CWAM 2025 Annual Meeting

By John Russell

At the 2025 CWAM Annual Meeting in Greeley (my first!), I found value in each session I attended, yet one particularly stood out: “You Should Write a Book On That!”, a panel of authors and publishers explaining the process a museum takes in producing books in-house on local history. Hearing Rose and Blair (both from Frisco Historic Park & Museum) explain their process opened my eyes to the ambition and skill required to produce even a small book. In conversation with publisher Julie VanLaanen (Filter Press, LLC), the panel inspired me towards writing while demystifying (but not underestimating) the intensive publishing process. Their roadmap from bullet-points to manuscript to book made the whole enterprise seem slightly less intimidating.

Over the last few years, I’ve noticed that writing (or reading) longer form content feels harder to do, so hearing actual museum professionals in Colorado report success in this area gives me some new goals to work towards, mainly related to staying organized and pushing oneself to new heights of focus. This panel drove home that writing a successful work of nonfiction requires careful use of primary sources, ethical discernment, business sense, creative vision and close collaboration with others. At CWAM 2025, I gravitated most towards the ambition-heavy sessions, and “You Should Write a Book on That!” really stuck in my mind. Much thanks to the Rose, Blair, and Julie for the great talk.