Small Places, Big Ideas: the 51st Annual Meeting of CWAM
May 1-4, 2024 in Worland, WY

Wednesday, May 1

1:00pm-5:00pm	Work Day at Ten Sleep Museum
7:30pm-9:00pm	Welcome Reception at Ten Sleep Brewery

Thursday, May 2

8:00am-4:30pm	Registration
8:30am-10:00am	Breakout Session 1
10:00am-11:00am	Snack Break + Art & Cultural Demonstrations
11:00am-12:15pm	General Session
12:30pm-1:45pm	Luncheon
2:00pm-3:30pm	Breakout Session 2
5:00pm-8:00pm	Discovery Dinner

Friday, May 3

8:00am-12:00pm	Registration
8:00am-9:30am	Breakout Session 3
9:30am-10:30am	Snack Break + Auction Mingle
10:30am-12:00pm	Breakout Session 4
12:00pm-1:45pm	Lunch on your own
1:45pm-3:15pm	Breakout Session 5
3:30pm-5:00pm	Breakout Session 6
7:00pm-11:00pm	Banquet

Saturday, May 4

9:00 am-12:00pm	Workshops
9:00 am-12:00pm	Field Trips

Thursday

Group 1 Breakout Session (8:00am-9:30am)

Session A

The Museum That Floods: a history of water disaster at the Aurora History Museum

Lizz Ricci (she/her), Curator of Collections , Aurora History Museum & Historic Sites

The Museum has issues with seasonal flooding. The grates on the drains become clogged and water pushes into the building. Over the years, the museum has developed a plan for seasonal flooding and has learned how to divert the water before it can make its way into the building.

Upon returning from the holiday season in December 2022, staff walked into the biggest emergency to date. The 2nd floor water fountain sprung a leak. The collection storage room was hit the hardest. The Museum's emergency and pocket response plans were enacted. The use of these plans created a less stressful situation for staff, and they could quickly address the problem. Staff with previous experience and/or were trained for these emergencies provided more knowledge to enhance the plans which in turn will provide even more ease for emergencies in the future.

We will share our story of water disasters, what we have learned, and what we have implemented, and our big ideas for the future. Copies of our Emergency Preparedness Plan and Pocket Response Plan will be available as a resource. The emergency plan I created when arriving at the Museum worked for this emergency and it has been updated with what we learned from this flood. I am also developing an "After Disaster Collections Care Manual". If completed by the conference I will share this information as well and have it available to take home.

Session B

Using Data to Demonstrate Impact: a crash course for small museums

Kevin Ramler (he/him), Director, Wyoming State Museum
Melisa McChesney (she/her), Curator of Community Engagement, Wyoming State Museum

This crash course in data collection and utilization is designed to help small museums get started in putting together a data driven impact statement. Participants will learn about the basics of data collection, where to find and how to utilize resources from bigger studies, and how to incorporate both sources of data into a compelling case for support from grantors, local governments, and impact-driven donors.

Session C

Social Silencing: researching women and lunacy in the 20th century

Bianca Barriskill (she/her), Program Assistant, Golden History Museum

What started as a small curiosity turned into a big question: did the Colorado criminal justice system pathologize women in the early twentieth century? The Golden History Museum has a jailhouse register from Jefferson County dating from 1878 to 1929. While researching a famous lynching case in Golden involving two men, we noticed that most of the charges for women were for "insanity." The project bloomed into a multi-institutional search for the women recorded in the register. The archivist at the Colorado State Hospital Museum in Pueblo welcomed me to research the asylum's archived medical records and documents. On the other hand, Jefferson County's archivist informed me that valuable Lunacy Commission records are still sealed to date. Why were some institutions permitting research of historical medical records, and others not? This presentation will offer biographies of the women and will explain the obstacles and benefits of working across multiple institutions in Colorado for historical research.

Demonstrations (9:30am-10:30am)

BLM Ten Sleep Fish Hatchery Truck

BLM Head Fish Hatchery Culturist Alysia Brown will give a demonstration on the changes in technology in fish hatcheries and share insight into the unique fish in the area.

Angela Rayne

CWAM member Angela Rayne will demonstrate flint knapping.

Local artist showcase

See the artwork of local Worland artists in the museum atrium.

