

University of Wyoming American Heritage Center

External Review Report

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This report is based on a site visit to Laramie, February 21-23, 2018; comprehensive review of documents supplied to the external review team; and subsequent input via telephone and e-mail.

Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary	2
II. Identity, Mission, Vision, and Strategic Planning	5
III. Operations	6
A. Internal: Content Curation	7
B. Internal: Systems for Access and Use	12
C. External Relationships and Programming	14
D. Personnel	21
E. Facilities	28
F. Budget	29
IV. Issues, Obstacles, and Potentials	31
A. Areas for Significant Action	31
B. Alternatives for AHC Administrative Reporting Line	33
C. Alternatives for AHC Leadership Structure	34
V. Conclusions	35
Appendices	37
Appendix A: Site Visit Itinerary, February 21-23, 2018	38
Appendix B: Additional Interviews	40
Appendix C: List of Resources Consulted	41
Appendix D: Leadership Rubric	43

I. Executive Summary

The American Heritage Center (AHC) is a unique institution and one of the nation's premier manuscript repositories. AHC has the enviable status of a strong name recognition among scholars and archival professionals. While the institution suffers some lingering negative public associations with an early Director and his highly ambitious but problematic collecting strategy, it is now well known for state of the art professional practice, exceptionally strong collections, and an essential role in fostering research, teaching, and learning about the American West in general and Wyoming in particular. It is somewhat ironic that it may be better known abroad than on campus. This reputation stems from prominent work of AHC staff over many decades, work that was acknowledged with a Distinguished Service Award from the Society of American Archivists, the highest honor possible for a U.S. historical repository.

The Center serves a de facto role as the primary manuscript repository for the State of Wyoming. Many informants we met fail to realize that the Wyoming State Archives in Cheyenne only collects the records of state government offices and agencies. Although the American Heritage Center collects much more than simply Wyoming material, the University and State must realize the important mandate assigned to AHC to preserve Wyoming manuscripts. While fulfilling a role expected of many land grant universities, this has not been generally recognized as a component of the University of Wyoming's mission.

The AHC is a leading site for scholarly inquiry, with a strong reputation nationally as well as international visibility. The scope and strengths of its collections place it on a short list of major, multipurpose "destination" archives in the United States. Though every major archives is unique to some extent, the combination of collecting areas, size, depth of collections, resources for scholars, and institutional culture are the major ingredients in creating an archives' scholarly reputation.

AHC is experiencing what one informant called "an awkward moment of institutional instability it doesn't deserve." The 2016 fiscal crisis affected all corners of the campus, impacting staffing levels in most University departments. In addition to the elimination of its Assistant Director position, AHC saw the departure of two long-serving leaders, Mark Greene and Rick Ewig. During the last five years, many internal operational and staffing issues have been left unresolved, outreach and external programming have stalled, new and essential activities around records management have been on hold, and the visibility of the Center has been reduced.

It is fitting that the University of Wyoming has now invited an external review of the AHC so that its strengths may be affirmed and articulated while its challenges are identified with reasonable solutions in mind. During a three-day visit to Laramie, our External Review Team spoke with a variety of stakeholders within the Center, elsewhere on campus, and external to the University of Wyoming; the Team's itinerary and list of subsequent telephone conferences are included as an appendix to this report. The Team also reviewed a large number of resource documents.

Overall, the American Heritage Center must improve its value statement to the University of Wyoming. Informants described the Center as the "crown jewel" of the University, though often only recognizing the specific programs and services they observed connecting AHC to UW students, students at other Wyoming colleges, K-12 schools, Wyoming residents, or the public at large. It points up the challenges the Center encounters in communicating the totality of its activity. The Center's reach extends beyond assumed humanist users, and supports teaching, learning, and research across many disciplines, including STEM fields. Beyond vision and mission statements, and beyond its draft strategic plan which aligns well with that of the University, AHC needs to present a clear and concise story that can be shared to faculty, staff, and administrators - and subsequently shared by them to the many communities both AHC and the University serve.

A variety of staffing issues must be resolved. Although described in greater detail elsewhere in this report, the most significant is the need to restore the two-person leadership team necessary to address the separate, but equally important, demands for programmatic leadership and operational efficiency. Enhanced staffing capacity for collections development, collections processing, instruction, outreach, public programming, and marketing/communications are also needed to return AHC to its full potential as a campus research laboratory, cultural asset for the State of Wyoming, and elite international repository. Internal morale issues cannot be overlooked, either, and issues of status, classification, and compensation must be addressed in an open, collegial, and professional manner.

Attention should be paid to several ongoing collecting areas. The University must develop a comprehensive plan, centered at AHC, for the identifying, management, preservation, and public accessibility of the University's institutional records and scholarly output in both tangible and digital forms. At the same time, AHC's non-UW collections must continue to grow through proactive acquisitions in critical topics such as conservation, water rights, entertainment, changes in energy policy, and tourism. The growth of collections - both University records and topical materials defined by its collecting strategy - will demand increasingly robust digital infrastructures. It is essential that that AHC participate in collaborative planning for digital systems with the Library, other campus units, and UW central IT. The increasing amount of born digital material - as well as increasing interest in online learning - will require significant investment in storage, systems, and personnel in the near future. Systems must be accessible to UW students, faculty, and administrators, but also to off-campus users in relation to AHC's role as the State's non-governmental manuscript repository in support of Wyoming residents, K-12 communities, and statewide cultural programming. Systems must also meet standards for long-term archival preservation.

The Center must develop an external engagement and marketing strategy, including a realistic staffing model to coordinate exhibits, events, conferences, symposia, and external communications. The program should be collaborative with other University units, regional scholars, and local community organizations. Increased engagement and cultural programming will raise the profile and value of the Center to the University and help to engage potential donors.

The Center must maintain, expand, and develop new partnerships with both on- and off-campus groups. Collaborations help to leverage scarce funds alongside other sources of support, broaden the impact of events, exhibits and activities, and generally heighten awareness of the Center's collections, staff, and programming. Partnerships can also help to address shortages in staff capacity by sharing positions (such as split appointments with other UW units for instruction, marketing and communications, or rare books curation) or by generating new sources of external funding (such as grant-funded initiatives or state support for expanded contact with Wyoming K-12 classrooms).

AHC is uniquely positioned for success with philanthropic giving, engaging a variety of inclined supporters who have little or no other contact with the University. The Center must continue to develop short- and long-term development strategies with the UW Foundation, coordinate the intersecting arcs of AHC's current collections and programming with the inclinations of potential donors, and develop regular engagement activities to keep donors informed about AHC collections, events, and programming.

The External Review Team received a variety of critiques of the Center's current reporting line to the Provost's Office and suggestions for alternative administrative structures of potential benefit to its collections and program. We feel, however, that an honest assessment of AHC's current physical facility, voluminous collections, unique operational and staffing needs, potential for philanthropic development, and complex on- and off-campus missions, should discourage this ongoing debate. While we acknowledge opportunities for partnerships and collaborations - many of which will create operational efficiencies and cultivate expanded external funding sources - the Center will benefit most by maintaining

its independent status and established brand identity. This is especially critical for any future growth and success of the AHC as THE institutional archive and source of records management. As a result of its important autonomy on campus, the highest priority must be given to recruiting and supporting a new leadership team to restore the American Heritage Center to its place amongst the nation's elite research centers, expand its program, and prove its value to the University of Wyoming, the state legislature, and the taxpayers of Wyoming.

II. Identity, Mission, Vision, and Strategic Planning

The American Heritage Center has a unique identity on campus, in the local community, across the state of Wyoming, throughout the American West, and among international scholars. This brand identity must be retained as the program moves forward, regardless of administrative reporting line and internal leadership structure.

In late 2017, AHC staff drafted a detailed Strategic Plan which directly aligns with the values and goals of the University and has set metrics to assess outcomes and their impact to the University and other stakeholders. It not only matches the University's aspirations, it also demonstrates an awareness and commitment to current best practices nationally in archival curation, outreach, and programming. It illustrates a professional level of expertise that is the foundation for a diligent use of limited resources. The plan is also an honest reveal of AHC's serious challenges. Perhaps understated is the point that AHC is at serious risk both of losing staff expertise and of failing to recruit new talent, given the lack of overall salary parity internal to the University and relatively low salaries compared to peer institutions. Also understated is the urgent need of the University to empower AHC to activate a much more ambitious records management role. The AHC appropriately acknowledges its gap in collections development and curation of digital content; any significant gain in this area does indeed require further funding and, in part, an authorization by University administrators for AHC to fully engage in records management, especially of records of essential value to the University in its administration. Inadequate records management is not just a risk to AHC, it is a risk to the University and its reputation, business efficiency, accountability, and heritage.

The Center's mission and vision statements support its well-established program for collections, facilities, and operational efficiency, including international recognition for its innovative curatorial practices. The Center has, however, experienced inconsistent periods of growth, great success, and challenge in its outreach and public programming. While mission, vision, and strategic plans provide road maps for faculty and staff direction, AHC needs to develop and deliver a more compelling and public value statement about its purpose and operations. Numerous stakeholders we met asked the question "What is the story that we're going to tell?" Perhaps more importantly, Provost Kate Miller has indicated that she "needs a story to tell about AHC." In short, the American Heritage Center is need of a short, zippy, and all-encompassing elevator speech. Many elements are in place but an even more compelling story could be told with additional support.

III. Operations

With the hope of breaking down the mass of information received from dozens of informants, we have structured this report along functional lines. The following sections examine internal aspects of the Center as an archival repository, curating content and deploying access systems to encourage and support use, AHC's external relationships and programming, and components of personnel, facilities, and budget which control its output capacity.

Given the unique qualities of AHC there is no single best list of comparator institutions. As one informant described it, AHC is a "very weird and special kind of archive." Further complicating any effort at comparison is the fact that metrics around archives have only recently begun to achieve a relative consistency across institutions. As one example, the Society of American Archivists and Association of College and Research Libraries have just this year completed the approval process for standardized statistical measures and metrics for public services in archival repositories and special collections libraries.

One reasonable comparison for AHC would be with repositories in similar regional/geographic settings. Like Alaska, Montana, Nevada, Utah, and the Dakotas, the state of Wyoming has a relatively small population distributed over a large land mass. Comparisons to the University of Alaska Fairbanks - and its archives program, which includes the Alaska and Polar Regions Collection - may be useful: both are land grant universities situated in small towns in states relying on a mineral and energy tax base. To the degree that this sort of comparison may be meaningful, it would warrant further exploration. But the external review team did not encounter this type of comparison being made by staff or stakeholders of AHC.

Another frame for comparative reference includes larger archives and manuscript collections at sizeable public universities such as Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon, or Wisconsin. Many of these, like AHC, bridge their university institutional missions with a manuscript collecting focus beyond their parent institutions, with thematic collecting on state, national, and international topics. This is a classic combination of roles - institutional archive and manuscript repository - which operate optimally in states where the collecting of historical materials is distributed among institutions (especially where the state archives has a relatively modest collecting program). By this comparison, AHC has had a reputation of punching above its weight in the recent past. It has excelled at the curation of large collections, so much that it is recognized as an international leader in innovative practice. What makes its recent leadership in curation even more exceptional is that it has occurred on a campus with no academic teaching and research in a degree program in archival administration. AHC has also excelled at impact in its educational programs, as Mark Greene and Rick Ewig noted in a printed article in 2013.¹ Where AHC lags in comparison with other archives and manuscript collections at sizeable universities is most notably in the curation of born-digital content and university archives/records management. In addition, with at least some of these comparables, there is a marked difference in salary levels.

One might also consider administrative structure, comparing AHC to universities with a large, standalone archival facility and operation. In some cases, such as the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, the repository remains independent of the university library system; the Bentley enjoys its status as an academic unit with a direct reporting line to the office of the provost and an executive committee that includes the university president, provost, vice president for government relations, vice president and general counsel, and an associate dean of undergraduate education. In other cases, such as the Reuther Library at Wayne State University, the repository reports to the Dean of Libraries and is integrated more fully with the library system and other distinctive collections. The current lack of full

¹ Mark A. Greene and Rick Ewig, "American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming," *Journal of the West* 52, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 65.

leadership at AHC obviously inhibits its internal reach at the University, especially given its relative autonomy in the organization.

