

10-12-2022

Review: Libraries, Archives and Museums: An Introduction to Cultural Heritage Institutions Through the Ages

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Recommended Citation

Grimsley, Reagan, "Review: Libraries, Archives and Museums: An Introduction to Cultural Heritage Institutions Through the Ages," *Provenance, Journal of the Society of Georgia Archivists* 38 no. 2 (2022) . Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/provenance/vol38/iss2/4>

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Libraries, Archives and Museums: An Introduction to Cultural Heritage Institutions Through the Ages. Edited by Suzanne Stauffer (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2021. 273 pp.)

Covering the first written inscriptions in 110,000 BCE to the digital challenges of the present day, *Libraries, Archives and Museums: An Introduction to Cultural Heritage Institutions Through the Ages* is broad in chronological scope. Touted by the publisher as the “first book to consider the development of all three cultural heritage institutions – libraries, archives, and museums” this book delivers on its promise and offers a well-researched and written introduction to the three types of organizations. This volume is a welcome addition to the literature of the cultural heritage field and should be of great interest to archivists.

In her Introduction, Editor Suzanne Stauffer, Professor in the School of Library and Information Sciences at Louisiana State University, defines *cultural heritage* as including “tangible, physical artifacts such as books, works of art, and buildings; the intangible legacy of folklore, literature, music and language; and the natural landscape, including areas designated as parks, forests, and waterways, as well as wilderness areas and common grounds.” (p.1) This definition also encompasses the history of people and the materials they produce that document their society. Cultural heritage institutions such as libraries, archives, and museums perform the crucial role of preserving the cultural heritage of society. They also play a significant role in shaping how a society remembers the past, including who is remembered via the cultural record and who is forgotten. The long history of these institutions are the focus of the work.

The volume contains an introduction and sixteen chapters arranged in chronological order. Stauffer pens the introduction and four chapters, while fifteen contributors provide the content in the remaining twelve chapters. The first nine chapters incorporate overviews of all three cultural heritage institutions in predominantly chronological order and focus on the following topics: Ancient World, Classical Antiquity, the Middle Ages, the influence of the Muslim world on the West, Muslim Spain, the influence of China/Asia on the West, the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment. The next six chapters, ten through fifteen, focus on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with separate chapters focusing on libraries, archives, and museums in each century. The last chapter covers libraries, archives and museums in the twenty-first century, with a focus on efforts to make these venues inclusive and participatory for all. Spatial coverage is solid but the primary focus is on the Western world and Northern Hemisphere, although there are attempts throughout to tie in the cultural heritage practices of both Native Americans and Indigenous peoples and the non-Western world. Stauffer highlights the cultural heritage of Native American and Indigenous peoples in the Introduction, Coleman and McLaughlin highlight the importance of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 in the United States in the penultimate chapter, and the final chapter by Salvatore includes a lengthy discussion of how libraries, archives, and museums have “traditionally neglected” (p.255) Native and Indigenous peoples and the author calls for these

institutions to become both “inclusive and participatory” (p.255). Examples of inclusion of the non-Western world include an excellent chapter by Diao titled “The Influence of China/Asia on the West (618-1892),” a chapter by Stauffer “The Influence of the Muslim World on the West (610-1299)” which focuses mainly on the Mediterranean Muslim world.

The monograph also includes an index and brief information about the editors and contributors. All chapters except the last (sixteen) contain a chronology of important events. All of the chapters also contain meticulously detailed footnotes to guide the reader who seeks to learn more. Eleven of the sixteen chapters also include a section with suggestions for further reading/bibliography, a handy resource for those using the volume as a text or reference guide or those who desire to investigate further such topics as the coffee houses of the Enlightenment or the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations which took place at London’s Crystal Palace in 1851. Black and white illustrations are included throughout the volume to enhance the text and offer drawings and images ranging from scriptorium monks in Europe to civil rights library protesters in the United States. Sidebars highlight important concepts or terms, which supports the use of this volume as an introductory text. Like the work as a whole, these sidebars cover a broad range of topics, from the use of papyrus in scrolls in classical antiquity to the design of Giralda of the Great Mosque of Seville, completed in 1176.

The work will certainly be appreciated by library, archives, and museum professionals as it fills a void in the literature by providing a concise introductory history of this triad of cultural heritage institutions. This volume can serve a variety of purposes: as a textbook for archive, museum, or library courses, as an introductory primer for those new to the cultural heritage field, or as a general reference work on the topic. The illustrations could be clearer and of higher resolution and are less than desirable for an academic monograph. Still, archivists seeking more information on the history of archives will find this tome most useful.

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