Chapter One

The American Writers Museum
2017 Annual Report
The mission of the American Writers Museum is to engage the public in celebrating American writers and exploring their influence on our history, our identity, our culture, and our daily lives.

Founding Board 2017

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The story of the American Writers Museum (AWM) began in late 2009, when our founder, Malcolm O’Hagan, discovered there was no museum dedicated to the great American writers who have had such a profound effect on our history, culture, and identity. The creation of this museum involved many talented people and generous donors who shared Malcolm’s belief that American writers deserved a place of their own to be celebrated and explored.

The American Writers Museum has been enthusiastically received by visitors and the media since we opened the doors on May 16, 2017. It is a joy to meet every visitor who comes through our doors. Throughout this report, you will read their reactions to the museum, which reflect the sense of wonder, surprise and delight that people experience here every day.

Thanks to many early donors, the AWM reached its $10 million capital campaign goal by the end of 2017—providing the resources needed to conceptualize and build the museum, as well as a base of operating support for our first two years.

The AWM’s Founding Board provided invaluable guidance and financial support, and advocated tirelessly for the museum throughout its development.

Our Content Leadership Team of six leading scholars and authors, and 48 Subject Matter Experts, drawn from literary scholarship and practice from across the country, took on the long and formidable task of choosing and curating the museum’s content.

The National Advisory Council, which includes 34 prominent writers and leading literary experts, provides expert guidance to the AWM on exhibit content and programming.

The AWM has become known for being modern, technology-forward, and hands-on. We are deeply grateful to Andy Anway and the team at Amaze Design, who envisioned and created a museum that represents the future in exhibit design and makes learning fun. We are proud to be a unique new addition to Chicago’s cultural landscape, and a destination for people from around the world.

In this inaugural annual report, we gratefully acknowledge the early supporters and visionaries who believed in the dream, and gave their time and treasure to bring it to life. Everyone who is acknowledged in this annual report took that leap of faith, and should feel a sense of pride in what they have made possible.

We are pleased to share the highlights of our first year, including interactive exhibits, engaging author events, and field trips that are both educational and fun. We are deeply grateful to our many generous donors for their critical role in making the American Writers Museum a reality that has surpassed our boldest dreams.

Carey Cranston, President
M. Hill Hammock, Co-chair
Roberta Rubin, Co-chair
Author and historian David McCullough joined the AWM Founding Board, donors, and friends to celebrate the museum’s ribbon-cutting event on May 15, 2017.

“I can’t think of a greater accomplishment and milestone for the City of Chicago to add to its cultural landscape.”

—Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel

From left: 14th Ward Alderman Edward Burke, AWM Founder Malcolm O’Hagan, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, 826CHL students Imaan Yousuf and Cynthia Osorio

Author and historian David McCullough joined the AWM Founding Board, donors, and friends to celebrate the museum’s ribbon-cutting event on May 15, 2017.
We were honored to receive congratulatory letters from Presidents Obama and Bush on the Museum’s Grand Opening.
Sponsored Galleries & Exhibits

The vision of the American Writers Museum would not have come to life without leadership gifts from Founding Board members and major donors. We are honored to acknowledge their transformational support throughout the museum.

“"The museum far exceeded my expectations. It was highly interactive and extremely informative...a delightful experience that should not be missed.”"
American Voices
Gift of Julie and Roger Baskes

The Negaunee Foundation
Children’s Literature Gallery
Gift of the Negaunee Foundation

A Nation of Writers
Gift of John and Cathie Estey

Nation of Writers: A Media Experience
Gift of Jay and Robin Hammer
Wordplay
Gift of the Jastromb Family, in memory of Ariel Jastromb, a poet and lover of language

The Mural Wall
Gift of Maree G. Bullock, honoring the memory of Jimmie R. Alford

Word Waterfall
Gift of James and Carol Hansen

Roberta Rubin Writers Room
Gift of Roberta Rubin’s Family and Friends
Wintrust Chicago Gallery
Sponsored by Wintrust

Visionaries and Troublemakers
Sponsored by Sipi Metals

Communities Map
Sponsored by S&C Electric Company

City on the Make
Gift of John and Mary Pappajohn
Temporary Exhibits

The museum was designed with two gallery spaces dedicated to changing exhibits, which allow us to explore a particular author or theme in-depth, and create exhibits and related programs that are timely and new. The Meijer Exhibit Gallery and the Roberta Rubin Writers Room hosted the following exhibits in 2017:

**Palm: All Awake in the Darkness**
The Meijer Exhibit Gallery  
May–October 2017  
*Sponsored by the Poetry Foundation*

One of the AWM’s first temporary exhibits, *Palm* was inspired by the life and work of the American poet and conservationist W.S. Merwin, and examined Merwin’s capacity to invoke in his readers a sense of the wakefulness of the world. *Palm* was an immersive art installation created by artist duo Susannah Sayler and Edward Morris, in collaboration with Ian Boyden. *Palm* created a meditative experience, with live palms, soundscape and audio of the Merwin’s poetry, and video. The Meijer Exhibit Gallery is one of the AWM’s two changing galleries that spotlight authors or genres of particular timeliness and relevance.

**The Beat Journey: Jack Kerouac’s On the Road**
The Roberta Rubin Writer’s Room  
May–November 2017

The AWM was honored to exhibit Jack Kerouac’s original 120-foot scroll on which he typed *On the Road* in a continuous stream of consciousness. This exhibit offered an intimate look at the writing of the Beat Generation and its cultural and historical context. The Roberta Rubin Writer’s Room is designated for exhibits that draw from important private collections, providing insight into a single author’s body of work, character, and spirit.
“I was blown away by the museum’s layout, design and information. As a writer, I was in heaven.”

“ We really enjoyed the typewriter area and listened to the tap, tap, tap as people wrote stories there.”

**Capturing Stories: Photographs of Writers by Art Shay**

The Meijer Exhibit Gallery  
Opened October 2017  
**Exhibit Lead Sponsor:**  
Abra Prentice Foundation, Inc.  
**Partner Sponsor:**  
Robin & Sandy Stuart Foundation  
**Guild Sponsors:** Ivan & Kathy Kane, Catherine Mouly & Ted Carlson, Susan Lyons, Shanti Nagarkatti and Wells Fargo

Capturing Stories gave visitors a different, and very personal, perspective on some favorite American authors. The AWM’s first photography exhibit paired photos with the authors’ books, interpretive text about Shay’s relationship with the authors, and a display of Art Shay’s candid shots where visitors were encouraged to write their own captions. Art Shay, an award-winning photojournalist and author of nearly 70 books, passed away at age 96 on April 28, 2018.

**Laura Ingalls Wilder: From Prairie to Page**

The Roberta Rubin Writer’s Room  
Opened November 2017

This exhibit gave visitors a deep look at the author of the beloved Little House series, including her writing and publishing process and her relationship with her daughter and editor, Rose. The exhibit featured the original longhand manuscript of The Long Winter, and other objects contributed by two AWM affiliates — the Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum in Walnut Grove, Minnesota and the Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Home and Museum in Mansfield, Missouri.
Write In: Inspiring Tomorrow’s Writers

The AWM has become known as a place of inspiration for middle and high school students who participate in the Write In program. Students engage in activities that encourage and inspire them to write, and learn about American authors and why they remain relevant today. The program’s specially-designed curriculum aligns with Common Core standards related to writing and complements classroom teaching across subject areas. In 2017, more than 900 students from 26 schools were served by Write In.

Responses from our student surveys convey students’ excitement and inspiration:

“The museum sparked interest, curiosity, and conversation I’ve been hard-pressed to find in our classroom all year.”
— Traci Mitchell, Teacher
Carl Sandburg High School

“The AWM created an environment of curiosity that made me want to go home and write more!”

“The museum is not at all what I expected!”

“I loved the typewriters. Usually in a museum, you can’t touch anything. You guys made an interactive environment and that made it unique.”

“When I am here I no longer feel like a student. I feel like a writer.”
— Rafael Vasquez, Senior, Lindblom Math and Science Academy

Write In was supported in 2017 by
The Elizabeth Morse Charitable Trust and the Combe Family
In 2017, the AWM hosted many well-known and emerging authors who work in a variety of genres.