A. Internal: Content Curation

In a published essay on leadership, Mark Greene noted that “virtually all of [the AHC’s] resources were devoted to collecting” under its first leader, with next to no cataloging, reference services, or conservation. There had been, according to a Society of American Archivists review in 1980, “a disproportionate amount of resources . . . concentrated on soliciting for and acquiring archival collections at the expense of making them available for research.”²

Mark Greene and other recent leaders at AHC successfully reoriented the AHC, so much that its reputation went from being a cautionary tale to one of enviable success in reinvention. Greene cited “a bias for action” in this same essay on leadership wherein he described the changes he led at AHC. Decades of undifferentiated collecting were addressed through a very ambitious reappraisal and curation so that a mountainous backlog was reduced and replaced by accessible collections.

Collection Policy and Strategy

A charitable description for the AHC’s early phase of collecting, in the mid twentieth century, would be to call it fairly “encyclopedic” in scope. As a result of a five-year review of the collections’ profile, in 2008 AHC refined its collecting focus so that it would build strength upon strength in select areas: aviation and aeronautics, military history, conservation, economic geology, ranching, postwar political conservatism, architecture, “Asia through American eyes,” journalism, the entertainment industry, and comic books and animation. These are all in addition to its institutional collecting as the official archive of the University. Such a broad scope can risk low yields in any one area. It can also divert attention from the area in greatest need of immediate action, namely the University archives and by extension campus life as experienced by students, faculty, administrators, alumni, and the larger community. While format in and of itself should not define a collecting policy, the lack of a proactive strategy for born digital content may ultimately compromise collecting in so many areas where content is now generated, circulated, and at least temporarily stored through digital tools, services, and infrastructure.

Acquisitions Approach

AHC does not employ any acquisitions field archivists. Instead, it utilizes a distributed approach to acquisitions in which an identified group of employees operate as an Acquisitions Committee, with subject specialties assigned to specific individuals (sometimes in an arbitrary fashion). Many of AHC’s endowed funds support the purchase of materials, so there are resources available to expand the collections through acquisitions other than just outright gift. New acquisitions are brought to the Committee for review and approval. The system allows a large number of people to participate and learn about existing collections and potential acquisitions. It also provides a committee the right to turn down a possible collection (and provides each archivist the opportunity to tell a donor it was the committee’s fault). The current practice of a very careful deliberation and confidence in declining materials not of

² Mark A. Greene, “Trying to Lead from Good to Great and Some Reflections on Leadership at All Levels,” in Bruce Dearstyne, ed., *Leading and Managing Archives and Records Programs: Strategies for Success* (Chicago: Neal-Schumann, 2008), 137-62; quote on page 2 of manuscript version supplied by Kathy Marquis.

interest stem no doubt from the earlier pathbreaking reappraisal and deaccessioning project of AHC, believed to be the largest of its kind in U.S. history.³

The AHC Director has historically played a key role in donor relations, serving often as the public face for the archives and its collecting mission. The Director or Assistant Director have been members or chaired the Acquisitions Committee and have been active in the field, assessing prospective collections and talking to donors about the Center. Staff from the UW Development office and members of the AHC Board of Advisors have also represented AHC to donors, developing leads and coordinating communications with the Director and other AHC employees. Recent gaps in executive leadership have created inconsistencies in donor relationships.

AHC employees acknowledge, as well, that the current collective approach has resulted in reactive forms of collecting. Since field work is not the primary duty of any single person, there isn't adequate coordination, direction or strategy to the work. Faculty and staff on the AHC Acquisitions Committee are often too overloaded with other work to proactively pursue leads or explore new subject areas. More often, AHC is responding to unsolicited offers of material and directing donors to the appropriate archivist assigned to that subject specialty. The last Director considered ways to create more proactive energy in acquisitions, possibly by selecting a larger, overarching theme like "environmental conservation" and having each subject specialist consider new materials in their area of interest. This seems an idea worthy of pursuit in the future, with broad themes of water rights, changes in energy policy, and tourism providing opportunities for growth in the collections.

Although a small matter from the External Review Team's perspective, AHC should be diligent in the language of its transfer deeds - and in communication with donors - concerning the licensing rights for donated images. One case was brought to our attention where a donor wished to provide digital scans to a personal friend for a book project. The donor felt that the request was mishandled and the matter has caused some lasting discomfort between this donor and the Center. This may be an isolated incident, but should serve as a reminder for clarity in donor communications.

Discovery/Description

AHC employs an innovative accessioning and initial description process. New collections arriving into the building are put through a somewhat standard accessioning system where they are registered formally into the holdings and ownership/transfer deeds are confirmed and recorded. An initial assessment is made of the collection, including a box-level content description, appraisal and weeding of undesirable components, and any necessary conservation treatment to address obvious hazards. While most archival agencies would move the unprocessed collection to the shelf to become part of an institutional backlog, unseen by the public and awaiting detailed processing, AHC provides an unusual descriptive element. Through a process staff describe as "content listing," staff create a collection-level descriptive record of the new materials and output both a MARC catalog record and an initial EAD finding aid (what they call a "trunc-EAD").

These simple, preliminary descriptive tools are immediately accessible by researchers and provide useful access points for this otherwise unprocessed material. While staff in the Arrangement and Description unit maintain lists for proactive and strategic detailed processing of collections, many collections move up

³ Mark A. Greene, "Four Forceful Phrases: An Archival Change Agent Muses on Museology," in *Active Collections*, Elizabeth Wood, Trevor Jones, and Rainey Tisdale, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2018). In this same essay, Greene credits the AHC as an almost exclusive inspiration for the Society of American Archivists' subsequent Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning.

this list because patrons have requested access to other collections they have discovered through one of the provisional records created during the “content listing” workflow.

This work is part of a larger transformation of archival descriptive practice, pioneered by Mark Greene and Dennis Messner while both were employed in Minnesota. The “More Product, Less Process” approach, commonly referred to by the acronym MPLP, provides a new way to complete “minimal processing” on collections as a means to move archival materials more quickly into public access.⁴ AHC became the location in which Greene and staff implemented and codified this practice, making the University of Wyoming known throughout the international archival profession. Greene and Messner’s original 2005 article has been cited by more than 250 subsequent authors, has inspired countless adoptions/adaptions of MPLP around the world, and has drawn international attention to AHC and the University of Wyoming.

The AHC is currently using CuadraSTAR Knowledge Center for Archives (SKCA) as its archival collection management software platform. The system allows analytics for reference and public access, is a stable proprietary database program used by numerous archives, and supports a variety of operational needs. It compares favorably to open source systems such as ArchivesSpace and its predecessors, Archon and Archivists Toolkit. The system outputs DACS-compliant EAD finding aids and MARC records. MARC records are shared to the campus OPAC and copied to OCLC WorldCat. EAD finding aids are shared to the Rocky Mountain Online Archive (RMOA), a collaborative effort by nearly 40 agencies in Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico. Staff are reasonably happy with this system, though some feel that AHC collections might get more exposure through the Archives West collaborative, covering Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Alaska, Montana, and Utah.

University Records

Of all areas of operation of the AHC, records management for the University of Wyoming is the least developed and most at risk, particularly in the area of digital records. Evidence of essential decision making by University leaders (either through formal documents and/or via email), commitments including promotion and tenure as well as philanthropic agreements, contractual documentation relating to course and degree requirements (either in print and/or online), other allocations of resources, and top-level communications of the University are not sufficiently managed in the short term nor curated and made accessible in the long run. There is an urgent need to conduct a gap analysis in the records of the University - possibly authorized in tandem with the University’s auditors - and to establish a concentrated effort around policy, authority, process, services, and support related to records management. Without adequate records management, the business and heritage of the University are at risk. The 2014 Retention Schedule and University Regulation 7-490 are fundamental resources but need to be matched by actual operations across campus, with dedicated resources from the University’s Information Technology services to support AHC. The beginnings of such an intention are noted in the DRAFT strategic plan for AHC from December 2017 but there is not an explicit urgency to this area. AHC must prioritize its effort to establish its identity as the single, formally identified repository for the University’s records, disentangling any curatorial practices as they relate to University records. Such entangled practices include the role Chisum has assumed in serving as a repository for essential University publications: the separation of publications from unpublished archival records of a parent institution is not in keeping with best practices for archival administration. (Federated repositories for archival content of a single institutional provenance risk mismanaged expectations for researchers and uneven curation, including

⁴ Mark Greene and Dennis Meissner, “More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing,” *The American Archivist* 68, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2005): 208-263.

preservation, over time). Furthermore, any web archiving of University records for ongoing curation should be an archival, rather than library, role. Official publications, either online or in print, are in scope for AHC's operations.

AHC operations around the identification, ingest, curation, and promotion of faculty collections are also in need of a critical review and documentation strategy. AHC excels at curation of analog content. What is currently lacking in terms of operations as they relate to faculty collections is twofold: leadership in collections development and the management of digital collections. The scholarly output of the University is of immense value but at risk by institutional amnesia. A new documentation strategy could rely upon best practices in the archival profession to establish field strategies for negotiations with select faculty, who could be readily incentivized to donate evidence of their academic accomplishments. There is no question that AHC has had such expertise in archival appraisal: it needs to be refreshed and redirected towards faculty who operate with digital tools for their research, teaching, service, and other activities on behalf of the University.

Digital Archives

Mark Greene astutely identified the essential gap here in terms of operations, by stating in 2015 that “[while] the AHC is a national model for collection development, management and cataloging, we lag behind the leaders, however, on the complex issues surrounding born-digital source material--its generation, assessment, preservation, and long-term utility.”⁵ There has been a pattern of new initiatives in digital curation but none have been adequately sustained or sufficient in scope. This area provides one obvious opportunity for collaboration and shared resources with the Library system and the larger university as well as the most important and unique role for AHC in terms of curating what is essential to the business and heritage of the University. The University of Wyoming has significant digital capacities, as evidenced by the NCAR-Wyoming Supercomputing Center (NWSC), and distributed in other ways across the entire University system. Archives are big data themselves and AHC is positioned to collaborate and partner with other campus units to digitally convert content, expand its acquisition of born digital content, and provide an incredible set of data resources in support of a variety of data mining and primary research activities.

Digital resources will be of increasing value as the University moves into online teaching and hybrid forms of instruction using online resources. Faculty have the opportunity to work directly with AHC faculty and staff to develop specific primary source sets and other learning tools, tailored specifically to their instruction needs. AHC currently falls short of what could be done in this area and needs to continue to push themselves.

The external review team saw indications that UW Libraries may have more resources committed to digital technologies and systems. AHC faculty and staff have had on-again/off-again relationships with their Library counterparts, but as one AHC employee indicated they've “been separate so long that it's hard to bring us together.” AHC and Library staff have common interests, but sometimes see different needs. Closer collaboration between the two units should be explored, seeking opportunities for shared systems and workflows. These conversations should include other cultural collections on campus which might benefit from integrated, enterprise-wide solutions.

⁵ Mark Greene, untitled manuscript, 2015, supplied by Kathy Marquis.

Toppan Rare Books

AHC has a significant collection of rare books, supported by endowment funds, known as the Toppan library. This collection is located in a separate area, off the main public space in the Centennial Complex. Patrons using the Toppan collections generally visit the Toppan space, rather than use the items in the main archival reading room. The collection originated with pre-1850 books held by UW libraries. In recent years it has generally been developed with an emphasis on teaching the history of books and bookmaking, with excellent examples of important milestones in the history of the book and printmaking. Less focus has been placed on building the collection in concert with the overall archival collecting goals of AHC, so while some researchers would undoubtedly find complementary materials in the Toppan collection, many others would not find many items of interest.

Not all books held by Toppan are catalogued in the library system, meaning that discovering Toppan resources can be difficult. This has become a sore point for some staff in the UW Library. Recent and current projects are addressing this backlog of uncatalogued titles, but these plans and their progress should be communicated more broadly to Library staff and interested parties on campus.

AHC must prepare for the impending retirement of the current Toppan curator. This will be an opportunity to assess the collection and how it relates to other AHC and Library collections (such as Chisum), as well as workflows for acquisition and cataloging, and future directions for the Toppan program.

One future direction could be to synchronize Toppan acquisitions and AHC collecting areas more closely, for example by collecting vigorously in mining and geology to support AHC's strengths in this area. Alternatively, Toppan could be considered for administrative reassignment to the Library. Even if the collection remains physically in the Centennial Complex, such a move might provide additional efficiencies related to book cataloging and integration of book-related instruction.

