Intangible Heritage
Edited by Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa.
Routledge, 2009

It has long been understood that a defining aspect of the ‘new’ heritage discourses which emerged in the west from the 1960s, was the way in which the idea of cultural heritage was redefined as a material rather than a spiritual concept – concerning religious, literary, linguistic and political traditions. These ‘new’ heritage discourses therefore became overwhelmingly concerned with those practices of identification, conservation, curatorship and management required to preserve this material evidence as vehicles for tradition, identity and meaning within culture. The consequences of this focus on the material have of course been broadly critiqued in the international literature, but perhaps this has been more than usually thorough in the Australian context – faced as practitioners have been with the reality of cross cultural engagements, not only between Indigenous and settler cultures, but with the range of cultures in our region. At least, this is an impression which is gained through a review of the papers in this edited volume entitled ‘Intangible Heritage’ which is focused on UNESCO’s 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Laurajane Smith’s critical deconstructions of heritage and in particular archaeological heritage management are well known and therefore it comes as no surprise that in their introduction to this volume the editors clearly set the tone as one that questions the concept of ‘intangible heritage’. They point out that all heritage is intangible – that heritage is in fact a form of cultural practice, ‘a verb rather than a noun’ (p.6). The editors identify the Convention as a ‘significant intervention into international debate about the nature and value of cultural heritage’, but one which therefore calls into question the sustainability of UNESCO’s concept of ‘universal’ heritage values through a recognition that all heritage is linked to culturally specific values that may be contested and may privilege some people over others (p.5).

The edited volume is structured into three parts: the first examines the history of the drafting and formulation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage; the second reflects on the operation of the convention and tests it in a range of scenarios; and the third reflects more broadly on the concept of intangible heritage and its implications for contemporary thought and practice relating to heritage. The papers in the first and second parts provide timely, important reflection on the Convention and on the debates and ideas that shaped its construction. I believe it is particularly important to publish papers such as these, because although they may appear specialist and concerned with minutiae, it is only through this kind of detailed recording and discussion that future scholars can apprehend how and why conventions and charters evolved and how they were understood at the time of their creation. Too often this historical sense and knowledge is lost and cultural policy is critiqued within inappropriate historical parameters.

As a general reader it was Part 3 of the collection however, which most engaged my interest. These papers are dealing explicitly with the ‘cultural work that heritage does in any society’ and in questioning the utility of any polarising debate between tangible and intangible heritage, as the editors set out in their introduction (p. 6). To mention a minor irritant, I found the abundant use of abbreviations in many of the chapters in this volume dense, disconcerting and difficult. From AHD to the ICGSICH and the RUCHH, this makes for heavy reading. I know such abbreviations are an unpleasant fact of life in United Nations/UNESCO ‘speak’ however, I for one, would value attempts to craft more elegant and streamlined forms of expression when writing in this more reflective and academic context. While the heavy use of abbreviations is irritating it also has a perhaps unintended effect as far as Laurajane Smith’s common use of the capitalised abbreviation ‘AHD’ for her previously published concept of an ‘Authorised Heritage Discourse’ goes (Smith 1996). This abbreviation is used in the Introduction and in Chapter 15 “The envy of the world” Intangible heritage in England’, jointly authored by Smith and Emma Waterton. Using ‘AHD’ alongside many other official and non official acronyms actually helps to solidify this concept as, according to Smith and Waterton’s argument, an official, highly robust and sealed area of discourse which, in the UK, has failed to be influenced by changes in intellectual interpretations of heritage or by the actual practices of heritage professionals. Smith and Waterton argue that the effect of this discourse is to prevent changes in heritage management processes in the UK which would allow the intangible as well as the tangible qualities of heritage values to be managed. While their research demonstrating the intactness of this form of dominant discourse in the UK is valuable, some suggestions from the authors, or perhaps identification of opportunities to intervene in the dominance of this discourse, would have been a welcome addition to the overall contribution of this volume.

