

and the liberality with which they are maintained" (p. 299). How many museum directors would like to have this thought carved on their museum portals?

Here are creators of moated zoos (Carl Hagenbeck), open-air museums (Arthur Hazelius), historic house museums (Ann Pamela Cunningham), botanical gardens (William Jackson Hooker), science and technology (Oskar van Miller), community service (John Cotton Davis), the British Museum (Sir Hans Sloane), and the decorative arts (Henry Cole). In their diverse personalities may be found the roots of virtually all museum trends today.

The book affords a clear view of the importance of personality to museums, and of the need for creative thinking, unfettered by convention. These men and women stand as examples of the importance of sudden change, not just gradual evolution, in museum work. They are also a reminder that there is much truth in the saying that all is old wine in new bottles, for the ideas they espoused are ideas that are very current. Alexander's is a well-written book, which for the reader not familiar with museum history will open avenues to its fascinating development. For those in the profession, perhaps John Cotton Davis's words ring truest of all, "I've had a lot of fun. . . . A whole lot of fun. . . . I am going ahead as fast as money permits . . ." (p. 399). It is a book well worth reading.

Indiana State Museum, Indianapolis

Lee Scott Theisen

Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology. Edited by David K. Dunaway and Willa K. Baum. (Nashville, Tenn.: American Association for State and Local History, 1984. Pp. xvii, 436. Figures, table, notes, bibliographies, index. Clothbound, \$29.50; paperbound, \$17.95.)

After thirty-five years of active practice by historians, school-children, and community groups, oral history seems to have come of age. This anthology simultaneously represents and celebrates that event. In the preface, the editors explain the book's genesis: "At one time the greatest need [in oral history] was for basic procedural manuals for beginning practitioners." That need having been more than adequately met at the present, they continue, "our goal was the upgrading of the oral history process and end product" by aiming the collection "at a broad spectrum of already initiated individuals" (p. xv). To this end, they sifted through the now voluminous literature on oral history and selected thirty-seven articles for inclusion here.

Most of the major figures in the field are represented, from Allan Nevins, universally acclaimed as the father of oral history

in the United States; to folklorist Richard Dorson, outspoken advocate of the relationship between folklore and oral history; to schoolteacher Eliot Wigginton, creator of the *Foxfire* project; and writer Alex Haley whose *Roots* spawned an enthusiasm for oral history and genealogy among Americans at large. (Ronald Grele, Alice Kessler-Harris, and even pop practitioner Studs Terkel are conspicuous omissions.)

The selections are organized into six sections, with each section introduced by the editors and each essay preceded by headnotes. The first five articles, in the section entitled "The Gateway to Oral History," provide the reader with an overview of the development of oral history—the history of oral history, as it were. Section II, "Interpreting and Designing Oral History" (is this not putting things in reverse order?), comprises eleven essays that address theoretical issues such as the reliability, significance, and ethics of oral history, as well as the practicalities of organizing and carrying out an oral history project. The third section, "Oral History Applied," includes general discussions of projects among blacks and other ethnic groups, women, workers, and families. The relationships between oral history and other disciplines that rely on oral historical data, such as folklore, anthropology, and gerontology, are explored in six articles in Section IV. Sections V and VI deal respectively with oral history in the schools and in libraries. An appendix presents the guidelines for setting up, conducting, and evaluating oral history projects adopted by the Oral History Association in 1968.

There are several strengths to the book, among them the recognition of the interdisciplinary uses of the oral history method. The coverage of subjects, with a few glaring exceptions, is even and presents a well-rounded and well-organized picture of the current state of oral history. Perhaps the strongest point of the book, however, is the care with which the essays have been arranged. Both the section introductions and the headnotes provide the reader with a thread to follow from one selection to the next and from one division to the next, so that the book has a coherence usually lacking in anthologies.

Now for its limitations. The essays are overwhelmingly North American in their orientation, and thus give no indication of the state of oral history elsewhere in the world. A second, and potentially more serious, deficiency is that the book contains no consideration of the nature of the oral history interview as a historical document. This critical issue is mentioned in passing in several of the essays, but treated in depth in none. The editors themselves call attention to a third limitation—there is no discussion of the legal aspects of oral history. A thorough and definitive treatment

of the subject, they state, has yet to be written. Finally, it is odd that the editors did not include a few case studies, demonstrating how oral history actually works. Perhaps the essays in Section III were meant to serve this purpose, but they are too broadly conceived to do so effectively.

Despite these shortcomings, the book is a welcome addition to the oral historical bookshelf—or, for that matter, to folkloristic, anthropological, or general historical collections. The quality of the essays is consistently high, yet none is so bogged down in jargon or technicalities as to be indecipherable to readers with little or no background in the subject. The book, in fact, should serve as an excellent introduction to oral history for any reader, “initiated” or not.

University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Ind.

Barbara Allen