



2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

Since 2005, the Recollection Wisconsin consortium has worked to bring together digital cultural heritage resources from Wisconsin libraries, archives, museums, and historical societies and share them with the world. In 2020, a year that saw historic social justice movements and a global pandemic, we witnessed resilience and creativity from our partners and colleagues as they rushed to respond. They documented the personal experiences of community members in challenging times, supported teachers and students as schools closed and learning transitioned to virtual environments, and turned a critical eye to their own collections to examine their participation in excluding or marginalizing members of their communities. And they tackled this work while navigating closed offices, limited staffing, and reduced budgets.

Throughout this difficult year, the Recollection Wisconsin team was honored to support and learn from these organizations. As we head into 2021 in similar circumstances, we are as committed as ever to serving the state as its central hub for digital cultural heritage work.

IN 2020, RECOLLECTION WISCONSIN:

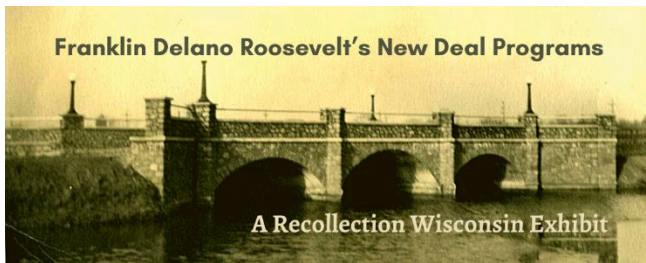
- Harvested 28,000 new records, welcomed 5 new Content Partners, and added 14 new collections from existing Content Partners
- Saw total website page views more than double over 2019 and saw views of individual items increase 134%
- Conducted a [gap analysis](#) of the collection as a first step to fostering greater diversity and inclusion, helping more Wisconsin residents can see their stories represented
- Launched [Listening to War](#), a digital collection of oral history interviews with nearly 500 Wisconsin veterans and civilians, contributed by 22 libraries, archives, museums, and veterans' organizations across the state
- Established an Education Advisory Committee of representatives from the K12 education community to guide efforts to connect educators with Content Partners' materials
- Launched a [Digital Readiness Community of Practice](#) to support local history organizations so they can provide online public access to their archives and historical records
- Published [Curating Community Digital Collections: A Starter Package](#) of curriculum and program materials for others interested in establishing a cohort-based digital preservation training program

NEW PARTNERS AND COLLECTIONS

In 2020, we harvested over 28,000 new records from both new and continuing [Content Partners](#). A few highlights include:

- Photographs, yearbooks, newspapers, and other local history materials from members of South Central Library System, representing the communities of Stevens Point and Waunakee.
- History and photographs of the Milton Public Library and Milton College (1844-1982) from Milton Public Library, scanned using a DPI-funded digitization kit through Arrowhead Library System.
- Early 20th century teachers' daily registers from the Manitowoc Public Library.
- Yearbooks, newsletters, photographs, and other memorabilia from schools in Sussex, Wisconsin, scanned by the Pauline Haass Public Library with a DPI-funded digitization kit from Bridges Library System
- 466 first-person audio and video accounts of veterans and civilians in Wisconsin during World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Persian Gulf War in Listening to War.
- Information and label scans of 500 Paramount 78rpm recordings held by the Mills Music Library in the Paramount Records Discography from University of Wisconsin Digital Collections.
- Papers and an unpublished autobiography of Milwaukee's first socialist mayor, Emil Seidel, from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee collection Milwaukee Socialism: The Emil Seidel Era.

EDUCATOR ENGAGEMENT

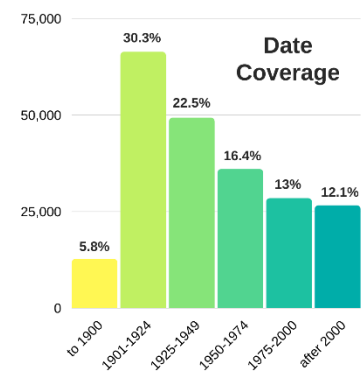


This year, Recollection Wisconsin focused on getting the collection into the hands and classrooms of educators. We published three new online exhibits: [Bon Appétit, Wisconsin Foodies](#); [We've got the power](#); and [Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal Programs](#) (curated by Recollection Wisconsin Steering Committee member Joe Hermolin). We also formed an Education Advisory

Committee of representatives from Milwaukee and Madison public schools, the Wisconsin Historical Society, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, and PBS Wisconsin Education. Under their guidance, we added 26 of [our online exhibits to WISELearn](#), a portal of open educational resources for use and reuse by any Wisconsin educator. We also harnessed this committee's expertise to begin the creation of targeted materials to help educators find and use the primary resources in Recollection Wisconsin.