Group 2 Breakout Sessions (3:00pm-4:30pm)

Session A

Apply Stronger: resumes & cover letters

Caitlin Rumery (she/her), Registrar, Denver Art Museum
Laura Browarny (she/her), Cultural Supervisor, Town of Windsor, Colorado

You're hired! Getting a job, let alone an interview, is an age-old challenge, faced by individuals entering the museum field all the way to seasoned professionals. Learn concrete and practical tips to polish your resume and cover letter to get a seat at the interview table. Come learn how to put your best foot forward in the competitive museum job market!

Session B

The Arapaho Ranch Field Station: a museum & interpretive site providing experiential learning within the 400,000 acre Arapaho Ranch

AdNolan Friday (he/him), Board Vice-Chair, Arapaho Ranch Field Station
Lorre Hoffman (she/her), Director/Development, Arapaho Ranch Field Station - Interpretive Site

Barrie Lynn Bryant, Site Coordinator

The interpretive museum of the Arapaho Ranch Field Station is located in the Owl Creek Valley on the Northern Arapaho Ranch in rural Hot Springs County, WY. The Field Station develops access to informal learning experiences related to agriculture and natural resources connected to the interpretive museum exhibit about a historic ranch. Our programs are for Tribal Youth and the general public. Programs include documenting rock art (petroglyphs and pictographs) with distinguished archaeologists, stream studies, equine-assisted learning for leadership, visiting artist workshops including blacksmithing, horn spoon making, painting, teepee construction, and an evolving program including the Ranch Safari.

The takeaways from this colorful visual presentation are examples of how a small museum can tell a big story connected to amazing experiences for the visitors to engage in and learn while participating in the storied history of the West.

Discovery Dinner

Advocacy: demonstrating museum benefits

Andrew Schneider (he/him), Executive Director, Wyoming Arts Alliance
Robert Henning, Director, Campbell County Rockpile Museum

Advocacy is how we demonstrate the benefits of museums to decision makers.

During this talk, the speakers will engage in a dynamic exchange of ideas, exploring innovative approaches to convey the multifaceted benefits of museums. The audience gains valuable insights into the art of effective advocacy, leaving them inspired to champion the cause of museums as essential pillars of community enrichment and cultural preservation in the American West.

Friday

Group 3 Breakout Sessions (8:00am-9:30am)

Session A

Apply Stronger: interviews

Caitlin Rumery (she/her), Registrar, Denver Art Museum
Laura Browarny (she/her), Cultural Supervisor, Town of Windsor, Colorado

Congratulations, your cover letter and resume got you a seat at the table and you have been invited in for an interview. Come learn important interviewing skills and how to prepare for an interview (yes, you need to prepare!)

Session B

Addressing the Digital Education Gap with In-person Courses for Older Adults

Melisa McChesney (she/her), Curator of Community Engagement, Wyoming State Museum
Dominique Maestas, BSW (she/her), Equipment Distribution Specialist, Wyoming Relay

Digital content has become a key part of museum work since the world went virtual during the COVID pandemic. However, older adults have been left decades behind in their digital education, preventing many seniors from accessing this emerging content. The Wyoming State Museum has developed a "Digital Skills for Seniors" program resulting in tremendous gratitude from a generation of community members who are leaping at the opportunity to catch up. Learn how we developed a curriculum, faced challenges, and utilized key community partnerships to create a program that has gained the attention of new audiences, sponsors, and statewide initiatives.

Session C

Enhancing Opportunities with Digitized Collections

Steven Dacus, Collections Manager, Research Arsenal

Digital collections are gaining popularity. While putting collections online is a very positive direction for museums to take, how can museums maximize accessibility and user intuitiveness for those digital collections?

Searching poorly tagged collections can be frustrating and even some of the largest institutions in the country have historic photographs listed with only “Soldier next to horse” as a descriptor. As a Civil War researcher Steve Dacus envisioned an online database of Civil War archives that was completely text searchable and created the Research Arsenal. Today, the Research Arsenal boasts thousands of historic photographs, the largest collection of searchable Civil War letters, and thousands of records that are all cross referenced with other records.

