house buyers who could not afford the expense of generous dimensions in their rooms. The stress on suburban, private views “nurtured misgivings of the city,” which led to regrettable political repercussions (265). Spaciousness and view also compensated modern man for living his life in a too-close relation to deskwork, while broad vistas restored his mental health and offered relaxation. Life magazine in 1953 described a librarian, “Mr. Munn [whose] chief pleasure is the view. Because he spends so much of his working time scanning fine print, he likes to ‘see for miles’ when at home.” Isenstadt observes, “The accompanying photograph shows Mr. Munn seated in a comfortable chair looking out the window, apparently on the mend” (262). More testimonials like this from other Mr. Munns rather than the book’s general reliance on prescriptive literature would have helped demonstrate the operation of spaciousness in clients’ minds.

In the penultimate chapter, Isenstadt argues that the modern small house created a “subjective impression of space independent of its objective existence” (251). It was the architect’s job to suggest deep space where only shallow space existed, and to use windows and views to project space outwards and enlarge the apparent scope of the interior. Newer ideas have dismissed the unquestioned virtues of a view. Instead, New Urbanist codes beginning in the late 1970s have returned street facades to walls with vertical punched windows and front porches, which acknowledge neighbors rather than pretend they are not there. Artists have devised ways of deconstructing the view using video cameras, questioning the acts of seeing and being seen. Television replaces the view of the infinite front yard with images of the world.

The Modern American House approaches domestic architecture through a new lens. Since Isenstadt has not chosen a familiar template for the book, such as an architect’s oeuvre or the close study of a set of specific buildings, his organizational structure is a bit awkward and allows some redundancies. Yet, the book’s themes are always intriguing, and the glimpses into previous cultural eras’ beliefs are convincing because they are allowed to unfold slowly and in detail. With its emphasis on viewers’ experience of spaciousness rather than architects creating spaciousness, the book fits into recent vernacular architecture studies that examine inhabitation as a primary influence on buildings.

Elizabeth C. Cromley
Northeastern University

Eric Mumford, editor

Eric Mumford’s edited volume on the modernist era, St. Louis, and Washington University’s School of Architecture is a determinedly and absorbingly localized study that promises to reach beyond the collective worth of its assembled facts. From this sometimes quirky and personalized collection of essays and memoirs there emerges something larger than the institutional history of one school, something more intriguing than a compilation of the architectural highlights of one city. The book evokes a nexus of architectural practice and education in a time and place dominated by charismatic men, interlocking social and professional networks, and high social and aesthetic ideals.

As its rambling title hints, Modern Architecture in St. Louis: Washington University and Postwar American Architecture, 1948–1973 stems from a complicated brief. Mumford memorializes an architecture school while simultaneously examining the evolution of American modernism in a largely unexamined local context. That the book owes its publication to financial contributions from Washington University itself, the city’s American Institute of Architects chapter, and the firm of Hellmuth, Obata, and Kassabaum (HOK)—three parties with a large stake in its contents—further complicates his work. Readers can make of this semiofficial authorization what they wish. Sponsored corporate histories—one need look only as far as Walter McQuade’s aptly titled HOK study, Architecture in the Real World—have always cast a long shadow across architectural bookshelves. For my part, I see little or nothing sacrificed here in the way of historical objectivity. Indeed, much is gained by the addition of an insider perspective, which will ultimately stand as one of the book’s chief virtues.

After a foreword from then-dean Cynthia Weese (who retired from the school in 2005), the book introduces the postwar metropolitan architectural scene through three historical essays. Mumford’s essay—which comes last but ought more profitably to have been placed first, where it could frame the other two—surveys the role played by Washington University-connected architects in translating modernist design paradigms to the local context of St. Louis. Mumford’s title, “Triumph and Eclipse,” suggests his working thesis: that, despite the prodigious talents and ambitions represented by the school’s faculty, “[a] certain distance seems to have opened up between the local practice environment and the School of Architecture” from the 1960s forward (60).

