EXARC JOURNAL 2024/4
14 Articles | Open Access

The content is published under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC BY 4.0).

Unreviewed Mixed Matters Article:

Book Review: Interpreting Science at Museums and Historic Sites by Debra A. Reid (eds)

Persistent Identifier: https://exarc.net/ark:/88735/10766

EXARC Journal Issue 2024/4 | **Publication Date:** 2024-11-27

Author(s): John Majerle [1] ✉

[1] Independent researcher, USA.

We live in a time when advances in science and technology can quickly outpace our ability to understand its impact on our past, present, and future. Interpreting Science at Museums and

Historic Sites provides insights into how museums and historic sites can bridge this gap so that we can better understand the past and perhaps influence future social directions for the better.

“ With each essay providing a different approach we learn the value of thinking outside the box when designing our own presentations.

This volume consists of a compendium of twenty-three essays, each one suggesting a different topic appropriate for a museum, historic site, or historic reenactment event, where advances in science or technology influenced or triggered a cultural event. Each essay thoroughly describes the topic, explains its historic relevance, and provides suggestions on how to present the topic to the public in both a meaningful and engaging way. Numerous valuable references, often drawn from readily available public sources, are included to assist the curator in presenting information.

The topics discussed are diverse ranging in time, from the late 1890s to the present, and relate to agriculture, health, climate change, and medical research. Particular emphasis is placed on events impacted by science or technology that some may find uncomfortable to discuss and are consequently not typically addressed in a public educational venue. The authors encourage public discussion and engagement instead of a predefined interpretation typical of traditional museum exhibits. Viewers should be left with more questions than answers.

Although each of these topics would make for an excellent museum display or historic reenactment, perhaps the more valuable takeaway is learning how others have approached the challenge of researching and communicating sometimes controversial historical topics in ways that might be generally applicable to other exhibits. With each essay providing a different approach we learn the value of thinking outside the box when designing our own presentations. We are encouraged to consider creating exhibits on topics to better understand recent or current day events.

Although the intended audience is professional historians, there is much here for the general reader curious about what led to an historic or current event.

Book information:

Interpreting Science at Museums and Historic Sites, eds: Debra A. Reid, Karen-Beth G. Scholthof and David D. Vail, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers / AASLH, Lanham, USA, 266 pages, ISBN: 9781538172759.

Keywords book
review
interpretation

Country USA

Share This Page

Corresponding Author

John Majerle
812 Beirne Ave. NE
Huntsville
Alabama 35801
USA
E-mail Contact