Join Steve in his program where he will share ways for you to incorporate keywords, tagging, and metadata into your online collections, as well as features and content that end users are looking for when searching for historical records. This session will use examples from famous digital collections (like the LOC, Ancestry, and Fold3) to identify common frustrations from end users.

Group 4 Breakout Sessions (10:30 am-noon)

Session A

Cultural Programming to Address Representational Deficiencies

Stefanie Kowalczyk (she/her), Curator, Washakie Museum and Cultural Center

Museums strive to be accessible, diverse, and inclusive. However, it can be difficult to make significant changes to existing collections, exhibits, and programs. For the past five years, the Washakie Museum had been holding an Indigenous Peoples' Day program in lieu of recognizing Columbus Day. It was developed not only to bring awareness to an important contemporary topic and fill an educational void, but more importantly, to improve our institution's shortcomings regarding Indigenous representation. This program has been both a blessing and

a challenge. We have struggled to work within the framework of another culture, to make connections where none existed, and to understand and define our own evolving goals for the program. However, we have ultimately found it successful - capable of creating new spaces for conversation, providing education for visitors and staff, and serving as the foundation for many long lasting and meaningful connections.

Session B

New Ways to Welcome at the Molly Brown House Museum: multi-faceted visitor experiences

Mike Erickson (he/him), Volunteer & Event Manager, Molly Brown House Museum
Taylor Silici (she/her), Visitor Experience Manager, Molly Brown House Museum

As museum professionals, we strive to find new ways to meaningfully engage our guests in our historic spaces. Struggles that many of us face can include physical space challenges and ensuring our content is welcoming to varied perceptions and learning styles that guests bring. Over recent years, the Molly Brown House Museum has been testing out new ways to welcome guests for varied experiences beyond guided tours. After providing solely a self-guided option in recent years, the museum now welcomes guided tours and self-guided experiences simultaneously. Beyond ensuring our museum has the capacity to welcome guests in this combined way, we had to assess how our content was delivered (or wasn't) as well as how we operate additional programs and events. Learn about the steps we took and lessons we learned and let's discuss how a multi-faceted experience can be adapted to your spaces.

Session C

Museum Basics: the successes and lessons learned from creating a statewide program

Mark Nelson (he/him), Head of Collections Management and Registration, History Colorado
Rachael Storm, Ph.D. (she/her), Curator of Business & Industry, History Colorado

In 2021, History Colorado launched a new educational program called Museum Basics. The program was designed for those who work in, hope to work in, or volunteer at cultural institutions such as museums, libraries, and archives. Further, the intention was to offer a variety of topics suited to those looking to gain a better understanding of the basics of working in cultural institutions. This session would examine the proactive work that went into crafting this program, with a focus on how input sought from an array of stakeholders across Colorado was used in multiple ways to offer a program that was actually desired and tailored to its audience. The trajectory of the program in the last four years will be examined in order to highlight its successes and the lessons that have been learned along the way. This program relates to the conference topic in particular because of the success of being able to take a single idea and expand the program to have statewide reach. Learning objectives include insights into how to utilize audience driven feedback to create more successful programs.

Group 5 Breakout Sessions (1:45pm-3:15pm)

Session A

Small Museums, Big Grants

Alexandra Deselms (she/her), Director of Collections / Interim Director, Meeteetse Museum District
David Cunningham (he/him), Kären & Jay Abbe Director of the National Discovery Center, American Prairie

Grants are a cornerstone of museum funding. What does it take to succeed in receiving grant awards? It can seem that small museums are at a disadvantage when having big ideas and applying for big grants, but it is possible and achievable. Hear tips on finding grants, the application process, matching funds, and even managing grants from a small museum's two-time federal grant receiver and a grant reviewer (and writer). While we cannot review applications there, we encourage questions on in-process grant applications.

Session B

Gamification in Museum Education Programming

Jeremy Thornbrugh (he/him), Curator of Education, Wyoming State Museum

Are you looking to breathe new life into your education programs; gamification may be the key! Gamification allows museums and historic sites to bring the concepts of games into their education programs to increase student participation, content retention, and program utilization. In this session we'll start by looking at the key concepts of gamification. We'll then explore ways that museums and historic sites of all sizes can work it into their programs, including adding activities to current programs and reworking your entire program into game form. We'll examine two programs at the Wyoming State Museum - our Year in the Life of a Mountain Man field trip and our Travel the Oregon Trail field trip. For each program we'll discuss the steps to create the gamified program, difficult points along the way, what we learned, and the outcome. We will also look at resources and vendors that organizations can utilize.