Papers by Bendix and Byrne propose some useful conceptual tools for a more reflexive heritage practice that is better equipped to understand the specific, local practices of ‘cultivating symbolic cultural capital’ (Bendix p.254). Bendix discusses the need for ‘reflexivity, disciplinary modesty and diplomacy’ as indispensable aspects of the study of heritage as a cultural practice. Byrne explores Indigenous and eastern societies in which people ‘move through daily life with an encompassing sense of relationship to past as well as present generations’, where ‘previous generations have an effective presence in the landscape of contemporary everyday life’ (Byrne p. 249). Byrne suggests that an anthropological understanding of the cultural perspective often termed ‘ancestor worship’, may be important to understanding the processes via which places and things accrue intangible values. It is also perhaps key to understanding the differences between concepts of heritage values in non-western social contexts and those western societies where, as Lowenthal has argued, notions of heritage value arise from a modern sense of alienation from the past (Lowenthal 1985). This theme is explored further in Hassard’s paper, enjoyable subtitled the ‘The Dark Side of the Enlightenment?’ where he explores the impact of Enlightenment thought, particularly the influence of the Protestant Reformation.
and the search for ‘original meaning’, in those traditions of western thought concerning concepts of the historical past and authenticity. Hassard interprets the approaches of Ruskin and Morris as attempting to heal modernity’s sense of rupture with the past through the use of traditional crafts and conservation processes which were ‘metaphysically productive’ not ‘scientistically reductive’ – which were in fact an antidote to the ‘metaphysically reductive, environmentally destructive and apodictic character of the Mechanical Age – which, to them (Ruskin et al), represented the “dark” side of Enlightenment’ (Hassard p. 285). Hassard seems to be arguing that contemporary science driven, value free, conservation and preservation practices are a result of the ‘forgetting’ of the intangible aspects of heritage value in the West (more specifically in the UK) and the overwhelming 20th century dominance of the importance of the material, and of the use of science to preserve the material at any cost. Instead, Hassard advocates ‘traditions of practice’ in conservation works, which thereby become a process through which the ‘intangible adheres itself to the tangible’ (Hassard 284). While I found Hassard’s paper fascinating, I was left wondering at the idea that simply by employing traditional crafts and materials, western heritage conservation could somehow reconnect the material with its historical meaning – through perhaps some metaphysical communing with the ‘soul’ of a place or a building through the process of physical, traditional work? A persistent thread in the papers of Part 3 of this collection is the understanding that most people in the world connect to what we call their heritage ‘via their emotions, their imagination, their belief in the supernatural and in the immanence of ancestors’ (Byrne p. 249). This finding is also based on the recognition that such an understanding is not available to those of us in the west whose sense of our place in the world has been shaped by secular modernism, except through a self conscious, reflexive intellectual process, informing an ethnographic approach to understanding culture and thereby heritage values, such as that proposed by Byrne and Bendix in this volume.

While opinions in this volume about the importance of recognising the intangible qualities of heritage in global, national and local management systems are consistent – ideas for transforming the currently polarised debate appear thin on the ground. Byrne suggests that the solutions will come from local experiences and that this necessitates a rejection of top down, authoritarian conservation as morally unsustainable. Byrne goes on to say ‘we cannot look to UNESCO for leadership here, mired as it appears to be in fantasies of universal value’ (Byrne, p. 249). More optimistically, Bendix provides a timely reminder that UNESCO’s overriding goals of using understanding of cultural difference to promote and support peace, make it imperative that we as practitioners commit to continued engagement and study of UNESCO’s regimes, unwieldy and intransigent though they may seem. This volume is an important resource in working towards this aim.

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Collaboration in Archaeological Practice: Engaging Descendant Communities
Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonph and T. J. Ferguson
Alta Mira Press, 2008
ISBN-10: 0759110549

A new volume on contemporary archaeological practice has brought together the views of some of the world’s leading archaeologists about how to more effectively work with indigenous peoples to improve research outcomes. The book also sets out a model for collaboration that shares power to control research projects and knowledge.

Collaboration in Archaeological Practice: Engaging Descendant Communities is a collection of papers by US, Canadian, South American, South African and Australian writers which discuss their experiences of collaboration with communities descended from ancestors who were the subjects of archaeological research. The writers offer practical advice about how to improve archaeological practice by actively involving indigenous people and other groups in research.

The volume, edited by US anthropologists Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonph and T. J. Ferguson was published by AltaMira Press in 2008. The book is 315 pages long and illustrated with black and white photographs and tables. The contributors include many of the innovative thinkers in the field: Michael Adler, Susan Bruning, Chip Chanthaphonph, Thomas W. Cuddy, T. J. Ferguson, and David A. Gadsby. Michael J. Heckenberger, Gary Jackson, Leigh J. Kuwanwiwma, Mark P. Leone, Ian Lilley, Dorothy Lippert, Lynn Meskell, George P. Nicholas, Paul A. Shackel, Norm Sheehan, Claire Smith, David Hurst Thomas, Lynette Sibongile Masuku Van Damme, John R. Welch, Eldon C. Yellowhorn and Larry J. Zimmerman.