Artifacts

Although not a significant part of its collecting mission moving forward, AHC does hold a considerable collection of three-dimensional historical artifacts. Many were donated along with accompanying collections of documents and photographs - such as the Oscar statuette donated with the personal papers of Barbara Stanwyck - while others came to the Center during its expansive collecting activity in previous decades.

It would be prudent at some point in the future to conduct a specific external review of AHC's artifact collection. This review, ideally by a professional museum curator and/or conservator, could provide useful input on conservation needs of the materials, suggest additional ways to expose the collection to interested scholars, encourage use of the artifacts in exhibit, or recommend deaccession/transfer of specific items to more appropriate repositories.

Suggested Strategic Actions – Content Curation

- Review impact and use of the Rocky Mountain Online Archive (RMOA) as the online clearing house for AHC finding aids. Explore benefits and disadvantages of moving EAD content to the Archives West collaborative.
- Develop a pilot collecting initiative selecting around a larger, overarching Wyoming theme, such as conservation, water rights, changes in energy policy, or tourism. Have faculty and staff

develop an outline of potential subtopics in their assigned subject specialties and announce the activity broadly and publicly. Promote new additions to the collection throughout the project timeline. Regardless of total acquisitions, the program may be used to communicate about the Center, its programs, and its ongoing collecting mission.

- The Provost should seat a campus task force to review and recommend a consistent and comprehensive plan for the management, preservation, and public accessibility of University records in both tangible and digital forms. Resources must be provided to implement a professional, comprehensive records program which addresses legal and fiscal liability to the institution. This project must also address campus publications, faculty publications, and the scholarly output of the campus in various forms. Something must be done to address the scope creep of the University Library into areas of faculty scholarship and publication; it is an inefficient and artificial separation of roles that is confusing to the campus.
- AHC, the Library, other campus units and UW central IT need to develop a coordinated and collaborative user-centered approach to improve communication, planning, and coordination of technological infrastructures, particularly those used by students, faculty, scholars, and the public.
- Additional discussion and analysis should be directed to the interconnections between AHC's Toppan rare book collection, the Library's Chisum rare book collection, and the Library's main research monograph collection. Continued efficiencies should be sought in staffing, cataloging work, and integration of these combined collections into the teaching, learning, and research mission of the University.
- Conduct an external review of AHC's artifact collection to assess conservation needs, and recommend activities to promote and use the materials.

B. Internal: Systems for Access and Use

Reference

AHC works with a surprisingly wide range of research questions from a very wide range of user groups. The External Review Team received numerous and nearly unanimous positive comments about the high quality, personalized service that researchers receive in support of their work with AHC collections. Faculty and staff are working efficiently, but have reached their capacity for timely response to in-person and remote users. The reading room is currently staffed primarily by AHC faculty and a few specific staff, but discussions are underway toward a new staffing model utilizing a reading room manager. This would release faculty to other work away from the reference desk.

Student Engagement and Instruction

AHC faculty and staff are involved in a wide variety of teaching and learning programs. Coordination of class support is currently embedded in the job duties of the Head of Reference and shared among several individuals associated with the reference function. The group provides orientation classes, instruction on using primary sources, and information literacy with historical materials. Staff are currently able to meet the general needs for instruction, especially with the conversion of a space for use as an additional classroom. But staff are nervous to overcommit to any broad outreach in fear their current capacity will be quickly overrun. This has resulted in a reactive stance, accepting requests for instruction sessions but limited from any proactive expansion. The lack of current leadership has furthermore limited the empowerment of faculty archivists to fully engage in the changing nature of archival literacy and

instruction, where there has been a dramatic shift beyond mastery of content knowledge as the sole measure of success. New models for evaluation have emerged with broader definitions of intended learning outcomes.

Several informants suggested creation of a new and separate faculty line for an “Instruction Archivist” - or as our Team styled it, an “Academic and Outreach Archivist” - to expand and promote curricular capacity, and enhance student success using established tools for teaching with primary sources (TPS). This includes not only traditional approaches to bringing students physically to AHC to handle and use original manuscripts and artifacts, but also digital approaches to access for UW students, students at other Wyoming colleges, K-12 schools, Wyoming residents, and the public at large. A new position for an archivist to be responsible for an innovative academic outreach and collaboration program would place the AHC in line with other leading academic archives, where there are examples of reinventing the student’s learning experience. The AHC Teaching and Research Grants program is impressive for driving attention to the collections (one grant, reported to our Team, supported a graduate assistant in developing a subject guide for a new curricular unit involving an AHC-based student research project). A more explicit strategy in the program could maximize archival expertise in the design, execution, and evaluation of either individual assignments or overall courses, either onsite or online. New research and new standards in archival competencies could be adapted from scholars in education, history, and information studies, for example, along with archivists of leading academic archives.⁶ A new academic and outreach archivist would personify the opportunity to foreground the collaborative nature of successful innovation in archival pedagogy, and the resulting gain in measurable impact when it comes to learning.

Faculty Research

To the humanistic disciplines, such as History, English, American Studies, and others, AHC might be considered a massive shared laboratory, with priceless material available to advance scholarly work. Its presence at UW enhances the ability of University faculty in these areas to publish research, train graduate students, and attract and retain high-quality scholars. The History Department includes a tour of the AHC for all faculty candidates, and sees it as a “research engine.” A list of recent publications using the Center’s collections includes many UW faculty and is available here:

<http://www.uwyo.edu/ahc/research/products-of-research.html>

One Dean noted that “Archives are not just a stepchild of a history department, they are about understanding how the historical record records, reflects, and informs human action of all kinds.” It is also important that the University, faculty, and students understand the breadth and potential use of AHC’s historical collections outside of the traditional humanistic disciplines. AHC faculty and staff have made inroads into these areas, but much more can be done to connect others - including those in STEM disciplines - to the importance of historical evidence to current teaching, learning, and scholarship.

⁶ For academic developments in archives and historical thinking, see e.g.: Peter Carini, "Information Literacy for Archives and Special Collections: Defining Outcomes," *Libraries and the Academy* 16, no. 1 (January 2016): 191-206; Peter Carini, "Archivists as Educators: Integrating Primary Sources into the Curriculum," *Journal of Archival Organization* 7, no. 1-2 (2009): 41-50; Chauncey Monte-Sano, "Beyond Reading Comprehension and Summary: Learning to Read and Write in History by Focusing on Evidence, Perspective, and Interpretation," *Curriculum Inquiry* 41, no. 2 (2011): 212-249; Christopher J. Prom and Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe, eds., *Teaching with Primary Sources* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2016); Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001); Avishag Reisman and Sam Wineburg, "Teaching the Skill of Contextualizing in History," *Social Studies* 99, no. 5 (September/October 2008): 202-207; and Elizabeth Yakel and Deborah A. Torres, "AI: Archival Intelligence and User Expertise," *The American Archivist* 66, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2003): 51-78.

AHC prepares periodic exhibits highlighting research in its collections and also invites speakers utilizing the collections to speak about their work. Further expansion of these activities, with an emphasis on the work of University faculty and students outside traditional humanistic archival research, could help to alert the campus community to the breadth of potential research within AHC's collections.

Suggested Strategic Actions – Access and Use

- Implement changes to AHC reference operations utilizing a reading room manager in place of faculty as primary contact at the primary reference desk.
- Develop and fund an Academic and Outreach Archivist to lead and coordinate a proactive, innovative instruction program for UW students, students at other Wyoming colleges, K-12 schools, Wyoming residents, and the public at large.
- Expand outreach to UW departments and faculty in nontraditional disciplines, particularly STEM fields, to explore use of AHC collections in teaching, learning, and research.

C. External Relationships and Programming

The AHC is a leading site for scholarly inquiry, with a strong reputation nationally as well as international visibility. The scope and strengths of its collections place it on a short list of major, multipurpose “destination” archives in the United States. Though every major archives is unique to some extent, the combination of collecting areas, size, depth of collections, resources for scholars, and institutional culture are the major ingredients in creating an archives' scholarly reputation.

The Center serves a de facto role as the primary manuscript repository for the State of Wyoming. Staff we spoke to at the Wyoming State Archives were very clear about their role is to preserve the administrative history of state government, as represented by the official records of the governor, state legislature, and the various state agencies (mostly located in Cheyenne). The Wyoming State Archives does not collect and preserve significant amounts of non-governmental historical manuscripts, such as the personal papers of state residents, the organizational records of nonprofits or corporations, and other types of historical documents created outside of state government. When individuals approach the Wyoming State Archives with non-governmental manuscripts, which happens regularly, they refer these donors to AHC. As Wyoming's only 4-year academic institution, the Center's placement on the UW campus means many see it as “kind of the state historical society” when it comes to archives, one state employee told us. “Our collections complement each other, with official records of state government in Cheyenne, and the manuscripts in Laramie.” Although AHC collects much more than simply Wyoming material, the University and State should realize the important mandate it has accepted to preserve Wyoming manuscripts that the State would otherwise have to curate in some other location. This is not generally recognized as a component of University's role as the state's land grant institution, but is very much in keeping with the University's statewide mission.

Examining these factors, the AHC receives strong marks for its collecting areas, and excels in size and depth of collections within those. For example, three of the AHC's most prominent collecting areas are entertainment, resource extraction and energy, and Western history (especially Wyoming). Each of these areas illuminates the AHC's strength in different ways. For example, entertainment is a very difficult category to collect (because of the fame and the perceived dollar value attached to donations), and it is reasonable to think that the AHC's biggest asset in entertainment collecting is the very strong reputation it already enjoys. The entertainment collections make AHC a national and international destination for

scholars. The resource extraction collections also have international scope, but there is less competition for these archives. Nonetheless, the AHC's outstanding strength in this area enables it to remain a major player for future collections. Unlike entertainment, however, mining, resource extraction, and energy themes provide different opportunities for fundraising around telling the stories held in the archives. One of the AHC's named and endowed fellowships (the Bernard Majewski fellowship) was donated for precisely this reason, and another of the AHC's resource extraction collections, the Anaconda Geological collection, generates income through use by exploration and mining industry firms hoping to find interesting prospects in the massive archive of data. The AHC's Western collections, with their strength in Wyoming, are likewise very strong -- one of the best Western history archives in the country. One might say it is "natural" for a Wyoming archive to collect Wyoming, but the AHC is unusual in the depth and breadth of related Western collections. These collections, to an extent not seen with the entertainment and resource extraction areas, have a strong local interest as well as a national scholarly one. In each of these areas, the size of collections - that is, how much was collected from a particular donor - and the scope of collecting within each area -- i.e. how many related collections there are - create an accelerating effect. Strength begets additional strength, creating both an escalating scholarly reputation and a level of external interest that brings both monetary and manuscript donations to the AHC.

By sheer volume of its holdings, AHC is amongst a select group of very large archives in the United States, including the Harry Ransom at the University of Texas in Austin, Boston University, the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, the Reuther Library at Wayne State University, and the holdings of Harvard University, Columbia University, and the New York Public Library. Its collections elevate AHC to a very select group of repositories collecting on the American West, such as the Huntington Library, the Bancroft Library at the University of California, the Charles Redd Center for the American West at Brigham Young University, the Western History Collection of the Denver Public Library, the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas--Austin, the Minnesota Historical Society, the Wisconsin Historical Society, and Yale's Beinecke Library.

Faculty Research Centers

AHC directly supports public humanities and digital humanities initiatives, such as the oral history and folklore work done by Andrea Graham and John Dorst in American Studies, the Wyoming Institute for Humanities Research, and the interdisciplinary Ph.D. program under development in the College of Arts & Sciences. The External Review Team was told that UW considered inviting the Western History Association to move their administrative offices to Laramie, into physical spaces within AHC. Although the project didn't pan out, there could be opportunities for the Centennial Complex to house other like-minded organizations which could help it to develop more outward-facing programming and increase its scholarly reputation beyond Wyoming...

For instance, we were asked by the UW President to meet with representatives of the UW "American West" initiative. The AHC Director had been involved in discussions about this program, which seeks to develop an interdisciplinary campus group to broadly examine the changing character of the American West. The program will encourage research and scholarly exchange on a variety of topics, including speakers' series, symposia and conferences, and possibly expansion of existing public history and museum studies curricula to support students as well as professionals working in smaller museum settings around Wyoming. It has been suggested that AHC could provide a needed physical home for this initiative.

