

Collections Care and Stewardship: Innovative Approaches for Museums.* Juilee Decker, ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Press, 2015. 98 pp.

Review by Stephanie Allen

As a collections professional, I was excited to receive the invitation to review this newest installment of the *Innovative Approaches for Museums* series edited by Juilee Decker. The volumes in this series cover topics related to technology and digital initiatives, engagement and access, collections care and stewardship, and fundraising and strategic planning. This installment, focusing on collections care and stewardship, presents a diverse series of case studies ranging from building projects to student involvement with collections and exhibit development, all focused on how to manage the intersection of museum theory and actual museum practice.

The first case study by Katherine A. Johnson, Eileen Prendergast, and Jennifer Schwarz Ballard discusses the unique challenges faced by botanical gardens and zoos, where balancing audience engagement and public education with the needs of living collections can prove difficult. This engaging chapter details how the newly renovated Learning Campus and Garden at the Chicago Botanical Garden have been redesigned to facilitate interaction and learning with the collections in a controlled environment through public programs and school group activities.

The next case, written by Kelly Tomajko, describes the planning and construction of a new sustainable collections storage and preservation facility at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. This chapter does an excellent job of describing how such a large-scale and ambitious project can actually be accomplished through a logical strategic plan, the securing of funding prior to the start of the project, the development of a long-term collections and research plan, and the completion of a comprehensive collections risk assessment. It illustrates a great model for other museums as to how safe, secure, state-of-the-art, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified collections storage and research space can be successfully built.

The next chapter, by Allison McCloskey, examines the Denver Museum of Art's renovation project, which led to the new PreVIEW space, a conservation and exhibit preparation lab that is viewable by the public. This thoughtful chapter presents both the pros and cons of such a project while providing a model for how other museums could incorporate such a space for engagement. This strategy brings to light some of the often mysterious, behind-the-scenes work of conservation and preservation work while balancing the actual needs and the workflow of the conservation staff.

Mary Coughlin's chapter focuses on a different aspect of collections engagement, that of a museum studies practicum course at the George Washington University rehousing collections at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. This case study exemplifies the benefits that partnerships between museum studies programs and museums can produce, both for the students, who receive practical hands-on training in collections work, and for the museum,

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who receives much needed help rehousing collection objects. The chapter provides a model that other museum studies programs can easily adopt for use in their own classes while forging lasting partnerships with local museums.

The following case, by Nicolette B. Meister at Beloit College's Logan Museum of Anthropology, highlights the challenges of negotiating the sometimes-conflicting goals of collections preservation and access in the context of a research-based academic institution. This chapter does a great job of illustrating how—with a good strategic plan, staff engagement, and successful grant applications to digitize and rehouse collections—access and preservation initiatives were achieved while maintaining the museum's identity as a research and teaching-based institution.

Carrie Wieners Meyer's chapter is devoted to the Durham Museum's development of an internship program. Their program led to not only the completion of much-needed digitization, inventory, and rehousing projects, it also repaired strained relationships between the museum and local universities. While a nice description of their internship program, which is undoubtedly successful, I found this chapter less interesting than the previous ones. Their internship program seemed to me to be the same as those found in many other museum studies programs and not reflective of a new or innovative approach, as implied by its inclusion in this volume.

The next chapter by Marjorie Schwarzer, Glori Simmons, and Cannon de Mendez provides an interesting look at engaging students in exhibition development while creating a mutually-beneficial partnership between the University of San Francisco and the Mexican Museum. I thought this case study did an excellent job of highlighting student engagement in all aspects of exhibition development in new and interesting ways.

The case study by Robert P. Connolly, Rebeca E. Bria, and Elizabeth K. Cruzado Carranza grapples with the idea of co-creative engagement with a community in the development of cultural heritage initiatives. Using the example of PIARA's (Proyecto de Investigación Arqueológico Regional Ancash) partnership with the C.H. Nash Museum at the University of Memphis, this chapter does an excellent job of describing the challenges of creating a museum in collaboration with the local community of Hualcayán.

Terry A. Barnhart's case study details the redesign of the Historical Administration Program at Eastern Illinois University. While the overarching point of the chapter—that programs in public history and museum studies need to respond to the practical needs of students entering real-world jobs—is extremely valid, Barnhart seems to make sweeping generalizations about these programs, primarily that none of the existing programs provide enough practical experience for their students. First, the author seems to conflate history, public history, and museum studies programs, all of which are very different in scope and design. Secondly, while there can be a disconnect between museum theory and practice in museum studies and public history programs, this is by no means a universal. There are many programs that long ago adopted mandatory internship requirements and hands-on, skills-based classes that better prepare students for the realities of museum work.

The final chapter by Michael Jones discusses the much-needed collaboration and intersection of GLAMs (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums) in a world where institutions often serve multiple, not just one of these functions. The author argues that the perceived differences in standards and best practices of GLAM organizations are actually not differences at all. They share similar goals, methods, practices, and standards and should learn to work more cooperatively, in ways that would benefit the preservation world as a whole and would facilitate greater access to and use of collections across the board.

Each chapter of this volume follows the same format, with sections on planning, implementation, results, lessons learned, and drilling down what's next in the field. This gives the volume consistency, even when the chapters are very different in content. With a couple of exceptions, all the of case studies presented in the volume provide an interesting, engaging, and innovative look at collections stewardship, unique partnerships, exhibit development, planning, and student engagement with museums.

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