Laura Dassow Walls
Daniel Ellsberg
Heid Erdrich
Caroline Fraser
Nancy Gee
Reginald Gibbons
Lance Grande
Jacob Grant
Walter Isaacson
Angela Jackson
Brenda Lozano
Joyce Maynard
David McCullough
Marta McDowell
James McGrath Morris
Dennis McNally
Hendrick Meijer
Sarah Miller
Dipika Mukherjee
Robin Newman
Janet Nolan
Alexis Okeowo
Liesel Olson
Elise Paschen
Ed Roberson
Augustus Rose
Karen Schreck
Donna Seaman
Ruth Spiro
Patricia Toht
Daren Want
Mary Wisniewski
Douglas A. Wissing
Sallie Wolf

Author Events

The AWM celebrates the best of today’s writing by bringing visitors face-to-face with bestselling authors to discuss their books and engage in lively and wide-ranging discussions with the audience.

“My 13 year old thanked me for taking her!”
The AWM is indebted to the law firm of Mayer Brown and museum co-founder Werner Hein. Throughout the museum’s development over seven years, and continuing today, Mayer Brown has provided pro-bono legal counsel and guidance to the AWM. We remain very grateful to Mayer Brown and Werner for their invaluable assistance.
The Chicago Council for the American Writers Museum is a group of young professionals who were quick to step up to volunteer to plan events that raise funds and awareness for the AWM. On May 12, 2017, they held their first event—a preview of Chicago’s newest museum—and raised over $26,000. Olivia Bedi has served as Chair of the Chicago Council, and has grown this group with the addition of new members who generously donate their time and expertise in support of the AWM.
National Advisory Council

Kwame Alexander
Children’s Author and Poet

Marie Arana
Author and Critic

Jabari Asim
Critic, Author and Educator

A. Scott Berg
Biographer

Jeffrey Brown
Television Journalist and Author

Billy Collins
Poet

Maureen Corrigan
Critic and Author

Stuart Dybek
Author

Dave Eggers
Author and Educator

Louise Erdrich
Novelist

Elliott Firman
Poet and Executive Director, Poets & Writers Foundation

Reginald Gibbons
Poet, Author, and Professor

Nikki Giovanni
Poet and Author

Adam Gopnik
Author and Journalist

Juan Felipe Herrera
Poet and Professor

Jeffrey Lependorf
Executive Director, Council of Literary Magazines and Presses

Lisa Lucas
Executive Director, National Book Foundation

Haki Madhubuti
Author, Poet, and Publisher

Leonard Marcus
Author, Critic, and Historian

Alice McDermott
Novelist

Azar Nafisi
Author and Professor

Joyce Carol Oates
Novelist and Educator

Roxana Robinson
Novelist

Marilynn Robinson
Novelist and Scholar

Max Rudin
Publisher

George Saunders
Fiction Writer and Educator

Donna Seaman
Critc and Author

Lisa See
Novelist

Anna Deavere Smith
Playwright, Producer and Educator

Ilan Stavans
Editor and Educator

Natasha Trethewey
Poet

Scott Turow
Novelist and Memoirist

Nguyen Viet Thanh
Novelist and Educator

Edward Widmer
Historian and Scholar

Content Leadership Team

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Francis Hooper Professor of Arts and Humanities, Northwestern University

Leonard Marcus
Author, Critic, Children’s Book Historian

Max Rudin
Publisher for Library of America

Donna Seaman
Senior Editor, Booklist, American Library Association

Natasha Trethewey
Poet, US Poet Laureate 2012 and 2013

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Department of English, University of Southern Mississippi; Director, The Robert Frost Society; Author

Ann Blair
Carl H. Pforzheimer University Professor of History, Harvard University

Matthew M. Briones
Associate Professor of US History, University of Chicago; Specialist in Asian American & African American history

Lynn Brown
Retired middle school English teacher

Toni-Lee Capossela
Retired college writing professor; former Director of the Stonehill College Writing Center

Cinnamon Catlin-Lugutko
President/CEO, Abbe Museum, Bar Harbor, ME; Specialist in Wabanaki Nation

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Associate Professor of English, Case Western Reserve University; Robert Casper Head of the Poetry & Literature Center, Library of Congress

Maureen Corrigan
The Nicky and Jamie Grant Distinguished Professor of the Practice of Literary Criticism at Georgetown University, Journalist, Author, and Literary Critic, The Washington Post, NPR

