



WISCONSIN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

Collecting, Preserving, and Sharing
Stories Since 1846

2023–2025 BIENNIAL REPORT



October 15, 2025

Dear Governor Evers, members of the Wisconsin State Legislature, and citizens of Wisconsin:

On behalf of the Wisconsin Historical Society, I am pleased to submit our report on the performance and operation of the Society during the 2023-2025 biennium, as required under s. 15.04(1)(d) of the Wisconsin Statutes. Since its creation in 1846, the Society has been our state's memory and premier storyteller. Because we are among the nation's oldest, largest, and most active state historical societies, with world-class collections, the Society is a trusted source of authentic historical information for people across our state and beyond. We make major contributions to Wisconsin's economic, educational, and cultural health through innovative initiatives and programs.

Over the past two fiscal years, the Society has made significant progress advancing our long-standing goal to open a new Wisconsin History Center on Capitol Square. In April of 2025 we celebrated the groundbreaking of the new center and in June we completed our private \$66.5M fundraising goal. At the same time we continued to strengthen and sustain our core services across Wisconsin. Next year we will open a new Welcome Center at Old World Wisconsin in time to celebrate the 250th anniversary of our nation and the 50th anniversary of the State's bicentennial project—Old World Wisconsin.

The dedicated public servants of the Wisconsin Historical Society remain committed to the mission you have entrusted to us: to collect, preserve, and share the history and heritage that bind us together. It continues to be our privilege and honor to serve you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Christian W. Overland'.

Christian Øverland

The Ruth and Hartley Barker Director & CEO

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ON THE COVER: The Wisconsin History Society's historic headquarters building (opened in 1900) on the UW-Madison campus. *(Photo courtesy Daniel Toennies)*

2023-2025 Review of Performance and Operation by Division

WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS; the Society), founded in 1846, ranks as one of the largest, most active, and most diversified state historical societies in the nation. As both a state agency and a private membership organization, its mission is to help connect people to the past by collecting, preserving, and sharing stories. WHS serves hundreds of thousands of people every year through a wide range of sites, programs, and services. More information is available at wisconsinhistory.org.

Mission: Connect people to the past by collecting, preserving, and sharing stories.

WHS is organized into five divisions and offices: Administrative Services; Library, Archives, & Museum Collections; Museums & Historic Sites; Programs & Outreach; and the State Historic Preservation Office. WHS is also supported by the Wisconsin Historical Foundation, a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. A breakdown of WHS divisions follows.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

The Society's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) administers the State Register of Historic Places and Wisconsin's portion of the National Register of Historic Places, certifies building projects for federal and state tax credits, reviews federal, state, and local unit of government projects for their effect on historic properties, and administers statutes that protect American Indian and Euro-American burial sites and cemeteries.

More information is available at wisconsinhistory.org/preserve.

Program Purpose: Because historic places are critical to quality of life, we will facilitate the preservation of places of enduring value.

During fiscal years 2023-2025, the division accomplished the following:

- Approved \$218 million in income-producing rehabilitation projects, generating nearly 3,800 jobs with \$43.7 million in federal tax credits to taxpayers.
- Nominated to the National Register of Historic Places: 31 buildings, 11 shipwrecks, 2 archaeological sites, 1 cemetery, and 5 historic districts (50 new listings).

- Awarded \$275,000 in federal pass-through grants to 13 Certified Local Government communities for preservation projects.
- Awarded \$70,000 in historic preservation grants from the SHPO's Fuldner Heritage Fund endowment to local historic places in Door, Forest, Green Lake, Walworth, and Waupaca counties.
- Expanded our understanding of the Teejop Canoe site in Lake Mendota, identifying a total of 16 intact and fragmentary canoes dating back 5,000 years, generating global press coverage, and strengthening our partnership with Wisconsin's sovereign Tribal Nations.
- Received two grants totaling \$101,731 from the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program to expand the Wisconsin Lost Coastal Community Project to Door, Manitowoc, Sheboygan, and Ozaukee Counties, shedding new light on the 19th century lumber ports which transformed Wisconsin's landscape and economy.
- Received a \$107,544 grant from the University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute for dive training, public outreach, and education. Two shipwrecks—the schooner Jennibel and an unidentified tug in Green Bay—were documented and storymaps were prepared to make the history of maritime commerce in Lake Superior and Milwaukee accessible to public audiences.
- Continued our archaeological outreach efforts to K-12 audiences through the creation of new interactive curricula and participation in regional events, reaching over 1,500 students.
- Continued long range planning with NOAA on agency cooperation at the Wisconsin Shipwreck Coast National Marine Sanctuary and worked with the Office of Coast Survey (NOAA-OCS) to identify shipwrecks among anomalies found during high-resolution scanning of the Lake Michigan lakebed.
- After an extensive consultation process, the SHPO executed a Programmatic Agreement with the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, United States Forest Service. This important agreement establishes new protocols, procedures, and partnerships to streamline and speed the Section 106 consultation process for both agencies.
- The State Historic Preservation Officer co-chaired a national committee to gather data, research, and write a workforce report identifying the conditions affecting preservation education, recruitment, hiring, and retaining staff at SHPO offices.