GAP ANALYSIS

In September of 2019, the Recollection Wisconsin Governing Board and Steering Committee set a priority to systematically develop the shared collection to foster diversity and inclusion, so that more Wisconsin residents can see their stories represented. To work towards this goal, Recollection Wisconsin began a gap analysis to understand current collection coverage and identify collection growth and partnership development opportunities. The first phase of this process, completed in September 2020, worked to identify gaps while future phases will focus on filling those gaps. The full [Gap Analysis Report](#) details the findings of that first phase and suggests pathways into the second. Potential future activities for Recollection Wisconsin resulting from the Gap Analysis include:



- Identifying and adding Content Partners from underrepresented areas of the state
- Providing fuller and more specific metadata guidance for Content Partners
- Implementing synonym support for collection searching
- Surfacing underrepresented voices from communities across the state by finding and helping bring collections online
- Conducting user expectation and experience studies to further understand the demands on the collection and the best way to leverage the interface to meet them

CONTENT PARTNER SUPPORT

In 2020, we explored new ways to help our partners in the state build and improve their digital collections. We launched our monthly [Office Hours](#), an open opportunity for new or existing content partners to get help on their digital projects from our staff. We also began publishing [The Toolkit](#), a monthly advice column addressing common questions we receive from people planning, building, and tending digital collections.

To help our community learn from one another other by sharing experiences and challenges, we also worked with three content partners to create case studies of their digital projects: [Richland County History Room](#), [George Culver Community Library](#) (previously Sauk City Public Library), and [Stoughton Public Library](#).

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Our #MainStreetMonday efforts, started last year, have continued to increase our Facebook followers and engagement levels. These posts are effective at highlighting our partners' collections, promoting our partners' organizations, and connecting people to communities they care about, even if they no longer live there. Our [most popular post of the year](#) came from [Angie W. Cox Public Library](#), showcasing Pardeeville's business district, train depot, and homes. Nearly 25,000 Facebook users were reached by the post and it was shared 210 times. On that day, 50 new people liked the Recollection Wisconsin Facebook page.



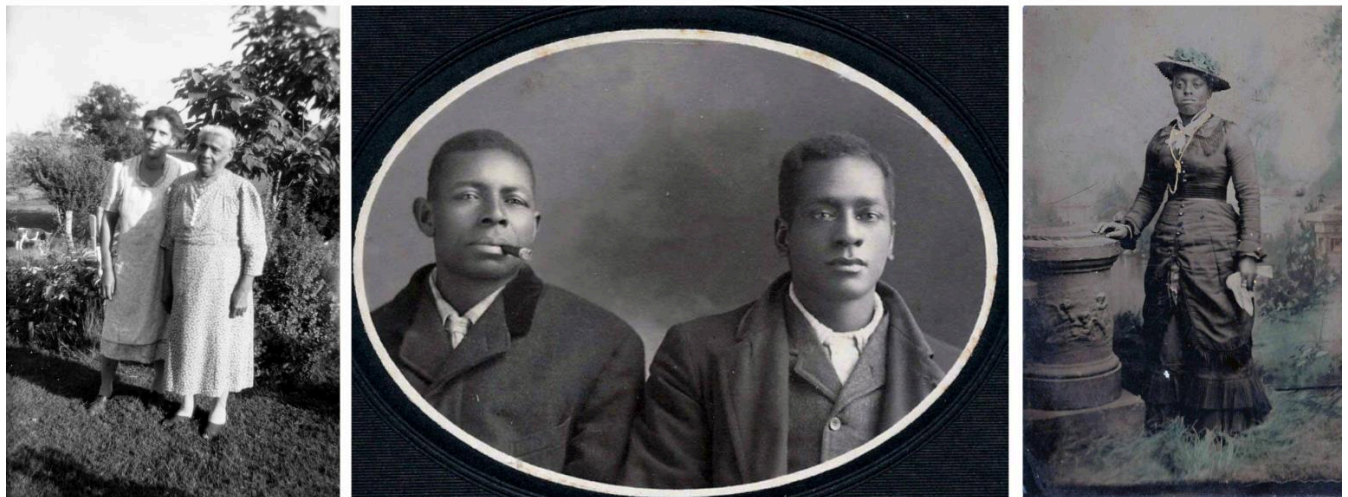
#MainStreetMonday from the [Angie W. Cox Library, Pardeeville](#)

A [post that shared images of Antigo, Wisconsin](#) from the [Langlade County Historical Society](#) was also hugely popular. The post reached over 15,000 Facebook users, was shared 157 times, and had dozens of comments from folks with memories to share and questions to ask.



