

2016 YEAR IN REVIEW



BACKGROUND

[Recollection Wisconsin](#) is a collaborative initiative of Marquette University, Milwaukee Public Library, University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, WiLS, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and the Wisconsin Historical Society. These governing partners believe that access to information has the power to enrich the lives of all the people of Wisconsin and agree to work together towards the free and open availability of Wisconsin's cultural heritage collections.

Funding for Recollection Wisconsin in 2016 was provided by grants from the Nicholas Family Foundation, Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, which administers Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds distributed by the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Recollection Wisconsin is also supported by service fees and generous in-kind contributions of time and expertise from our partners.

PARTNERSHIPS AND PROJECTS

Digital Public Library of America

In August 2016, following three years of collaborative planning and development, Recollection Wisconsin officially launched as a Service Hub for the [Digital Public Library of America](#) (DPLA). Cultural heritage organizations across Wisconsin have now joined their peers around the country in providing free online access to their digital collections through DPLA, whose mission is to bring together the riches of America's libraries, archives and museums and share them with the world. More than 400,000 records representing photographs, books, maps, artifacts and other historical and cultural materials from Wisconsin collections can now be discovered alongside 15 million resources from dozens of other contributors nationwide, including the Smithsonian, the National Archives, the Library of Congress and the New York Public Library.

Recollection Wisconsin's role as a DPLA Service Hub makes us the official on-ramp to DPLA for the state's cultural institutions, ensuring that even more digital collections from and about Wisconsin can be shared and enhanced through this innovative national platform.

It's exciting that the unique treasures of this state, many of which may have only been known locally, are joining those from across the nation as part of DPLA. It's a chance to share what's special about Wisconsin and to give Wisconsin a voice and a place in the national story. – Erika Janik, Wisconsin Public Radio

National Endowment for the Humanities Foundations Grant

In 2016, we received funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to identify, inventory and plan for the digitization and preservation of hidden, at-risk audiovisual collections across Wisconsin. This yearlong planning project, [Listening to War: Uncovering Wisconsin's Wartime Oral Histories](#), is seeking oral history collections capturing personal accounts of Wisconsin veterans and civilians during World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Persian Gulf War. With the funding provided by NEH, we hired a part-time Digital Archives Assistant, Dana Gerber-Margie. At the end of 2016, midway through the grant period, Dana has visited seventeen small archival collections across Wisconsin to assess audiovisual materials. In 2017, we will work with our Grant Advisory Committee and the consulting firm AVPreserve to develop a plan to digitize, preserve and share these oral histories online and pursue additional funding to put the plan into action.

Wisconsin Public Library Consortium

We worked with the Wisconsin Public Library Consortium (WPLC) on ways to help public library systems support their members' growing interest in digitizing unique local collections. With funding from WPLC and guidance from the newly-created [WPLC Historical and Local Digital Resources Committee](#), Recollection Wisconsin created several resources:

- The Digital Projects Toolkit online course. This free series of five short courses, designed for Continuing Education coordinators and other system-level staff, covers basic information about copyright, scanning, metadata, file storage and digital preservation. The course is complemented by a Google Community and a live webinar discussion scheduled in Spring 2017.
- A list of digitization vendors and related tip sheet for working with vendors.
- Grants for Digitization Projects blog posts. These posts to the WPLC website shared detailed information about eight potential funding sources for digital projects, including examples of successful grant proposals.

Umbra Search African American History



We became a partner in [Umbra Search African American History](#) at the University of Minnesota, a program that makes African American culture and history more broadly available through a freely available search tool. Digitized materials from Recollection Wisconsin Content Partners that document African American cultural history have been made available for aggregation through DPLA, and are now discoverable in *Umbra Search*, alongside over 500,000 records from libraries and archives across the country.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

In order to build a statewide community of practice around digitization initiatives, provide clearer and more transparent documentation for our Content Partners, and to increase awareness of the program among potential contributors and users, our education and outreach efforts in 2016 included:

- Working with the Recollection Wisconsin Service Hub Steering Committee to develop a Collection Policy, Copyright Policy and Participation Agreement for new Content Partners.
- Coordinating a Metadata Work Group to review our metadata guidelines and release a new, simplified version called [Recollection Wisconsin Metadata Essentials](#).
- In partnership with Marquette University and University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, piloting a consulting service. Wisconsin cultural organizations can connect with experts at Marquette and UWM in person, by

phone or by email to receive guidance in developing digital projects, including rights issues, grant writing, identifying digitization vendors and selecting equipment.

- Presenting workshops on digital preservation for the Council of University of Wisconsin Libraries (CUWL) Digital Initiatives Coordinating Committee and on digital project planning for South Central Library System and the Wisconsin Local History and Historic Preservation conference.
- Sharing information about Recollection Wisconsin and DPLA with librarians, archivists and educators at conferences and events including the CUWL Annual Meeting, DPLAFest, Midwest Archives Conference, Public Library Technology Day, Upper Midwest Digital Collections Conference, Wisconsin Council for the Social Studies, Wisconsin Educational Media and Technology Association and the Wisconsin Library Association.

This was a wonderful discovery! I'm putting together a history of my father's life and this helped with his time at Central High. My father was proud of his time as a teacher at Central and the beginning of his "career" as a student council advisor and organizer. I have many fond memories of my own of Central. My brother and I would help my dad over the summer when he was in charge of the Textbook Dept. I can remember racing the book cart up and down the empty halls... until my dad came out and told us to "knock it off." – Comment on Dane County Historical Society's digital collection of Madison Central High School yearbooks

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

For the second year in a row, Recollection Wisconsin was named to *Family Tree Magazine's* list of Best State Websites for Genealogy. This list honors the best websites that specialize in genealogy research for one of the 50 US states.



There are scores of other digital highways you can follow into our region's past. By far the best road map to this ever-expanding landscape is Recollection Wisconsin, a collaborative website that provides links to no fewer than 237 digital collections in the state. – John Gurda, Milwaukee historian

LOOKING FORWARD

Recollection Wisconsin's priorities in 2017 include:

- Redesigning the recollectionwisconsin.org website with a more contemporary look and improved functionality.
- Building a new search interface for state and local history resources from collections in Wisconsin and beyond, using DPLA's aggregated metadata to replace our existing search portal interface.
- Developing resources to help our content partners enhance and standardize their metadata, in order to improve discoverability of collections in DPLA.
- Continuing to expand access to unique local resources from Wisconsin's libraries, archives, historical societies and museums through coordinated training, shared standards, centralized content hosting and creative outreach and promotion.