Collaboration in Archaeological Practice is the third volume published in the Archaeology in Society Series. This series aims to document what the editors see as the changes that have taken place in archaeological practice during the past 20 years from a “narrow focus on economics and environmental adaptation to address issues of ideology, power and meaning”. In keeping with the book’s post-processual emphasis, the 11 papers are divided into three sections: knowledge, ethics and practice.

In the foreword David Hurst Thomas discusses his own journey from his student days in the late 1960s when archaeological research was carried on with little or no contribution from indigenous people to consultation and collaboration in the early 21st century. According to Thomas, collaboration creates its own community of interest and power, a synergy between researchers and native peoples to create an “environment in which the virtues can thrive for all stakeholders” (Colwell-Chanthaphonph and Ferguson 2008: xi).

Thomas’ introduction is worth reading by itself as it is a candid account of a researcher’s observation of the changes that have taken place in archaeological practice over the last half century. Thomas is frank about the fears and failures of archaeologists to engage fully with indigenous people and share knowledge openly.

However, in his enthusiastic advocacy of Collaborative Inquiry, Thomas does his case no favours by descending into hubris. His statement that “…collaborative archaeology has the potential to rock the theoretical, methodological and ethical
foundations within the world of contemporary archaeology” (Colwell-Chanthaphonph and Ferguson 2008: vii) may be intended to be provocative but could also indicate an inability or unwillingness to consider alternative viewpoints outside post-processual thought, that could hinder effective discussion of the topic.

The introduction written by Colwell-Chanthaphonph and Ferguson, titled A Collaborative Continuum, explains their model for collaboration called Collaborative Inquiry. “…Collaborative Inquiry requires scholars to work in partnership with the people who would normally constitute the ‘subjects’ of research throughout the entire research project” (Colwell-Chanthaphonph and Ferguson 2008: 9). This model builds on the work of earlier researchers Stringer and Whyte and involves four steps: “forming a group of co-researchers, creating the conditions for group learning, acting on the inquiry question, and making meaning by constructing group knowledge” (Colwell-Chanthaphonph and Ferguson 2008: 9).

The editors build on this model with the “phenomenological concept of life world” to actively involve both the researchers and the other participants to combine different understandings and enrich people's experiences. “The researcher in this mode is not outside the research experience but necessarily and fundamentally a part of it” (Colwell-Chanthaphonph and Ferguson 2008: 10).

The editors’ attempts to develop a model for Collaborative Inquiry and provide examples of successful interaction with indigenous communities has resulted in a thought provoking primer for researchers trying to develop strategies for effective cross-cultural communication. Useful tips and insights shared by experienced researchers about how to engage effectively with traditional owners, communicate appropriately and avoid inadvertently causing offence are valuable for field workers planning projects. The researchers’ stories shared in the book are the products of hard-won experience and close relationships built up in some cases over years that have endured.

The model of Collaborative Inquiry is only a representation of reality that no matter how sophisticated can only provide guidelines for researchers as they head into the field. Cross-cultural collaboration, like much of life, is a messy process that depends for its effectiveness on shared understanding and good will, and which cannot be reduced to a formula for success. A reading of the papers in the book shows that each researcher has developed their own approaches to collaboration that suit their projects and the indigenous communities with which they are working.

The approaches raise many worthwhile questions about contemporary archaeological practices that will keep archaeologists arguing about their merits until late into the night, so only a few observations about the book's strengths and weaknesses have been addressed here.

Colwell-Chanthaphonph and Ferguson’s model for Collaborative Inquiry is an attempt to create an agenda for archaeological practice that in the reviewer’s opinion fails on two counts. As a model, it inevitably over simplifies the complexities of the world in which archaeologists operate and should be read as that. It also appears to fail to acknowledge the reality that archaeologists are constantly trying to find ways to build more effective relationships with indigenous communities and use many different strategies to communicate, including collaboration. The editors have created a model based on post-processual approaches that they advocate as the standard for a profession when there is already a diversity of effective approaches. They tacitly acknowledge this point when they state: “Of note, while we advocate an approach of Collaborative Inquiry here, the volume’s contributors do not rely on this method” (Colwell-Chanthaphonph and Ferguson 2008: 9).