#MainStreetMonday in Antigo, from the [Langlade County Historical Society](#)

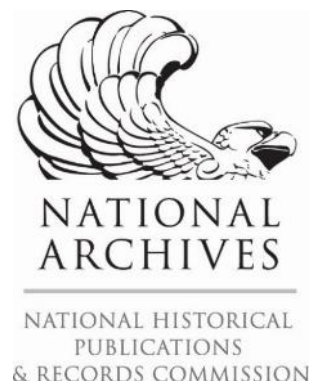
We also [highlighted Pleasant Ridge, Wisconsin](#) (near present day Beetown) with images from the [Grant County Historical Society](#) and the [University of Wisconsin Digital Collections](#). In 1848, Charles and Caroline Shepard, their three children Harriet, John and Mary, Charles' brother Isaac, and Sarah Brown, who had not yet been freed (her freedom and that of her two children were later purchased for \$1000), came to southwestern Wisconsin and began farming. The Shepards were freedmen formerly enslaved by a Virginia planter, who moved his own family and the Shepards north, where they formed Pleasant Ridge. This post garnered 182 reactions, including comments, likes, and shares.



Residents of Pleasant Ridge, Wisconsin from [Grant County Historical Society](#) and [UW Digital Collections](#)

BUILDING A DIGITAL READINESS COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

In October, we launched [Building a Digital Readiness Community of Practice](#). This one-year project funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission will support digital readiness - the knowledge, tools, resources, and infrastructure to provide online public access to archives and historical records - in small and under-resourced local historical societies and historic preservation organizations across Wisconsin. WiLS, Recollection Wisconsin, and the Wisconsin Historical Society are providing support for this community-driven venture.



The project aims to improve access to historical records in local history organizations by fostering an inclusive, equitable, and welcoming environment for peer-to-peer learning and mutual support around digital collections creation and management. This includes increasing awareness of standards, tools, and resources available to support digital work; encouraging effective use of limited budgets and staffing by minimizing redundant effort; and providing pathways for more small repositories to share their archives and historical records online. We've developed a framework – [Digital Readiness Levels](#) – that provides a roadmap for practitioners engaged in digital work. Other resources include case studies, a digital readiness glossary, and [Toolkit blog posts](#) to help build confidence and competence in this area.

The work is being guided by Program Assistant [Kristen Whitson](#) and the project Launch Committee representing eleven Wisconsin local history organizations. Follow our [blog posts](#) for project updates!

LISTENING TO WAR: DIGITIZING WISCONSIN'S WARTIME ORAL HISTORIES



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

In November 2020, we unveiled [Listening to War](#), a digital collection of oral history interviews with nearly 500 Wisconsin veterans and civilians, contributed by 22 libraries, archives, museums, and veterans' organizations across the state. These stories of everyday life during wartime come from men and women who served on the battlefield; nurses, journalists, shipbuilders, and others who contributed to wartime work at home and abroad; Holocaust survivors who immigrated from Europe to Wisconsin after World War II; and Hmong refugees from Laos who were resettled in the state following the Vietnam War. Most of these audio and video recordings, which date from the 1970s to the 2010s, were captured on analog formats including reel-to-reel tape and videocassette, and are now accessible digitally for the first time. Although the quality and completeness of these interviews vary, each one represents a unique voice and an important story.

Listening to War was made possible by two grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities (planning grant, 2016-2017 and implementation grant, 2017-2020). Project partners include the Wisconsin Historical Society, the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, and the [libraries, archives, museums, and veterans' organizations](#) that contributed materials to this collection. Recollection Wisconsin is planning a broader promotional push for this project in Spring 2021, including virtual events and a press release.

CURATING COMMUNITY DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

This two-year IMLS-funded program placed UW-Madison and UW-Milwaukee information studies graduate students in small or under-resourced cultural heritage institutions across Wisconsin to complete digital preservation projects with support from professional mentors. This unique opportunity helped students develop critical skills in digital curation and digital stewardship while helping their host sites develop and sustain digital preservation efforts. Many of our CCDC students, host sites, and mentors continue to be involved in digital stewardship work with Recollection Wisconsin.