Session C

Use What You've Got: how to be more strategic with your resources to deepen audience engagement

Chelsea Pennington Hahn (she/her), Director, Lafayette History Museum

As museums, we don't just want to increase the number of people who walk through our doors; we also want to keep them coming back, to turn them into fans and ambassadors of the museum. The process of doing that, however, can seem murky at best and daunting in other cases. But to engage your community more meaningfully, you don't need a giant budget or a huge staff; you just need to be more strategic about your current resources. The Lafayette History Museum developed a community engagement pipeline to ensure everything we do aligns with our mission and effectively engages our audience. The pipeline is a blueprint for transforming a nearby resident to a one-time visitor to an excited supporter. In this session, museum director Chelsea Pennington Hahn will walk attendees through the community engagement pipeline, including questions to ask about each group, obstacles that prevent

people from moving along the pipeline, and how it can lead to an outsized impact from even the smallest museum. Attendees will have the chance to perform an audit of their current offerings and discuss with other attendees possible solutions to the challenges they identify.

Group 6 Breakout Sessions (3:30pm-5:00pm)

Session A

Teaching Big Ideas to Little Kids

Deborah Teany (she/her), Children's Education Specialist, Aurora History Museum
Emily J. Conner (she/her), Master Teacher, University of Wyoming Art Museum

Many museums in Colorado and Wyoming offer activities for preschoolers but don't have regular, recurring classes for them. In this presentation the Aurora History Museum of Colorado and the University of Wyoming Art Museum come together to demonstrate how we teach high level/ adult concepts (Big Ideas) to our preschool population (Small Places). Past successful topics include civics, primary sources, economics, positive and negative space in art, heirlooms and micro-organisms.

After the presentation of our teaching techniques, there will be a workshop aimed at developing lesson plans making audience-suggested "big ideas" accessible to our smallest audience members. This session is for anyone wishing to start a preschool program or strengthen their current offerings.

Session B

Emergency Preparedness: big challenges, simple solutions

Christina Cain (she/her), Anthropology Collections Manager and NAGPRA Coordinator, University of Colorado Museum of Natural History
Korina Ike (she/her), Director, Hulett Museum

All collections will face an emergency at some point. Being prepared will minimize the impact on and loss of our cultural heritage. In this session, participants will learn the basics of emergency preparedness, including understanding the most common risks, identifying needed supplies, and hearing successful case studies. Attendees will participate in an exercise to begin risk assessment and development of an emergency plan for their institution.

Session C

Bigger Than Just Us: a collaboration of partners to reach a bigger audience

Eric Chapman, Eric Chapman (he/him), Exhibits and Marketing Assistant, Aurora History Museum
Chuck Stout (he/him), Curator, Wings Over the Rockies Museum

The Aurora History Museum is a small history museum focused on the local stories that make the city a place of historical and cultural significance. While we are a smaller institution, we make it our mission to have a big impact in our community. The exhibition, Building on

Stanley's Foundation, began when another museum, Wings Over the Rockies, reached out to Stanley Marketplace, a local business venue but also one of Aurora's landmarked historic sites, to install artifacts in display cases there. Wings reached out to us to collaborate on the exhibit combining our resources into a great educational opportunity. It allowed us to create something that alone would be difficult to achieve: Stanley Marketplace wanted to talk about the history of their facility but did not have the content knowledge or the expertise to create an exhibit; Wings Over the Rockies wanted to create an new offsite exhibit they had not done before but had limited staffing resources and design capabilities; Aurora History Museum had a story they wanted to get out to a larger audience but lacked financial resources and artifacts to support that story; City of Aurora Communications Department could support our exhibit designers and provide financial support, while also making sure messaging and marketing goals were being met with all the city partners that were involved. As a collaborative team, we were able to achieve something that could truly connect people with the history in their own backyards.