For the researchers who contributed to the book and no doubt others who also work with indigenous communities, collaboration is a central part of their field work. Building effective relationships with indigenous people through long-term partnerships, jointly planning research strategies and sharing the results of their work to mutual benefit is now an established practice in Australia particularly post Mabo and post Wik which empowered traditional owners with formal recognition of rights to land and ownership of cultural heritage. It is the contributors, not the editors, who discuss the likelihood of outcomes that are less than optimal and issues that disrupt collaboration. Power relationships are rarely equal and negotiations often fail to produce ideal outcomes for everybody. Indeed, disagreement may be desirable because if managed properly it can highlight problems with research designs and lead to the development of better strategies.

An example of a stumbling block for collaboration addressed by the contributors is the different agendas of academics and indigenous peoples. For scholars, the right to publish and share their information is vital, while to traditional owners control of secret and sacred information and empowerment of their people through the information revealed by research is key. Director of the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office Leigh J. Kuwanwisiwma stated the problem when he said about the issue of reburials: “I think compromise is okay. But sometimes we get into this sort of trap where compromise has to be a balanced compromise. Sometimes I still feel that, perhaps, a compromise should be unbalanced one way or the other” (Colwell-Chanthaphonph and Ferguson 2008: 160).

Collaboration in Archaeological Practice: Engaging Descendant Communities is a thought-provoking and worthwhile contribution to the literature. However it is a messy read as the editors and the contributors appear to have headed off in different directions in their approaches to collaboration. The editors, focussed on a post-processual agenda, have devised a sophisticated model but largely ignored the riches to be drawn from the contributors’ experiences in the field. The guiding hand of a general editor to bring together the model for Collaborative Inquiry and the approaches taken by the researchers in a discussion about the merits of different approaches would have improved the outcome and made the volume more cohesive and rewarding for readers.

Donald Kerr
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In this edited collection entitled, *Places of Pain and Shame – Dealing with ‘Difficult Heritage’*, heritage site case studies from around the globe are brought together. Through the case studies the authors bring their diverse professional and cultural backgrounds to the intriguing questions of why places of shame and pain have burgeoned in recent decades and now constitute a segment of heritage and cultural tourism in many nations. In keeping with much contemporary scholarship, the aim of the case studies, drawn from Japan, Cambodia, Northern Ireland, Poland, South Africa, United States, Timor, China, Taiwan, Indonesia and Australia is to explore the contested and layered meanings of the sites and to broaden their interpretation (2009:4). The implications for professional practice, including how such places might be interpreted and conserved are explored along with the observation shared by many of the authors that heritage is a cultural artefact and will inevitably vary through time.

Each of the book’s sixteen case studies is grouped under one of the book’s four parts: massacre and genocide sites; wartime internment sites; civil and political prisons; and places of benevolent internment. The book’s co-editors, Australian-based academics William Logan and Keir Reeves, explain in the introduction that the site types identified in the four parts are not always as clearly defined as the book’s structure might suggest. Hiroshima, for example is both a massacre and wartime site. Hanoi’s Hoa Lo Prison during its history was a political prison under French colonial rule and later during the Vietnam War housed American pilots. Issues of typological overlap aside, Logan and Reeves open with a succinct overview of heritage theory and practice in recent decades. They discern changes in what constitutes heritage, noticing the shift from ‘the great and beautiful’ to ‘the destructive and cruel side of history’ (2009:1) and highlight the national and international interest in sites associated with pain and shame.

In one of the Australian case studies, Brownyn Batten, a senior government policy officer, traces the development of a memorial to commemorate the 1838 Myall Creek Massacre. The massacre was a tragic and violent event where twenty eight Aboriginal people were murdered and seven white men were hung as a consequence (2009:83). Batten notes that the memorial, unveiled in June 2000, coincided with a broader spirit of reconciliation and recognition of hitherto silent truth of our shared history. She goes on to question the validity of recent initiatives for the memorial to become a nationally significant destination symbolic of massacre sites and reconciliation throughout Australia. Batten worries that the integrity, complexity and texture of the local may be lost in pursuit of the national, but she misses the observation that many communities have ambitions for their significant places that move beyond the local to claim and cohere the nation.

