



## 2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

Recollection Wisconsin is guided by the principle that access to historical materials representing a diversity of experiences has the power to enrich the lives of all the people of Wisconsin. Since 2005, Recollection Wisconsin has partnered with Wisconsin libraries, archives, museums, and historical societies to bring together [hundreds of thousands of historical resources](#) and make them available to a national and international audience through our role as a Service Hub for the [Digital Public Library of America](#) (DPLA).

This last year was a year of anticipation, hard work, and celebration for Recollection Wisconsin. In the first half of the year, alongside members of our Governing Board and other stakeholders, we wrapped up the last leg of a strenuous, multi-year legislative advocacy process for state funding and awaited the legislature's decision. It was announced in July 2023 that Recollection Wisconsin had been funded through the 2023-2025 biennium as part of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's budget. We celebrated, and with renewed spirit, buckled down for the work ahead. In the second half of the year, we restarted the gears of the Recollection Wisconsin machinery, resuming the consortium's regular operations.

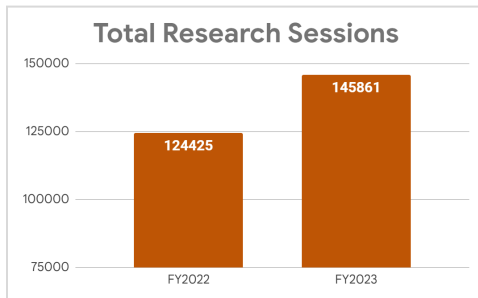
This funding achievement propels Recollection Wisconsin into a new phase of both opportunity and responsibility as stewards of Wisconsin's digital history with the entrusted taxpayer funds. Building on what we heard last year from content contributors and other partners, Recollection Wisconsin will be able to resume and enhance its invaluable role in enabling small and under-resourced organizations to digitize and share unique collections.

Recollection Wisconsin is eager to move forward with purposeful action. The Governing Board and Steering Committee have identified four strategic initiatives to guide our work through the 2023-2025 biennium (and beyond!).

- 1) **Conduct targeted outreach** to the counties in Wisconsin that don't currently have an organization participating in Recollection Wisconsin. This includes identifying barriers to participation and seeking solutions to overcome those barriers.

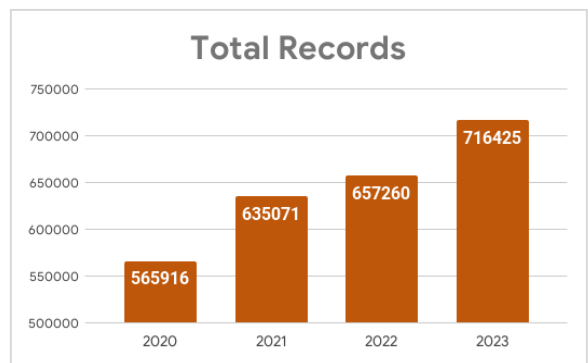
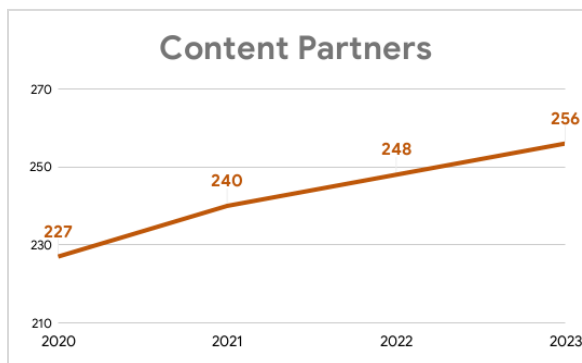
- 2) **Undertake a foundational mission and scope identification process.** Recollection Wisconsin has been in existence for a decade and has been a DPLA hub since 2016. With both the passage of time and the addition of a stable funding source, the Governing Board and Steering Committee will revisit the scope, purpose, and values of the Recollection Wisconsin consortium.
  
- 3) **Train stakeholders to become ambassadors for Recollection Wisconsin.** We have work to do to raise awareness of the vast and unique collections and services of Recollection Wisconsin, but the groundswell of support from libraries, historical societies, individuals, and other friends of Recollection Wisconsin in the budget advocacy process made clear that we have fans in every corner of the state. We will empower those fans to share the collections and services available through Recollection Wisconsin in easy, impactful ways.
  
- 4) **Update metadata guidelines to reflect best practices in diversity, equity, and inclusion.** Recollection Wisconsin's existing metadata guidelines were written in 2017, and while they have helped many content partners describe their collections for discoverability and interoperability, updates are needed to reflect more recent and community-driven practices in diversity, equity, and inclusion in metadata.