Keynote

Reimaging Ethnographic Objects: An Exploration of Human-Object Interactions in Museums

Keynote Speaker: *Nicole M. Crawford (she/her), Director & Chief Curator, University of Wyoming Art Museum*

Introductory remarks: *Rebecca Hunt (she/her), Associate Professor Emerita, Geoff Hunt, Board Member*

In their keynote introductory remarks, Rebecca and Geoff Hunt will share their perceptions of how the museum field has changed in the last fifty years and how Wyoming and Colorado museums have evolved with the times.

Nicole M. Crawford's keynote talk aims to revolutionize discussions about ethnographic objects in museums, steering away from conventional legal and ethical debates on repatriation. Crawford's research seeks to uncover hidden meanings in museum objects and their originating cultures, injecting complexity into discussions that involve curators, audiences, and source communities. She argues that ethnographic objects can reveal concealed meanings, reshaping human-object interactions beyond their physicality. Rejecting rigid classifications, this presentation proposes a shift in perspective to redefine how we discuss human-object relationships in museum collections using specific cases of objects held in museum collections and efforts to include source community information with the object. Emphasizing the importance of truth and meaning construction, this innovative approach challenges established perspectives, fostering a deeper understanding of ethnographic objects within museums.

Saturday Workshops

9:00 am-noon

Workshop A

Implementing NAGPRA & the New Regulations

Anne Amati (she/her), NAGPRA Coordinator/Registrar, University of Denver Museum of Anthropology
Christina Cain (she/her), Anthropology Collections Manager and NAGPRA Coordinator, University of Colorado Museum of Natural History
Joshua Mann, Director, Eastern Shoshone Tribal Historic Preservation Office

Does your museum curate Native American human remains or cultural items and has it received Federal funding, either directly or indirectly through pass-through funding, after November 16, 1990? If the answer is yes, then your museum must comply with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). Workshop participants will learn about recent updates to the regulations and how they can stay in compliance with the law. Presenters will cover what types of items are eligible for repatriation under the law and how to move through the NAGPRA process. Consultation with Tribes is crucial, and we will explain when to consult and share examples of how to consult. We will describe the new requirements and suggest ways your museum can implement them. Cultural affiliation is a key concept under NAGPRA, and we will review the lines of evidence museums can use to make cultural affiliation determinations, new guidance for affiliation based on geography alone, and how to move forward if no cultural affiliation determination can be made.

Workshop B

Writing Interpretation That's Worthwhile

Elisabeth DeGrenier (she/her), Supervisor of Exhibits & Programs, Wyoming State Museum

As historians, archivists, and enthusiastic researchers, reducing the interpretive information we relay to our guests can be challenging. While we may feel that it's all relevant to the story we're telling, studies show that general visitors can quickly lose interest or completely ignore text, making our interpretation … pointless.

So, how do we balance sharing relevant research and holding our visitor's interest?

During this workshop, attendees will receive an overview of the research about visitors' behaviors. Then, we will review interpretive guidelines, such as identifying your audience, getting to the point, and finding your "why."

Attendees will then walk through an abbreviated exhibit interpretation process. First, as a group, we will look at a predetermined topic, identify subjects to address, and then settle on a theme. Next, in smaller groups or individually (depending on the number of participants), attendees will be given research material and selected artifacts. They will use these resources to draft an intro panel, topic panel, and object label. Finally, we will share everyone's interpretative drafts with the group and go through the editing process.

By the end of this workshop, attendees will learn how to identify their audience, understand the expectations and behaviors of general museum visitors, and, by going through a brief interpretive process, know how to convey historical research and content through interpretation effectively.

Poster Lounge

Poster A

Wonder Women of the West: connecting pop culture, history, & Gen Z

Jana Arnold (she/her), Guest Services Specialist, Frisco Historic Park & Museum

This past year, we developed a presentation comparing the women of Frisco and Summit County to the super women of comic books. We submitted the idea to Denver FanExpo, a local comic con, and were accepted to present. Denver FanExpo offers programming to help educators find new ways to connect with students and enhance learning different forms of pop culture. While our Museum has a well established educational component, this was an audience we had not yet connected to. Even though our time slot occurred at the same time as one of the most significant panels of the weekend, we still had an engaged and interactive audience for the full presentation. We saw immediate benefits with attendees visiting the Museum the following weekend. This presentation will highlight the steps taken to develop the presentation, the resources used, and how to bring it to an audience that may not have previously been considered.

