African American history. He prods public historians and museum professionals to raise the bar and expand their audience and story. He states, “What a gift it will be when museums help the public understand that they are shaped and touched by African American history—all the day, every day” (70).

In several chapters, Bunch confronts such subjects as diversity in museums, interpreting the recent past, and museum challenges ranging from funding to politics—all in essays he has written between 1984 to 2005. He also includes reprints from several of his scholarly publications on African American history in California. He pushes for the profession to have the courage of their convictions and for their scholarship to “fight the good fight.”

However, Bunch does not throw out challenges without solutions. Throughout the book he offers sage suggestions about how we can be better teachers, historians, stewards, curators, fundraisers, and, most importantly, better people.

It is through his very personal and powerful stories that Bunch teaches the importance and impact of history. We go along because he invites us to remember our own journey. This book is not only useful for public historians, museum professionals, and academic historians; it is inspiring and encouraging. We close the cover on this book knowing that people influence one another and history influences us all.

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Life Stages of the Museum Visitor: Building Engagement Over a Lifetime is one of a number of recent publications that explore visitor demographics, psychographics, and motivations for attending museums. Published by the American Association of Museums Press, the book synthesizes research studies conducted by consultants at Reach Advisors, as well as other studies performed by single institutions, in total representing more than one hundred museums of all varieties—from children’s museums and science centers to outdoor history parks and historical societies. Primarily intended for museum practitioners, Life Stages of a Museum Visitor by Susie Wilkening and James Chung makes a valuable contribution to the growing body of literature by focusing primarily on the characteristics, interests, and motivations of museum visitors at different stages of their lives and within distinct generational categories. It is a practical and timely publication for museum staff and consultants interested in producing exhibitions or programs for diverse visitors, or developing marketing and membership approaches to attract their attendance and support.

Over the past thirty years or so, museum leaders have begun increasingly to recognize that their work and, indeed, the long-term viability of their institutions demand more than presenting objects, art works, artifacts, or specimens
to a public that, by tradition, education, or income, is already pre-disposed to visiting cultural institutions. Changing demographics, increased competition among leisure-time activities, and expectations for high-quality and participatory experiences have meant that museum professionals must better understand their audiences and respond to their changing interests and desires. The field of visitor research has grown significantly, and individual museums and field-wide museum associations are now actively engaged in visitor studies and evaluations. Beginning in the 1980s, researchers such as Marilyn Hood, John Falk, and Lynn Dierking produced ground-breaking research studies and published excellent overviews of their work and the implications for institutions. For example, Marilyn Hood’s early work in studying participants and non-participants at art museums enabled museum professionals to identify fundamental visitor motivations. More recently, John Falk and Beverly Sheppard’s book, *Thriving in the Knowledge Age: New Business Models for Museums and Other Cultural Institutions* (2006) underscored how museums could shape their missions, structures, and financial resources around the different types of visitors they engage.

Often, however, these publications utilized research studies at a particular institution or within a specific type of museum. Moreover, they typically focused on broad general categories of museum visitors—such as frequent or infrequent visitors, or the motivations of the general adult visitor such as the “explorer,” “hobbyist/professional,” “experience-seeker,” “re-charger,” or “facilitator,” as defined by John Falk in his studies and books.¹

The unique contribution that Wilkening and Chung make in *Life Stages of a Museum Visitor* is to consider museum visitors within different generations, such as Generation Y, Generation X, and the Silent/Mature Generation, as well as those between distinct stages and genders, such as middle-school students, mothers with young children, and older men.² In addition, the authors make observations and recommendations on a broad range of museum functions including customer-service techniques, membership appeals, program development, and communications vehicles. They also highlight potential areas for future research in the field.

Many of the findings that Wilkening and Chung note will not be a surprise

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1. In addition to *Thriving in the Knowledge Age*, see John H. Falk, *Identity and the Museum Experience* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2009).

2. The authors define “Generation Y,” or the “echo generation” of the Baby Boomers, as the generation starting in roughly 1979 when annual birthrates increased about 10%. The hallmarks of this generation include great ethnic and cultural diversity; great comfort with and expectations for use of social media; and increased education, particularly with women outnumbering men as college graduates. Generation X is the earlier generation, born between the years 1965 and 1978. It is much smaller than the Baby Boomer generation, and doesn’t have the same clearly defined generational identity as the Boomers. Some of the major characteristics include being shaped by new family structures (i.e. two working parents or divorced parents) and increased education balanced by greater financial burden from debt and housing costs. Finally, the Silent/Mature Generation represents older adults born between 1927 and 1945. These individuals came of age during the Depression and World War II and being now retired they have greater leisure time for a variety of pursuits.
to museum staff members who have followed audience research over the past many years. The advantage of this book is that it brings together different and interesting nuggets of information in a highly readable form. For example, the authors explore the concept of the “Museum Advocate,” a segment of museum visitors who are not particularly distinguished by education or income from typical “core visitors,” but who are much more likely to visit museums at every stage of their life and demonstrate characteristics at a very young age that could make them “dream visitors” throughout their lives (see pages 33–36). Similarly, though many museums are eager to attract family visitors and recognize mothers with their young children as a target audience, most institutions do not take the most fundamental steps to make their museums family-friendly. The authors’ “Family Amenities Checklist” is a no-nonsense reference for museum staff looking to enhance customer service for families (see pages 55–56).

The authors also include some unexpected and surprising findings. For example, the comparisons of gender differences between museum visitors was an area I had not seen widely explored in other visitor study books, and the studies on how visitors respond to specific interpretive strategies—from technology devices to guided tours—was also illuminating. Finally, I found that some of the short essays or “think pieces” that they inserted between and within the chapters offered simple but worthwhile questions or reminders about the importance of placing ourselves in the visitors’ shoes. “Best and Worst Thank You Notes Ever” (page 83) was definitely one that I will remember and circulate among colleagues in membership and development departments.

While *Life Stages of a Museum Visitor: Building Engagement Over a Lifetime* will be of greatest value to public historians within the museum field who are directly responsible for exhibit and program development, or participate in marketing, visitor services, or interpretative efforts, it will still be of interest to anyone involved with education and understanding how lifelong learning evolves within an individual lifetime and across generations.

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*Unbound by Place or Time: Museums and Online Learning* by **William B. Crow** and **Herminia Din.** Washington, DC: AAM Press, 2009. 132 pp.; index; paperbound, $34.95.

In *Unbound by Place or Time: Museums and Online Learning*, authors William B. Crow and Herminia Din explore the possibilities presented by connecting a learner-centric museum education model with the highly participatory nature of the Internet. Crow and Din previously collaborated at the Metropolitan Museum of Art to develop online workshops for classroom teachers. Their professional backgrounds in museum education and educational technology are evident in their approach to this reader-friendly work, which strongly advocates for museums to expand their online learning offerings.