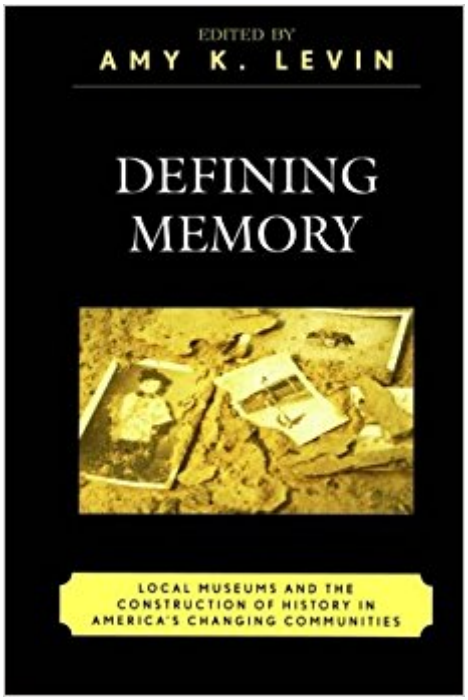
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Defining Memory: Local Museums And The Construction Of History In America's Changing Communities (American Association For State And Local History)



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Synopsis

Defining Memory uses case studies of exhibits from around the country to examine how local museums, defined as museums whose collections are local in scope or whose audiences are primarily local, have both shaped and been shaped by evolving community values and sense of history. Levin and her contributors argue that these small institutions play a key role in defining America's selfidentity and should be studied as seriously as more national institutions like the Smithsonian and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Defining Memory is an important and long-overdue piece of work that not only highlights the significant influence of local museums in their communities but also discloses them as lenses for understanding our greater contemporary American community. Because there has been no sustained support for local museums in the United States, their growth and even survival continues to be uncertain. It is through the work of authors like those in this book that local museums have a chance to shine as important cultural and educational assets for all citizens. (Rosa Cabrera, Field Museum)This collection of essays edited by Amy Levin illuminates the rich diversity of America's lesser-known local museums. Levin and her colleagues provide rich descriptions of a remarkable diversity of institutions. . . . Their selections reflect the wide variety of museums spread across the land and ranging from professionally to haphazardly administered, from well to precariously

supported, and from broadly representative to highly unusual in content. More important, the authors raise significant questions about the functions of museums and the way in which they should be organized, employed, and explained. . . . Levin and company force readers to think about what to expect from museums, what to demand, what to enjoy, and what might be best not to encounter. . . . Anyone interested in a nearby past will find themselves constantly intrigued, frequently amused, occasionally astonished, repeatedly enlightened, and, above all, amply rewarded. (David Kyvig, Northern Illinois University, from the foreword)Anyone interested in museums or historical societies will find something of interest here. (Patricia Mooney-Melvin, Loyola University Chicago)Some people will find comfort in these pages, seeing similar situations; others will be surprised at the sorts of problems other museums face; while still others will think that their own situation is not so bad after all. Within these pages, everyone will encounter museum directors and educators attempting to keep up with the field and represent the past in as careful a manner as possible. This is a fine contribution to the field. (Carol Kammen, author of On Doing Local History)This book captures the cacophonous bouquet(to mix metaphors) that are our local museums. How often have each of us been captivated by such a museum! The thoughtful insights this book provides certainly expanded my sense of what the museum universe is and should be. Hooray for cacophony as opposed to the sedate murmurs of proper museums. (Patterson B. Williams, Senior Educator, Denver Art Museum)The contributors to Defining Memory combine intriguing subject matter with reflective commentary to provide highly readable, stimulating essays that will be equally useful in the classroom, the staff conference room, and the boardroom. (Rebecca Conrad Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains, Winter 2007)

Amy K. Levin is director of women’s studies and a professor of English at Northern Illinois University, where she is also a member of the faculty of the museum studies graduate certificate program.

Very helpful as I get ready to do research in my community. Helps provide focus and what some of the pitfalls can be when communicating the story. One of the examples in this book was near my community and I remember the controversy surrounding it. It was an interesting experience to read about it in this book from an objective outsider person.

Needed for school.

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