought to give visitors and patrons a voice in retelling the city's history. In response to debates over the authority to interpret the past, CHS engaged in community outreach and sponsored multicultural exhibits and programs. Yet, in this analysis of the society's evolving relationship with its diverse constituencies, Catherine M. Lewis finds that prevailing assumptions about the museum as a commemorative site dedicated to civic pride undermined CHS's bold attempts to create a public forum. Based on more than 250 interviews with staff at CHS and museums around the country, as well as research into formerly inaccessible public and private papers, *The Changing Face of Public History* offers a behind-the-scenes look at the ways in which one of the most innovative museums in the United States has continually grappled with issues confronting not only museum professionals but all those concerned about the role history plays in the lives of American citizens.

Lonetree, Amy and Amanda J. Cobb, eds. *The National Museum of the American Indian: Critical Conversations*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008.

This collection provides a discussion of the issues raised by the creation of the National Museum of the American Indian, the first national museum designed through a unique collaboration between Indigenous people and the Smithsonian Institution. The seventeen essays in this collection provide a wide array of perspectives, and individual essays could be assigned in place of the complete collection, such as Aldona Jonaitis and Janet Catherine Berlo, "'Indian Country' on the National Mall: The Mainstream Press versus the National Museum of the American Indian." Individual essays might also be paired with selections from "Review Roundtable: The National Museum of the American Indian" featured in *The Public Historian* 28 (Spring 2006): 47-90; or such provocative pieces as Jacki Thompson Rand's "Why I Can't Visit the National Museum of the American Indian," *Common-place* 7, No. 4 (July 2007).

Schwarzer, Marjorie. *Riches, Rivals, and Radicals: A History of Museums in the United States*, Third Edition. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020.

Since it was first published in 2006, *Riches, Rivals and Radicals* has been the go-to text for introductory museum studies courses. It is also of great value to professionals as well as museum lovers who want to learn the stories behind how and why these institutions have evolved since the day the first mastodon bones, royal portraits, and botanical specimens entered their dusty halls. (UG)

Tilden, Freeman. *Interpreting Our Heritage*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Every year millions of Americans visit national parks and monuments, state and municipal parks, battlefields, historic houses, and museums. By means of guided walks and talks, tours, exhibits, and signs, visitors experience these areas through a very special kind of communication technique known as "interpretation." For fifty years, Freeman Tilden's *Interpreting Our Heritage* has been an indispensable sourcebook for those who are responsible for developing and delivering interpretive programs. This expanded and revised anniversary edition includes not only Tilden's classic work but also an entirely new selection of accompanying photographs, five additional essays by Tilden on the art and craft of interpretation, a new foreword by former National Park Service director Russell Dickenson, and an introduction by R. Bruce Craig that puts Tilden's writings into perspective for present and future generations. (UG)

Turino, Kenneth C. and Max A. Van Baloogy. *Reimagining Historic House Museums: New Approaches and Proven Solutions*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019.

Drawing from innovative organizations across the United States, *Reimagining Historic House Museums* is an indispensable source of field-tested tools and techniques drawn from such wide-ranging sources as non-profit management, business strategy, and software development. It also profiles historic sites that are using new models to engage with their communities to become more relevant, adopting creative forms of interpretation and programming, and earning income to become more financially sustainable.

Vagnone, Franklin D. and Deborah E. Ryan. *The Anarchists Guide to Historic House Museums*. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2016.

In these days of an aging traditional audience, shrinking attendance, tightened budgets, increased competition, and exponential growth in new types of communication methods, America's house museums need to take bold steps and expand their overall purpose beyond those of the traditional museum. They need not only to engage the communities surrounding them, but also to collaborate with visitors on the type and quality of experience they provide. This book is a groundbreaking manifesto that calls for the establishment of a more inclusive, visitor-centered paradigm based on the shared experience of human habitation.