Mumford’s thesis of a unidirectional trend somewhat elides, however, the inevitable ebb and flow of practice. For example, the placement of some of the school’s urban designers, including John Hoal and Don Royce, in key positions with the city of St. Louis’s planning department during major urban design revisions in the 1980s and 1990s suggests that Washington University has played, and may again play, a part in shaping the metropolitan landscape. Moreover, the extent to which Mumford’s “eclipse” thesis reflects the changing business of architecture in America generally, rather than the particular orientation of the school’s faculty vis-à-vis local clients, is a question largely unexamined. Key early local modernists such as Harris Armstrong, William Bernoudy, and Freder-
Hélène Lipstadt and James-Chakraborty precede Mumford’s survey with their case studies, respectively, of the 1947 Jefferson National Expansion Memorial (JNEM) competition and of local religious architecture from the 1930s through the 1960s. The Gateway Arch, result of the JNEM competition, has, like too many other buildings in St. Louis, suffered the neglect of architectural historians—in part, Lipstadt contends, because of its “unsettling . . . conjuncture of monumentality and modernism” (5). An unorthodox design from the standpoint of doctrinaire modernism (and a surprising choice, perhaps, from a jury headed by George Howe), the Arch has never perplexed St. Louis residents as much as it has the architectural establishment. Indeed, as Lipstadt shows, the project had a lengthy genealogy as a local waterfront-renewal effort prior to the opportunistic acquisition of federal funds, and a national mission, during the Depression. Her essay will stand as the best concise summary we have of the machinations of a local political effort—headed by civic leader Luther Ely Smith—and its eventual ties both to a national design commission and a federal bureaucracy. (Particularly interesting is the effect on the project of the controversies surrounding the contemporaneous Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C.) The result of their joint efforts (and tensions) was, in Lipstadt’s terms, a “co-made” project, one that reflected local political and development needs as much as it did architect Eero Saarinen’s vision of modernist monumentality. The only thing missing from the account is a sense of life “on the ground”—away from the drafting boards and the boardrooms. We learn little, for example, of the significance of the immense landscape cleared for the project and less of the alternative schemes put forth by Park Service employee Charles Peterson, whose museum of architecture and proposed re-creation of significant St. Louis buildings on the site disappeared without explanation from the final program.

James-Chakraborty surveys the city’s local shade of modernism through her accounts of a handful of churches and synagogues dating from the late 1930s through the 1960s. Her contention that the program and appearances of these local landmarks “reinforced rather than changed widely shared values, even as it expressed them in ways that were new and exciting to all” (38), accords with the general trend in modernist historiography—a shift away from the focus on the universalism of the movement’s best-known proponents and toward its more common local adaptation to community needs and local materials. For James-Chakraborty, the power of such buildings as St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, Faith Salem Evangelical and Lutheran Center, B’nai Amoona Synagogue, and Temple Emanuel derived not from their architects’ abilities to impose an unfamiliar design vocabulary on a traditional-minded congregation, but from their willingness to accept such clients’ democratic, community-based approaches to divine communion (27–28). In this contention, she is almost surely correct. Nonetheless, we might have learned more about those particular communities and their needs had her essay delved more thoroughly into the neighborhoods where these structures arose and into the social milieus that distinguished their congregants from others of the same faith residing in quite different communities and worshipping in quite different structures.

Ultimately, Modern Architecture in St. Louis belongs to the men whose personal memoirs of teaching and practice fill the pages of its second half. Among them, Joseph Passonneau, dean of the School of Architecture from 1956 to 1967, stands out in his own account and those of his successors as a formidable figure: decisive, convincing, sociable, and well connected. Aged eighty-four at the time of the book’s release, Passonneau still projects in his memoir some of the qualities that helped him turn a small program at a “street-car college” (79) into a center for architects and planners from the nation’s best schools working alongside a regular retinue of distinguished international visitors that has included Fumihiko Maki, Aldo Van Eyck, and Hans Hollein. Particularly entertaining is Passonneau’s account of his aborted term as chairman of architecture and dean-designate at Harvard’s Graduate School of Design—an appointment that tangled with the plans of existing dean Josep Lluis Sert (“a superb designer and a terrible administrator” [76]) and resulted in Passonneau’s departure on the first plane back to St. Louis. His successor, George Ansellevicius, likewise recalls a time (one that we ought not lament too much) when a phone call from a well-placed friend, or a dinner at the Russian Tea Room, could lead to a new faculty hire.

At the same time, the serious business of reforming architectural education in the post–École des Beaux-Arts, post-Bauhaus 1960s gets interesting treatment from these administrators and even more so from Constantine Michaelides, who followed Ansellevicius in the dean’s office. Michaelides is particularly revealing on the administrative and financial challenges of operating a small architecture school (two hundred undergraduates, one hundred graduates) within a liberal-arts university, where designers lack the support and facilities of a more fully independent professional program. Washington University’s four-year Bach-
elor of Arts–two-year Master of Architecture sequence was one response to this context—a response that proved innovative for its time even if, as Michaelides reports, it was prompted largely by the school's desire to help shield Vietnam-era students from draft eligibility (104). His accounts of the school's administrative struggles appear all the more telling in retrospect, with the university's post-publication decision to subsume the once-separate schools of art and architecture under the banner of its new Sam Fox School of Design and Visual Arts.