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William Lampson Professor of English & American Studies, Yale University; Author

Paul Durica
Director of Programs at Illinois Humanities

Thomas Dyja
Author

Roderick Ferguson
Professor of African American Studies, Gender &Women’s Studies, Co-Director of Racialized Body research cluster, University of Illinois, Chicago; Author

Shelley Fisher Fishkin
Joseph S. Atia Professor in Humanities, Stanford University

Dr. Ed Folsom
Roy J. Carver Professor of English, The University of Iowa; Editor, Walt Whitman Quarterly Review; Director, Walt Whitman Archive

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Writer, Museum Consultant

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Chicago high school English teacher; Special Education training

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Dr. Kimberly Parker
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Associate Professor of Instruction in English, Northwestern University

Will Shortz

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Retired middle school English teacher, Cambridge Public Schools

Sunny Yudoff
Senior Lecturer in Yiddish, Department of German Studies, University of Chicago
Affiliates

The AWM Affiliates Program fosters collaboration among American author museums and homes to increase interest in the works of our great American writers. This program helps increase the national scope of the AWM.

Louisa May Alcott’s Orchard House
Nelson Algren Museum of Miller Beach
The Beat Museum - Jack Kerouac
William Cullen Bryant Homestead
Pearl S. Buck Birthplace
Pearl S. Buck House
Truman Capote and Harper Lee, Old Courthouse Museum
The Willa Cather Foundation
Pat Conroy Literary Center
Emily Dickinson Museum, The Homestead and The Evergreens
Frederick Douglass National Historic Site
Paul Laurence Dunbar House
Ralph Waldo Emerson and Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Old Manse
Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, Concord Museum
William Faulkner’s Rowan Oak
Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald Museum
Robert Frost Farm
Hamlin Garland Homestead
Georgia Writers Museum
Edward Gorey House
Woody Guthrie Center
Alex Haley Museum & Interpretive Center
Joel Chandler Harris, The Wren’s Nest
Nathaniel Hawthorne, The House of Seven Gables
Ernest Hemingway Birthplace Home Museum
Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center
Washington Irving’s Sunnyside
Helen Hunt Jackson, Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum
Laura (Riding) Jackson Foundation
Robinson Jeffers Tor House Foundation
Sarah Orne Jewett House Museum and Visitor Center
Frances Parkinson Keyes, The Beauregard-Keyes House
Vachel Lindsay Home State Historic Site
Jack London State Historic Park
Longfellow House
Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site
Wadsworth-Longfellow House & Garden
Herman Melville’s Arrowhead
The Merwin Conservancy
Edna St. Vincent Millay Society at Steepletop
Margaret Mitchell House
John Muir National Historic Site
John D. Niehardt State Historic Site
Flannery O’Connor, Andalusia Farm
Eugene O’Neill National Historic Site
Monte Cristo Cottage
William Sidney Porter, O. Henry Museum
Poe Baltimore
Poe Museum
Marjorie Kinnen Rawlings Historic State Park
James Whitcomb Riley Museum Home
Theodore Roethke Home Museum
Will Rogers Memorial Museum
Carl Sandburg State Historic Site
Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site
Sequoyah’s Cabin
National Steinbeck Center
Harriet Beecher Stowe House
Harriet Beecher Stowe Center
Gene Stratton-Porter State Historic Site
Thoreau Farm
Thurber House
Mark Twain Boyhood Home & Musuem
Mark Twain House & Museum
The John Updike Childhood Home
Kurt Vonnegut Memorial Library
Margaret Walker Center
Noah Webster House
Eudora Welty House and Garden
Edith Wharton, The Mount
Walt Whitman Birthplace State Historic Site and Interpretive Center
Whittier Birthplace
Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Home and Museum
Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum, Walnut Grove
Thomas Wolfe Memorial

STAFF

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President

MUSEUM OPERATIONS

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Christina Carrera
Facilities Supervisor

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Nate King
Administrative Assistant

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Laura Sterkel
Nick Tovar
Susan Wigoda
Financial Statements

