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Public History: A Textbook of Practice by Thomas Cauvin. New York: Routledge, 2016. x + 282 pp.; illustrations, notes, bibliography, index; clothbound, \$175.00; paperbound, \$44.95; eBook, \$40.46.

Introduction to Public History: Interpreting the Past, Engaging Audiences by Cherstin M. Lyon, Elizabeth M. Nix, and Rebecca K. Shrum. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017. vii + 187 pp.; illustrations, notes, index; clothbound, \$78.00; paperbound, \$39.00; eBook, \$37.00.

Public history as an academic field functioned without an identifiable textbook for a full four decades. This may be due, at least in part, to the lack of an agreed upon definition of public history. Even so, the wide-ranging variety of articles in *The Public Historian*, as well as the availability of collected essays in readers, enabled public history educators to shape their own definitions of public history and, in a more general sense, promoted a big-tent concept of the field that accommodated both those engaged in more utilitarian, or structured, forms of practice and those who sought to put the ideas of radical or New Left history into practice. This worked reasonably well when public history programs were primarily designed for graduate students. However, as undergraduate programs in public history have proliferated and as theory has assumed a more prominent role in public history education, the need has arisen for textbooks that bring order to a field that has grown like Topsy. Bringing order has the collateral function of defining a field, thus the two books reviewed herein, the first that aspire to textbook status, are to be taken seriously.

In the acknowledgements for *Public History: A Textbook of Practice*, Thomas Cauvin lists approximately sixty-five individuals who reviewed draft chapters or provided him with information and images. This figure captures both the strength and weakness of the resulting book. On the one hand, Cauvin covers the breadth of public history. On the other hand, the book has a patchwork quality. One gets the impression that sections were added here and there throughout to accommodate every suggestion.

As the subtitle indicates, Cauvin's book focuses on *practice*, in different venues and with multiple media. In content and language, it is more suitably pitched for

graduate level use. An introductory section discusses the difference between academic and public history, the emergence of public history as a movement, the approaches to and definitions of public history, and the internationalization of public history. The last section also signals one of the book's chief assets: the seamless weaving of international scholarship and examples throughout each chapter. But the discussion of public history's place in the larger discipline of history is disjointed and reflects an idiosyncratic reading of the literature. Ian Tyrrell's *Historians in Public*, despite its shortcomings, will remain a valuable book for introductory courses at the graduate level.

The body of the book is divided into three parts. Part 1, on "Collecting, Managing, and Preserving the Past," comprises separate chapters on collections management, historic preservation, and oral history. Each provides rather detailed information on public history practice in archives, museums, historic sites, and places that use oral history to interpret family history and everyday life. Students are introduced to the professional standards that inform practice, and lengthy chapter bibliographies point the way to further reading.

Part 2, "Making Public History," is perhaps the strongest section. It takes students on a tour of the various media that public historians employ to interpret history, beginning with the most obvious, written history, covering a variety of genres and formats, including historical fiction, children's literature, comics and graphic novels, and digital writing. Separate chapters cover historical editing; exhibitions; audio and audiovisual productions; digital productions, including user-generated content, crowdsourcing, and database production; and creating immersive environments, including living history, reenacting, video games, and virtual reconstruction. Altogether, this section is well developed and nicely demonstrates the ways in which technology is changing and challenging the practice of public history. Again, each chapter includes a useful bibliography.

Part 3 contains an odd quartet of chapters under the heading of "Collaboration and Uses of the Past." A very short chapter on teaching public history seems extraneous. A subsequent chapter is devoted to "shared authority," which is where Michael Frisch's expanded concept is discussed (although a discussion of "co-creation" is curiously missing from the chapter on oral history). Another chapter is devoted to historians as activists, which covers the literature on civic engagement and explores the various avenues public historians take in pursuing social justice goals. The final chapter focuses on those whom Cauvin views as "applied history" practitioners—consultants, those who work for corporations or large institutions, and those engaged in policy work. This is the chapter with the most substantive discussion of ethics, although ethics is mentioned throughout. While this discussion is welcome, its placement here implies that ethics is primarily an issue in applied history practice. Matters of agency and authority certainly are heightened concerns for practitioners with responsibility for meeting the needs of clients, private corporations, or public institutions whose activities are subject to regulation, but all public historians should be well versed in the ethics of practice.

Moreover, I am not quite sure what to make of separate chapters devoted to “activist” and “applied” historians. On the one hand, their inclusion enables Cauvin to fairly cover the landscape of public history practice. On the other, these two chapters perpetuate perceived differences among “activist” and “applied” historians rather than explore what unites them as public history practitioners.

Although *Public History: A Textbook of Practice* is packed with information, one gets the sense that the whole might have benefited from another round of revisions. The book also bears further evidence of having been rushed into production. It is marred by poor editing, including several nonsensical phrases and sentences, the occasional wrong word, the intermittent note that does not link to sources listed in the corresponding chapter bibliography, and a dual notation system that takes some getting used to. It also (at least the paperback version) is printed in small type, which will frustrate anyone with less-than-perfect vision.

