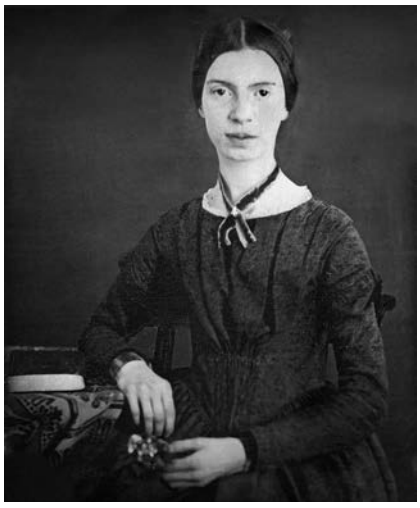
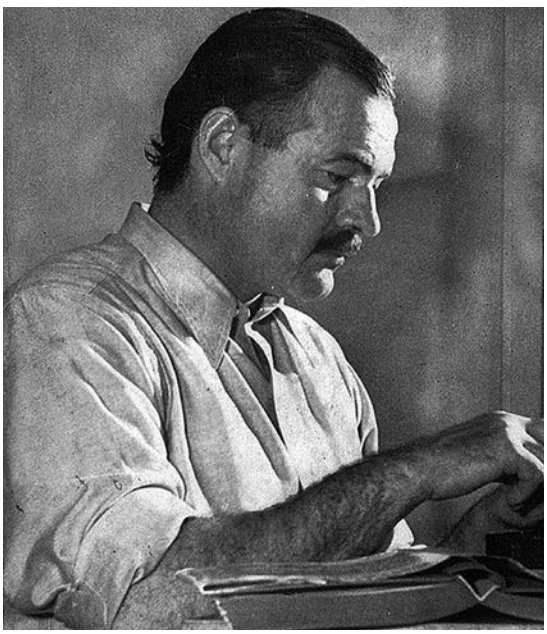
AMERICAN WRITERS MUSEUM

2019 Annual Report





From the Chairman and the President

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

ON THE COVER Author photos: Top row: Gwendolyn Brooks; John Steinbeck. Second Row: Emily Dickinson. Third row: James Baldwin; Zora Neale Hurston; Gloria Anzaldua. Bottom Row: Ernest Hemingway; Langston Hughes

NUMBERS & IMPACT 2019

1,400 MEMBERS

TOTAL VISITORS 38,487

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

300+

writers & works of literature explored throughout the museum

"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."

2 Original New Exhibits

TOOLS of the TRADE

IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE My AMERICA WRITERS TODAY

Social Media REACH

2.34 MILLION

YouTube

NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE

686 PLACEMENTS

with a potential reach of

649,000,000

The Washington Post

LA RB LOS ANGELES REVIEW OF BOOKS

abc 7 CHICAGO TONIGHT

Chicago Tribune

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.

S. Leigh Pierson Conant & Douglas R. Conant Readers Hall

Stead Family Foundation Writers Hall

John and Cathie Estey: A Nation of Writers

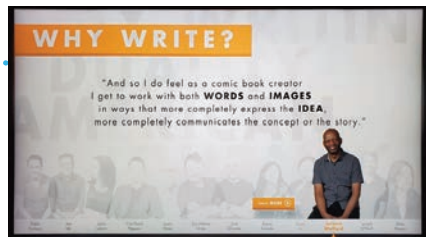
Saul Zaentz Charitable Foundation Mind of a Writer Gallery

2018-2019 Featured Exhibits

Bob Dylan: Electric
on view November 2018
through October 2019

Frederick Douglass: Agitator
on view June 2018
through June 2019

New Exhibits in 2019



Opened November 2019
The Meijer Exhibit Gallery

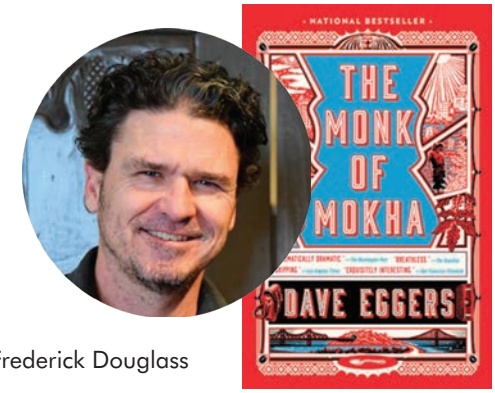
My America features videoed interviews with 31 of today's most influential writers who are immigrants and refugees to the United States, from all parts of the world. They explore issues such as writing influences, being multilingual, community, family, culture and what it means to be an American. The 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.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

