The great writing of the past and present can help us navigate the daunting issues we face today. It can open the door to a deeper understanding and acceptance of ourselves and others. It offers a path to someplace new, with endless possibilities for discovery.

The themes and messages in American literature are as relevant today as when they were first written. Frederick Douglass’s eloquent calls for equal treatment for people of color, women, and other marginalized groups feel just as urgent today. When Tim O’Brien describes the Vietnam war and its toll on the individual’s soul, he is writing about every war, and he is speaking not only to every soldier, but to every reader. Great writing broadens our perspective, it raises tough questions, and it can give us hope.

By presenting writers and their work in new ways, the American Writers Museum aims to teach, inspire, and spark new ideas. With new exhibits like My America: Immigrant and Refugee Writers Today, we curate content in new ways to reflect current issues, and strengthen our role as a community hub and a safe space for dialogue. We extend the conversation through our public programs, by presenting in-person events with today’s established and emerging writers, who give us new perspectives and prose that is often beautiful, challenging, and conversation-provoking. And because the AWM has so much to offer young writers, we continue to make the Write In youth education program a focal point of what we do. Through this program, we provide an educational experience that is unique, memorable, and fun, and inspires students to write and be the voices of the future.

It takes a dedicated team to implement this vision. We are grateful to work with a committed and creative Board of Trustees, who provide excellent counsel, financial oversight, and generous support, ensuring the museum’s steady growth and financial stability. We are fortunate to have the involvement of our National Advisory Council, a group of renowned scholars and writers from across the country. Each member of the AWM staff brings a personal passion for the museum’s mission. And, none of our achievements would be possible without our donors — we are honored and grateful to have your support. Everything we accomplished in 2019 was made possible because of you.

Why does writing matter? We never finish answering this question, or asking new ones. The American Writers Museum is not just a museum. It is a jumping-off point for discovery, a place to explore a deeper understanding of humanity and the world. It is where we celebrate our love of words and their power to move us forward, intellectually and emotionally. What are your questions? We invite you to continue the conversation with us.

Chairman John W. Estey & President Carey Cranston
6,802 Students served through the Write In program.

INCLUDING
4,380 students from low-income households who participated at no cost to their families or schools, thanks to AWM donors

“I spent time in the American Writers Museum while in Chicago earlier this month and it was so inspiring as a writer and as an American.”

Social Media REACH 2.34 MILLION

NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE 686 PLACEMENTS with a potential reach of 649,000,000

2 Original New Exhibits

300+ writers & works of literature explored throughout the museum

39 AUTHOR PROGRAMS attended by 2,175 people.
EXHIBITS

The American Writers Museum’s permanent exhibits take visitors on a journey through the American story, from the perspective of the writers. They introduce people to great writing in all genres, illustrate how writing influences our history and culture, and spotlight the beauty and visceral impact of great writing.

Through video, touch screens, and multi-sensory elements, visitors are invited to dive into a world of discovery, and many are inspired to put their own words on paper.

New Exhibits in 2019

**Opened November 2019**
**The Meijer Exhibit Gallery**
My America features videoed interviews with 31 of today’s most influential writers who are immigrants and refugees to the United States, from all parts of the world. They explore issues such as writing influences, being multilingual, community, family, culture and what it means to be an American. The exhibit is complemented by the Jeanne M. and John W. Rowe Program Series, featuring in-person public events with immigrant and refugee writers. Students who visit the museum as part of the Write In youth education program use specially-designed curriculum to further explore the themes in this exhibit. On view through May 2021.

**Opened June 2019**
**The Roberta Rubin Writer’s Room**
From Frederick Douglass’s ornate inkwell to Helen Keller’s braille writer, and the actual typewriters owned by Jack London, Ernest Hemingway, Ray Bradbury, Maya Angelou, and others, this exhibit features the “tools of the trade” that were used to write some of the most important works in American literary history. Most of the typewriters in the exhibit are on loan from the collection of Steve Soboroff. On view through July 2020.