As we turn the pages of 2023's Year in Review, let the work and the celebrations be testaments to our shared commitment to preserving Wisconsin's digital history and fostering a robust cultural heritage community.



Even though the first half of the year was spent focused on advocacy for sustainable funding, the Recollection Wisconsin collection and community continued to grow in 2023. We brought eight new content partners and 12 new collections aboard, and we added nearly 60,000 new resources to Recollection Wisconsin and DPLA.

Additionally, from July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023, we saw continued growth in the number of Recollection Wisconsin research sessions, which includes both usage of the collection as well as of our resources for digital collection managers, researchers, educators, and genealogists, over the same period of the previous year.



## Welcome from Steven Rice, Steering Committee Chair

Greetings to our Recollection Wisconsin friends and partners!

My name is Steven Rice, and I serve as the Museum and Archives Manager for the Door County Museum & Archives Center in Sturgeon Bay. For the past year, I have had the privilege of chairing the Recollection Wisconsin Steering Committee, working with a diverse and passionate group of practitioners to secure the future of digital heritage in our state. What an amazing journey it has been.

This was a historic year for Recollection Wisconsin. Faced with difficult fiscal choices stemming from unstable funding, the Governing Board and Steering Committee came together with content partners and other allies to launch an unprecedented push for state support in 2023. Recollection Wisconsin champions across Wisconsin demonstrated this organization's impact through one-on-one legislative meetings, listening sessions and new educational materials. It was a celebration of a decade of innovation and leadership, and the impact was tremendous: for the first time, Recollection Wisconsin is fully funded by the state of Wisconsin to strengthen and expand its services over the next two years. We owe a debt of gratitude to the many, many colleagues and friends who made this dream a reality, and to the elected officials who lent their support to our work. Bravo.

With success comes ever-greater opportunities and challenges. Now more than ever, we have a responsibility to improve our practice, create innovative programs, and empower everyone in Wisconsin to bring their stories to the world. The next year will see Recollection Wisconsin meet that challenge with energy and flair. From new collaborations with First Nations to fresh educational materials, regional connections, and a new commitment to going fee-free, the possibilities before us are exhilarating. And we're just getting started.

When I first became involved with Recollection Wisconsin through the CCDC program in 2019, I could never have imagined how important this group would become to me, professionally and personally. Local history work is often isolated and underappreciated, and we as practitioners suffer from an excess of humility. My work with Recollection Wisconsin has taught me that nothing in our industry is small-scale, and that even the most local story can have meaning and impact far beyond the times and spaces we work in today.

As 2024 unfolds before us, I challenge you to reach out, give back, and help make this extraordinary organization a beacon for everyone who values the past.

Excelsior!

*-- Steven Rice, Museum and Archives Manager, Door County Museum & Archives Center and  
Recollection Wisconsin Steering Committee Chair*

## Digital Projects Toolkit Expanded to Include A/V Guidance

Recollection Wisconsin has enhanced and expanded its [Digital Readiness Toolkit](#) to incorporate guidance and best practices on digitizing and sharing audiovisual content. These enhancements, a result of valuable contributions from the [Community Archiving Workshop](#), include a comprehensive digital readiness [self-assessment tool](#) for your organization, a [framework for prioritizing A/V materials for digitization](#), and in-depth guidance tailored specifically to managing audiovisual collections. We've also updated and expanded the [Digital Project Planning Worksheet](#), added [support for choosing a Collection Management System](#) and [recommendations for digitization equipment](#), and incorporated requests for resources and information from the past few years.



This updated version is now available in ebook format, which offers a more user-friendly and interactive experience with easier access to the Toolkit's valuable information.

*This work was supported in part by grants to WiLS and the Association of Moving Image Archivists, in partnership with Recollection Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Historical Society, from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC).*

"I recently learned about your Digital Readiness Toolkit and was able to share it with a Tribe embarking on their first digitization project. I recommended this Toolkit to them and they've already told me it's been a huge help!"

- IMLS Program Officer

## Film Inspection and Digitization Kits for Community Use



Recollection Wisconsin, in partnership with the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, can loan a Film Inspection Kit for examining 8mm or 16mm film and a Wolverine Film Scanner for reformatting 8mm and Super8 film. Funding for the kits was provided by a grant to the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

Kits are available to lend to any organization within the state of Wisconsin that is either 1) an affiliate of

the Wisconsin Historical Society; 2) a WiLS general member; or 3) a Recollection Wisconsin content partner. The kits are free to borrow for up to two months or longer, if another organization has not requested it. Requesting organizations will be responsible for picking up and returning the kit, or for the cost of shipping. There are limited grant funds available to cover shipping costs. [Read more](#) or fill out an [interest form](#).