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 Wiliams**

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**

Sandra Cisneros & Fernando Flores

Eve Ewing & Ross Gay

Tim O'Brien & Alex Kotlowitz

WRITE IN

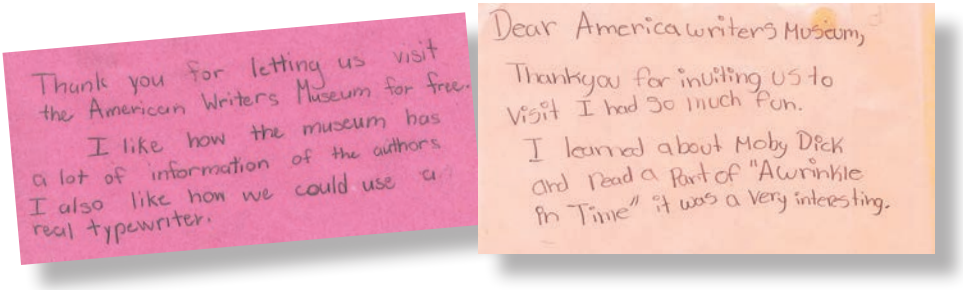
Youth Education Program

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
Ralph & Evelyn Davis Family Foundation
The Hammond Education Foundation
Lloyd & Kathryn Bettis
Anonymous

ONWORD 2019

The AWM's Inaugural Award Dinner

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.*

DONORS

Our growth is made possible by generous donors.

We are grateful to the individuals, foundations, and corporations that made gifts between Jan 1–Dec. 31, 2019.

$100,000 and up

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FINANCES

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

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

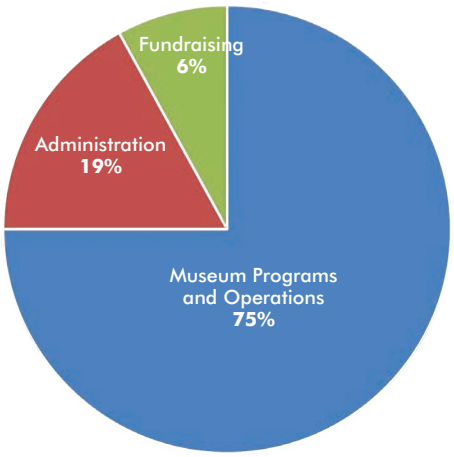
Cash Flows from Operating Activities

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

Expense Categories



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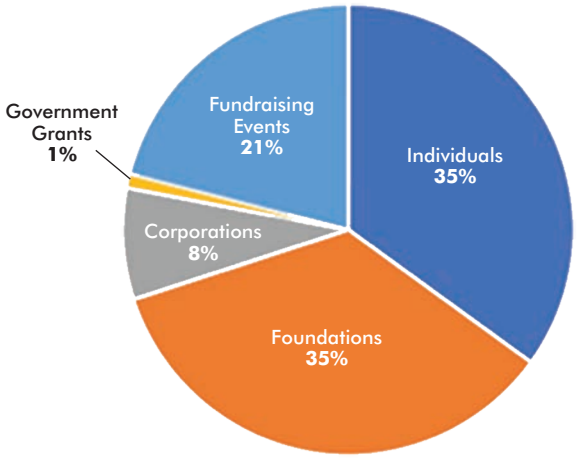

NOTE: These financials are final but unaudited, due to delays caused by COVID-19. Audited financial statements will be available later in 2020.

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Novelist and Memoirist

Viet Thanh Nguyen
Novelist, Educator, Pulitzer Prize winner, and Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature winner

