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In 2016 the Washington State Historical Society embraced a new mission to partner with our communities to explore how history connects us all. While not a significant departure from our past focus, I feel that our new mission statement better embodies today’s Historical Society by emphasizing three core activities:

- Partnering – Whether working with the Shoalwater Bay Tribe to create an original exhibit or hosting a Broadway Center production on civil rights in America, our programs are stronger when we partner with the diverse communities of our state.

- Exploring – Exploration is at the root of historical inquiry. The nearly 25,000 K-12 students served by the Society each year explore history through solving history mysteries in the History Lab, going on museum scavenger hunts, and researching diverse topics through primary sources for National History Day.

- Connecting – History has the power to connect us to each other and to our shared past. More than ever, we are focused on helping our audiences explore our common values and creating a forum for civic dialogue.

Thank you for sharing this journey with us for the past 125 years. We are, and will remain, your historical society, focused on telling your stories. Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Executive director Jennifer Kilmer.
by the numbers

Adults: 36,468
Students: 7,759
Seniors (ages 60+): 6,538
Children (ages 0-5): 2,414
Military: 1,683

Adult Members: 831
Child Members: 203
Military Members: 205
Senior Members: 535
Student Members: 335

Quest Families: 471
Quest Individuals: 109
Dual Senior: 364
Family: 270
Individual Senior: 226
Sustaining: 120
Dual: 102
Individual: 69
Student/Teacher: 51
Benefactor: 25
Patron: 15
Curator’s Club: 7
Chairman’s Club: 1
Director’s Club: 1
This fiscal year brought exciting new updates to our flagship exhibit: The Great Hall of Washington History. Two new areas, “Shaping a New World” and “The Ancient Ones,” opened in September 2015. From the unique geology of Washington to the stunning diversity of the Clovis Points, the new exhibit areas are bright and inviting, and they provide guests with opportunities to learn more about early Washington. A third new area, to the left of the gallery entrance, is now in development. Called “Washington, Our Home,” this section will focus on the broad diversity of individuals who have immigrated to Washington from other states and around the world.

The year brought some exciting temporary exhibits to the History Museum’s fifth floor. The People of the Adze: The Shoalwater Bay Carving Program, on exhibit during the summer of 2015, highlighted the revitalization of Native culture through traditional arts. October 2015 saw the opening of Arctic Ambitions: Captain Cook and the Northwest Passage, created in partnership with the Anchorage Museum. The exhibition examined the legacies of Cook’s northern voyage, including changes to indigenous life, and was highlighted by artifacts from around the world, including Captain Cook’s handwritten journal, displayed in a climate-controlled case. Museums from seven countries combined artifacts for this exhibit.
In February 2016, the exhibit *125 Years of Collecting and Connecting* opened to mark the Historical Society’s 125th anniversary. It featured some of the Historical Society’s most valued artifacts. An adjunct display featured artifacts selected by a group of community representatives for their historical significance. From Chief Lechi’s paddle to DB Cooper’s parachute, *125 Years* featured artifacts and ephemera that truly encompass the breadth of the collections the Historical Society holds in trust for the people of Washington.

The History Museum’s fifth-floor exhibit space saw an explosion of fabric and color in April 2016 with the opening of *Cutting Edge: Art Quilts of Washington*, a juried textile show produced in partnership with the Contemporary Quilt Art Association. The exhibit included many examples of the innovative techniques and finely-honed craftsmanship involved in creating modern-day fiber arts as well as the range of messages and stories that can be conveyed through quilting. *Cutting Edge* also included seven historical quilts from the Society’s own collection.

In June the History Museum opened the 10th annual *IN THE SPIRIT Contemporary Native Arts Exhibit*. This show included pieces of traditional design as well as contemporary themes created by Native artists. Best in Show went to Kathey Ervin for *High Tea*; Ka’ilaka Farrell-Smith received the Honoring the Northwest award; the Honoring the Ancestors award went to Earl Davis; and Jennifer Angaiak Wood took the Honoring Innovation award.

The award-winning *High Tea*, by Kathey Ervin, is now part of the Washington State Historic Society’s collection.
Our main purpose at the Washington State History Museum is to connect the people of Washington with their history. We continually build on this connection by hosting thousands of kindergarten through college-age students in a variety of programs, events, and field trip opportunities. This school year we engaged nearly 14,500 students throughout Washington with the history of our state and region.

