

History Curatorship

ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

"History Curatorship." *The Annals of Iowa* 55 (1996), 190-191.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.10035>

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and rural residents. (For example, the former had indoor faucets and water closets long before the latter.)

The networks that create and connect communities are an often "invisible" but clearly essential part of the lives of their residents. Exploring their origins and evolution helps us understand how communities, cities, and regions came to be the way they are. With *Invisible Networks* as a guide, research in places such as Iowa has much to contribute.

History Curatorship, by Gaynor Kavanagh. Leicester Museum Studies Series. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990; originally published by Leicester University Press, 1990. xv, 173 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JEFFREY P. BROWN, NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY

During the past generation, a number of scholars have assessed the development of American museums, their impact on American society, and the best techniques for museum practices. Edward Alexander, Michael Wallace, Thomas Schlereth, G. Ellis Burcaw, Jay Anderson, George McDaniel, and others have produced a substantial body of literature about historical museums and their roles in preserving and interpreting the past.

Gaynor Kavanagh's *History Curatorship* addresses the history and development of British and Swedish museums, and in her final chapters cites American museum experiences. Kavanagh places museum development in historical perspective, emphasizing folk culture as well as industrial and local and regional history museums. She expands from this base to a broader theoretical discussion of types of museums, collection policies, criteria for acquisitions, and the relationships between a museum's mission and its audience.

Kavanagh encourages museum personnel to follow the broad Swedish interpretation of *dokumentation*, involving research, fieldwork, recording, acquisition, and cataloging, rather than a narrow and traditional British definition of documentation. She similarly recommends the Swedish practice of devoting 20 percent of collection activities to contemporary materials, and 80 percent to items produced during the period from 1900 to 1970. Kavanagh urges a proactive collection policy rather than passive acceptance of random donations. She discusses the Swedish collection priority policy that emphasizes the frequency of item use, the value of items in demonstrating technological innovations, and other criteria that should be followed in making acquisition decisions.

Kavanagh reminds readers that museums must respond to broad public audiences, be receptive to visitors' concerns, pay as much attention to amenities as to exhibits, and take every opportunity to make exhibits instructive, easily understandable, and interactive. She notes that history reflects present concerns, and that efforts to reconstruct the past inevitably legitimize, celebrate, or question topics in ways that are currently deemed important. Although museums once simply told truths to the public, she states that their role should be the promotion of further inquiry. Since audiences come to museums on a voluntary basis, she notes that curators must carefully think through all aspects of their exhibits.

Kavanagh makes many references to British museums that readers may find unfamiliar. However, she offers readers an international museum perspective, and makes many worthwhile suggestions about museum practices that will benefit all museum professionals.

Exploring the Beloved Country: Geographic Forays into American Society and Culture, by Wilbur Zelinsky. American Land and Life Series. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994. xiv, 604 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, notes, references, index. \$49.95 cloth, \$22.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY DOUGLAS K. MEYER, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Exploring the Beloved Country represents a sampling of essays from a cornucopia of articles written by a distinguished cultural geographer, Wilbur Zelinsky. Some of these essays were seminal articles that became benchmarks from which scholars in interdisciplinary fields have expanded our understanding of the history of American culture and landscape. The University of Iowa Press, with publication of this collection of essays, provides the curious general reader and traveler the opportunity to explore the spatial-temporal patterns of the American experience in terms of who we were, are, and are becoming. The book's only minor flaw is that some of the photographs, maps, and graphs are grainy and are not high-quality reproductions.

Zelinsky selected a fascinating collage of 21 articles that assess the American geographical experience at the place, regional, national, and international levels. The essays are integrated within four themes: society, built landscape, language, and transnationalism. His perspective stresses not only the significance of an alluring historical, geographical, and cultural saga, but an evolving American consciousness that has shaped and nurtured the people, land, and life in America. The diverse topics emerge from a focus on a wide array of commonplace landscape elements: magazines, religious affiliation, season of

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