



*** THIS IS ***
CHICAGO

OUR FUTURE

**COLLECTIONS AND
DIGITIZATION**

Chicago**History**Museum



In 1871, as flames engulfed the original Chicago Historical Society building at Dearborn and Ontario Streets, the Society's Secretary ran headlong into the blaze in a desperate attempt to save Abraham Lincoln's original hand-annotated signed copy of the Emancipation Proclamation.

The attempt proved fruitless—but it reflected the much deeper belief on which the Chicago Historical Society was founded: that Chicago's precious, irreplaceable artifacts must be collected and preserved for our city's future.

We see the wisdom of that insight every day at the Chicago History Museum (CHM),

whenever a visitor encounters one of the 22 million objects in our collection—keys to our shared memories, pieces of the stories we live and tell each day, and windows onto our future.

As we now look ahead to CHM's next generation of service to Chicago, we all have a responsibility—as community members and as Chicagoans—to renew this timeless commitment for those who follow. We must maintain the Museum's collections for the future while finding new and innovative ways to share the stories they hold.

Collections: *Updating and modernizing central collections storage.*

The East Basement is not only the largest on-site storage area at CHM's Clark Street home, with over 17,000 linear feet of

shelving, but it is also the storage site for hundreds of thousands of important items that need to be easily discoverable and accessible—for researchers, curators, and the general public alike. But the East Basement is now at the end of its 30-year expected life and requires significant renovation for the future. Specifically, we will:

- Upgrade and modernize the East Basement storage area to provide specialized, state-of-the-art care for millions of documents and ensure their long-term preservation. The full renovation—including temporary relocation of existing collections—is expected to be completed by the end of 2019.

- Increase capacity by 50% through modern storage technology, providing immediate access to significant materials that are currently stored off-site.
- Improve archival arrangement, description, and housing to provide better collections access and management for both internal and public use.
- Rebuild the East Basement’s rooftop plaza—an important civic space that will become a part of the new outdoor Chicago History Experience.

Digitization: *Accelerating digitization initiatives to share CHM’s collections more widely than ever before.*

Already, CHM has digitized nearly 500,000 pages of archival material, which can be accessed through more than 70 research libraries across the country. But as we

look ahead to the next generation of service to Chicago, we must do far more in order to meet the tremendous demand from scholars, students, and families of all backgrounds.

By investing in additional service space, staff, and technology, we can dramatically expand these digitization efforts for the years ahead. Our focus will be on high-

value materials, including making digital surrogates of artifacts and art collections discoverable online and sharing collections such as Hedrich-Blessing architectural photographs and *Chicago Daily News* historic photographs. We will also create new ways to manage and expand access to our digital content, allowing the whole world to access Chicago’s history—the heart of our proud city—with ease.

With your support, we will invest in bold and innovative ways to preserve and share the past that shapes our city—and its future.



“CHM is a leader in imagining what a historical society can be and a model of how to achieve it. It should be embraced as a model of thoughtful planning and imaginative implementation.”

WILLIAM TRAMPOSCH
AND MORRIS VOGEL

from the 2014 Reaccreditation
Site Visit Report

THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE



CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM

COVER: *Evening gown*. 1982

Bill Blass, American (1922-2002), gift of Marilyn Miglin, 1984.8.1