Visiting students find it exciting to uncover our state’s past. The History Lab, one of our most popular programs, lets students become detectives as they search for answers to a history mystery while learning about events that shaped the Washington they know today.

Another of our most requested programs is “Ghosts of the Great Hall,” where historical figures come to life through interactive portrayals. We presented two of these programs during the last year, serving 1,500 students at all grade levels. The fall 2015 program explored the experiences of individuals impacted by James Cook’s explorations of the Pacific Northwest. The spring 2016 “Ghosts” program focused on the story of aviation in Washington, featuring pioneering greats like William Boeing and Bessie Coleman.

"The Ghosts of the Great Hall is the kind of program that they will remember at your museum. The actors were able to bring the history to life and to give some of the students the chance to interact with them. It was truly a memorable experience for the students and the museum staff."
In addition to students within the museum’s walls, students across the state are able to have hands-on interactions with Washington history in their own classrooms through our collection of History Boxes. The kits provided touchable artifacts, books, and lessons for 1,400 students. History Box topics range from Coast Salish ways of life and the “Ring of Fire” to Washington women’s history.

Five hundred teachers attended the Educator Night hosted by museums and cultural institutions throughout Pierce County to learn about resources available to them. Teachers received a special behind-the-scenes look at the newest section of the History Museum’s permanent exhibit, presented by the lead curator. In our continuing effort to serve all of Washington’s students through innovative, educational programming, the Historical Society also participated in the first annual Full STEAM Ahead teacher workshop, presenting a historical topic through a scientific lens. Teachers learned about the mysterious death of Meriwether Lewis and took away lessons to use in their classrooms.

Students are captivated by actors performing for the History Museum’s signature offering, “Ghosts of the Great Hall.”
This past year the Historical Society provided opportunities for the public to engage in over 50 events and public programs, ranging from in-depth history workshops to exhibit openings, special celebrations and hands-on classes for young learners. The common goal was to open a window into the past for our visitors, connecting them with collections, exhibits, staff, and expert community partners.

The museum hosted several large community events. The 10th annual IN THE SPIRIT Native Arts Market and Festival welcomed nearly 1,200 attendees for a day-long celebration of art, culture, music, and dance, with performances ranging from Chippewa Cree flute music to costumed productions of traditional Kwakwaka’wakw stories.

The annual Veterans Day event offered free admission to active and former members of the military and their families. Through partnership with the Buffalo Soldiers Museum, the day included a family-friendly program about the army’s 10th Cavalry “Buffalo Soldiers” Regiment, presented by Dr. Quintard Taylor Jr. and attended by nearly 100 visitors.
In January the museum held its annual Martin Luther King Jr. commemoration, with free general admission all day. Through a partnership with ONYX Fine Arts Collective, artists guided 150 young visitors and their families through an artistic exercise in creative expression titled “Finding Your Voice Through Art.” The museum partnered with the Broadway Center for Performing Arts to present a performance for 250 visitors of *Get on the Bus*, a play that interweaves stories from multiple generations of individuals involved in civil rights.

Special events were not the only path to learning at the museum. Lectures addressed such topics as climbing Mount Rainier in the middle of a severe storm, aviation history of the zeppelin, and early European exploration of Puget Sound. For a more in-depth experience, visitors joined us at workshops on such topics as Aleut weaving and prehistoric technology and tools. Our youngest learners got busy using natural dyes from Washington plants and learning about early pioneer life.

As always, these events and programs were made stronger through our community partnerships, tapping into the expertise, connections, and know-how of our trusted collaborators. From a lecture series with University of Washington-Tacoma to activities with many tribal partners and fellow nonprofits dedicated to history and culture, the History Museum provided a broad array of collaborative public programs and events.
The Washington State Historical Society connects with individuals across the state through community outreach ranging from workshops for museum professionals to participating in community festivals. Our efforts served approximately 4,000 individuals and included history and arts organizations, community members, and government and tribal agencies.

Situated off the History Museum’s main lobby, our Community Gallery provides a place where our community partners can engage with the public by sharing their organizational work and mission through self-designed exhibits. The space is open to the public free of charge.

