

Book Reviews

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Eliasof, Jane Mitchell. *Rebranding: A Guide for Historic Houses, Museums, Sites, and Organizations*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield/AASLH, 2022. Hardcover/Paperback/eBook, 184p. \$85/\$36/\$34. (ISBN: 978-1-5381-4889-1/978-1-5381-4890-7/978-1-5381-4891-4).

In recent years, many museums and history organizations have been contemplating the need for a refresh to appeal to younger and more diverse audiences. While some have already made considerable changes and updates to their content and programming, names like “historic house” and “historical society” often carry dry or stuffy connotations that can mislead potential visitors. These names and brands may no longer reflect the audience’s experience. Rebranding the organization with a new name and look can help both to improve clarity, and to better showcase these more modern and inclusive offerings. It can even increase visibility and attract new visitors to the site. However, rebranding a history organization can come with unique challenges. How do you reassure your dedicated donors and members that you will continue to honor the institutional history and legacy of the founders? Will you lose existing brand equity with the change? Using real examples from thirteen case studies, Jane Mitchell Eliasof’s *Rebranding: A Guide for Historic Houses, Museums, Sites, and Organizations* highlights this growing trend and shows how other organizations were able to acknowledge their past, while making an important change for their institutional trajectory.

Rebranding is part of the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) Book Series, edited by Rebecca K. Shrum of Indiana University-Purdue

University Indianapolis. Co-published with Rowman & Littlefield, this series spotlights current issues, trends, and best practices in the field through inspiring, informative, and practical texts written by, and for, practitioners in the history community. Though *Rebranding* is categorized as an administration and marketing text, it is not overly technical. The author encourages readers to share the book as a resource with whomever seems appropriate, particularly at smaller organizations where staff tend to take on various job responsibilities, or “wear many hats,” as the phrase goes.

Eliasof markets the book as an essential step-by-step guide for any history organization considering rebranding. Though numerous books have been written about logos and branding from the marketing perspective, very few focus entirely on branding for cultural heritage and history organizations. What makes this book even more distinctive is that Eliasof looks specifically at organizations who sought to change their existing branding. Across the case studies, *Rebranding* follows the who, what, when, where, why, and how for each museum or historical society’s rebranding process. Perhaps even more importantly, the book includes insights from representatives of the featured organizations, who reflect on whether they thought their rebranding was successful or not, and acknowledge what they might have done differently in retrospect.

The shorter length of *Rebranding* enhances its approachability. Working professionals will not be daunted by picking this book up during a busy calendar year. The writing is clear and practical, and the book is arranged into sections that make it easy to reference by topic. The preface sets the stage well and establishes the need for this book. The reader is presented with more background on the concept of rebranding and its value to the museum field. The preface also introduces the author and describes Eliasof’s qualifications. Drawing on over two decades of designing and writing marketing, educational, and training programs for the health care industry, Eliasof was well positioned to lead the Montclair Historical Society through a rebranding and reinterpretation process, serving as Executive Director when the organization became the Montclair History Center. This firsthand experience demonstrates her expertise on the topic. The first chapter gives an overview of each of the thirteen different organizations featured as case studies. Those organizations are the Ames History Center (Ames, Iowa); the First Americans Museum (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma); Five Oaks Museum (Portland, Oregon); HistoryMiami Museum (Miami, Florida); the Moab Museum (Moab, Utah); the Montclair History Center (Montclair, New Jersey); the Northwest Montana History Museum (Kalispell, Montana); Ohio History Connection (Columbus, Ohio); the Pejepscot History Center (Brunswick, Maine); the Society for History and Racial Equality (Kalamazoo, Michigan); the Southern California Railway Museum (Perris, California); Two Mississippi Museums (Jackson, Mississippi); and the Virginia Museum of History and Culture (Richmond, Virginia). By including

representative organizations of varied sizes and budgets located across the contiguous United States, Eliasof provides a wealth of perspectives. All the organizations followed a similar rebranding process and faced many of the same issues.