These programmatic proposals offer important opportunities to expand existing forms of practical experience that UW students gain through practicums and internships at AHC. Both graduate and

undergraduate students benefit from projects including arrangement and description, exhibits, and developing resource lists to support curricular learning.

AHC would certainly benefit from these types of initiatives, expanding and developing new connections to campus units, engaging additional students and faculty research, and enlarging the profile of AHC to state residents and elected officials. From an archival standpoint, there would also be opportunities for these programs to enhance AHC collecting activities, by recording and preserving scholarly presentations, through oral history programs, or other means to capture faculty and student outputs.

Such initiatives must, however, be supported by staff and fund development activities separate from, or in addition to, current AHC funding resources. In its current form, AHC is already understaffed to meet the expectations for its basic operation. While it is possible to consider collaborative efforts which might combine efforts with some stated needs for programming and outreach already expected of the AHC, there seems little likelihood of success in simply adding new programming without additional resources.

Campus Cultural Collections

The AHC is one of a number of UW units responsible for cultural or object collections, and opportunities may exist for further cooperation between these units. As part of our site visit, the External Review Team toured and met staff in various departments of the UW Libraries system, at the UW Art Museum (which occupies additional space in the Centennial Complex) and at the Law Library (which is administered directly within the Law School, separate from the main library). The group was also made aware of a variety of other cultural collections on campus – a fossil collection at the geological museum, archaeological specimens exhibited at an anthropological museum (the University hosts the Wyoming Cultural Records Office, the curatorial part of the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office), an etymological collection relating to the agriculture school, and a herbarium collection maintained within the School of Arts and Sciences.

Although the focus and specific content of these collections may be quite different, the Library has been working with one of these in support of digital collections opportunities. AHC should seek opportunities to develop collegial ties to the Library and the curators of these collections and share professional expertise concerning descriptive metadata schema, software platforms for gathering and sharing descriptive information, and opportunities to use complementary components of the various collections in support of teaching, learning and research. Additionally, the AHC should consider working with these other units on opportunities for integration of exhibits and programming around a common theme.

UW Library System

Regardless of any administrative restructuring, work is needed to harmonize the collections, operations, and staff of the AHC and the UW Library. Although AHC was founded in the 1940s as a unit located within, and administratively part of, the UW Library, much has changed in the 25 years since the division of collections and move of the Center to the Centennial Complex.

Many in the Library define the division of collections as AHC collecting primary source materials while the Library collects published material, with a further division of rare books between Chisum and Toppan generally by date. The situation becomes less clearly defined for maps, grey literature, university publications, and some types of digital content.

Patrons and staff could benefit from more interaction between reference staff in each unit. Many UW classes include instruction by both the Library and AHC, with some even developing separate LibGuides.

Many researchers may benefit from using both collections – particularly research into Wyoming topics that may utilize AHC manuscripts and Chisum books. But many external scholars have no need for Library services, as their focus is solely on AHC manuscripts (“AHC is different than what we do in the Library,” noted one librarian). Staff in both units have been successful in helping patrons navigate differences, but service can always be improved. Some staff in the Library indicated that patrons often expect that an entry in the catalog implies that an item is in the Coe Library. While this may mean that some UW researchers might initially come to the wrong building, this is a problem that all multi-library campuses encounter. UW employees should be reassured that this is normal.

The External Review Team saw indications that UW Libraries may have more resources committed to digital technologies and systems. The innovation center at the Coe Library is blurring lines between traditional library programming and what is possible in an increasingly digital setting. Closer collaboration between the two units should be explored, seeking opportunities for shared systems and workflows. These conversations should include other cultural collections on campus which might benefit from integrated, enterprise-wide solutions.

AHC and the Library have collaborated on many projects. A collaborative project in 2009 merged cataloged materials into the Sierra integrated library software platform (ILS) of Innovative Interfaces, Inc. (a.k.a., “Triple I”). A collection of Hebrew materials was temporarily stored at AHC during a renovation of space at Coe Library, and there is an ongoing arrangement for AHC cold storage to be used for emergency response by the Library. Both units have seen staff constriction. The Library has lost 10 librarians and 8 staff in the last decade, while AHC has lost its Assistant Director position and numerous full- and part-time staff positions. Several areas, including book cataloging and marketing, could realize efficiencies in staffing and workflow from some type of collaborative work.

Regardless of any larger-scale administrative restructuring, Library and AHC staff need to develop stronger ties, both professionally and personally. Each group seems surprisingly unaware of the other; although faculty interact through Senate committee work, there are few opportunities to discuss the similarities and differences in each other’s work. It will be useful to develop some internal communications mechanisms - including open houses and informal show-and-tell tours. The external review team heard much positive talk about previous efforts to establish a “coffee hour” and, more recently, a number of “Ivan’s soirees” which brought the two staffs together.

Statewide Partners and Programming

Considering the renewed commitment to community engagement made by the UW President, Board, and central executive leadership, and the University’s long-standing engagement role stemming from its cherished land-grant mission, it is a good time for AHC to renew its commitment to external programming, to the local region, and to statewide audiences. This programming covers both Wyoming-centric history as well as topical themes stretching beyond Wyoming. But this programming will require resources of staff and funding - resources that must not simply be subtracted from the Center’s central archival operations.

The AHC is an important nexus of K-12 learning and research in Wyoming, both for students and teachers. The center’s highest-profile activities occur because AHC serves as the coordinating institution for the National History Day program and hosts the annual Wyoming History Day. This program engages middle and high school students in a variety of historical research, exhibit, writing, and media projects. Students complete within their local areas, with the best projects moving to the annual event at AHC, and then on to a national competition in Washington, D.C. A number of years ago, state government backed away from administration of the program and AHC (specifically Rick Ewig) stepped in and adopted the

program. The External Review Team heard repeated commendation of this program, its critical importance to the State of Wyoming, the attention it brings to the University, and the need to maintain funding and even expand the reach of this program. It is one clear success story of how the AHC can connect to the entire state. Aside from History Day, the AHC also works with teachers routinely on an individual basis. Library system staff regularly refer teachers to AHC for questions about Wyoming history that can be applied in K-12 classrooms.

This K-12 role must be considered in any long-term plan for digital infrastructures, as teachers and students make greater use of content virtually. AHC should seek closer partnerships with UW and the state department of education to develop technological tools such as interactive videoconferencing and skype-style reference platforms to connect AHC archivists and collections to school students and teachers around the state.

The AHC can support communities organizations in a number of ways, but these should be part of an overall external engagement strategy so that the impact on staff resources is appropriately considered. The Center needs to decide how it may make its meeting spaces available for use by other organizations. Recent missteps with the Laramie Lyceum were brought up in a meeting with the review team, with the indication that AHC was no longer able to host local groups in its spaces. While this specific instance was influenced by other factors, it does point out the need for AHC to review and establish a public policy for such use. Hosting groups is a wonderful outreach and engagement opportunity, but does require staffing to coordinate scheduling, arrange for room set-up, assist with catering and AV needs, and deal with cleanup following events. These efforts require specific staff allocations which must be budgeted as part of the AHC program, not simply added to an existing staff person's duties.

The AHC can, should, and to an extent has supported museums and heritage organizations throughout the state with technical/professional advice in addition to historical content. Respondents reminded the review team that the AHC is one of the very few professionally run archival agencies in the state, and may be the only agency to which a small museum might turn for technical advice and support. The Center needs to embrace a leadership role in convening archivists and history people from around Wyoming. Similarly, AHC staff need to be more visible across the state. While this is essential to the success of the next Director, it can also be useful for other members of the AHC staff to get out to visit with donors, local historians, and local museums across the state. "Wyoming is in the midst of some very hard times," one statewide partner noted, "But we're going to come out of it much stronger, based upon a strengthened network of heritage agencies, both large and small, working more closely together." AHC must be at the table as this next chapter of Wyoming cultural programming is written.

The Buffalo Bill Cody Center of the West is an important partner and their collections complement those of AHC. In many ways, it also provides a good comparator of mission and operation to AHC, as Buffalo Bill is designed with an outward focus, centered around exhibits, programming, outreach, and education. The physical distance between the two institutions provides challenges for closer collaboration, but technology has provided some opportunities. Although the two agencies couldn't agree on a single digital collections platform (AHC is using LUNA, while the Buffalo Bill Cody Center of the West selected CONTENTdm), there is interest in continued discussion about sharing content digitally, particularly when each institution holds parts of a single, larger collection.

Programming

Throughout our site visit - and throughout this report - emphasis has been placed on the need to build out AHC's public programming, including exhibits, virtual content, events, lectures, and symposia. Ideally, this work should be coordinated by a dedicated outreach staff person, working with the Director, AHC

faculty and staff, as well as the many campus and external partners who will contribute and benefit from the work. It is shortsighted to believe that a robust variety of public programming can be developed on an ad hoc basis by AHC employees already working at capacity in their primary roles. Yet, without doubt, the lack of such programming in recent years was the single most significant deficiency emphasized by informants we engaged. Scholarly and public programming are key to elevating AHC's visibility on campus, establishing its value statement to the University and State of Wyoming, and confirming its stature as one of the leading manuscript repositories in the United States.

The Center's scholarship and fellowship programs contribute to the AHC's public programming, though they offer fewer opportunities for research trips by visiting scholars than is common for an archives of this size. The AHC offers a named research fellowship, the Bernard L. Majewski Fellowship, in the history of economic geology. Majewski Fellows are asked to provide a public lecture about their research as well. The George A. Rentschler Distinguished Visiting Lecturer fellowship is open to scholars and notable personalities in the entertainment field, who give a public talk at the AHC. Finally, the Teaching and Research Grant program provides multiple awards in support of research or pedagogical projects involving the AHC's collections. These are open to faculty, staff, and students at UW and Wyoming community colleges, and can be used much more flexibly than is typical. Suggested uses include not only traditional research, but course development, curriculum generation, and symposia. To assist with growing the AHC's national reputation among scholars, the AHC should consider instituting a program of general-purpose travel grants for researchers. Such research grant programs are used strategically by comparator institutions to bring their collections to the attention of outside researchers, and even a modest program of small grants helps to attract notice and encourage scholars to visit.

The Center also has an established traveling exhibit program. AHC has nearly 20 traveling exhibits, comprising framed reproductions of historical photographs from the collections, as well as discursive descriptive text blocks. No AHC employees are formally assigned to design the exhibits, but many are developed by AHC faculty as a component of their expectations for scholarship and service. Some of the projects have engaged outside scholars. AHC has an ongoing agreement with the Art Museum to host a physical installation each year which is subsequently transformed into a traveling exhibit. Each exhibit has a custom-made shipping crate. Graphic design and fabrication of the exhibits are supported by an endowment. Hosts for the traveling exhibit pay the shipping costs in both directions.

This program has been successful, but more could be done to promote and extend its impact on a statewide and regional basis. Reductions in staff time have reduced capacity of AHC staff to generate new exhibits. To be truly successful, the program could benefit from a coordinator to provide consistent thematic content, develop a format template which could be easily replicated, engage external scholars to develop new exhibits, manage engagement with host sites, and oversee shipping and receiving of the exhibits.

Donors and Development

AHC has a long and successful history of working with external donors, both of collections and of monetary support. In the last 6 years, direct giving to AHC has been nearly \$9 million, far beyond many other campus units including the Library. Priorities for development, including wish lists and programmatic ideas, have generally vested with the Director and Assistant Director, so the current leadership vacuum has placed much of this activity in a holding pattern. This has caused some problems and we interacted with one donor who had encountered some issues more recently. While it is unclear whether this was an exceptional case, the matter serves as an important reminder of the need for an identifiable leader from whom donors can expect stewardship. Donor relations rely on building personal trust over time; turnover in staff interrupts these relationships in significant ways.

The Center has 60 active gift fund accounts - more than most other campus units, including UW Libraries. Some of these are quite large and produce significant amounts of cash in spending accounts to support staff lines, acquisitions, and other resource needs. Others are quite small and restricted to a specific activity. Many are linked to living donors with the capacity for additional giving.

Staff in the UW Foundation unit are quick to point out that for a very considerable number of AHC donors, this is their only connection to, and financial commitment to, the University of Wyoming. Figures from Tyler Spear indicated that 74% of AHC's "Top 40" prospects see the Center as their primary and/or sole connection point; of these about half have also donated historical materials. Some of the University's most notable donors are in this category, some of whom have a significant amount of celebrity locally, across the state, and even internationally (e.g., Stan Lee, creator of Spider-Man and other comic book heroes, whose papers were donated to AHC between 1981 and 2011).