During this past fiscal year, the Community Gallery hosted Washington State Parks through the Lens of Asahel Curtis, by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission; A Decade of Art, by Onyx Fine Arts Collective; Building Strong Boats—Sailing Rough Waters, by Tacoma Community Boat Builders; and Shalom! Open for Business: Tales of Jewish Merchants in Washington State, by the Washington State Jewish Historical Society.
Other programming included History Happy Hours in Tacoma and Olympia with our partners at State Archives, State Parks, Tacoma Historical Society, and the Tacoma Historic Preservation Office. We also co-hosted events such as a film screening of *Honor and Sacrifice: the Roy Matsumoto Story*, with the Secretary of State’s Office at the State Capitol Building.

Community events remained a priority this year. We hosted an activity table at Joint Base Lewis-McChord’s Family Day, where children created artistic representations of what they like about living in Washington. We also presented a hands-on activity cart at the Tacoma Public Schools’ Deaf Picnic. This year’s incoming University of Washington–Tacoma class was met by Historical Society staff members who recommended upcoming events and reminded them that their admission to the History Museum is free thanks to our Visiting Institutional Partners program.

As manager of the Washington Women’s History Consortium, the Historical Society is committed to celebrating the role of women in Washington history. In the past year, for example, we hosted programs such as “Witness to History: The Story of Anna Louise Strong” and a talk by Ana Maria Spagna on women environmentalists in the Cascades and Sierras. We are currently working with the WHC Board to develop initiatives in connection with the National Suffrage Centennial in 2020.

Image from the Historical Society’s Asahel Curtis Collection, which appeared in the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission’s Community Gallery exhibit.
The Washington State Historical Society is the organizing institution and sponsor for **Washington History Day**. The program is a year-long educational initiative that encourages 6th- through 12th-grade students to actively engage in history education through research, interpretation, and creative expression.

Participation begins in the classroom where teachers guide students in choosing historical topics related to an annual theme. Students then conduct extensive primary and secondary research and draw conclusions about their topic’s significance in history, presenting their work in the form of original papers, websites, exhibits, performances, and documentaries. The program culminates in the Kenneth E. Behring National Contest held each June at the University of Maryland at College Park.

The 2015–16 school year saw over 10,000 students taking part at the local, regional, and state contests. Washington students advanced five projects to the national competition. Bobby Aiyer, from Evergreen Middle School in Redmond, won the gold medal for his Junior Individual Documentary, “The Awakening of the Sleeping Giant: How Sino-American Rapprochement Triggered China’s Meteoric Rise and What It Means Today.” His was the first project from Evergreen Middle School to win a medal at the national contest.
Supporters of the Washington State Historical Society are true partners in all of our milestones and successes. Heritage Circle donors—those whose annual giving exceeds $500—have helped us realize exhibit plans, artifact and ephemera conservation projects, and statewide programs like History Day. All of our donors have a direct impact on exhibits, educational programs, and collections. Members provide crucial support while benefiting from opportunities like free museum admission, guest passes, a subscription to COLUMBIA magazine, and first looks at our major exhibitions. The “Circle” continued to expand this past year as many members elected to make additional History Fund donations and previous donors chose to increase their annual gift.

In the 2015–16 fiscal year the Historical Society received grants from public entities, private foundations and tribal governments. We were privileged to collaborate with Washington-based partners whose sponsorship reflected our shared values of community service and outreach. The Tacoma Arts Commission, for example, has been a champion of the IN THE SPIRIT Native Arts Market & Festival. Boeing is investing in our future with a two-year grant focused on developing interpretive plans for our gallery renovations. In another inspiring example, the Baker and Kilworth Foundations, two charitable organizations based in Tacoma, facilitated programs that brought history to life for thousands of schoolchildren on History Museum field trips.

Donors from all walks of life have pledged planned gifts. We were grateful to receive a charitable bequest of more than $46,000 from Vivian Roberts, whose husband once served on our board of trustees. She included the Historical Society among several nonprofits whose missions aligned with her values and vision for a flourishing community.

Thank you
During the past year, the Collections Department has undertaken one new project and continued several ongoing projects to make the collections more accessible via the Historical Society’s online catalog.