The administrators' perspective is offset, in part, by the offstage presence of other influential faculty, including the historians Buford Pickens, Udo Kultermann, and especially Norris Kelly Smith, the iconoclastic Wright biographer whose "discouraging preaching" (102) and antimodern moralizing Michaelides remembers with a grudging fondness. Likewise alive throughout these pages is the brilliant, cantankerous future Berkeley dean Roger Montgomery, the one faculty colleague whom these administrators seem to have considered their equal in talent, ambition, and especially willfulness.

Finally, the memoir section of the book offers pride of place to two architects who never served in more than visiting positions at the school: Maki and Obata. Obata's terse memoir does not do justice either to the importance of his own career or to the school's history. Maki uses his essay as an opportunity to reflect not only on his several terms as a visiting lecturer at the school but on the book-ended achievements of his original design for Steinberg Hall (1960, his first American commission) and his recent completion of the Sam Fox School—both additions to the original architecture building. Maki's discussion, the most intensely personal of the book's first-person accounts, reveals that St. Louis is "the city that appears most often in [his] dreams"—not the city's landmarks, Maki confesses, but "the desolate midtown or some fantastic townscape born of my memory" (92).

In that melancholic dream image lies the great missing link of this book: what of the city that lay untouched by Washington University, by modernism? What of all the streets, and all the buildings, in all the cities, that even the grandiose visions of the postwar age failed to reach? In the end, such questions are moot. What gives this book its special value is its singular focus on the people who taught and practiced architecture in one place and the institution that brought them together. As Maki writes, "then, as now, architects were most interested in architecture and the architects around them" (91). Anyone interested in architecture and architects will appreciate this volume for its value in bringing alive that tight world as it flourished in one place during one short but hopeful span in mid-century America.

ERIC SANDWEISS
Indiana University

Note
1. Osmund Overby, William Adair Bernoudy, Architect: Bringing the Legacy of Frank Lloyd Wright to St. Louis (Columbia, Mo., 1999), and Kathleen James-Chakraborty, "In the Spirit of Our Age": Eric Mendelsohn's B'nai Amana Synagogue (St. Louis, 2008).

Nicholas Adams
Skidmore, Owings & Merrill: SOM since 1936

Many readers will be surprised after reading the opening lines of this text about the American architectural firm Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill (SOM): "This book is dedicated to those who dug the foundations, lettered the working drawings, cut the friskets, adjusted the computer programs, and whose names find no space in a book of this sort. In the context of the modern worship of the celebrity, the study of SOM forcibly reminds one that making architecture depends on teamwork, institutional cooperation, and the continuity of architectural generations." Next to this quote, Nicholas Adams places a picture of the Chase Manhattan Plaza, one of the emblematic SOM buildings, in its construction phase, where we see hundreds of construction workers peering over the exposed structural frame. Many blue-collar outfits and few white-collar ones provide a singular backdrop for the accompanying phrase: "without the work of everyone, the building would be impossible."

After reading the book, one understands this atypical beginning. The enormous operational complexity of a firm that has built over ten thousand buildings, is still active today, and has offices all over the world with hundreds of associates is striking, but it pales in comparison to the gigantic work needed to turn projects into built realities. SOM attempted to merge business and aesthetic principles, and in so doing, it developed a strategy that achieved the results Adams traces here, including the Sears Tower in Chicago, completed in 1974.

SOM's postwar buildings are essential to understanding the so-called modern movement in the United States. Adams informs the reader that he will use the firm's most emblematic buildings as case studies and will not consider the hundreds of supermarkets and other everyday constructions that are also part of the firm's immense output. The book, therefore, is about the most exportable architectural aspects of a giant operation. The author forewarns us: those in search of intricate theses derived from archival research must wait for future doctoral investigations. This book will encourage them, and this alone makes it well worth our attention. Despite the omission of archival material, Adams's contribution will become an indispensable element in future analyses of SOM. The author defines SOM as a firm with almost no architectural theory. The only exceptions are Myron Goldsmith's text, "The Effects of Scale" (1953), some late lectures by Nathaniel Owings, and the handwritten works of Robert W. Cutler. This light intellectual baggage contrasted with so much built work hints at SOM's working method: the resolution of problems generated by specific projects. The firm departed from this approach on only a few occasions, such