AHC leadership must take an active, visible, and personal role in development activity. Development at AHC is an exercise in raising funds to continue and expand the work of the center, but it is also a key part of growing the collections at the core of the Center's operations. Although scholarly considerations must always be of utmost concern in the collecting process, these two types of development are inseparably intertwined. For example, a donor might be approached about the importance of preserving and sharing their personal papers, but may also be approached for financial support to arrange and describe the materials as well. The AHC might collect in a specific area (e.g. economic geology and resource extraction) because of the academic value, but the public promotion of this collecting emphasis may help to attract philanthropic support to further this work. In all these cases, donors of collection and donors of money both want to feel that the AHC is a responsible and forward-looking steward of their gift, which means that the Director's attention to development activity of both types draws upon the same underlying human concerns.

Philanthropic support can be significantly impacted by high-quality and visible programming. Donors want to see their materials used in research, see the research (and their collections) highlighted in publications, events, and symposia. AHC has partnered with the UW Foundation to have some events in the Gateway Center, but needs to find more opportunities for events inside the Centennial Complex. AHC suffers a bit from its facilities and could use better exhibit spaces and an auditorium.

Grants Administration

AHC has a long and successful history in securing and completing grant funded projects from local, state, and federal funding sources, including significant grants from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC, the granting arm of the National Archives and Records Administration), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and the Wyoming Trust Fund. Grant writing, however, has been vested largely in the Director's office and the special skill set required for this work is not actively cultivated across other parts of the staff. As a result of recent leadership changes, grant proposals for several project ideas were never completed – including processing initiatives designed to fully arrange and describe collections in energy, popular culture, and New Deal topical areas.

AHC must identify and commit staff resources to grants work. This is no simple task, as project development, the definition of necessary work, timelines, and personnel, as well as the compilation of application materials consume large amounts of time. Add to this the resources to actually carry out the funded work – and to meet expectations for awards management and reporting requirements – and grants work will consume limited staff resources. Many of these grants are competitive, meaning that the investment must be made without certainty that any particular proposal will be successful. Yet the ability

to expand AHC's activity and output in strategic areas through grant support may be significant and these opportunities should not be overlooked. This also provides an important opportunity for workforce development. Rather than simply adding to work expectations, sharing opportunities across the entire staff to strengthen and exercise their grant writing skills empowers individual employees and expands the capacity of the entire program.

Suggested Strategic Actions – External Relationships and Programming

- Develop an external engagement strategy, including a realistic staffing model to coordinate exhibits, events, and external communications. The program should be collaborative with other University units, regional scholars, and local community organizations. A review of existing spaces in the entire Centennial Complex and continuing partnership with the UW Art Museum will encourage maximized use of spaces for a variety of public and scholarly programming.
- Strengthen grant writing processes and workflows. In support of agreed strategic priorities, empower faculty and staff across AHC to generate project ideas, write and submit grant applications, manage the resulting projects, and complete necessary reporting requirements. Provide appropriate training to faculty and staff to develop these skill sets.
- Engage in collaborative review and planning for digital infrastructures on the UW campus. The increasing amount of born digital material - as well as increasing interest in online learning - will impact investment in storage, systems, and personnel in the near future. Systems must be logical, seamless, and accessible to UW students and faculty. As the state's professionally managed non-governmental manuscript repository, additional support for these tools should be sought from the State of Wyoming to support K-12 teaching and statewide cultural programming.

D. Personnel

AHC has a surprisingly complex variety of employment classifications and reporting lines. Most of the professional archivists are classified as faculty with expectations for research, publication, and service (particularly to the UW Senate). There are also full- and part-time staff lines, some of which do work of a very similar professional nature to the faculty lines. The organizational chart groups people in functional categories such as collections, processing, research and instruction, and administration, but it conceals other managerial structures, reporting lines, and perceived hierarchies which define how individuals interact with each other (for instance, faculty members are only allowed to report to other faculty lines, causing some discordant lines on the org chart). Although most employees are paid from UW's central "state funds," AHC is able to utilize \$115,000 annually from endowed accounts to support 1.7 FTE staff, as well as many of the part-time employees throughout the building.

AHC employees feel as if the operational functions of the repository are understaffed, and many also feel that others on campus believe the AHC is "overstaffed and underperforming." The External Review Team didn't necessarily hear campus voices complaining of underperformance, but there may be misunderstandings concerning the full breadth of AHC's mission, priorities for staffing, and a general lack of understanding of the amount of work required for the core archival operations of the repository (more on this below). Any institution, archival or other, can expand overall output with the addition of staff, but we found no pockets of inefficiency in the existing staff.

The 2016 financial crisis affected all components of the campus, including the American Heritage Center. Most notably, the elimination of the Assistant Director position has had a significant impact as described in greater detail elsewhere in this report. Add to this the recent - and early - departure of the Director and

the AHC is in a crisis of leadership. It is normal for any individual or department to bemoan a perceived shortage in staffing; with a seemingly unlimited amount of work or potential projects, additional help would increase the speed and volume of overall output. For instance, full curation of collections is a deliberate process that is highly dependent on human resources. AHC's Arrangement and Description Department is efficient and productive, but ultimately limited in how much material it can describe more thoroughly and move more fully into public access. Additional staff resources in this area - ideally full-time processing archivists, but possibly term- or project archivists - will have an immediate effect on the amount of material that can be discovered within the collection.

Many informants noted the opportunities that AHC provides for student employment. These include several student assistant positions, as well as part-time and term positions connected to operational functions or special projects. Although UW doesn't have a library science or archival administration degree program, many UW students from museum studies, history, and education programs have had the opportunity for paid employment at AHC. "It is an amazing place for student employees," one AHC staff person noted, "they can earn enough to pay their bills, but get real-world experience working in a large research archives."

There are unexplored and reasonable opportunities for the AHC to position itself explicitly, even emphatically, as an early-career destination with much to offer. A "project archivist program" could model itself after those elsewhere, including at the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library. Such programs aim to "launch leadership careers" through matching new graduates of information degree programs with term-limit employment that addresses mission-critical priorities while infusing an operation with new energy and the latest learning from educational institutions. Two-year appointments based on a national search could support the AHC's needs to sustain its ambitious digitization program, address its underperformance in the curation of born-digital content and records management, support the exploration of collaborative innovations in archival pedagogy for undergraduates, and even undertake select "hidden collections" investigations for further description of minimally processed materials. The program could honor the unique legacy of former director Mark Greene, by identifying itself as the Mark A. Greene Project Archivist Program at the American Heritage Center.

Limited Capacity

The External Review Team heard concerns from informants outside of the Center about inefficiencies in staffing levels, its mix of staff classifications, and overall deployment of workload. Clearly, there is lack of understanding about the core work of the AHC and staff necessary to maintain operations. This is a common challenge for archives and libraries – external users only see public service staff or administrators, and rarely understand the resources necessary to maintain and expand a collection of tangible and digital assets.

AHC is understaffed generally, and has suffered from an imbalance between faculty and staff roles, following a long-term reduction in staff positions. In comparison to other repositories of similar size and program, it operates with a surprisingly small number of employees. This presents significant limitations as to what it can accomplish in its core work as a collecting archive, a learning laboratory, and a program center for outreach, exhibits and events. Following the elimination of the Assistant Director position, and the current vacancy for Director, other staff have stepped up to do things and there is an *esprit de corps* to get things done collectively. But just as it was not sustainable for a single Director to meet the expectations of two former positions, staff are barely able to keep up with core operations and also respond to requests for new programs or activities.

Leadership and Management Limits

It is important for AHC staff to realize that leadership and management occur throughout institutions and up and down staff reporting lines. A lack of consistent executive leadership has resulted in low staff morale (described in detail below) but has also undermined empowerment and leadership attitudes throughout the staff. Employees throughout AHC could benefit from workforce development training about emotional intelligence, servant leadership, or even mindfulness techniques to both reduce workplace stress and reinstate shared values for interpersonal empathy and empowerment.

That said, AHC has clearly suffered from reduced and inconsistent senior leadership for an extended period of time. The declining health of former Director Mark Greene had increasing impact on operations and programming. Mark's retirement provided a gap of time, during which Rick Ewig provided yeoman's effort during a national Director search. Rick's subsequent retirement and the elimination of the Assistant Director position as a result of the 2016 financial crisis served to continue the downward cycle. Bridget Burke was unable to find success in the single-Director management model and departed relatively early into her tenure at AHC.

To clarify, the External Review Team confirmed two large areas of need for executive leadership at AHC. The first is for a hands-on operational manager of the archives itself, which is one of the nation's largest manuscript repositories. This includes oversight of the day-to-day, week-to-week, and month-to-month functional operation of the building, collection-related activities, personnel, accounting and administrative matters. The second, and equally important need is for overall leadership and vision for collection development, outreach and programming (for both on- and off-campus audiences), fund development and donor relations, as well as campus and legislative relations. Some informants described a relationship akin to some university senior leadership models, with an externally-facing president and an operationally-focused provost. But the roles aren't mutually exclusive and AHC history has seen different divisions of labor in the differing divisions of labor between leadership teams such as Mike Devine and Tom Wilsted, and also Mark Greene and Rick Ewig.

Skills with partnerships and collaboration are required of both roles. These cannot be insular people. One UW Dean indicated that these positions serve "at the nexus of disciplines" and need to be open, collaborative, and able to negotiate roles with other units. Externally, we were told that "Wyoming is a small town with long streets" and that AHC Directors engage regularly with the Governor and elected officials at both state and federal levels, requiring nuanced political skills.

Recent history reveals that it is untenable for a single person to fully address both sets of needs. Following Rick Ewig's retirement and the elimination of the Assistant Director position, the remaining sole Director was unable to meet expectations for the work previously done under the two-director model. Many informants indicate the last Director devoted most of her time to operations management, could not devote much time to the external needs of the Center, and, as a result, was unable to communicate the value of the AHC to the campus and state.

UW administration must consider options to more fully address these two areas of need. Clearly, the simplest solution would be to restore the former two-person leadership structure, employing Director and Assistant Director positions. But other options could be explored. For instance, it might be possible to elevate an existing member of the AHC faculty and staff to serve in the role of an operational manager. This should include backfilling a lower position to assume components of that existing assignment, but there are several current employees who have the capacity to make this step into a role with more leadership responsibility. At the other end of need, might there be opportunities to attract a programmatic leader, rather than an archivist per se, if a position included a "dry appointment" with one of the academic departments such as History, American Studies, or Anthropology? The individual wouldn't have

significant teaching or research duties in that department, but it could be an opportunity to embed and integrate this person directly within one of the schools and serve on graduate thesis and dissertation committees. The position would have an academic form that might be attractive to certain candidates, regardless of whether it included retreat rights.

Employee Morale Issues

Although the AHC faculty and staff continue to work effectively as a team, there are issues at play within the building which are currently undermining morale and productivity. There are perceived hierarchies: staff feel that they are considered of lesser status than faculty, part-time staff feel underappreciated, and administrative staff feel disconnected from other aspects of the operation. This to be expected in any organization, but is exacerbated at AHC by the physical separation of staff around the building, by a few individuals with superiority or inferiority complexes, and by some larger forces of budget and University policy which are beyond the control of AHC. Yet, issues of employee morale were repeatedly mentioned, both internally and externally during our Team visit.

AHC, like many other UW units, faces challenges for faculty and staff recruitment and retention. Laramie is a smaller, remote location and does not provide many opportunities for spousal employment. We were told that it can be a challenging location for younger entry-level professionals, particularly those from diverse and urban backgrounds. Staff turnover is challenging and disruptive to AHC, resulting in short-term coverage of job duties or complete elimination of positions and dispersal of required activities. Turnover also leaves a core group of longer-serving employees who put down roots at UW and remain committed to Laramie due to family obligations, their love of Wyoming, or other reasons. Like other high-quality institutions in less-populated rural areas, many who choose to stay at UW understand and accept a trade-off of reduced relative compensation to live in a place that they really love.