The Society received a grant from Pierce County to have conservation work done on a large watercolor painting and three unique, colorful posters. The painting—a bird’s-eye view of Tacoma created in 1894—was badly stained and mounted on an acidic wooden board. Its size and the extent of the damage made this work very challenging. The posters also have Tacoma themes. The grant funds, matched by several donors, allowed us to preserve these important local pieces.

Collections staff and volunteers catalog and photograph artifacts and process manuscript collections on an ongoing basis. During the 2015–16 fiscal year, over 5,100 artifacts, photographs, and documents were cataloged. Most of these items were also scanned or photographed to provide our audiences with a visual record along with historical data on each object.

Now in its second year, a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services funds cataloging and photographing the Society’s Native American collections. Under this grant the department has cataloged and photographed over 1,000 artifacts.
We continue to acquire new collections from our generous donors. Some of the most notable additions to the collection in the 2015–16 fiscal year include:

- Diaries and photographs by Williard Nelson Handsaker. Gift of William Handsaker, who worked for the Northern Pacific Railway.


- Papers of Rita Shaw, progressive activist, labor organizer, and feminist. Gift of Rita Shaw.


This 60-by-40-inch postage stamp eagle, a gift of Midge Conner, is just one of many items donated to the Washington State Historical Society’s collection in 2015–16.
Keeping history and heritage alive and accessible requires ongoing, intentional effort. The legislature established the Heritage Capital Projects program in 1995 to “support capital needs and facilities of heritage organizations, tribal governments, public development authorities, and local government agencies that interpret and preserve Washington’s history and heritage.” It then appointed the Washington State Historical Society to administer the program. Since that time, the Society has worked to engage hundreds of local organizations as partners in this significant work.

In the program’s 10th consecutive biennium, the 2015–17 state capital budget awarded $10 million for 29 important new projects. In total, the state has awarded over $67 million in funding assistance, leveraging over $135 million in support of 276 brick-and-mortar projects that preserve and interpret Washington’s history and heritage and make it accessible for current and future generations.

While Historical Society staff members have provided ongoing contract management and technical assistance toward the successful completion of funded projects, work this fiscal year focused on increasing the quality, quantity, and diversity of future HCP proposals through broader outreach, project coaching, and capacity building.

The 1868 historic Colville Indian Agency Cabin in the town of Chewelah is one of Washington’s oldest territorial structures.
After recognizing that smaller organizations and rural areas were not engaging in the program, Historical Society staff developed a series of outreach workshops in fall 2015 aimed at small, rural communities. Some 165 attendees learned of the program, engaged in roundtable discussions of projects being considered, and received guidance and resources to help them design an appropriate project and craft a compelling application.

In an effort to broaden awareness of the HCP program’s funding possibilities, staff outreach expanded to include speaking and networking at state conferences on infrastructure funding, downtown revitalization, historic preservation, and cultural resources. Program staff also visited potential applicants on project sites and initiated collaboration with associations and organizations caring for heritage resources.

The result was that 83 individuals attended one of six HCP Grant Application Workshops and 44 submitted applications to be reviewed by staff. Ultimately, HCP staff forwarded 39 applications to an advisory panel for independent review, evaluation, and scoring. Thirty-five projects totaling close to $9 million were recommended for funding in the 2017–19 biennium, and almost half of them are situated in small communities or rural areas.

Coaching early and often throughout the HCP process and strengthening organizational capacity were key success factors for the program. Continued outreach and collaboration throughout the state—including development of an HCP database—are on the horizon for the next fiscal year.

The 1902 Railroad Camp near Hoquiam was once a hub for the Polson Logging Company.
The Great Washington Heritage Geo-Adventure was a highlight of the past year. Staff brainstormed, planned, and implemented the statewide geocaching event to run in conjunction with the Historical Society’s quasquicentennial. Contestants had 125 days to search out 25 hidden caches in five regions around the state at sites that have all received Capital Heritage Grant funding.

The History Museum spearheaded the effort to expand public awareness of the Tacoma Museum District’s presence and promote the Tacoma Museum Pass both regionally and statewide. In collaboration with LeMay–America’s Car Museum, the Tacoma Art Museum, and the Museum of Glass, the History Museum was able to bring Foss Waterway Seaport and Children’s Museum of Tacoma in as full partners.