In a second Australian case study, Jane Lennon’s examination of the meanings and lessons provided by three of the more evocative sites of convict incarceration (Port Arthur, Norfolk Island and New Caledonia) is particularly timely, given the current Australian Convict Sites World Heritage nomination. These and the many other examples of sites associated with 19th century forced migration by the European powers, share in common the 21st century challenge of dealing with a shameful or forbidden past and how to present these stories in a manner that is relevant and resonant.

These case studies, along with a number of others in the collection, cover places of pain and shame that can be considered from within the comfort zone of a buffer of half a century or more since these events took place. Some of the other events covered, however, are somewhat closer to our own time. Perhaps the most confronting is the paper by Colin Long and Keir Reeves. They discuss the confronting messages presented to both the visitor and the local inhabitants at Anlong Veng in Cambodia, the former Khmer Rouge stronghold and base of Ta Mok (known as the ‘Butcher’), whose house is now a museum. Long and Reeves argue that the version of history presented by the unreconstructed Khmer Rouge community of Anlong Veng is so distorted and perverse that any balanced understanding of this tragic episode of Cambodia’s history, let alone reconciliation, is impossible. They conclude that Anlong Veng is a rare example of a place of pain and shame that should be forgotten rather than conserved.

This is an interesting and courageous book that explores a challenging and fascinating subject through many significant political and cultural sites. It makes an important contribution to, what is at least in Australia, a modest body of literature that critically engages with and examines heritage theory and practice and connects it with the constant work of communities and nations in trying to imagine, define and cohere identity. We need more of this kind of interdisciplinary research and scholarship that actively penetrates heritage discourse and practice to expose the all too frequently hidden orthodoxies that are at play at heritage sites nationally and internationally.

Peter Romey and Sharon Veale
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**The Career of William Thompson, Convict**

*Port Arthur Occasional Papers No 2, 2009*  
*Edited by Julia Clark*  
ISBN: 978-0-9579394-7-9

It was rather exciting to read a narrative about a convict’s daily life in such extraordinary detail. Edited by Julia Clark, *The Career of William Thompson, Convict* is a remarkable study into life in Van Diemen’s Land around 1841.

The study is strongly grounded on archival record, including information and quotations that prove to be a revelation and a delight even for those who are familiar with the convict period history. Her notes provide background information and clarifications on colonial and penal culture from its own standpoint, as opposed to how we might like to see it from today’s politicised point of view. The vast majority of places or people quoted on the manuscript are pinpointed and identified in historical maps, photos and sketches, including some current locations, which further endorses the outstanding presentation of research in this narrative.

The book relates the life of William Thompson, who was sentenced to life in prison in 1841 for breaking into and looting commercial premises. At the age of twenty-one, this Protestant shoemaker spent almost eleven years, between 1841 and
1852, in the colonial penal system in Van Diemen's Land and considerable time at Coal Mines and at Port Arthur. John Watt Beattie, a renowned Tasmanian photographer, wrote about Thompson's journey at the age of eighty, taking several photos of him at memorable places during his imprisonment. One of the 1900 studio photographs of old William Thompson is particularly impressive, showing this unique character posing in convict uniform and leg irons for the picture, probably from Beattie's extensive collection of artefacts.

In this narrative of life, Thompson chose to present himself and his life for public consumption, shaped by a selective memory probably filtered by the heavy and long-endured burden of life on his shoulders. It also shows connections within the penal system, linking the life of a convict to reality, restoring him to the status of an individual with a positive approach to life while always making the best of a situation and dealing with life's inconveniences in a confident way. Thompson tells a story of physical punishment, flogging, time spent in solitary confinement and the tread wheel, and how they would "oval" their irons for easy removal. He relates how tobacco was more valuable to a convict than any other product and describes time spent wandering aimlessly around the region. He also reports that attendance to church was compulsory for all convicts, with double service on Sunday, because religion was considered the basis of the reform project. Although little is known about his life as a free man, an interesting part of the narrative tells of his first meeting with his future wife. Information obtained from the Registry Office and from family history tells of how he was able to build a family of seven children and thirty-eight grandchildren.

Considering that many remaining published narratives were written by political prisoners, and shaped to almost fiction by literate men, Thompson's depiction of people, places and procedures tells an extraordinary and rather touching life story from the time that he arrived to Van Diemen's Land in 1841 to his departure from the convict system. Between 1841 and 1848 he formed part of an extensive influx of convicts that provided a continuous supply of labour force for both private and public enterprises.