DIVISION OF LIBRARY, ARCHIVES & MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

The Society's history collection is preeminent in the country, with a library of more than 4 million items, an archive of more than 105,000 cubic feet of textual collections, 25,000 maps and atlases, 3 million photographs, 750,000 objects, an extensive sound and moving image collection and one of the largest newspapers and periodical collections in the country. The Society also maintains the State Archives, archeological items recovered in the field, and distinguished North American Genealogy records. This range of artifacts, manuscripts and public records document the archeological past to the present.

Program Purpose: Steward and share a growing collection that serves WHS audiences, experiences, programs, and products.

During fiscal years 2023-2025, the division accomplished the following:

- Reorganized the division and leadership structure to advance the most effective and efficient methods of collection care and access.
- Advanced the design of galleries for the new Wisconsin History Center.
- Acquired 120 items to support the stories shared in the Center. Highlights include:
 - Archival records and flying gear from Operation Migration, an organization that used ultralight aircraft to teach birds such as geese, swans and cranes to migrate.
 - Tattoo designs of Amund Dietzel (frequently referred to as the "Master of Milwaukee") who contributed to what is known as the celebrated American traditional tattoo style.
 - A drum-style Civil War canteen owned by Samuel Arms, an escaped slave from Georgia who joined the Union army and settled in Cheyenne Valley as a farmer after the Civil War.
 - Pleasant Company/American Girl books, dolls, accessories and archives;
 - Seventeen Native Nations art commissions ranging from beadwork and basketry, to paintings, lacrosse sticks, and stained glass.
 - The original Milwaukee Brewers Racing Sausages from 1993.
 - Historic neon signs from across the State will enliven the staircase connecting the 3rd and 4th floors of the new history center. Neon signs include: Bakalars Sausage of La Crosse; Lopez Panaderia from Milwaukee; Krail Jewelry from Fond du Lac; Heileman's Old Style used at the Country stage on Summerfest grounds in Milwaukee; a bowling sign from Twin Lakes; International Harvester sign from Sherwood; and The Barn Restaurant in Baraboo.

- Collected history as it happens by attending the Republican National Convention and the Democratic National Convention in 2024, acquiring convention ephemera and capturing color photographs for the WHS collection.
- Revitalized collections conservation to improve stewardship of WHS holdings.
- Launched a new Digital Asset Management System (DAMS), migrating 300,000+ assets from legacy platforms and retiring outdated systems and saving over \$40,000 annually.
- Put the WHS collection on road for the History Makers Tour to tell stories of people in traveling displays at history affiliates across Wisconsin in 2023 and 2024.
- Sustained the Latinx Collective partnership to highlight past and present contributions of Latino communities in Wisconsin's history.
- Hosted 360 University of Wisconsin classes, National History Day visits, and community groups for over 7,489 people.
- The Wisconsin Historical Society and the University of Wisconsin (UW) System cooperate in a network of Area Research Centers located at UW campus libraries located around the State and the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center in Ashland, WI. In the last biennium, over 2,000 boxes of archival collections were circulated between Area Research Centers.
- Served 583,849 people over the biennium in the library and archives at Headquarters and refurbished the Archives Reading Room to enhance the research experience of patrons.
- Hosted 46 Genealogy programs serving 1,845 people.
- Continued to provide art to legislators through the Capitol Loan Program and host tours and an annual welcome orientation for first-year legislators of the State Archive Preservation Facility.
- Built the capability for state agencies and local government units to electronically transfer born digital records to the State Archives.
- Hosted 267 tours and events at the State Archive Preservation Facility.