The 2015–16 fiscal year saw a number of Marketing and Communications Department efforts that helped publicize and promote both the Washington State Historical Society and the Washington State History Museum, along with history-themed programs, events, and educational opportunities.

Staff introduced an internal newsletter to facilitate better communication among employees at all agency levels: The Cog – because this doesn’t run without every single one.
In addition, on the eve of its 30th anniversary, the Historical Society’s popular history quarterly, *COLUMBIA The Magazine of Northwest History*, received a Board Award of Excellence from the Washington Museum Association and a Leadership in History Award of Merit from the American Association for State and Local History.

Hundreds of people undertook The Great Washington Heritage Geo-Adventure, finding caches all around the state.

The cover of the summer 2016 edition of *COLUMBIA* featured a military heritage poster dedicated to the World War II Nisei soldiers of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team in honor of their service and sacrifice.
Each year the Washington State Historical Society bestows a number of awards on people and organizations who have made outstanding contributions to Washington’s history, heritage, and culture. The 2016 winners are listed below:


John McClelland, Jr. Award – David Delbert Kruger, for his article, *The Main Street Spirit of JCPenney: A Department Store Chain in the Downtowns of Washington*

David Douglas Award – Northwest News Network and Anna King, for *Daughters of Hanford*, a series of radio pieces, complementary portraits and an exhibit at The Reach Museum highlighting underrepresented women’s perspectives of the nuclear site.

Robert Gray Medal – Barry Gough

Peace and Friendship Award – Ed Carriere and Dale Croes

Governor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching History – Michelle Hall

Lorraine Wojahn Award – Susan Long

Jean Richards Award – Bill Brookreson and the South Sound Native Plant Society

The awards were presented at the Washington State Historical Society’s 2016 annual meeting in September. More information about the awards is available at www.WashingtonHistory.org.
Volunteers make a difference at the Washington State Historical Society every single day. During the 2015–16 fiscal year, they boosted the Society’s effectiveness with over 8,000 hours of their time.

Volunteers assist collections staff at the Research Center, facilitate school programs and serve as ambassadors and gallery interpreters at the History Museum. They help out in Marketing and Communications. Volunteers contribute their efforts during both on-site and off-site special events, including Model Train Festival, IN THE SPIRIT, and outreach fairs in Olympia and elsewhere.

Volunteers participate in continuing education opportunities throughout the year by attending curators’ gallery talks and quarterly briefings with the director. In return for donating their time and talent, Historical Society volunteers say they get a lot out of their experience. They come to the Society for a variety of reasons, and most continue to volunteer for years... even decades.

“I volunteer at the History Museum because it’s FUN. Everyone—volunteers, staff, visitors, and kids—has a good time!” —H.F.
current staff & affiliates

STAFF

Elena Balli
Dave Beals
David Becker
Laura Berry
SueSan Chan
Kyle Curtin
Tam Dang
Melissa Davis
Katherine Dorr
Christina Dubois
Erich R. Ebel
Klaus Elliott
Susan Hesselgrave
Nancy Jackson
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Marshall Joy
Sarah Kennedy
Jennifer Kilmer
Tuyen Kraber
Lissa Kramer
Michael Livingston
Joan Martin
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Mark McKee
Jeffrey Melton
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Lynette Miller
Ed Nolan
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Maria Pascualy
Emma Pierce
Eileen Price
Misty Reese
Annie Roberts
Janet Rogerson
Susan Rohrer
Marian Shepherd
Jason Sterling
Mark Sylvester
Patricia Tobias

AFFILIATES

Affiliate Plus Members
Anacortes Museum
Harbor History Museum
Kittitas County Historical Museum
Legacy Washington
Pacific County Historical Society

Affiliate Members
Points Northeast Historical Society
Appelo Archives Center
Clallam County Historical Society
Des Moines Historical Society

Fort Nisqually Living History Museum
Historic Fort Steilacoom
Kitsap County Historical Society Museum
Lakewood Historical Society
League of Snohomish County
Heritage Organizations
Okanogan County Historical Society
Olympia Historical Society & Bigelow House Museum
Puget Sound Civil War Round Table (PSCWRT)
Quilcene Historical Museum
Redmond Historical Society
Yakima Valley Museum

Mark Vessey
Julia White
Gwen Whiting
Curtis Williams
Molly Wilmoth
Makayla Wood