Thanks to John Watt Beattie this vulnerable narrative persisted in an era that most of Tasmania would like to forget, resisting the fast pace of development, technology and modernity, and enduring as a considerable contribution to the Convict Heritage. He was considered the "Photographer to the Government of Tasmania" and painstakingly documented features and events throughout the state. Beattie was also a passionate collector of convict-related material, exhibited today in the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston as well as in the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery in Hobart. His collection includes clothing, tools, products of many branches of convict history, curios and photographs of Port Arthur and other convict sites.

In summary, this powerful narrative provides an official and well-researched understanding of cultural heritage that both exposes the human story of Port Arthur and allows the reader a unique perception of life in the system at that time, including a glimpse of the hidden dimensions of what appears on the surface. Information provided by the editor is a remarkable presentation of precisely how heritage information should be documented.

Flavia Kiperman

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**Time Honored: A Global View of Architectural Conservation**

*John H. Stubbs,*

*Wiley & Sons, New Jersey, 2009*

*ISBN-10: 0470260491*

Recently, as an experienced architect but new student at Deakin University, I was on the lookout for a book like this. Aimed at the professional and probably most helpful to architects tackling conservation problems, it is both approachable and encyclopaedic in its coverage of architectural conservation theory and best of all is interesting to read. This is intended to be the first of a series with later volumes focussing on recent architectural conservation practice throughout the world and as such is intended to define the parameters of what we are doing today and why.

Its publication comes at a time of intense interest and public awareness of how we are protecting the world's cultural patrimony. Hopefully the academic John Stubbs is also a good teacher – if his lectures and seminars are as readable as this book then he would be a powerful force in the field. He speaks from wide experience as practitioner, educator, US National Parks Service advisor and more recently as director of field projects for the World Monuments Fund in New York. The foreword by Sir Bernard Fielden adds to the impeccable credentials of the author and praises ‘the first truly comprehensive review and balanced portrayal of today’s field from a professional perspective.’ (Stubbs 2009: xii)

Setting out the development of architectural conservation since prehistoric times the book follows the evolution of discussion and theory that has been the background for the national and international conservation charters. It does not attempt to be a practical handbook, wisely leaving technical aspects to be investigated elsewhere, but it makes a clear point of the importance of assessment and investigation of conservation issues before proposing a physical solution. Conservation is essentially the practical outcome of an intellectual process. The very moment we attempt to value or categorise a heritage place, ‘despite all efforts to objectify qualities, the decision is both subjective and relative – and therefore controversial’ (Stubbs 2009: 42).

The author quotes the best of the current texts, but has plainly been influenced by a few of the great names, including John Ruskin, William Morris, James Marston Fitch and Bernard Fielden. His list of Twenty Actions That Influenced Today's World Architectural Conservation Practice (Stubbs 2009: 281) acknowledges the value of sharing our skills and learning from others, as we now benefit from easy communications and cheap travel. In touching on the shortcomings of modern planning, he notes the big growth area in conservation today as the rehabilitation of 20th century buildings. There is no apology for the mistakes of the past. They are used to illustrate the need for careful evaluation of any completed project. The great conserving nations have exported money and skills to solve the issues of under-developed and third-world countries, in such places as Angkor Wat in Cambodia where there have been many international missions working side by side using vastly different conservation principals and techniques. Stubbs uses these examples to describe how

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F lava Kiperman

58

*historic environment* volume 22 number 3 2009
each culture’s conservation theories are a product of their own fundamental cultural differences and practitioners must understand their own bias.

The important place of the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter is acknowledged several times in the text and it is to be hoped that a new pride in our local conservation work will encourage more young architects to take up the challenge of this discipline in Australia. Stubbs observes the ageing nature of professionals in many countries and the importance of both education and apprenticeship in passing on vital theoretical and practical skills.

There is a shortcoming – the illustrations. Many images appear to have been badly scanned from old photographs. The standard of images in current architectural press publications is very high, in both colour and monochrome. Given the importance of the illustrations in supporting the text many of the images are just inadequate, grainy and unclear. The excellent chapters in Part IV giving a broad view of contemporary architectural conservation examples throughout the world rely on photographs with lengthy, descriptive captions, a ploy less instructive as the places described require prior knowledge or access to Google images.

Complete with a glossary of conservation terms, an extensive annotated bibliography, comprehensive list of all the international and regional resources, conventions and charters and well indexed it will be a useful reference text for both professional and interested participants in conservation projects.