Salary and benefit levels are discouraging. While it may be difficult to make comparisons of AHC salaries to similar institutions in other states, compensation levels for existing archival faculty and staff are not equitable to those in the UW Library. New hires are being brought in at more equitable rates, but this has caused significant salary compression for longer-serving members of the AHC faculty. Everyone seems to be aware of this inequity, yet little has been done about it. The External Review Team is aware of the initial work of the UW Salary Policy Task Force. But a specialized salary equalization study specifically addressing faculty archivists, librarians, and related staff lines could more closely examine and document these disparities.

Attention should also be paid to the provision of benefits to individuals throughout the building, particularly if they have similar job duties and responsibilities. The current options for positions to either be classified as “part-time without benefits” or “full-time with benefits” has placed many part-time employees in a precarious situation. While this may be a realistic function of UW’s unusually high 56% fringe rate for staff positions, it has significant impact in an institution which relies heavily on staff positions for its operation. It can also lead to small insensitivities when those with benefits complain about medical care issues that part-time people cannot access.

The loss of positions following the 2016 budget crisis leave many staff feeling insecure about their future employment and the changeable nature of their work. Other than promotion within position, neither AHC nor UW provide many opportunities for advancement within the institution. The administrative structure within AHC is not clearly defined to some staff and individuals are not sure if the role of coordinator is actually a step up in a management structure or simply a title with no defined authority or improved compensation.

Many AHC employees note a level of stress associated with their workload. There is a heightened sense of expectation from the campus, yet no additional staff resources to meet the many competing priorities. Additionally, worry over uncertainty regarding future leadership and concern about the perception of the place of AHC in the eyes of campus leadership were mentioned by colleagues in the Library, faculty in various departments, a member of the AHC Board of Advisors, external donors, and other stakeholders around the state. Even the work of this External Review Team has added to the tension facing AHC staff surrounding the future of AHC.

Archivists with faculty status have additional pressures. While enjoying opportunities for interaction with other campus faculty in the UW Faculty Senate, AHC has been challenged to meet its expectations for service on Senate committees. AHC faculty feel that they are given little time to actively engage in professional growth, and that service commitments should be scheduled outside normal work hours. Several individuals indicated that they are working on research and publication during their evenings and weekends. "It feels for many of us that we have an 8-5 job, PLUS all of the other things needed for tenure." AHC faculty are not taking advantage of the sabbatical program. Some feel it won't be granted if requested and many feel that their absence for an extended period of time will impair public service and negatively impact their office colleagues. While AHC faculty feel that they receive reasonable support for professional development (i.e., financial support for conference travel), many in the UW academic faculty don't realize that they are faculty or understand their similar professional expectations. AHC staff also indicated their own fatigue from hearing AHC faculty complaints about all of these issues.

Meanwhile, there are also questions about the sometimes artificial definitions between faculty and staff positions. "Everyone is intermingled at work," one staff member noted, "it is not as clear cut as one might see in an academic unit. We have reference archivists who are staff, who work alongside reference archivists who are faculty, and they are doing the same work." Everyone understands that faculty have additional expectations for research, professional activity and service, but the job duties are otherwise very similar.

All of these issues are affecting morale within AHC. In general, they undermine enthusiasm, stifle opportunity for creative thought and discourage collective action. They also contribute to the challenges to recruit and retain qualified staff. There is a fair amount of turnover at AHC, with difficulties in attracting high-quality candidates and some younger staff moving on to new positions outside of Wyoming relatively quickly.

An AHC faculty and staff task force should be established to carry out a climate survey. There are many established models to assess workplace stress and satisfaction and AHC could seek input from UW Human Resources on existing institutional climate survey tools. While confidentiality of respondents must be ensured, an open and transparent review of the results will generally acknowledge morale issues, help to relieve tensions, and identify areas for specific subsequent work. Many simple initiatives can help. Employees commented on the physical separation of offices on different floors. Some regular social interactions could help to address this, activities such as a regular coffee hour once a week or a staff potluck in one of the meeting rooms. Several people commented positively on the gatherings that Dean Ivan Gaetz had organized for staff. Some have suggested an internal AHC book club that might consider basic literature or items more specifically themed to leadership topics or self-empowerment.

Communications and Marketing

AHC must greatly improve its capacity for marketing and communications. A new internal Marketing Group is beginning to coordinate external communications and social media, but hasn't been able to generate as much energy as it would like. Some questions have arisen about the specific roles and

capacities of faculty and staff in the development/writing of specific content, but the group has made initial strides pushing existing content out through social media as well as external media contacts. Some informants suggested that a marketing and communications specialist could focus more energy in this area, possibly as a split appointment with the Library or some other unit.

AHC should proactively collect and share qualitative and anecdotal testimony of its activity. This could be accomplished through user surveys, questionnaires for faculty and their classes, and as part of other assessment activity. Such testimony will highlight the work that occurs within AHC which the campus and public may not otherwise see. This could include take form as content on the AHC web, shared to campus communications systems, and distributed as press releases about class instruction, external communities who make use of the collections and facilities, and even “staff spotlights” that highlight the work of individuals and their role in the varied mission of AHC. One suggestion was to convene a monthly speaker series and simply ask AHC employees to repeat presentations they have done at conferences or in the local community.

Several informants identified opportunities for AHC staff and collections to be better integrated into the state’s growing tourism industry. As Wyoming necessarily diversifies its economy in lieu of declining mining and energy industries, tourism is likely to be an important and expanding sector. Tourism is ultimately about telling stories and AHC has the primary sources for this work.

AHC requires a robust, consistent, and constant stream of information to a variety of audiences, but particularly to the UW campus. While many on campus realize that AHC faculty and staff are passionate about their work and that the collections are significant and support high quality research by external scholars, many stakeholders we spoke to indicated that more needs to be done to develop, measure, and share the impact AHC has directly on the mission of the University. “In times of lean state funding” one informant shared, “it is absolutely critical that we all prove our relevancy and value to the campus community and the state.”

Board of Advisors

The External Review Team received a great deal of input from, and about, the AHC Board of Advisors (BOA), including two sessions with current members. The Board comprises historians, business people, donors, and descendants of families with close ties to AHC. Representatives are drawn from across the state and help to advocate and communicate AHC programs in their regions, while also helping to identify and cultivate donors of both historical materials and philanthropic support.

The BOA is at a tipping point between what it has been and what it can be. Some external partners have noted that the BOA is “not really with it,” and simply represents a friendly group of supporters who meet regularly, believe in the mission of the AHC, but who have failed to provide direct and significant action to the program. Many feel that the BOA must reinvent itself as a more funding-directed organization. The group’s updated bylaws outline a more directed expectation for member participation in give-and-get fundraising as well as assistance with collection acquisition. Recent additions to the BOA fit this model for a fundraising board. Some have even suggested that UW freeze its budget commitment to AHC and force the BOA to significantly increase its fundraising to match the remaining need.

The future of the BOA will be greatly affected by decisions UW may make in the administrative structure and reporting line of the AHC. It is in a strong position to advocate for an independent Center, but may see a weakened enthusiasm for donor cultivation should AHC be folded under another UW unit.

Faculty Advisors

At one time, a Board of Faculty Advisors was in place to support the collections, staff, and programming of the AHC. Some indicated that this was created as a tool to reign in an overzealous former Director. Others feel that it was disbanded to mute faculty voices during a deaccessioning initiative. There was general agreement that it had removed an important communication network between AHC and the academic core of the campus. Some AHC employees felt that the faculty advisors believed that they should have a role in setting collection policy and recommending specific acquisitions. “There were too many situations where they would say “here’s what YOU should do,” one informant recalled, “but they were never there for any follow-up.” There was a disconnect between what this advisory group thought AHC should acquire, the board’s lack of knowledge of the resources needed to process, describe, and house collections, and the failure of the faculty advisors to accept any responsibility to engage in fund development to support the actual work.

The External Review Team heard many ideas to reconstitute this group to provide an interactive conduit to, and for, UW faculty. These individuals feel that such a board could encourage new users to engage with AHC, particularly faculty who are not yet aware of its potentials in their research and instructional design. The idea is worth pursuing, but serious thought must be given to a specific charge for the group. It could be reconstituted more as a “friends” group - possibly to support an integrated effort to encourage other faculty to use the collections in their teaching and research. AHC does not need additional voices telling it what to do, it needs supporters assisting it to meet its stated mission and goals.

Suggested Strategic Actions – Personnel

- UW administration must identify a staffing solution to address both the internal operational needs of AHC as a large manuscript repository, as well as the leadership and external programmatic needs of AHC as a cultural research center. It is untenable to expect a single Director to meet expectations in both of these areas and significantly propel the AHC program forward.
- Review current AHC staffing levels and develop strategic funding priorities for several additional positions. In addition to needs for expanded executive leadership (indicated above), this report identifies staffing weaknesses in collections processing, instruction, outreach, public programming, and marketing/communications. Considering the scarcity of state funds, AHC must think creatively about locating resources for improved staffing in these areas. Some of this work may be appropriate for part-time or project positions, and some could be split appointments with other UW units. Existing development funds may support part of the need, while new partnerships could generate external support (for instance, the state department of education could partially support an instruction position that expanded contact to Wyoming K-12 classrooms). Working with the UW Foundation, some of this work could attract philanthropic support.
- Establish an AHC faculty and staff task force to carry out a climate survey. Communicate the results openly and develop initiatives to improve faculty and staff morale.
- AHC must greatly improve its capacity for marketing and communications. The Center must produce a robust, consistent, and constant stream of information to a variety of audiences, but particularly to the UW campus and its executive leadership.
- Assess mission and purpose of the Board of Advisors and consider the mission and purpose of a reconstituted Board of Faculty Advisors. Both could benefit from benchmarking with organizations affiliated with archival institutions similar to AHC. Although the two organizations

may differ in membership and specific activity, their core purpose must be to advocate for AHC, cultivate support, and directly attract financial resources and appropriate collections. Advisory boards should support AHC's existing mission, vision, and strategic plan; neither organization should be empowered to direct changes in operations, programming, or strategic direction.

E. Facilities

Although a few commenters see the facility as a mixed bag, the External Review Team found the quality, equipment, and general cleanliness of AHC storage areas to be one of the shining spots in our visit. Staff report a very good relationship with UW Facilities department. Personnel are responsive to issues that arise and seem to have a genuine understanding and respect for the collections and their preservation. The building has had significant structural issues over its 25 years, including a \$1.5 million complete replacement of the roof in 2013. There are ongoing issues regulating temperatures throughout the building and while Facilities staff are committed to assisting with solutions, many of the problems stem from the building's original structural design.

Current shelving in the building is at 7/8 capacity, with nearly 100,000 feet of material, but staff report that space is not yet affecting acquisitions decisions. The deaccessioning project that Mark Greene led gained significant space. Several storage areas are prepped for the installation of additional compact shelving which could expand available shelving by up to 10,000 feet. Planning for the purchase of additional shelving should be included in the AHC's development plan.

On the down side, the Centennial Complex is confusing to the general public. The combination of art museum, historical archives, exhibits hidden in various nooks and crannies, and remote location of the reading room from the main entrance present challenges to the public as they enter. Funding does not currently support regular staffing at the main entrance desk of the Centennial Complex, so researchers must rely on directional signage to navigate the various spaces. It is not clear what may be done to alleviate these challenges, but it is important to recognize that the building can be imposing to first-time visitors.

Facilities also present challenges for expanded public programming at AHC. The central atrium area, with its thick wooden architectural features does not lend itself to large public gathering and the "Sheep Room," which serves as a classroom and meeting room is tucked away high up on the 5th floor. The primary public event space is the Wyoming Stockgrowers Association Room, and its odd shape results in divided audiences, difficult sight lines, and challenges with audio.

AHC has brokered use of the former dining hall for larger events, such as Wyoming History Day. While it may be possible to negotiate increased use of that space for events, AHC programming will remain hamstrung by its physical facilities limitations. It may be a useful long-term plan to seek external support for a purpose-built auditorium with capacity to host lectures and symposia of at least 150 people. And, as indicated above, AHC should include public use of its spaces as part of a coordinated community engagement strategy with appropriate staff support.

Suggested Strategic Actions – Facilities

- Develop and implement a multi-year plan to expand shelving capacity in existing AHC storage spaces.
- Develop an external engagement strategy, including a realistic staffing model to coordinate exhibits, events, and external communications. The program should be collaborative with other University units, regional scholars, and local community organizations. A review of existing spaces in the entire Centennial Complex and continuing partnership with the UW Art Museum will encourage maximized use of spaces for a variety of public and scholarly programming.
- Consider a capital improvement plan to add an auditorium, with raked seating for 150-200 and associated support spaces to host conferences and symposia.