Introduction to Public History: Interpreting the Past, Engaging Audiences is intended primarily for undergraduate audiences. It is crisply written, and the co-authors—Cherstin Lyon, Elizabeth Nix, and Rebecca Shrum—zero in on the “big questions that underpin the how and . . . why of public history” (1). At the outset they tackle the ever-present question of what distinguishes public history from academic history, and they do so succinctly by identifying three key elements: audience, collaboration, and reflective practice (2–3). They also provide a clear explanation of what unites academic and public history: historical thinking, historical methods, and heuristics. The authors skillfully navigate readers through some of the key scholarly works that have influenced public history as an academic discipline: *The Presence of the Past* by Roy Rozensweig and David Thelen, *A Shared Authority* by Michael Frisch, and John Kuo Wei Tchen’s “Creating a Dialogic Museum: The Chinatown History Museum Experiment,” to name just a few. Although undergraduates may be the primary audience, the introductory chapter is one that all of us could benefit from reading.

As the subtitle indicates, this book emphasizes interpreting history and engaging audiences. Five chapters cover collecting history, interpreting and exhibiting history, and engaging audiences, with a case study on interpretation—the Baltimore ’68 Project, which is presented as a model public history project—and another chapter devoted to case studies from the field on engaging audiences. Each chapter begins with a list of key terms, which also are highlighted in bold in the chapter text, making it easy for students to catch the major points. At the end of each chapter, the authors suggest group and individual activities, all of which bear the stamp of experience. For instance, chapter 3 includes recommendations for student research projects using oral history that follow the Oral History Association’s guidelines but also suggests other methods, such as “walking and talking” and using art and objects as focus points, which might work better with narrators who have difficult stories to tell. Finally, each chapter concludes with a list of books, articles, and web resources for further study. A brief concluding chapter provides practical advice on seeking volunteer experiences or a career in public history.

There is much to praise in this book, but, unfortunately, it is not a full introduction to public history. The subtitle, *Interpreting the Past, Engaging Audiences*, would have been the more appropriate title. The authors disclaim any attempt to “provide a comprehensive, encyclopedic examination of every aspect of public history” or “meet diverse needs with a single volume,” which is understandable (ix). This might have led to an unwieldy book, and one can argue that undergraduates do not need to know much about the work of practitioners in policy think tanks, government agencies, business corporations, or consulting firms. Instead, the authors chose to focus on “issues that arise at the kinds of venues that everyone encounters as consumers of the past” (ix). These are most likely to be issues associated with cultural institutions. But even so, the collecting and preservation work that takes place in cultural institutions receives scant attention.

Chapter 4, “Collecting History,” introduces the terms “preservation” and “archives,” acknowledges that public history professionals “have to think about what to *collect*, *preserve*, or *archive*” [italics in text], and includes a short section on “Debating What to Keep from the Past.” However, the chapter emphasizes “Representative Collecting” with specific sections on working-class, women’s, African American, and LGBTQ history. Likewise, the section on “Ethical Collecting” speaks of ethics in limited terms of protecting the rights and respecting the culture of indigenous peoples and other minority groups. The case studies and examples are all timely and cogent, so it is hard to fault the authors. Still, while they have drawn extensively on the scholarship of oral history, they have not drawn similarly on the rich scholarship of archival thought and historic preservation philosophy in relation to public history. The famous 1975 public debate between Herbert Gans and Ida Huxtable over preservation in New York City is covered briefly (60), and a few pertinent works—namely a 2006 article by Rand Jimerson on the power of archives and the 2009 introductory text on historic preservation by Tyler, Ligibel, and Tyler—are cited in Resources for Further Study (81), but the work that practitioners do behind the scenes to collect and preserve the past is not really treated as intellectual work.

Perhaps there is an argument to be made that, in the real world, archivists and preservationists must acquire other disciplinary skills that have little to do with issues of historical relevance, but I worry about the message this sends to students who are drawn to public history because they want to engage with the stuff of history and are not so much interested in carrying the banner for groups who have been marginalized in the metanarrative of American history. In this vein, it was disappointing to find Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* tucked away in the list of “Resources for Further Study” at the back of chapter 6 on “Engaging Audiences.” Those of us who have used *Silencing the Past* in introductory public history courses have witnessed the oh!-we’re-all-in-this-together moment when students absorb the implications of Trouillot’s four “moments” when power, benign or intentional, enters the production of history: when sources are created, when archives are assembled, when sources are used to develop narratives, and

when the final product is created.¹ At this point, those students who want to collect and care for the documents, material culture, and other physical manifestations of history and those who want to tell stories and engage with audiences realize that every step in the complex process of producing history has consequences.

It is far easier to critique a book than write one, and I want to conclude by acknowledging the courage it surely took to write both books. It is a daunting task to inaugurate a textbook project for an academic field that has skirted the definition question since its inception. The final product is almost destined not to please everyone. If both books fall a bit short of the mark—in my estimation; others may disagree—both are nonetheless solid first editions, and revised editions will appear in due course.

1 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995), 26–27.

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Digital Work with Nontextual Objects

Abigail G. Mullen

Textile Collections: Preservation, Access, Curation, and Interpretation in the Digital Age by Amanda Grace Sikarskie. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016. vii + 161 pp.; illustrations, notes, bibliography, index; clothbound, \$90.00; paperbound, \$42.00; eBook, \$39.00.

Digital Giza: Visualizing the Pyramids by Peter Der Manuelian. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016. 1-256 pp.; notes, illustrations; paperbound, \$25.00.

For a digital historian interested in preservation, nontextual collections pose unique challenges. Although a digital copy of a physical object is never the same as