Edward Widmer
Historian and Scholar

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 Center for Ray Bradbury Studies
Westerly Library & Wilcox Park
Margaret Wise Brown
William Cullen Bryant Homestead
Pearl S. Buck Birthplace
Pearl S. Buck House
Monroe County Museum
Truman Capote & Harper Lee
National Willa Cather Center
The Pat Conroy Literary Center
Emily Dickinson Museum
The Homestead and The Evergreens
Frederick Douglass National Historic Site
Paul Laurence Dunbar House
The Old Manse
Ralph Waldo Emerson
& Nathaniel Hawthorne
Concord Museum
Ralph Waldo Emerson
& Henry David Thoreau
Rowan Oak
William Faulkner
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
The Wren's Nest – Joel Chandler Harris
Georgia Writers Museum
The House of the Seven Gables Settlement
Association – Nathaniel Hawthorne
Ernest Hemingway Birthplace Home Museum
Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum
and Educational Center
Washington Irving's Sunnyside
Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum
Helen Hunt Jackson
Laura (Riding) Jackson Foundation
Robinson Jeffers Tor House Foundation
Sarah Orne Jewett House Museum
The Beat Museum – Jack Kerouac
The Beauregard-Keyes House
Frances Parkinson Keyes
Vachel Lindsay Home State Historic Site
Jack London State Historic Park
Longfellow House – George Washington's
Headquarters National Historic Site
Wadsworth-Longfellow House and Garden
Herman Melville's Arrowhead
The Merwin Conservancy
The Edna St. Vincent Millay Society
at Steepletop
Margaret Mitchell House
John Muir National Historic Site
John G. Neihardt State Historic Site
Andalusia: The Home of Flannery O'Connor
Eugene O'Neill National Historic Site
Monte Cristo Cottage
William Sidney Porter, O. Henry Museum
Poe Baltimore
Edgar Allan Poe Museum
Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park
James Whitcomb Riley Museum Home
Theodore Roethke Home Museum
Will Rogers Memorial Museums
Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site
Carl Sandburg State Historic Site
The William Saroyan House Museum
Cherokee Nation,
Sequoyah's Cabin Museum
The National Steinbeck Center
Harriet Beecher Stowe House
Harriet Beecher Stowe Center
Gene Stratton-Porter State Historic Site
Thoreau Farm
Thurber House
The Mark Twain House & Museum
Mark Twain Home Foundation
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 Association
John Greenleaf Whittier Birthplace
Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum, Walnut Grove
Laura Ingalls Wilder
Historic Home & Museum
Laura Ingalls Wilder Park & Museum
Thomas Wolfe Memorial

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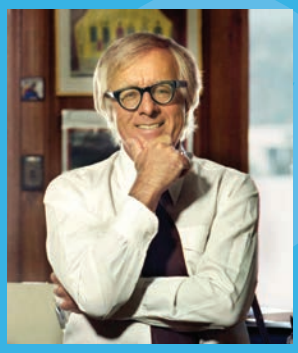
COMING SOON

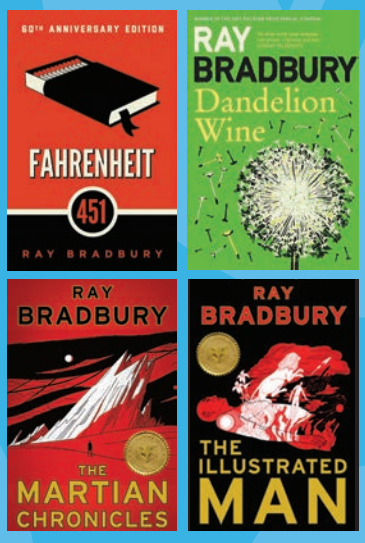
A new exhibit in the Roberta Rubin Writer's Room

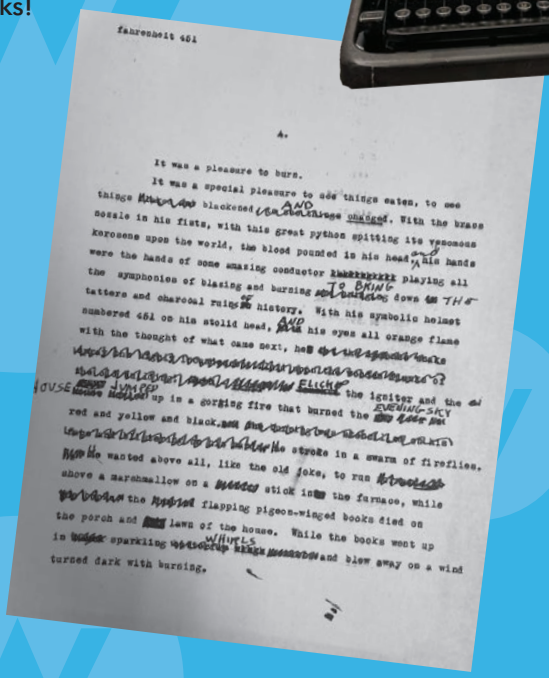


RAY BRADBURY
INEXTINGUISHABLE

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!





fahrenheit 451

4.

It was a pleasure to burn.

It was a special pleasure to see things eaten, to see

AMERICAN WRITERS MUSEUM

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
AmericanWritersMuseum.org • 312-374-8790