DIVISION OF MUSEUMS & HISTORIC SITES

The Society owns and operates the Wisconsin Historical Museum and 11 additional historic sites, museums, and attractions that share stories of Wisconsin's physical and cultural heritage, and promote tourism, community engagement, and economic development. The Division of Museums and Historic Sites (DMHS) interprets and develops experiences that promote the region's history for the public. The division fulfills its educational role through preserved historic interiors, exhibitions, facilitated tours, and a variety of public programs conducted at the Wisconsin Historical Museum in Madison, and at historic sites and other venues throughout the state. **More information is available at wisconsinhistory.org/sites.**

The division also includes the Museum Archaeology Program (MAP), which actively engages in the identification and preservation of Wisconsin's cultural resources and has been an active field research branch of the Wisconsin Historical Society since 1958. (See Page 9 for program purpose and highlights.) **More information is available at wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS4047.**

MUSEUMS & HISTORIC SITES

Program Purpose: The division uses physical environments and artifacts to create immersive and engaging learning experiences at 12 locations across Wisconsin.

During fiscal years 2023-2025, the division accomplished the following:

- Served nearly 450,000 guests through daily experiences, programs, and events at historic sites and museums.
- Served nearly 80,000 school children through educational programming.
- Improved operational support for site maintenance, animal care, safety and security.

Black Point Estate & Gardens (Lake Geneva)

- Restoration of 125 feet of shoreline was completed with the addition of riprap and landscape fabric. This \$80,000 project was managed and funded by DOA.
- DOA also funded an upgrade to the 20 year old fire detection system at the estate.
- Black Point received \$23,000 in grants from two local funders for landscape gardening improvements at the estate.
- As part of active stewardship of the site, the historic driveway at Black Point was reinstalled, thanks to \$200,000 in private donor funding.
- The William O. Peterson bedroom was restored in June 2025, thanks to funding from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation's William O. Peterson Endowment.

Circus World (Baraboo)

- \$3.07 million in private funding was raised to support the gift of the AL. Ringling Theatre to the Historical Society. Funding supported rigging improvements, operational support, and a technical director staff position.
- The AL. Ringling reopened in March 2025 just in time for the season's first performances. All community events and performances continue to be hosted during this early transition phase.
- The site retired elephant performances as part of the Big Top show in 2023, wishing a fond farewell to these members of the Circus World extended family.
- 2025 saw the much anticipated return of four historic circus wagons, including the popular Bell Wagon. The wagon is on a long-term loan from Feld Entertainment.
- Historic preservation projects kicked off on the Ringlingville Winter Office and the Wild Animal House, funded by two Save America's Treasures (SAT) grants.
- A third SAT grant of \$729,586 in matching funds was awarded to restore the National Historic Landmark Baggage Horse Barn, built in 1904.
- The site improved onsite accessibility with construction of an ADA compliant ramp in the Elephant House.

First Capitol (Belmont)

- All three historic markers at the site were restored during the summer of 2023 after storm damage at the site.
- Critical roofing work was completed on the Council and Court Houses, ensuring the continued safety of both the structures and collections.
- Accessibility to both historic structures was improved over the summer of 2024 to ensure visitor safety and convenience.
- A new smoke and fire system was installed in spring 2025.

H.H. Bennett Studio & Museum (Wisconsin Dells)

- Façade and other improvements were made to the museum, including woodwork restoration, window repair, plumbing and painting. IT and security improvements were also completed.
- The site celebrated the 150th anniversary of opening at its current location with several special programs, tin type demonstrations, and a temporary exhibit.

Madeline Island Museum (La Pointe)

- In September 2023, the crumbling stockade was removed from around the museum courtyard, improving safety, allowing better visibility, and creating a welcoming environment for all guests.
- Also in September, a new historic marker was unveiled at the site. The marker shares the story of the island's history, including its significance to the Ojibwe people. Both enhancements were well received by the local community.
- The museum opened its "Passages" exhibit in May 2024, sharing a compelling story of the home of the Ojibwe, incorporating a pictograph, treaties, community guides, the Chief Buffalo journey, the Ojibwe migration story, and island life. The site also opened a smaller exhibition – "Aagimaak: Ash Trees and Lacrosse Sticks" on the history of the sport of lacrosse.
- In September 2024, Director Overland participated in events commemorating the 1854 Treaty signing between the Lake Superior Ojibwe and the United States. Dr. Mike Sullivan presented an Ojibwe perspective and translated historical notes from Ojibwe leaders who were present in 1854.