F. Budget

The University of Wyoming has a high level of dependence on state resources, drawing 60-70% of its budget from taxpayer dollars and tuition. There have been serious challenges during the recent financial crisis in Wyoming, including an 80% tax on carryforward. This was particularly hard on AHC, which had built up more than \$75,000 from revenue accounts to address special projects. This has changed the dynamic in the AHC business office, encouraging the immediate expenditure of available budget in fear of another significant pull-back. Generally speaking, AHC employees have internalized the perception of a scarcity of funding, which sometimes leads them to not ask for what is really needed (under the belief that there would not be any available resources), and to struggle creatively to make do with what little is provided.

Because of the success of previous Directors, AHC has a dizzying array of endowed funds which refill spending accounts. Many of these funds are restricted, but staff in the AHC business office are becoming more transparent and proactive with other staff about the availability of funds for certain needs. Meghan Monahan shares information every Friday about a “Fund of the Week” and attends the acquisitions meetings to talk about special funds which can only be spent on specific thematic materials. AHC also realizes \$50,000 in revenue most years, though there are concerns that increased user fees are not necessarily a user-centered approach to improve service.

Some informants feel that these funds could be handled more efficiently to expand the number of AHC part-time employees. It has been challenging to get some part-time staff to work their full contingent of hours, making it hard to match actual expenses to budget expectations. The last Director seemed more interested in directing funds to acquisitions, rather than staff. But it is possible for AHC to fund term positions from endowed and revenue funds if that is a direction of interest in the future.

Moving forward, development activity and philanthropy will only increase in importance to AHC and UW. The basic rule of external support is to present high-quality, cost-efficient and impactful projects and programs to external agents who are already inclined to give. Most of the pieces are already in place: AHC has incredible collections, an expert staff, and amazing potential for external support. It also has enthusiastic friends in the UW Foundation offices, a wide pool of existing donors, and a good list of likely supporters. With AHC collections supporting learning audiences of UW students and faculty, K-12 students and teachers, Wyoming residents, academic scholars, and the general public, it is simply a matter of connecting donors with great projects.

Regardless of AHC's ability to build endowments, increase sources of external funding, increase revenue, and reduce its reliance on state support, it should continue to build its value statement to the core mission of the University. Limited state resources require efficient integration and collaboration among all campus units, regardless of administrative reporting lines. This should be a two-way street for AHC, both taking advantages of the systems, staff, and capacities of other units, but also providing support from its programs to the rest of the campus.

Suggested Strategic Actions – Budget

- Continue to build and clarify an AHC value statement to the core mission of the University and taxpayers in the State of Wyoming.
- Ensure that existing endowed funds are utilized in a timely and efficient manner. Actively highlight and promote use of existing funds as a means to encourage new donors.
- Develop short- and long-term development strategies with the UW Foundation. This should include definition of existing needs (i.e., “wish lists”), understanding the inclinations of potential donors, and engagement activities to keep donors informed about AHC collections, events, and programming.

IV. Issues, Obstacles, and Potentials

The External Review Team was impressed by what we found at the American Heritage Center and the University of Wyoming. While it has been the intention of our work to help identify issues of concern and areas for future improvement, it is important to acknowledge that the collections are high-quality and professionally curated, staff are enthusiastic and expert in their work, infrastructures are in relatively good shape, and the Center is positioned to excel. AHC is in an elite tier of large, university-based research collections in the United States and one cannot overstate the myriad ways this program represents and promotes the University of Wyoming to local, statewide, national and international audiences.

It is impossible for any External Review Team to comprehensively observe and report all salient points uncovered in a project such as this. Thankfully, AHC staff and others on the UW campus are surprisingly self-aware and introspective, which encourages an attitude of continuous assessment and improvement. The following sections summarize some areas we feel are important for attention and action.

A. Areas for Significant Action

The American Heritage Center must improve its value statement to the University of Wyoming. Beyond vision and mission statements, and beyond its draft strategic plan which aligns well with that of the University, AHC needs to present a clear and concise story that can be shared to faculty, staff, and administrators - and then shared by them to the many communities both AHC and the University serve. This may be a short, zippy, and all-encompassing elevator speech, but it must encapsulate the nearly-unanimous sentiment we heard that AHC is a significant and core resource to the University's mission.

AHC has reached the capacity of its current staffing model for campus instruction, a key activity for campus awareness, engagement, and relevance. An Academic and Outreach Archivist should be added to develop an expanded, proactive, instruction program for UW students, students at other Wyoming colleges, K-12 schools, Wyoming residents, and the public at large. This person will extend the Center's reach into nontraditional disciplines, particularly STEM fields, and expand the use of AHC collections in teaching, learning, and research.

The Center must develop an external engagement strategy, including a realistic staffing model to coordinate exhibits, events, and external communications. The program should be collaborative with other University units, regional scholars, and local community organizations. A review of existing spaces in the entire Centennial Complex and continuing partnership with the UW Art Museum will encourage maximized use of spaces for a variety of public and scholarly programming. Increased engagement will raise the profile and value of the Center to the University and help to engage potential donors.

AHC must also greatly improve its capacity for marketing and communications. The Center must direct a robust, consistent, and constant stream of information to a variety of audiences, but particularly to the UW campus and its executive leadership.

The University must develop a comprehensive plan for the management, preservation, and public accessibility of institutional records in both tangible and digital forms. This program must be centered at the American Heritage Center with resources to implement a professional, comprehensive records program to address legal and fiscal liability to the institution.

AHC must become more proactive in its ongoing collecting mission. While this may not require a dedicated Field Archivist position, more must be done to encourage coordinated and deliberate collecting

in areas critical for future research. One recommended approach is to undertake a themed collecting initiative around a larger, overarching Wyoming theme, such as conservation, water rights, changes in energy policy, or tourism. This program will communicate the value of the Center to the University and the State of Wyoming.

It is essential that AHC participate in collaborative review and planning for digital services and infrastructures with the Library, other campus units and UW central IT. The increasing amount of born digital material - as well as increasing interest in online learning - will require significant investment in storage, systems, and personnel in the near future. Systems must be logical, seamless, and accessible to UW students and faculty. They must also meet standards of sustainability for content of enduring value. As the state's professionally managed non-governmental manuscript repository, additional support for these tools should be sought from the State of Wyoming to support K-12 teaching and statewide cultural programming.

Although this is discussed in detail below, University administration must identify a staffing solution to address both the internal operational needs of AHC as a large manuscript repository, as well as the leadership and external programmatic needs of AHC as a cultural research center. It is untenable to expect a single Director to meet expectations in both of these areas and significantly propel the AHC program forward.

New leadership at AHC should review the organizational structure, classification of positions, reporting lines, compensation and fringe benefits of employees across the Center. AHC faculty and staff should also conduct an internal climate survey. These processes will help to clarify the sources of current morale issues – some to be addressed internally by AHC leadership, others requiring action at the campus level. These reviews will also confirm challenges with staffing capacity in collections processing, instruction, outreach, public programming, and marketing/communications.

The Center must maintain, expand, and develop new partnerships with both on- and off-campus groups. Collaborations help to leverage scarce funds alongside other sources of support, broaden the impact of events, exhibits and activities, and generally heighten awareness of the Center's collections, staff, and programming. Partnerships can also help to address shortages in staff capacity by sharing positions (such as split appointments with other UW units for instruction, marketing and communications, or rare books curation) or by generating new sources of external support (such as State support for expanded contact with Wyoming K-12 classrooms).

AHC has unique opportunities for philanthropic support, engaging a variety of inclined supporters who have little or no other contact with the University. The Center must continue to develop short- and long-term development strategies with the UW Foundation, coordinate the intersecting arcs of AHC's current collections and programming with the inclinations of potential donors, and develop regular engagement activities to keep donors informed about AHC collections, events, and programming.

The Center should also strengthen and focus other mechanisms for support. Faculty and staff should widen their capacity for grant writing in support of strategic priorities. New AHC leadership should assess the mission and purpose of the current external Board of Advisors, and consider the potential mission and purpose of a reconstituted Board of Faculty Advisors. Regardless of membership, the core purpose of such advisory groups must be to advocate for AHC, cultivate support, and attract financial resources and appropriate collections.

B. Alternatives for AHC Administrative Reporting Line

It is clear that some individuals on campus feel that the AHC should be folded into some other administrative reporting structure. The External Review Team heard many such scenarios, including a combination with other existing centers for humanities, folklife or American Studies. Stronger suggestions envisioned “returning” the Center to its original location as part of the Libraries. While it was not the purpose of this review and recommend a specific course of action, several observations may be shared.

There may be advantages to some form of administrative consolidation. By pooling resources and better integrating collection-related activity, the University could provide a more cohesive face to researchers and the campus. Some administrative functions, such as assessment, marketing, and communications, could realize some efficiencies in sharing specific staff capacities with another unit, and improvements could likely be realized in collaborations grouped around outreach and instruction. Representation by a Dean could solidify the combined unit’s position on campus, allow it to advocate better to the campus and administration, and provide it with a stronger bargaining position. The AHC Director position could be recast as an Associate or Assistant Dean position, helping to boost the University’s ability to recruit and retain highly qualified candidates. Several informants shared comments about UW’s exploration of membership in the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), asserting that most institutions of its size have an integrated library, manuscript, and university records program administered by a single Dean. This is not true in practice, however, as ARL libraries utilize a wide variety of administrative structures.

There are, however, significant disadvantages, particularly the weakening of identity and brand for AHC. While Dean-level advocacy may have provide political advantage on campus, it is likely that AHC would receive reduced priority within some other UW center or as part of the larger Library system. AHC is one of the largest manuscript repositories in the country, so it may also be difficult for a single Dean to adequately manage this large enterprise as an addition to his/her existing responsibilities (and difficult, as a result, to recruit and retain highly qualified candidates to the Dean’s position).

Many campus informants believe that AHC continues to be best represented in its current form with a reporting line directly with the Provost. Most of the external partners we spoke to shared strong feelings that AHC needs to retain its independence from other UW units - and that such independence under a strong Director will allow AHC to build a stronger set of outward-facing programming that will benefit the University. Staff from the UW Foundation indicated that several key donors are unlikely to continue their support if AHC is subsumed under another UW department. “It would be a PR disaster,” one Foundation staffer told us, “and much damage control would be necessary.” A current member of the BOA agreed, indicating that “independent fundraising can be most successful as an independent entity. Donors want to support a heritage center, not a library.” There may be legal implications for deeds of gift, as some donors may believe that their gift was made to an independent Center, not the University. If a decision were made to integrate AHC into another UW department, the Board of Advisors would need to be reconstituted, would likely lose many of its current members, or might disband altogether.

Ultimately, AHC has a much broader and varied set of audience and goals than the Library. The Library is primarily (if not solely) directed toward the success of UW students, faculty, and staff. AHC is also committed to the success of these same campus researchers, but has enormous additional responsibility to collect, preserve, and share manuscript resources about Wyoming history for the entire state. Additionally, as a research repository at a large land-grant university, AHC collects and preserves materials on certain themes beyond Wyoming as an international partner in a distributed network of agencies to safeguard the artifacts of human activity. While some may wish to promote similarities between AHC and the Library as good reasoning for merger, the differences present serious discordance in mission and stakeholders.

There is a physical reality to the separate nature of the American Heritage Center. It is a large operation, comprising 100,000 linear feet of collections, more than a dozen staff and student workers, reading rooms, meeting rooms, work areas, and public galleries. It seems unlikely that a new physical building would be built to house the AHC – either as a standalone unit, or as a component of some other administrative group. In addition to the obvious physical separation of collections, the unique needs for patron access will also require that AHC continue to operate its own separate reading room.

Too often, institutions allow administrative reporting lines to become personality driven, either by the selection of a charismatic leader or through the rise of specific individuals over time. This is true of department heads, directors, deans, and other executive leaders in academic institutions. While strength of vision and managerial ability will be critical to the next AHC Director, her/his work must be mission driven, regardless of administrative reporting line. Any consideration of changes from the current administrative structure, with the AHC Director reporting to the Provost, must acknowledge and align the Center's mission to that of the University and the State of Wyoming.