*This work was supported in part by grants to the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Image credit: [Examining a film strip](#), ca. 1950-ca. 1960. UW-Madison Archives.*

“Thanks again for letting us use the A/V kits. They were a huge help to us!”  
- PBS Wisconsin

## Main Street Monday: Traveling Back in Time in Wisconsin Communities



With reduced time and funding available to Recollection Wisconsin since late 2021, one of the treasured ways we highlight our partners' collections was unfortunately put on hold. The [Main Street Monday](#) series on Facebook shone a spotlight on Wisconsin cities, towns and villages through content partners' digital historical images. When time and funding allowed, we returned to the series in October 2023 and highlighted images from places like La Crosse, Linden, Cambria, Platteville, and Milwaukee.

One of the year's most popular posts highlighted the [bygone Main Streets of Waukesha, Wisconsin](#) and a very young Les Paul (at left from the Waukesha Public Library and Waukesha County Historical Society and Museum). One reader shared the older names of stores and that her grandfather was the first mayor of Waukesha; another noted that the apartment building in which she now lives was pictured 142 years ago! With 286 likes and 87 shares, this post reached more than 36,000 fans and potential fans of Recollection Wisconsin, which is more than half of the population of Waukesha itself!

We also expanded our social media presence this year to take advantage of the visual nature of [Instagram](#) and the burgeoning professional community on [Threads](#). Give us a follow!



“That Brehm brothers store was owned by my Grandfather, John Brehm and his brother. My Grandfather was the first Mayor of Waukesha.”

- Recollection Wisconsin Facebook Follower

## The Digital Equity Project: Advancing Justice in American Libraries

With assistance from Recollection Wisconsin, UW-Milwaukee Libraries was one of the DPLA's sites for the [Digital Equity Project](#), an effort to advance racial justice in American libraries supported by the Mellon Foundation. The joint project was a partnership with the Milwaukee Women's Art Library (MWAL), a collection of papers from local women and nonbinary artists, originally privately held and recently donated to UWM Libraries.

The project [kicked off](#) in November 2022 when [Celeste Contreras](#) was hired to serve as Community Ambassador to both build the collection and represent the community of women and nonbinary artists. Celeste's work focused on seeking to understand the perspectives and concerns of artists and sharing the importance of preserving community history.

Recollection Wisconsin provided guidance on [personal digital archiving](#) in an online webinar in June 2023, and Celeste and project lead and UWM Archivist Derek Webb shared their experiences in a [WiLSWorld Shorts session](#) in September 2023. The project [was featured](#) on WUMW's Lake Effect show in April 2023.

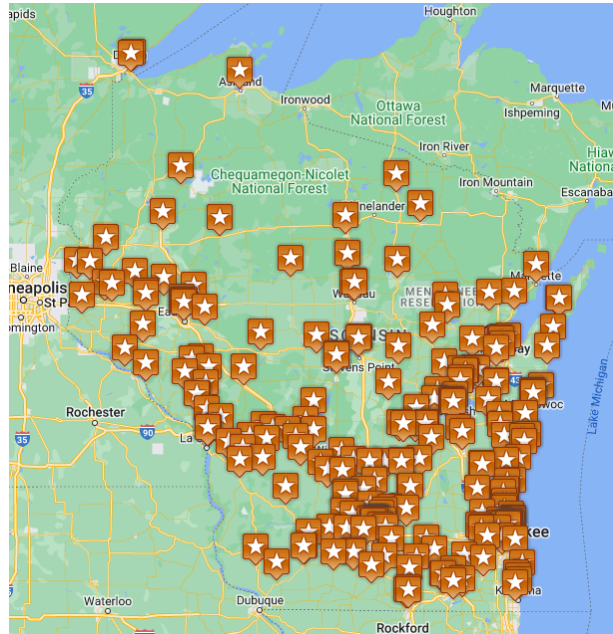
“We just applied for a grant, and it definitely helped to be able to point to our Recollection Wisconsin and DPLA presences as evidence of our collection's wide reach.”