Old World Wisconsin (Eagle)

- Restoration work was completed on Wittnebel's Tavern, the final building in the Beer & Brewing Experience at Old World Wisconsin. The grand opening was held in May 2025 in time for season opening.
- Broke ground on the new Old World Wisconsin's "Welcome Center", scheduled for completion in May 2026— in time to celebrate the site's 50th anniversary.
- Legends & Lore, the site's signature Halloween event welcomed 6,300 guests in the Fall of 2023 and a record 7,294 visitors in the second year of the biennium.
- The site exceeded 70,000 guests for the first time since 2016 when it welcomed 77,531 guests in calendar 2023.
- Six new people mover vehicles were purchased for the site using the DOA master lease program. The new trams improve site accessibility and guest experience.

Pendarvis (Mineral Point)

- Partnerships were forged with local groups and PBS Wisconsin with the "Pride at Pendarvis: Celebrating Wisconsin's LGBTQ+ History" program, part of a community wide event in July 2023.
- Using the Historic Structures Report as a roadmap, facilities upgrades were made to the heating, ventilation and air conditioning system in staff offices and programming space. A window and door restoration project began on several historic structures.
- The site's maintenance staff rebuilt the fence at the Merry Christmas Mine Hill Trails and Prairie trailhead, thanks to funding from an Iowa County Outdoor Recreation Tourism grant.

Reed School (Neillsville)

- Several hundred guests continue to enjoy the site each season, including school field trips, groups, and general visitors. The site remains free to the visitors.

Stonefield (Cassville)

- In September 2023, the site hosted the Harvest Moon Fest in partnership with Cassville Tourism. The event used the open spaces of Stonefield to host bands, food trucks, and other vendors.
- The annual Safe & Spooky hosted a total of more than 5,700 guests during the biennium at this family-friendly Halloween event.
- In March 2024, a culvert and levee upgrade project was completed to help with flood mitigation. The area has been subject to increased flooding in the past several years.
- The Monitor Windmill returned after much needed restoration. The windmill was damaged during a storm in 2022.
- A new roof was installed on the village saloon, as well as new gutters.
- Staff hosted Darcy Kind, Conservation Biologist with the Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation with the WI DNR who surveyed the grounds to review tree health. This is the first step in developing a tree plan for the historic site, which has suffered a major loss of trees due to disease and repeated flooding of the Mississippi River.

Villa Louis (Prairie du Chien)

- Important archeological remains were discovered at Villa Louis that significantly expand the many layers of history at the site.
- The site hosted the last two Villa Louis Carriage Classic events, concluding a 43-year partnership with the organizers. The negative impacts of heavy equipment and staking in the grounds contributed to the decision to end the event, considering the important archeological findings at the site.
- The \$942,000 Villa Louis Walkway Project was completed in November 2023, greatly improving the appearance and safety at this National Historic Landmark.
- A collaboration between Villa Louis and UW Eau Claire was taught by Dr. John Mann, providing students with practical experience. Students conducted research and developed interpretive panels that added to the many layers of history at the site.

Wade House (Greenbush)

- The newly completed horse arena was dedicated in 2024 to Herbert V. Kohler, Jr., at an event attended by carriage driving lovers and members of the Kohler family.
- In November 2024, the Wells Fargo Foundation in California donated an original 1875 Abbot-Downing Concord Stagecoach to the site. This rare example is the first original stagecoach to be added to the site's collection of horse-powered vehicles.

Wisconsin History Center (Madison)

- Completed final architectural design in 2024.
- Broke ground in April 2025.
- Realized private fundraising goal in June 2025.
- Advanced exhibit design, media development, and collecting plans in partnership with communities and organizations across Wisconsin.

FY24 Division of Museums & Historic Sites Revenues and Expenses:

Historic Site / Museum	FY24 Earned Revenue	FY24 Contributed & Endowment Income	FY24 State Tax Contribution	FY24 Expenses
Black Point Estate & Gardens	\$169,275	\$145,593	\$13,770	\$298,687
Circus World	\$1,133,404	\$168,379	\$672,094	\$1,946,509
H.H. Bennett Studio	\$48,246	\$5,230	\$114,370	\$174,225
Madeline Island Museum	\$137,355	\$231,295	\$11,844	\$380,471
Old World Wisconsin	\$1,192,984	\$200,020	\$1,198,636	\$2,764,989
Pendarvis	\$33,203	\$4,889	\$152,266	\$263,980
Reed School	\$0	\$28,685	\$5,045	\$34,642
Stonefield	\$48,079	\$150,666	\$134,382	\$320,720
Villa Louis	\$137,838	\$9,251	\$172,078	\$470,430
Wade House	\$241,486	\$213,127	\$334,354	\$804,173
Wisconsin Historical Museum	\$40,448	\$142,116	\$145,229	\$301,638