C. Alternatives for AHC Leadership Structure

Regardless of any changes in administrative reporting, the External Review Team feels it is critical that UW address leadership needs within the American Heritage Center for its two primary, yet intertwined missions. The simplest strategy would be to return to the former two-director structure, and hire a Director to provide overarching leadership for vision and mission, collection strategy, programming and outreach, and donor relations and development, but also an Assistant Director to manage the archival operations of this large manuscript repository. As one informant put it, “It may be hard to imagine all of this in one person.” There was also a shared sense of all informants that the previous Director, unable to succeed in both roles, chose to focus on the internal operational needs of the archives, leaving the outreach and programming expectations largely unmet. It is difficult to see how a search for a single Director will produce a different result at this time.

Serious consideration should be given to the possibility of elevating an existing member of the AHC faculty or staff to serve in the role of an archives operational manager or Assistant Director. This should include backfilling a lower position to address needs in the existing position. This will allow a national search to locate a high-quality Director to provide the vision, leadership, and fund development skills necessary to expand AHC programmatic engagement with its numerous user communities. Exploring options for a dual appointment (or “dry appointment”) with a UW academic department might provide additional status to attract high quality candidates. The University must provide a compensation package commensurate to the high expectations of the position and one which is competitive to other institutions attempting to recruit high-quality individuals. The University should also be willing to have a failed search if it cannot identify a very strong candidate in its first call for applicants.

V. Conclusions

The American Heritage Center is one of the largest manuscript repositories in the United States. It is in an elite tier of archival institutions in the country in terms of the size of its holdings, the international significance of its content, the number of staff it employs, the size of its standalone physical facility, and the significant role it has played in the transformation of international professional archival practice. It is not only an archives, however, but a Center for scholarship, outreach, events, and exhibits. As such, it serves many audiences and stakeholders on campus, in the local community, across the State of Wyoming, and with scholars nationally and internationally. AHC's ability to balance these varying missions requires a significant investment of resources, a clear administrative structure, and identifiable leaders to guide the program in its many directions.

AHC must communicate a clear statement of purpose. At its core, the Center must represent a strong commitment to the core mission of the University for teaching and research, but also acknowledge the critical records management and archival functions for the University. AHC staff and systems are an important element of the emerging digital functionality of the University. A strong and supported AHC can be critical to success of the University. "The American Heritage Center sets UW apart as a research institution," one faculty member noted. "It supports student learning and faculty research in a broad variety of topics on campus, but also produces public goods of value to the state and the nation." The Center also provides leadership to other campus cultural collections, supports the efforts of emerging initiatives in digital humanities and scholarship on the American West, as well as cultural tourism efforts across the state. As an archive, AHC is not simply responsible to "preserve old stuff," but also has a responsibility to collect and preserve information concerning contemporary issues, such as water rights, the LGBT community, energy, and other topics which will "one day become history."

While AHC is a vital part of the University, its work as part of the state's land grant institution provides direct service to the state, maintaining a significant part of collective cultural record of the State of Wyoming and completing critical cultural work not otherwise done by the state archives, the state library, and other state-funded cultural agencies. Whether officially mandated as such, the State of Wyoming utilizes AHC as its repository for non-governmental historical manuscripts collected by the state. In addition, many in the state's cultural community rely on the Center to support K-12 learning, coordinate and host the History Day program, and provide technical and professional leadership to cultural agencies across the state.

There are many challenges for the Center to respond to cultural shifts within the University and at the state legislature. Informants feel that the UW administration has been moving toward a more business-oriented model with greater ties to entrepreneurial and philanthropic support. AHC presents special opportunities for fund development and expansion of the UW's endowed funds. Some informants also observed an increasing emphasis on engineering and science. While AHC has a significant role as a research and learning laboratory for humanistic scholarship, the breadth of its topical scope provides opportunities to engage UW faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students in all disciplines, including STEM fields.

AHC is experiencing what one informant called "an awkward moment of institutional instability it doesn't deserve." The financial crisis experienced by the State of Wyoming in 2016 had serious ramifications for the University of Wyoming. Early retirement incentives affected all campus units, with many vacated positions eliminated, in addition to other open lines. The loss of people demands that all units seek better coordination and efficiencies in their operations to reduce cost. Turnover in UW executive positions requires units like AHC to constantly improve visibility, give voice to the value of their work to the University, and advocate for improved resources.

Institutionally and individually, people across the University must stop looking through the rear view mirror to debate the roles of previous administrators, recounting the origins of the Center within the Library system, and promoting advisory boards addressing outdated needs of previous decades. Looking forward through the windshield at the road ahead maps a new route with a mission-driven purpose to support the University, the state, and the cultural history of the American West.

The key to AHC's future will be the re-establishment of strong leadership for both its internal archival operations and its external programming needs. Provost Miller understands that AHC needs to hire an effective Director and create an administrative structure which will encourage the program to thrive. She is looking for dynamic leadership which can create and communicate a clear vision for the Center. The lack of consistent leadership over the last 5 years has, as one informant put it, "parked the AHC on hold." The State of Wyoming is at a turning point in the way that it funds higher education and cultural programming. The AHC must be part of this conversation.

Appendices

- A. Site Visit Itinerary, February 21-23, 2018.
- B. Additional Interviews.
- C. List of Resources Consulted.
- D. Leadership Rubric.

Appendix A: Site Visit Itinerary, February 21-23, 2018

Tuesday February 20th

7:45 Arrival at Laramie Regional Airport. Erik Nordberg, Nancy Bartlett, and Eric Nystrom. Matthew Troyanek transports team to Hilton Garden Inn.

Wednesday February 21st

8:00 AHC External Review group arrives at American Heritage Center.

8:30 Tour of AHC by Leslie Waggener, beginning on AHC 4th floor.

9:30 Meeting with staff of the UW Art Museum.

10:00 AHC Arrangement and Description Department. AHC Room 308.

12:00 Lunch meeting with UW Collaborative Faculty. Coe Library 506.

1:30 UW Libraries General Meeting. Coe Library 506.

3:00 AHC Collections Management unit. AHC Stockgrowers Room.

5:00 End of meetings.

Thursday February 22nd

9:00 UW Libraries General Meeting. Coe Library 506.

10:00 Chisum Special Collections, Tami Hert. Chisum Reading Room, Coe Library.

11:00 AHC Finances and Accounting, Meghan Monahan. AHC Stockgrowers Room.

12:00 Lunch meeting with AHC Board of Advisors. Coe Library 506.
(included call-in option for some AHC Board of Advisors members)

1:00 UW American Studies, History Department. UW Cooper house.

2:00 UW Law School Library, Political and Legislative Collections. UW Law School.

3:00 AHC Reference Department unit. AHC Stockgrowers Room.

4:00 AHC Toppan Rare Books Library, Anne Marie Lane. AHC Toppan Reading Room.

5:00 End of Meetings.

Friday February 24th

- 8:00 AHC Faculty. AHC Stockgrowers Room.
- 9:00 AHC Staff. AHC Stockgrowers Room.
- 10:00 AHC Acquisitions Committee. AHC Stockgrowers Room.
- 11:00 American West Group. AHC Rentschler Room.
- 12:00 Lunch meeting with UW Deans and Directors. Coe Library 506.
- 1:30 UW Provost Kate Miller. Old Main 321.
- 3:00 Wyoming History Day program, Jessica Flock. AHC Stockgrowers Room.
- 4:00 AHC Managers. AHC Stockgrowers Room.
- 5:30 Dinner meeting with Dean Gaetz and AHC Managers. Altitudes Chophouse & Brewery.

Saturday February 25th

- 6:15 Departure from Laramie Regional Airport.

Appendix B: Additional Interviews

- March 14, 2018 - Conference call with Tyler Spear, UW Foundation.
- March 14, 2018 - Conference call with Bruce Eldredge, Mary Robinson, and Jeremy Johnston, Buffalo Bill Cody Center of the West.
- March 16, 2018 - Conference call with Mike Strom and Kathy Marquis, Wyoming State Archives.
- March 19, 2018 - Conference call with Lucille Dubrill and Keith Bailey, AHC Board of Advisors.
- April 5, 2018 - Conference call with Shannon Smith, Wyoming Humanities Council.

Appendix C: List of Resources Consulted

1) General

AHC Self Study, February 2018.

AHC Activities Report for UW Office of Institutional Analysis for FY17 (2-page narrative by B. Burke).

AHC 2017 draft strategic plan (currently under discussion).

AHC 2017 By the Numbers infographic.

AHC 2013 draft strategic plan (never implemented).

AHC Board of Advisors, Bylaws (October 2011, with marginalia).

Untitled "History of AHC" (review of AHC under Mark Greene, 2002-2010).

Mark A. Greene, "Four Forceful Phrases: An Archival Change Agent Muses on Museology," in *Active Collections*, Elizabeth Wood, Trevor Jones, and Rainey Tisdale, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2018).

Mark A. Greene and Rick Ewig, "American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming," *Journal of the West*, 52:4 (2013).

2) Collections

"Regarding University records management." D. Claudia Thompson, e-mail communication, February 9, 2018.

AHC 2017 Collection Development Policy.

AHC 2017 Collection Development Strategy.

Tyler Cline, "The Wild West No More, Preserving 40 Years of Electronic Records at the University of Wyoming American Heritage Center," *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies*, 3:4 (2016).

Mark Greene and Dennis Meissner, "More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing," *The American Archivist*, 68:2 (2005).

3) Reference Statistics

Reference stats – 2004-2017.

Reference stats – FY16-17.

4) Outreach and Programming

“Wyoming at the National History Day Competition: “Taking a Stand in History,” June 10-17, 2017.”

“Learning Spaces” PowerPoint slides for Deans and Directors meeting, June 2014.

Unnamed Classroom PowerPoint presentation (possibly for UW class taught by Rachel Watson).

5) Human Resources

Addressing Faculty Salary Parity at the UW American Heritage Center, February 2018.

AHC Employee Roster, 2018.

Organizational Chart, December 5, 2017.

AHC Travel and Professional Development Guidelines, June 2017.

AHC Faculty Handbook, 2017.

6) Financial

Budget forecast for fiscal year 2018.

Overview of FY17 Spending from AHC Annual Report.

Strategic Budgeting FY18, April 19, 2017.

AHC Combined Gift Account Report, December 31, 2017.

Budget summary: fiscal years 2015, 2016, and 2017.

AHC Gift Account Criteria, December 31, 2017.

7) Other

AHC Website: <http://www.uwyo.edu/ahc/>

Site map: <http://www.uwyo.edu/ahc/sitemap.html>

AHC Publications: <http://www.uwyo.edu/ahc/about/publications.html>

AHC Blog Site: <https://ahcwyo.org/>

Appendix D: Leadership Rubric

The external review team asked informants to describe the ideal characteristics needed in the next AHC leadership team. Responses were varied and include the following skills, knowledge, experience, and abilities. This is not intended to represent a single job description, rather summary of talents that stakeholders feel are important for the future of the American Heritage Center.

Professional skills

- Archival talents and knowledge of the profession.
- Good grounding in historical study.
- Ability to push more material into web-accessible digital form to expand access to people who cannot visit Laramie in person.
- Someone with a vision for the archives of the future.

Managerial skills

- Able to enable a cultural shift in the building.
- Experience in planning and strategy
- Someone with business savvy who has experience with budgeting.

External Relationship skills

- Promotes accessibility of the collections.
- Stewarding the donor relationship - spending the money people give you in the way they expect.
- Able to make connections and establish allies.
- Someone outgoing, able to help secure funding for AHC.
- Able to work with Tyler Spear in UW Development.
- Able to travel the state and meet donors.
- Willing and able to ask people for their collections.
- Understand and relate well with the people of Wyoming.
 (“Maybe our state is a little bit different and frightening to some people”)
- Able to tell a compelling story for a fundraising campaign.

Leadership skills

- Fully embrace the full mission of AHC to collect, preserve, and share.
 (“with an emphasis on the sharing part” said one BOA member)
- Ability to market the AHC to the University and external partners.
- Confidence and savvy to work with University administrators and representatives of state government.
- Strength to effect change.
- Flexibility with adjusting mission and influences others in change.
- Someone who can lead discussion about changes in the archival profession, not only among AHC staff, but as a leader to other records administrators across the state.
- Dynamic leaders with a high level of energy.
 (“Lightning in a bottle,” according to one informant)