Joint Steering + Board Meeting Notes

September 14th, 2023 from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm
State Archive Preservation Facility and virtual

Attendees

Steering Committee

Katie Blank, Marquette University
Peter Gorman, UW-Madison
Christina Harrington, Mineral Point Opera
     House
Paul Hedges, Wisconsin Historical Society
Nathan Humpal, UW-Milwaukee
Bethany Huse (Past Chair), College of
     Menominee Nation
Robert Jaeger, Milwaukee Public Library
Jodi Kiffmeyer, Chippewa Valley Museum

Elizabeth Neuman (Chair Elect), Wisconsin
     Department of Public Instruction
Tamara Ramski, South Central Library
     System
Nyama Reed, Whitefish Bay Public Library
Michael Rehberg, Walworth County
     Historical Society
Steven Rice (Chair), Door County Library

Governing Board

Amy Cooper Cary, Marquette University
Ann Hanlon (Chair), University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Daniel Hartwig, Wisconsin HIstorical Society
Lee Konrad, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Ben Miller (Chair Elect), Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Karli Pederson, Milwaukee Public Library

Project Managers

Andi Coffin, WiLS

Kristen Whitson, WiLS
Jennifer Chamberlain, WiLS

Meeting Materials

- [Recollection Wisconsin Service Hub Charter](#)
- [Recollection Wisconsin Steering Committee Statement of Purpose](#)
- [Recollection Wisconsin Gap Analysis](#)
- [Meeting packet](#) (Google Drive folder)

Discussion Topics

1. **Welcome and introductions**
   Discussion: Introductions were made by those attending the meeting in person and virtually. It's an exciting time to be a part of Recollection Wisconsin right now! Thanks to Emily Pfotenhauer were shared; it's due to her hard work that we are in this fortunate position with state funding.

2. **Business**
   The governing board chair position changes over to Ben Miller of the Department of Public Instruction. Many thanks were given to Ann Hanlon of UW-Milwaukee for her 18 months of phenomenal leadership.

   As a reminder, we have been designated $150,000 for the fiscal year 7/1/23 - 6/30/24, and $300,000 for 7/1/24 - 6/30/25. This really brings us to the status quo this year with just enough extra for us to pursue some stage-setting for whatever priorities we come away with today. Next year is the growth year. We can do some carryover this year if needed, but Ben/DPI's advice to us is to spend all $450k by the end of the biennium (so, June 30, 2025).

   It was clarified that when we ask for continued funding from the Joint Committee on Finance (JFC), we ask for the amount of *increase* over the prior year or biennium. So a 0% increase would be a $300,000 request in the next biennium. Recollection Wisconsin will not need to create a separate budget request; DPI will continue to submit the budget request on RW's behalf. The current biennium term is July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2025. The reporting process from how RW spends their allocation is part of the annual reporting process via DPI, though other reporting that is done regularly like Years in Review will help with advocacy.

3. **Review Recollection Wisconsin strategic priorities - [Slides](#)**
   The activities that Recollection Wisconsin will be restarting (or have already restarted) was shared (see slides). Harvests were clarified as the process of aggregating metadata from content partners - not the resources themselves - and serving that to DPLA for inclusion in DPLA's and Recollection Wisconsin's collections. The harvest schedule was confirmed to be the same as it has previously been, which is September, December, March, and June.

   The core functions as identified by stakeholders in summer 2022 were reviewed (see slides).

   It was noted that enhancing diversity is important and challenging, but/and governing bodies are often composed of white folks building white collections. How do we balance adding content that is available versus content that is not yet available, which is often where the diversity lies?

It was noted that DPLA is rethinking their priorities with strategic planning and we should keep an eye on it, but it's less important than with Recollection Wisconsin is doing, because RW will continue regardless. It was clarified that, while DPLA is rethinking its future, there is no indication their commitment to RW and other hubs is diminished. DPLA is also very interested in our funding journey and experience with content partners. They provide RW's platform and they are also developing some interesting projects on the periphery as well. It was clarified that the work to enhance the discoverability and inclusivity of metadata would apply also to contextualizing and discovery.

With those core functions in mind, the strategic priorities for Recollection Wisconsin were reviewed (see slides).

An observation was made that there is a real connection between the goals of supporting content partners and enhancing the diversity of the collection, because some of those content partners are working with diverse communities and collections as well. It was noted that these goals look a little different now because of the funding situation and perhaps now is time to create a strategic plan with more formal goals.