FY25 Division of Museums & Historic Sites Revenues and Expenses:

Historic Site / Museum	FY25 Earned Revenue	FY25 Contributed & Endowment Income	FY25 State Tax Contribution	FY25 Expenses
Black Point Estate & Gardens	\$168,587	\$213,334	\$12,664	\$380,686
Circus World	\$755,298	\$344,523	\$574,662	\$1,839,179
H.H. Bennett Studio	\$40,572	\$1,441	\$44,507	\$110,347
Madeline Island Museum	\$117,760	\$271,434	\$11,155	\$352,662
Old World Wisconsin	\$1,266,101	\$180,058	\$1,059,524	\$2,883,066
Pendarvis	\$36,972	\$10,753	\$236,094	\$315,051
Reed School	\$0	\$15,416	\$2,298	\$17,713
Stonefield	\$38,872	\$108,500	\$150,787	\$295,534
Villa Louis	\$131,244	\$5,611	\$217,762	\$482,768
Wade House	\$242,544	\$216,425	\$360,081	\$796,655
Wisconsin Historical Museum	\$86,622	\$104,425	\$14,278	\$272,399

MUSEUM ARCHAEOLOGY PROGRAM

The Museum Archaeology Program provides technical services to federal and state agencies to aid in compliance with historic preservation laws and regulations, including:

- Identification of archaeological resources, burial sites, and historic buildings and structures that may be affected by development and construction projects.
- Development of instructional materials and programs for educators to aid in teaching the history of Wisconsin.
- Curation and management of state-owned archaeological object collections and associated documentation.

Program Purpose: To serve as a leader in Wisconsin archaeological research, working side-by-side with other archaeology programs at the Society, academic institutions, agencies, and local historical societies throughout Wisconsin.

During fiscal years 2023-2025, the Museum Archaeology Program (MAP) accomplished the following:

- Archaeologists and historians conducted field investigations over one-third of the state working in 28 of Wisconsin's 72 counties.
- Staff Investigated 180 archaeological sites and surveyed 45 historic buildings.
- Acquired 52 new archaeological collections and entered 3,393 object records into the collection management system.
- Reviewed 539 client projects for the presence of previously reported cultural resources.
- Engaged with 16 new clients resulting in 25 projects, equating to \$150,000 of earned revenue.
- Published articles in The Wisconsin Archaeologist.
- Gave various presentations on historic preservation to a variety of audiences including, 2nd graders at Elvehjem Elementary School, 4th graders at Lodi Elementary School, Black Earth Historical Society, Fitchburg Historical Society, Sauk City Historical Society, West Point Area Historical Society, City of Lake Geneva, Sauk City, the Wisconsin Transportation Tribal Conference, and at the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

OFFICE OF PROGRAMS & OUTREACH

The Office of Programs and Outreach aims to expand the reach of the Society's mission, programs and services to all Wisconsinites through three main functions: Field Services, the Wisconsin Historical Society Press, and Education. The office develops curriculum for K-12 classrooms, conducts school visits, administers tours and programming at Society locations, creates traveling exhibitions, and administers the state National History Day program. It also provides technical assistance to more than 400 affiliated historical societies statewide and assists the general public and researchers on a variety of historic preservation and other history-related inquiries and projects. The Wisconsin Historical Society Press publishes the *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, books for general readers, and textbooks and curriculum support materials for teachers and students. **More information is available at wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/cs14818.**

Program Purpose: The office helps to enhance the understanding of history through reading, listening, and learning.

During fiscal years 2023-2025, the office accomplished the following:

- Overall, the division built strong community partnerships with libraries, local history affiliates, local government, and other cultural organizations, through programming initiatives that shared the rich history of the state. Staff also prototyped new educational experiences and events for the future Wisconsin History Center, currently under construction.
- Launched the Wisconsin History Makers Tour, which allows WHS to share programming through collection displays, pop-up exhibits, panel presentations, author talks, and localized programs in all 72 counties of the state over a three-year period. More than 150,000 residents were served in these first regions.
- Planning also began for the commemoration of the nation's 250th birthday in 2026, including creation of a local history toolkit for affiliates to use in planning their own community celebrations. The centerpiece of the celebration will be "Independence Days" to be held at Old World Wisconsin during the Fourth of July weekend.

