

WISCONSIN RECORDS ASSESSMENT PROJECT WORK PLAN

In order, to support a future statewide effort to collect historical records which document Wisconsin's state history after 1945, this project will:

- Collect information about post-1945 manuscript holdings in Wisconsin historical records repositories
- Analyze and share the gathered information with historical records repositories and individuals who use these records
- Discuss with creators, keepers, and users of records those aspects of contemporary life in Wisconsin that may require additional collecting work in order to be adequately documented
- Develop a new collaborative blueprint for collecting and documenting the current history of the state based on discussions with historical records stakeholders.
- Launch an on-line directory of Wisconsin historical records repositories

Collect Information about Current Manuscript Holdings

Staff at the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) has surveyed and analyzed selected data about all the manuscript collections acquired by the WHS since the introduction their collecting policy in 1987 which will provide the framework for a comprehensive survey of other historical records repositories throughout the state of Wisconsin.

The objective of this project's survey is to collect information on the importance and the depth and breadth of current holdings in selected Wisconsin repositories in order to gain a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of coverage in specific topical and subject areas. Additionally, the survey aims to gauge individual repositories' interest in beginning collecting work or participating in a statewide collaborative collecting effort in specific subject areas.

Analyze and Share Survey Results

The survey results will be tabulated, analyzed, and presented in a written report which will then guide the remaining work over the course of the project. During this time, the project archivist will conduct a series of visits to participating repositories to clarify survey answers and to gain additional background information. The analytical report will combine the data from this survey, data from the previous WHS survey, and additional information gained from repository site visits. The report, which will be made available on-line, will summarize the findings of the survey work and site visits, identify perceived gaps in archival documentation about contemporary life in Wisconsin, and offer recommendations for specific measures to address those lapses.

Discuss Findings of the Survey Work with Creators, Keepers, and Users of Records

An outcome of the survey work and analytical report will be a one-day symposium to be held next year in Madison. A group of fifty historical records stakeholders will participate in the symposium which will present an opportunity to review the findings of the project and to encourage discussions about future collecting goals and collecting strategies. The intention of the discussions is to brainstorm strategies which will lead to the improvement of historical documentation for post-1945 Wisconsin.

Develop a New Collaborative Collecting Blueprint

The results of the symposium will be published in an on-line report and will contribute to the recommendations for improving documentation of Wisconsin history in subject areas identified as incomplete or absent. The lessons learned from the symposium and the recommendations made will provide a basis for the development of a new collaborative collecting plan amongst Wisconsin historical records repositories in order to secure our historical future.

Launch an On-line Directory of Wisconsin Historical Records Repositories

The final product of the project will be an on-line directory listing Wisconsin repositories and their holdings information which will be created and hosted by the Wisconsin Historical Society and WHRAB. The directory will provide basic information about each repository that completed the online survey and a description of their Wisconsin manuscript holdings. The project staff will create the initial version of the directory, but participants will be responsible for managing and updating their repository's information.