**2018-2019 Featured Exhibits**

**Bob Dylan: Electric**
on view November 2018 through October 2019

**Frederick Douglass: Agitator**
on view June 2018 through June 2019
In 2019 the American Writers Museum hosted conversations and readings from National Book Award winners, Pulitzer Prize honorees, living legends and rising stars. Sandra Cisneros introduced us to her new favorite Mexican-American novelist; Tim O’Brien and Alex Kotlowitz talked about writing and fatherhood, Jasmine Guillory explored the changing face of romance publishing, presidential speechwriters challenged us with the power of words, and Dave Eggers taught us more than we ever knew about coffee.

**Author Events**

- **Samira Ahmed** Love, Hate & Other Filters
- **Ronald Cohen** Bob Dylan & American Folk Music
- **Ross Gay** The Book of Delights, with Eve Ewing
- **Daryl Sanders** That Thin, Wild Mercury Sound
- **Dave Eggers** The Monk of Mokha
- **Eric Hoffman** Tearing the World Apart
- **Tom Chaffin** Frederick Douglass In Ireland
- **Timothy Hampton** Bob Dylan’s Poetics
- **Sloane Crosley** Look Alive Out There
- **Joan Osborne** Songs of Bob Dylan
- **Eve L. Ewing** ‘1919’ Launch Party
- **Julien Gorbach** The Notorious Ben Hecht
- **Colin Asher** Never a Lovely so Real: The Life and Work of Nelson Algren
- **Elliot Ackerman** Places and Names
- **Jasmine Guillory** The Wedding Party
- **R.O. Kwon** The Incendiaries
- **J. Michael Straczynski** Becoming Superman
- **Karl Marlantes** Deep River
- **Deborah Blum** The Poison Squad
- **Keah Brown** The Pretty One
- **Annalee Newitz** The Future of Another Timeline
- **Aarti Shahani** Here We Are
- **David Shields** Lynch, A History
- **Saeed Jones** How We Fight for Our Lives
- **Rebecca Deng** What They Meant for Evil
- **Dominic Pacyga** American Warsaw

**Public Conversations**

- **Dr. John Stauffer** on the Legacy of Frederick Douglass
- **Gene Scheer** Moby Dick, in partnership with the Chicago Opera Theater
- **Resisting Hate with Free Speech** A Conversation with Nadine Strossen and Christie Hefner
- **Chicago by the Book** How Literature Changed Chicago
  - An Evening with Jonathan Lethem and Stacie Williams
  - Performance and Conversation with Frank Waln & Tanaya Winder
  - An Evening with Sandra Cisneros and Fernando Flores
- **Chicago Coalition for the Homeless** Horizons Writing Showcase
- **Archaeology from Space** Writing the Past and Future
- **Literature’s Lineage** Descendants of Writers Share Family Stories
- **Writing to Power** Presidential Speechwriters on Winning Elections
- **The Peanuts Papers** An Evening with Tim O’Brien
The AWM honors the past and promotes the present of American writing through exhibits and public programs. We inspire the future through the Write In youth education program.

The Write In program has evolved rapidly since the museum opened in 2017. It builds on our exhibits and author programs to give students a fun and lasting educational experience in the world’s only museum dedicated to the vast spectrum of American writing.

During a 90-minute visit, middle and high school students use specially-designed curriculum to explore the exhibits and do their own writing in response to exhibit content. Based on feedback from students and teachers, we developed an ambitious five-year plan to expand the program’s reach and deepen the educational experience. We began implementing the plan in the 2019-2020 school year, by expanding our outreach to serve more students, adding twice-monthly author events just for students, and creating special curriculum for the My America exhibit.

Write In served 6,802 students during 2019, including 4,380 students from low-income households, whose museum admission and bus costs were subsidized thanks to donors to the program.

Leadership grant from the Saul Zaentz Charitable Foundation

In 2019, the AWM was awarded a $500,000 grant from the Saul Zaentz Charitable Foundation to support the first phase of implementation of the Write In five-year expansion plan.