- Mount Mary University

# Cultivating Community

The Recollection Wisconsin program is made possible by and provides benefits to hundreds of organizations across the state that participate at many levels:

- 256 [Content Partners](#) contribute their historical resources to the collection
- 6 organizations anchor our [Governing Board](#) and provide valuable in-kind contributions: Wisconsin Historical Society, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Milwaukee Public Library, and Marquette University
- 13 members of our [Steering Committee](#) guide collection growth and maintenance
- 7 members of our [Education Advisory Committee](#) inform our outreach efforts to connect K12 educators with Content Partners' materials



We are always helping this community grow. In 2023, we helped bring local historical collections into Recollection Wisconsin from Mount Mary University (Milwaukee), Milwaukee Public Library, and Lakeshore Technical College (Cleveland). Building on work that began in 2022, we continued our partnership with Winnefox Library System to bring in collections from their member libraries, including Princeton Public Library, Berlin Public Library, and Ripon Public Library.



Taking advantage of events where our community and potential users might already be, we exhibited at a number of Wisconsin conferences this year. At the Wisconsin Educational Media and Technology Association (WEMTA) conference in February, the Wisconsin Council for the Social Studies (WCSS) annual conference in March, and the School Leaders Advancing Technology in Education (SLATE) conference in December, we shared [our resources for K12 educators](#), including our [online exhibits](#), subject-specific [collections](#), and our [Travel Back in Time series](#)

of historical photos from 41 Wisconsin communities. At the Wisconsin Library Association Annual Conference in October, we decorated our booth like a homecoming parade to honor the season. We shared details about how to build and maintain digital collections and participate in Recollection Wisconsin with library staff of all varieties from across the state.

Recollection Wisconsin and our community of Content Partners continue to lead the way in digital projects expertise! In 2023, we assisted in facilitating discussions for digital archivists at the Midwest Archives Conference. We helped lead a Personal Digital Archiving Workshop with our colleagues at UW-Milwaukee for the DPLA Digital Equity Project (see above for more details). Recollection Wisconsin was invited to present at the Ohio Digital Network's annual conference, a one-day event for Ohio's DPLA hub and content partners, about our track record of successful community engagement. For the second year in a row, we presented a workshop at the Wisconsin Historical Society's Local History and Historic Preservation Conference for organizations just beginning their digitization projects. We are proud and honored that the years of working with content partners and colleagues have built the kind of expertise that can be shared with others. Please get in touch at [info@recollectionwisconsin.org](mailto:info@recollectionwisconsin.org) if we can present or lead a workshop on topics of interest to your organization.

*Image credit: [Dairy division fair booth, 1921](#). UW-Madison Archives.*

## Former Recollection Wisconsin Program Manager Wins Award

Former Recollection Wisconsin Program Manager Emily Pfothenauer was selected to receive the 2023 Society of American Archivists [Spotlight Award](#). This award, given only once a year, recognizes the contributions of individuals who work for the good of the archives profession and of archival collections, and whose work would not typically receive public recognition. Emily's qualifications are significant and you can [read the full nomination letter](#) to learn about the contributions she made in her 14-year tenure with WiLS, Wisconsin Heritage Online, and Recollection Wisconsin. We are forever grateful for her work, including years of advocating for sustainable funding for Recollection Wisconsin. Her efforts were successful; the most recent Wisconsin biennial budget includes a dedicated funding line for Recollection Wisconsin.



## We Want to Hear from You!

Input from our community is critical to making sure we are good stewards of the taxpayer dollars with which we have been entrusted.. It's important that we understand what you expect from Recollection Wisconsin, what can be done to help improve the health and discovery of your



historical collections, and how your collections are being used - either locally or through Recollection Wisconsin - by community members in the classroom, at work, or in their free time.

In February of 2024, and annually going forward, Recollection Wisconsin will share a survey for content partners to better understand which of our offerings and services are most valuable, how we can improve, and what our growth opportunities are. We hope you'll take a moment to complete that survey.

We also invite you to share examples of how your digital collection or Recollection Wisconsin has made a difference for you, your organization, or your community. These examples help us tell the story of why broad representation alongside free, online access to historical materials are important to all of the people of Wisconsin and, therefore, why our funding is a valuable investment made by the state in its biennial budget.

Continued, sustainable funding will allow us to serve you for years and years to come.

Share your story with us

## Stay Connected to Recollection Wisconsin

- Subscribe to the Recollection Wisconsin [newsletter](#).
- Check out our [blog](#).
- Find us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Threads](#).
- Join the conversation with other digital practitioners on the [Digital Readiness Community of Practice](#) mailing list.
- Use our [contact form](#), email us at [info@recollectionwisconsin.org](mailto:info@recollectionwisconsin.org) to get in touch, or contact us individually. We'd love to hear from you!



**Andi Coffin**

Communication and Consortia Manager  
[acoffin@wils.org](mailto:acoffin@wils.org)



**Kristen Whitson**

Digital Specialist and Consortia Manager  
[kristen@wils.org](mailto:kristen@wils.org)

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