Pk-12 Education

- Team Wisconsin continued its winning ways in the National History Day (NHD) competition held in the Washington DC area. In Spring 2024, 58 students competed at the national level, winning 4 awards. In Spring 2025, the team topped the prior year's performance, securing 8 awards, two honorable mentions, and inclusion in an exhibit showcase at the Smithsonian. Approximately 6,000 students compete each year in regional contests around the state.

- In December 2024, the Society received a grant for \$20,000 from the Jane Bradley Pettit Foundation which allowed the expansion of NHD to include students from the Milwaukee Public Schools for the first time.
- Wisconsin Adventures, a new educational resource based in Dungeons & Dragons gaming, has taken off with rave reviews from teachers across the state and museum education field. It was launched to mark the 50th anniversary of D&D, which originated in Lake Geneva, with the creation of Wisconsin-based classroom publications as a vehicle for increasing historical literacy skills.
- Conducted teacher trainings across Wisconsin through collaborations with Wisconsin Council for the Social Studies, Wisconsin Educational Media and Technology Association, Wisconsin State Reading Association, and the UW School of Education.
- Planned teacher professional development workshops on civic learning in partnership with the National Constitution Center and to coincide with the 2025 James Madison Lectures in Green Bay and Madison.

Outreach

- The Local History & Historic Preservation Conference rebounded to pre-pandemic levels, with attendees from across Wisconsin as well as other states in the region. The conference has averaged 340 attendees each year of the biennium and was held in La Crosse in 2023 and in Appleton in 2024. Planning also began for the 2025 conference to be held in Baraboo.
- Held Ojibwe Winter Storytelling Series in January 2024 more than 6,000 viewers from across the country over the four sessions.
- Partnered with more than 70 local organizations in South Central, Southeast and Southwest Wisconsin to complete the first three regions of the History Makers Tour, scheduled to run through February 2027. Launched the Northwest region of the tour in June 2025.
- Awarded a \$249,618 Institute of Museum & Library Services “Museums for America” grant to support the History Makers Tour.
- Facilitated the launch and ongoing work of the Native Nations Council, an advisory body during the development of the Wisconsin History Center.
- Collaborated with the Milwaukee County Historical Society on a temporary exhibition “Homegrown: Wisconsin Pop Culture,” which was on display from November 2024 to March 2025 at the MCHS building in Milwaukee.
- Entered the final phase of work to produce 28 new historical markers around the state. Production of the markers was funded by a three-year grant from the William G. Pomeroy Foundation.

WHS Press

- The Press sold 81,320 history books during the biennial, earning \$1,136,429 in sales revenue.
- The Press team begin work on the Third Edition of the state's history textbook, *Wisconsin: Our State, Our Story* with a publication date of 2028. The current edition is used by students in two-thirds of the state's school districts.
- Milwaukee Public Schools, which adopted the state textbook in the prior biennium, purchased 5,550 copies of *Native People of Wisconsin* and 1,600 copies of *Indian Nations of Wisconsin*, supporting the implementation of Act 31 in the state's public schools.
- PBS Milwaukee premiered "Roots and Legacy: Jesus Salas" a documentary based on Salas's memoir *Obreros Unidos*, published by WHS Press. They also premiered "Meet Us at the Fair" a documentary based on Jerry Apps's *Meet Me on the Midway*.
- The Ho-Chunk Nation purchased 400 copies of *People of the Big Voice* to distribute to tribal citizens, and the Oneida Nation purchased 300 copies of *A History in Indigenous Voices*.
- The Press published several award winning titles, including *Obreros Unidos* (Jesus Salas), *Never Givin' Up: The Life and Music of Al Jarreau* (Kurt Dietrich), *Sand and Fire* (Dave Peters), *Survival Food* (Thomas Pecore Weso), *Death's Door* (Barbara Joosse), and *A History in Indigenous Voices* (Carol Cornelius).
- Numerous WHS Press authors were featured as part of PBS Wisconsin's University Place series.

DIVISION OF BUSINESS SERVICES

The Division of Business Services provides a wide range of day-to-day support and long-range planning for the Wisconsin Historical Society, including its divisions, the Director's Office, the senior leadership team and over 175 permanent and between 150 and 250 limited-term employees, depending on the season. The division also assists in the management and maintenance of the Society's 253 buildings located throughout the state.