This grant honors the legacy of iconic film producer Saul Zaentz, who passed away in 2014.

The Saul Zaentz Charitable Foundation aims to address social justice and improve educational opportunities for disadvantaged youth.

This leadership grant has led the way for other donors to support the program expansion.

Major support for the Write In youth education program is provided by the Saul Zaentz Charitable Foundation

Other supporters include:

Abra Prentice Foundation, Lead Sponsor
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The Hammond Education Foundation
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Anonymous
Nearly 400 friends and supporters came together for a celebration of the American Writers Museum at OnWord2019, held on April 9, 2019 at the Four Seasons Hotel in Chicago.

The evening was hosted by Peter Sagal, host of NPR’s Wait Wait...Don’t Tell Me! and featured a performance by the Boston Typewriter Orchestra. The event was chaired by Hill Hammock and Roberta Rubin and raised more than $500,000 for the AWM’s education programs.

Wintrust CEO Edward J. Wehmer accepts the Cultural and Civic Leadership Award from AWM Founder Malcolm O’Hagan, honoring Wintrust’s strong commitment to Chicago’s cultural community and the AWM.

The Friend of the Writer award was presented to Marie Arana, author, editor, senior advisor to the Library of Congress and Director of the National Book Festival.

Award-winning and bestselling author Rebecca Makkai presented the Inspiration Award to Tom Elieff, a former teacher who inspired her as a writer.
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Statement of Activities
Year Ended 12/31/2019

Revenue
- Museum Admissions ..................... $220,839
- Retail Sales: Net........................ $30,510
- Memberships ................................ $44,845
- Individual Gifts ............................. $864,332
- Event Income, net of $198,360 .... $528,024
- Corporations and Foundations ...... $1,045,000
- Space Rental ................................ $41,515
- Program Income ............................. $18,632
- Other Income .............................. $1,748
Total: $2,835,445

Expenses
- Museum Programming and Operations $2,114,263
- Management and General .............. $529,150
- Fundraising ................................. $183,400
Total: $2,826,813

Change in Net Assets ...................... $8,362

Sources of Contributions
- Museum Programs and Operations 75%
- Administration 19%
- Fundraising 6%

Expense Categories
- Administration 19%
- Fundraising 6%
- Museum Programs and Operations 75%

Statement of Cash Flows - Modified Cash Basis
Year Ended 12/31/2019

Cash Flows from Operating Activities
Change in Net Assets ...................... $8,632
Adjustments to Reconcile Change in Net Assets to Net Cash Provided by Operating Activities
- Depreciation .............................. $491,849
- Security Deposit ......................... $100,000
- Inventory .................................. $1,430
- Other Current Liabilities ............... $1,708
- Other Current Assets .................... $90
- Sales Tax Payable ......................... ($1,714)
Net Cash Provided (Used) by Operating Activities $601,995

Cash Flows from Investing Activities
Principal Repayment ....................... ($175,000)
Net Cash Provided (Used) by Investing Activities ($175,000)
Net Increase in Cash ....................... $426,995
Cash Balance - Beginning of Year ........ $274,879
Cash Balance - End of Year .............. $701,874

Note: These financials are final but unaudited, due to delays caused by COVID-19. Audited financial statements will be available later in 2020.
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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.

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The Center for Ray Bradbury Studies
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William Cullen Bryant Homestead
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Pearl S. Buck House
Monroe County Museum
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The Pat Conroy Literary Center
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COMING SOON
A new exhibit in the Roberta Rubin Writer’s Room

RAY BRADBURY
INEXTINGUISHABLE

Opening in fall 2020, Ray Bradbury: Inextinguishable will explore the enduring, and sometimes unexpected, influence of Ray Bradbury and his enduring legacy.

Visitors will see original manuscripts, personal items, and the typewriter and desk on which Bradbury wrote many of his famous works!

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.

180 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60601
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