The digital preservation immersion workshop curriculum and program materials created for CCDC are now publicly available for anyone interested in leveraging this work in their own programs: [Curating Community Digital Collections: A Starter Package](#). Included are sample planning documents, timelines, checklists, schedules, outreach materials, and communications to program participants. Additional project documentation, training and workshop materials are also available on the Recollection Wisconsin [website](#).

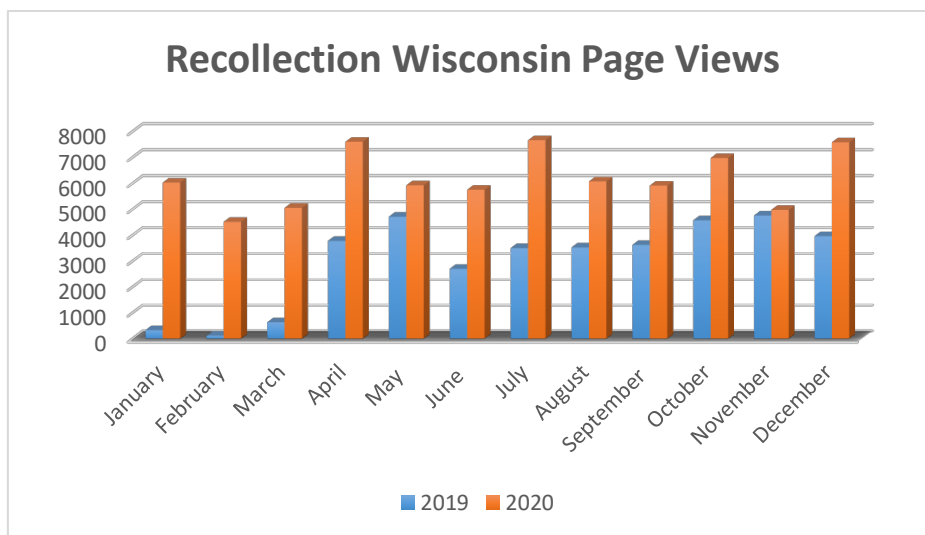


UPDATES FROM DPLA



In June 2020, the Digital Public Library of America’s Board of Directors [released a statement](#) that *we believe that it is our responsibility to reject racism and reiterate our commitment not only to free access to knowledge, but to continually strive to be anti-racist in all that we do*. DPLA and its members are undertaking several actions to live up to that commitment. The DPLA Network Council, the representative body for DPLA’s members, collaboratively developed an Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access, and Social Justice (IDEAS) statement. The [IDEAS statement](#) asserts that, as a national network of digital libraries and archives, *we are in a unique position to see and reflect on the historical homogeneity of our collections, and to recognize and act on the need for diversity, representativeness, and respect in how we conduct the work of documenting and providing access to our shared history*. The work to draft and adopt the IDEAS statement was led by Network Council Chair Ann Hanlon (Head, UW-Milwaukee Digital Collections and Recollection Wisconsin Governing Board member)

In September, DPLA launched the [Black Women’s Suffrage Collection](#), a portal to records that document the contributions and experiences of Black women during the women’s suffrage movement as well as Black women’s activism from the 1850s to the 1960s. To build this collection, DPLA also worked with several new partners including HBCUs and African-American community archives, to digitize relevant content. The portal includes [more than 1,000 records from Recollection Wisconsin Content Partners](#).



In 2020, Recollection Wisconsin saw total page views more than double over 2019

LOOKING FORWARD

We are excited to begin the new year! Projects on our plate in 2021 include:

- Continuing to work with the **Education Advisory Committee** to help connect K-12 teachers and students with Content Partners' resources.
- Reaching out to new audiences to gather more in-depth information and acting on insights learned in our **Gap Analysis** to begin to fill gaps and create a more representative and inclusive collection.
- Offering virtual programming around the hundreds of oral history interviews digitized through the NEH-funded *Listening to War* project.
- Hosting virtual digital fairs to connect local history practitioners with the new Digital Readiness Levels through the **Digital Readiness Community of Practice**.
- Exploring new partnerships and funding opportunities to ensure continued growth and sustainability of the Recollection Wisconsin collection and program.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Subscribe to Recollection Wisconsin's [newsletter](#).
- Check out our [blog](#).
- Find us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).
- Join the conversation with other digital practitioners on the Wisconsin Digital Stewardship [Google Group](#).
- Use our [contact form](#) or email us at info@recollectionwisconsin.org to get in touch or contact us individually:



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