Focusing in on "support" for content partners; the term feels passive. Perhaps "collaborate" is a better word to describe the intentional way we are building relationships and the ownership of them - that we are doing more than providing a forum but are active partners. "Encourage" and "partner with" were other suggestions.

It was also noted that RW does not have a mission statement. It was noted as well that digitizing happens way after much of other planning and work has to be done - perhaps RW's scope of support is expanding to focus more on that pre-digitization work.

4. **Horizon setting**
   The foundational concepts for the day's brainstorming and prioritization activities were shared.

   The existing ideas that governing bodies and project managers had previously brought forth were shared [on the wall](#) and on a [virtual board](#).

   Attendees were asked to generate any additional ideas through the lenses of financial feasibility ($300,000 per year), impact on Wisconsin's cultural heritage community, what we'd like to be able to show to the JFC in 2025, and when they think the initiatives should be enacted - this biennium, next biennium (2025-2027) or within the next decade (by 2033).

Groups broke off and brainstormed additional ideas to bring to the boards; the results of that brainstorming session are [here](#).

5. **LUNCH**

6. **Prioritizing initiatives for 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 (12:45 pm - 1:45 pm)**
Participants were asked to vote individually on all of the existing and new ideas on the in-person and virtual boards.

Pink (in-person) or heart (virtual): prioritize for 2023-2025 biennium
Yellow (in-person) or thumbs-up (virtual): prioritize for 2025-2027 biennium
Green (in-person) or watch (virtual): prioritize for the longer-term, by 2033

The ideas that rose to the top were identified and are listed [here](#).

Notes from discussion:
Undertake targeted outreach to organizations in the 11 non-participating counties and other counties with low participation - it was noted that this is a clear way to convey improved coverage to the JFC. "RW used the allocated funds to reach 100% coverage in the state." Undertaking this activity will also be a way to find out more about why those counties don't participate in RW - lack of equipment, funds, desire to digitize?

Seek funding to build digital collections around specific topics, digitizing content from multiple contributors. Examples: DPLA Black Women's Suffrage collection; RW Listening to War project - there are a few problematic issues in this type of grant funding pursuit, making sure the state commits to a base level and doesn't withdraw support because of increased grant funding. We also don't want to use state funding to create more of the same history and use grants for the "others." It was suggested that Recollection Wisconsin could instead provide support for grant writing in small organizations to digitize their collections, rather than us seeking that grant funding ourselves.

Pertaining to a couple of different ideas regarding gathering use stories: It's hard to gather use stories because the content is available online and there isn't necessarily mediated use. We can have a form or a popup on the website to gather stories. Negative feedback can also help reveal gaps in content or place of poor UX. Recommended methods of data collection can be part of an advocacy toolkit or other shared materials. Include multiple ways that users can provide feedback - written or recorded.

It was suggested that we should be documenting the history of Recollection Wisconsin itself (written, oral history, video) as an advocacy mechanism to provide testimonials, explain what Recollection Wisconsin is, and gather use stories. It was suggested that we think about approaching someone like [John McGivern](#) to do basic publicity about small town Wisconsin in an interesting and engaging way. Another person to reach out to is [John Gurda](#). [Adam Carr](#) in Milwaukee is the millennial version of John Gurda.

It was mentioned that it is difficult to prioritize - especially without a mission - but we can find out what our core services are from the survey information. We can use the lenses "core function," "nice to have," "not necessary" form the survey or from other information gathered to prioritize if needed. It was suggested that developing mission and other guiding principles is the first priority of the Governing Board while the project managers work on the day-to-day things.

It was asked if the suite of the near-term activities identified is the right set to present to the JFC when we next ask for funding. It was discussed that the *why* of the work is the important piece, more so than the activities done to meet them. The "All of Wisconsin Initiative" was suggested as a way to brand reaching 100% of the state.

It was suggested that we leverage the expertise of the governing bodies more strategically. This was a component of the success of the advocacy efforts, so we should look at workgroups to continue these efforts in a sustainable way. That might mean more frequent meetings of workgroups on specific topics.

In conclusion, the group agreed that it is important that we continue to stay involved in what is already being done that we can participate in or elevate. One of RW's many strong points is our connection to people, organizations, institutions and initiatives, and we can lean on our relationship-building prowess to continue prioritizing those connections. This relationship-building strength should be part of a strategic plan as a goal to continue improving.

Next Meeting Dates

Governing Board: early November, TBD
Steering Committee: Tuesday, January 16th from 1:00 - 2:00 pm (virtual)