Flexible Work Schedules and Alternative Work Patterns:

- Pursuant to s. 230.215, Wisconsin Statutes, the Wisconsin Historical Society currently supports and has implemented flexible-time schedules and other alternative work pattern programs. As a result, the Society has many permanent and part-time employees using flexible-time work schedules. The Society has found that implementing alternative work patterns serves the needs of the state by offering consistent and reliable service to the public, increasing efficiency and maximizing employee productivity. The Society's Alternative Work Patterns Program complies with the requirements of the state Alternative Work Patterns Policy and Procedures Outline.
- To further the achievements gained under the Alternative Work Patterns Program, the Society has published a Telecommuting Policy to allow employees to work occasionally at home, on the road, or in a satellite location for a portion of the regular work week. The Society understands that, in appropriate circumstances, this policy will promote productivity, conservation of resources, and better service to the public while also offering a benefit to suitable employees.

2023-2025 Biennial Budget:

Overview	FY22	FY23
General Program Operations	\$18,635,000	\$18,136,900
Wisconsin History Center	\$2,000,000	
Earned Revenue	\$4,918,600	\$5,868,600
Debt Service	\$4,623,200	\$6,363,000
Transfer Revenue	\$3,044,000	\$3,045,500
Federal Revenue	\$2,603,400	\$2,717,200
Foundation & Other Contributed Income	\$2,717,200	\$2,737,200
Utilities and Fuel	\$1,208,900	\$1,233,300
Endowment Income	\$726,700	\$770,200
Wisconsin Black Historical Society	\$84,500	\$84,500
TOTAL	\$40,561,500	\$40,956,400

During fiscal years 2023-2025, the division accomplished the following:

- Implemented a new centralized model for facilities management statewide, establishing consistent standards of safety, maintenance, and operations across all historic sites.
- Expanded safety and security capacity by hiring Facilities & Safety Coordinators, assuming HQ security functions, and delivering robust training (Bobcat, Toolcat, HazCom, FISTA chainsaw safety, CPR/First Aid/AED, fall protection, fire safety, OSHA 10).
- Produced new hire safety training videos for all historic sites, ensuring every employee starts with consistent, high-quality instruction.
- Recovered \$312,944.77 in property and liability claims, reducing organizational risk and offsetting costs.
- Secured \$15.6M in capital project approvals for the 2023–25 biennium, exceeding DOA-DFD's recommended level by \$3.6M.
- Managed 110 active projects totaling nearly \$40M in construction costs.
- Oversaw and closed 47 construction projects worth over \$9M.
- Served as project managers or agency reps on 100+ delegated and all-agency projects with a combined construction value exceeding \$40M.
- Reduced deferred maintenance through project delivery, while strategically quantifying a \$94M backlog to drive future investment planning.
- Renovated and opened Wittenabel's Tavern & Biergarten at Old World Wisconsin, the first new building at the site since the 1990s, introducing a 1930s tavern experience.
- Completed the IT Infrastructure Transformation, migrating core systems from UW-Madison to the Department of Administration's Division of Enterprise Technology with minimal disruption.
- Consolidated and modernized statewide networks and cellular services for efficiency and resilience.
- Advanced planning and design for the new WHS brand and wisconsinhistory.org website (launch planned for 2026).
- Automated critical business functions, including:
 - STAR-integrated organizational charts that update in real time.
 - STAR task reporting for Archaeology projects to improve time-tracking accuracy.
- Hired the Society's first Business Intelligence and Data Program Officer, launched digital reporting systems, and expanded electronic workflows.
- Developed and executed Continuity of Operations (COOP) tabletop exercises at multiple historic sites to strengthen organizational preparedness.
- Built an agency-wide Post-Awards Grant Program with the hiring of a Grants Specialist to ensure compliance, improve fiscal management, and increase accountability for external funding.
- Leveraged employee feedback to launch the 2024–26 Equity & Inclusion Plan, introducing new approaches in recruitment, retention, and onboarding, including expanded Native Nation partnerships, refreshed orientation materials, and stronger equity communications.
- Delivered supervisor and staff professional development through a structured learning calendar, covering topics from IT compliance to records management, inclusion, and operational readiness for the Wisconsin History Center.

2025-2027 Programs, Goals, Objectives, & Activities

PROGRAM 1: HISTORY SERVICES

GOAL: Expedite the preservation of places of enduring value.