Margaret Heathcote

Museums in a Digital Age

Ross Parry (ed)

Museums worldwide seem to be doing a good job as custodians of our cultural artefacts and despite the fact that many have neither the space nor the resources to exhibit anything but a small proportion of their collection, they are also doing a good job at displaying and interpreting them to the public. Over the past few decades, museums also seem to have acquired a religious-like authenticity – more people in New York in the aftermath of 9/11 went to museums than to churches (Pachter 2010: 335). This role is reinforced by the seriousness and splendour of their architecture, and by the attraction of a newer god — Retail. However, when we consider the high-res, pixel by pixel examination of every brush stroke of a work like the Mona Lisa made possible by the web, supported by the endless facts, interpretation, distortion, analysis and parody available virtually, in comparison to the crowded, distant, glassed-off viewing possible at the Louvre, the power of the virtual in the world of museums is unarguable.

Museums in a Digital Age is thus a timely consideration of the role of the digital in the entire spectrum of museum activities. The book is one of a series of publications by the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester, which look at various aspects of the management and role of museums in today’s world. The School pioneered museum studies or ‘museology’ as a discipline in the 1960s (Knell 2010: xiii) and has underpinned the recognition of museum studies as a valid area of academic and practical research. The current volume is not a reasoned study around a thesis, but something much more attuned to the digital age which is its basis – a highly diverse, even eclectic, collection of papers broadly centred around the subject of the work.

These papers, some published elsewhere, some not, some reproduced in full whilst others are edited extracts are ordered in seven themed sections, the titles of which are worth noting in even as brief a review as this, as they give a sound overview of the scope and content of the book.

The first considers ‘Information: data, structure and meaning’ and is chiefly concerned with the history and practice of digital management of collections. At times dry, this is of relevance mainly to the museum professional. It does contain ‘A Brief History of Museum Computerisation’ (Williams 2010: 16-21); a very useful overview for the novice, reinforcing the parallel in museums of the accelerated reliance on digital machinery throughout the modern world. The second considers the ‘idea of a museum as a venue and a place’ (Parry 2010: 119) and is titled ‘Space: visits, virtuality and distance’. Here are discussions of the museum as an international symbol, with analysis ranging from Malraux’s Imaginary Museum – now realisable in cyberspace – to the use of mobile phone technology to create ‘Museums Outside Walls’ (Arvenitis 2010, 170-176). There is, however, no discussion of the genuine excitement of real objects carefully lit and beautifully arranged in seductive architecture, let alone of one of the museum’s core attractions – their exciting role as public gathering spaces. The web’s basis as a source of accessible data is considered in the third section, ‘Access: ability, usability and connectivity’, which also contains a timely review of the role and structure of the museum website.

More interesting is the fourth section on ‘Interpretation: communication, interactivity and learning’, which reminds us that ‘digital media (like any media) is anything but a neutral vessel’ (Parry 2010: 227) A discussion on the digital object and its preservation and interpretation – and the evaluation in this context of ‘original’ versus ‘copy’ is the centrepiece of many of the essays. Thus section also includes a wonderful essay ‘Visitors’ Use of Computer Exhibits – findings from five gruelling years of watching visitors getting it wrong’ (Gammon 2010: 281) In the fifth section, ‘Object: authenticity, authority and trust’, Klaus Muller’s essay ‘Museums and Virtuality’ gets to the heart of this complex subject, and deconstructs the distinction between real and virtual – ‘The integration of objects into museum collections removes and alienates the object from its “authentic” (original, historical, physical, emotional) context and places it into a new and virtual “museum” order (Muller 2010: 297). A necessary, if short and poorly edited, transcript of a conference introduction by Marc Pachter ‘Why Museums Matter’ restores ‘the triumph of the real’ (Pachter 2010: 333). The section ‘Delivery: production, evaluation and sustainability’ again returns to the practical issues of the production of exhibitions and multimedia displays. Finally we come to ‘Futures: priorities, approaches and aspirations’, which imagines a future where ‘more than just a tool, computing becomes a function and fundamental logic of the museum’ (Parry 2010: 419) - just as it has in communications generally, in business and trade, and in the daily life of the young.
The virtual will slide into the everyday, as unnoticeable as electricity, and museums will exploit its benefits, with I feel no diminution of the value of the real, and no decrease in the importance of real objects to the wider public.

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