Poster B

Big Change and Resistance: activists, knowledge equity, and the contention of Colorado's psychedelic drug policy reform

Bianca Barriskill (she/her), Program Assistant, Golden History Museum

In November of 2022, Colorado became the first state in the nation to decriminalize psychedelics for personal and regulated use after passing Proposition (Prop) 122. Its passage created the Natural Medicine Health Act, which decriminalized four substances: Psilocybin or Psilocin, Ibogaine, Mescaline, and Dimethyltryptamine. In the spring of 2023, while interning for History Colorado, I collected oral histories from activists, politicians, and medicine people in relation to Prop 122 and its cultural impact. The legislation is historical in nature: decriminalization of four psychedelic compounds all at once, a scale indicative of a "big idea." However, from smaller spaces came resistance and activism against the forces of colonization and commodification, specifically from members of some of Colorado's Indigenous and BIPOC communities. This poster is the focus of how the oral history project advanced a big idea: BIPOC knowledge equity amidst policy reform and shifting cultural norms.

Poster C

The Journey of the Iconic Cactus Motel Sign

Eric Chapman (he/him), Exhibits and Marketing Assistant, Aurora History Museum

The Cactus Motel originally opened in 1948 along Colfax Avenue, the main thoroughfare connecting Aurora and Denver. The neon sign was an icon of that strip for decades and a fixture for Colfax travelers and drivers. After the business closed, the sign was taken down and saved by the Aurora History Museum in 1995. However, with limited space and financial resources the

cactus sign was placed in storage for years out at the Aurora Reservoir. It wasn't until 2022 and the museum's exhibition, Beyond the Storefront, that an effort to restore the sign began. A team from the museum cleaned the sign and built a display structure so it could be put on display in the exhibit. Once the temporary exhibition closed the sign was relocated within the museum to a permanent gallery next to the historic Trolley Trailer 610. Now visitors can see it on display after nearly 20 years of being removed from Colfax Avenue.

Poster D

Clearing Out the Cobwebs: campus reorganization project at the Louisville Historical Museum

Hadley Kluber Seifert (she/her), Collections Management, Louisville Historical Museum

Small museums with localized collections have incredible stories to tell; as is the case with the Louisville Historical Museum in Louisville, Colorado. This museum, like many other small museums, have been understaffed and used their limited resources to focus more on daily operations rather than collections management. Recently, the museum has been able to fund a part time Collections Management position which I am fortunate enough to fill. Even in my short time here, it is clear the collection has many diverse stories to tell, yet in its current state remains silent. I will be presenting on the massive campus reorganization project I am spearheading which focuses on moving collections materials from various locations around the museum campus and the city itself into our designated collections and processing rooms. This is intended not as an indictment on the Museum, but rather as an illustrative case study for other museums who may be experiencing similar backlog and storage concerns for their own collections. The poster will include photographs, spreadsheets and discuss the ways in which the project (still underway) has been successful while mentioning specific pitfalls to avoid.

Poster E

Creating Space for Historic Firearms

Sydney Mauck (she/her), Anschutz Military Collections Specialist, History Colorado, Denver, CO

Historic firearms present unique challenges for museums with limited storage space. Factors, like design, age, and physical condition, must be considered when creating a long term preservation plan. History Colorado recently completed a large rehousing project to improve the storage conditions and long term preservation of the 315 historic long barreled firearms in its collection. This poster will discuss our big idea to use cost-effective, archival-safe materials and existing space in our collection storage to create new vertical storage units for this project. Specialized, archival-safe firearm cabinets are expensive and require large amounts of space for installation. This poster will discuss the research and design process for creating custom firearm mounts while addressing the benefits and weaknesses of vertical shelving storage versus horizontal drawer storage. The goal is to share creative solutions for how to maximize the use of existing storage space for large scale rehousing projects.

Poster F

Regional Museum Group Builds Partnership and Capacity

Marian Bender (she/her), Executive Director, Washakie Museum & Cultural Center, Worland, WY

The Bighorn Basin Association of Museums brings staff together from 14+ small museums at semiannual meetings to build collaboration, share skills, cross-promote, and commiserate. Hear how the group started, how meetings are run, and benefits that members have received.

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