The subsequent eight chapters walk the reader through the rebranding process using examples from the case study organizations. At this point, the book becomes a topical guide on why and how to rebrand. The chapters cover the importance of data collection, legal name change options, logo and brand design, launch timelines, budgets, and funding. Here, the author emphasizes that a brand is just as much about the name and logo as it is about the overall experience. All three of these elements must support each other and work together for the organization to thrive. In addition, Eliasof asked representatives of the thirteen organizations to share advice on how they approached planning hiccups, handled negative feedback, and measured success. While this advice is important, the reader would also have benefited from the inclusion of an author critique regarding whether or not each rebranding was successful. While Eliasof may not have wanted to criticize colleagues in the field, it would be helpful for an impartial party to analyze the pros and cons of each case study example.

The handbook portion of the book is structured to allow time for reflection. At the end of each chapter, the author provides “Ask Yourself” guided questions to help prompt discussion with your team or organization. There are also useful tips and tools throughout the chapters, including real examples of audience surveys, “before” and “after” logos, brand guidelines, and press releases from the case study organizations. The book relies heavily on these images and examples, which is especially appealing for visual learners. However, several figures were particularly difficult to read or distinguish due to blurriness or small, illegible font. This made it challenging for the reader to glean the full message of those sections. Though color printing may have been more costly, color images would have been particularly helpful in the section discussing logo design and color choices. Eliasof relied on written descriptions and black-and-white images, but the reader may feel compelled to do quick internet searches to fully visualize the design choices for each organization.

One key element lacking in the book is a nuanced discussion of budget. Eliasof tries to emphasize the need to look for hidden costs and does provide overall rebranding budgets for each organization, if available. However, the spending in the case studies ranged anywhere from \$5,000 to \$100,000, and many of the interviewees noted that they underestimated the total cost of rebranding. Because money is always a major consideration for any organizational undertaking, readers will undoubtedly seek guidance in this book. Eliasof could have incorporated a table with cost estimates for each potential element of rebranding to give a more specific idea of what to expect. A list of additional grant and funding opportunities would also have been helpful, rather

than simply encouraging pro bono work from generous community businesses and university students.

This book is chock-full of information, but the structure is difficult to follow at times. Organizing the book by topic, rather than by case study, allows readers to refer back to specific points in the rebranding process going forward. However, this made the initial readthrough slightly convoluted. The reader may have a tough time keeping the details of each of the thirteen organizations straight. Eliasof tried to combat this by providing introductions of the case study organizations in the first chapter, as well as in an Appendix, which includes an alphabetical listing of each organization, noting their mission, former name(s), institutional overview, reason for rebranding, rebranding costs (if available), and staff interviewees. The reader may find themselves flipping back to one of these sections for quick reminders while reading the rest of the book.

Overall, *Rebranding: A Guide for Historic Houses, Museums, Sites, and Organizations* is a useful resource that walks readers through the steps of, and reasons for, rebranding. It stresses the importance of considering your goals, audience, timing, qualitative and quantitative research, as well as the need to document and analyze your results and feedback throughout the process. Eliasof uses pre- and post-COVID-19 examples from statewide organizations, local historical societies, and regional museums across the country to create an engaging how-to guide for museum practitioners. *Rebranding* fills an information gap in the field and makes the rebranding process seem less daunting by providing a pathway for success. — *Mindy Price, Minnetrista Museum & Gardens*

Fox, Adam. *The Press and the People: Cheap Print & Society in Scotland, 1500–1785*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. (electronic book)

Early modern book history in Scotland has focused primarily on the publication of texts by and for Scotland's intellectual élite. Scotland eventually emerged, as it is often argued, as the most literate society in Europe at the time. Such an accomplishment is remarkable considering how relatively late the printing press was introduced in Scotland: Walter Chapman and Androw Myllar established the first press in 1507 at the instruction of James IV. Although cheap prints and popular literature were the “bread and butter” of Scottish printers in the early modern era, no study of their survival and impact on Scottish book trade had previously been published. Adam Fox's *The Press and the People* fills this lacuna in an admirable manner, being the only large-scale survey of Scottish popular and ephemeral literature production to date.

Fox's main goal is to create a survey of cheap print and popular literature in early modern Scotland, examining the relationships between increased book production and circulation and mass communication and popular culture (1). Part bibliographi-