**Statement of Activities**
*Year Ended 12/31/2017 (see note)*

**Revenue**
- Museum Admissions ........................................... $160,806
- Retail Sales: Net .............................................. $28,810
- Memberships .................................................... $35,288
- Individual Gifts .................................................. $1,895,039
- Corporations and Foundations ................................. $1,019,500
- Other Income ....................................................... $15,217

Total ........................................................................... $3,154,660

**Expenses**
- Museum Programming and Operations ......................... $1,223,765
- Management and General ......................................... $264,077
- Fundraising .............................................................. $247,763

Total ........................................................................... $1,735,605

Change in Net Assets .................................................. $1,419,055

**Note:** The AWM opened to the public in May 2017. These numbers reflect 7.5 months of operation. Cumulative cash from donations and 2017 operations was used to fund the capital costs of the museum buildout.

From 2010 through December 31, 2017, the AWM raised $10 million, which funded the development and creation of the museum. The final $2.9 million of this campaign was raised during calendar year 2017.

**Statement of Cash Flows - Modified Cash Basis**
*Year Ended 12/31/2017*

**Cash Flows from Operating Activities**
- Change in Net Assets .................................................. $1,419,055
- Adjustments to Reconcile Change in Net Assets to Net Cash Provided by Operating Activities ................. $235,916
- Net Cash Provided (Used) by Operating Activities ............... $1,654,971

**Cash Flows from Investing Activities**
- Purchase of Furniture and Fixtures ............................... ($6,115)
- Leasehold Improvements .......................................... ($3,065,478)
- Net Cash Provided (Used) by Investing Activities ................. ($3,071,593)

**Cash Flows from Financing Activities**
- Line of Credit .......................................................... $350,000
- Net Cash Provided (Used) by Financing Activities .......... $350,000
- Net Increase (Decrease) in Cash ................................. ($1,066,622)
- Cash Balance - Beginning of Year ............................... $1,274,665
- Cash Balance - End of Year ......................................... $208,043

The accounting firm of Kopczyk, Osher & Scott has reviewed our financial statements and has opined that they present fairly, in all material aspects, the financial performance of The American Writers Museum through December 31, 2017. During the year, our primary sources of revenue were the nearly $200,000 in admissions and memberships purchased by our nearly 20,000 visitors, and the $2,900,000 raised from nearly 300 donors. We improved our asset position with an increase of over $1,400,000, and completed the construction and opening of the Museum with the funding of over $3,000,000 in leasehold improvements. We thank our many donors and partners in helping to make this possible, and for providing the foundation for the museum’s continued success.

Jay Hammer, Treasurer
A good start is half the battle, the old saying goes. After reading this report, I think you will agree the American Writers Museum is indeed off to a good start. But it is only a start. We continue to build toward long-term sustainability through prudent financial management and by working hard to raise and earn the funds needed to maintain and grow the museum. We will always be grateful to the early donors who laid the foundation. If their good faith and generous spirits are any indication, we can be optimistic about the future.

While the American Writers Museum exists for all to enjoy, it has particular value and importance for young people. Reading and writing are pillars of civilization. It behooves us to ensure that future generations appreciate the beauty and relevance of the written word.

We live in an exciting time—technology has a profound impact on the way we communicate. But all communication, no matter the medium, is based on words. Properly selected and arranged, they hold enormous power. They can inspire, soothe, inform, make us laugh, and make us cry. Words will continue to alter the course of history and shape our culture and identity.

As students, teachers, and other visitors have attested, the American Writers Museum offers an inspiring encounter with our great writers and their words. It is gratifying to see young people composing stories on our vintage typewriters, engaging with the exhibits, and most especially, leaving the museum with a reading list.

We want all young people to enjoy and benefit from this experience. Our Write In program enables students from schools across the region to visit the museum. Thousands have taken advantage of this program already. But we want all students to have this opportunity, especially those from underserved areas. As we look ahead, this is one of our most cherished goals, and our donors will make it happen.

As donors and visitors, you are the lifeblood of the museum. I plan to visit the AWM every time I am in Chicago, and, of course, I will continue to provide all the support I can. I hope you too will continue your generous support, and that you will encourage family, friends, and others to visit the museum.

Creating the American Writers Museum was a superb team effort. I will always be personally grateful to the many people who gave their time, talent and treasure to bring this vision to life.

Malcolm O’Hagan