Objectives/Activities:

- Facilitate Wisconsin's historic preservation programs, including private investment in historic properties utilizing the state and federal historic building rehabilitation tax credit programs.
- Educate Wisconsin residents, property owners and stakeholders on Wisconsin's archaeological, maritime and built environment resources.

GOAL: Enhance the understanding of history through reading, listening and learning.

Objectives/Activities:

- Publish and distribute highly valued and widely read Wisconsin Historical Society Press (WHSP) books sold to general audiences.
- Distribute highly valued WHSP student titles and textbooks to schools and students.
- Provide transformative history educational experiences for middle school and high school students through the National History Day program.
- Provide assistance and support to local history affiliate organizations and support to local heritage and community groups through consultations, programming and educational services.

GOAL: Acquire, catalog, preserve and share collections that sustain our national reputation and provide egalitarian access to research services for seekers of historical information.

Objectives/Activities:

- Acquire and document history through current collecting policies and collection plans.
- Provide valued service and unparalleled access to the society's research collection to patrons and visitors.
- Provide assistance with electronic records to state agencies.

GOAL: Use physical environments and artifacts to create immersive and engaging learning experiences.

Objectives/Activities:

- Deliver quality, engaging, entertaining and educational experiences for visitors of all ages that result in lasting and inspirational memories and connections to Wisconsin history.
- Advance the Old World Wisconsin master plan to improve quality of guest experience.
- Provide enriching educational experiences for school children that meet Wisconsin instructional standards.
- Increase safety and security at Society facilities and reduce deferred maintenance.

GOAL: Replace Wisconsin Historical Museum with a new 21st-century history center.

Objectives/Activities:

- Complete construction of new facility and develop and execute pre-opening plans.
- Engage citizenship of Wisconsin to complete design of the new visitor experience.
- Complete project on schedule and on budget.

2023-2025 Biennium Metrics & Future Goals:

Performance Measure	Goal 2023	Actual 2023	Goal 2024	Actual 2024	Goal 2025	Actual 2025
Number of buildings rehabilitated using the rehabilitation tax credit programs	350	254	350	256	310	237
Total tax credit project investment	\$120M	\$354,460,820	\$120M	\$225,423,071	\$120M	\$63,963,166
Number of WHSP books sold or distributed through all channels	42,000	51,775	42,000	44,932	45,000	37,918
Number of WHSP student titles and textbooks sold and distributed	4,000	22,238	4,000	9,741	5,000	8,146
Number of participants in National History Day program	5,000	3,500	7,500	6,000	6,500	6,000
Number of local history affiliate consultations	450	440	450	551	450	459
People engaged in new museum development process ¹	1,000	1,413	1,000	636		
Number of new museum design consultations with community, scholarly, Tribal, and K-12 Educator councils ¹					32	140
Number of collection donations (donor transactions)	300	186	300	170	190	655
Number of patrons served through State Archives and North American History Library	150,000	175,028	150,000	193,366	180,000	218,494
Number of agencies provided with e-records assistance	18	33	20	25	22	38
Number of local governments served via in-person consultations	100	171	100	166	100	147
All attendance at museums and historic sites (includes K-12) ²	250,000	226,330	255,000	220,360	237,000	198,082
K-12 student attendance at museums and historic sites ²	60,000	36,766	61,500	44,227	45,000	33,172
Unique visits to website content ³	5,700,000	6,181,149	5,700,000	3,919,834	4,000,000	4,293,946
Total Wisconsin Historical Society members	12,000	11,532	12,500	11,130	12,000	10,662
Value of deferred maintenance at Wisconsin Historical Society facilities ⁴	\$6,000,000	\$5,955,300	\$5,000,000	\$6,985,500	\$16,625,400	\$93,774,900

¹The number of people engaged in the new museum development process was updated to measure the number of new museum design consultations with the Native Nations Advisory Council (created in collaboration with the Great Lakes Intertribal Council), the Scholarly Committee, the K-12 Educator Council, and planned engagement with community councils.

²Updated visitor count to exclude purchase of tokens/add-ons in FY25, as someone would have needed to purchase a ticket already to get an add-on.

³Changed analytics methodology for determining unique visits to website content in FY24. Previously counted pageviews, now counting unique user sessions.

⁴The value of deferred maintenance from 2025 onward is the projected total value of unfunded maintenance projects. The goal assumes capital funding allotments in 2025-2027 equal to 2023-2025.

The Wisconsin History Center, to be completed on Capitol Square in 2027.



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Collecting, Preserving, and Sharing Stories Since 1846

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