

Wisconsin 101 Style Sheet

General Remarks

- Object Histories should be 400-500 words in length; Related Stories should be 600-750 words. Take these numbers as approximate lengths, not hard boundaries.
- Assume that your audience consists of casual readers who will spend a few minutes browsing through the site and reading a few stories. The stories on the web site are not lengthy volumes to be studied in depth. Rather they should draw readers in, keep them interested, and be easy to read.
- Your prose should consist mostly of short, fairly direct sentences, except where longer sentences can add variety to your style.
- The language of the writing should likewise be clear and direct. Avoid abstract terms (such as “formalism” or “decadence”) or uncommon words, unless using such words serves an obvious purpose. In such cases, all unusual terms must be explained or defined.
- Object histories and related stories for Wisconsin 101 should be thought of informally as “clusters” and where appropriate they should contain brief mentions or references in the article to the related pieces. For example, the object history about the Yerkes telescope (<https://wi101.wisc.edu/2019/09/10/object-history-yerkes-telescope/>) in Williams Bay near Lake Geneva in southern Wisconsin refers briefly to the related history on the science of astronomy in the early 1900s.

Specific Style Suggestions

- Do not address the reader directly in the “you” form.
- In general you should try to use active verbs in your writing, not passive forms (e.g., “was made,” “was created,” etc.). Try to avoid using forms of “to be,” even when not in passive constructions.
- Wherever possible, try to give a specific location or address in Object Histories and Related Stories, especially in cases where specific buildings, landmarks, or businesses are being described. This gives readers an opportunity to “see” for themselves where something once stood.
- Avoid using direct quotations for evidence. Save those quotations only for cases when the quoted words are particularly enlightening or amusing.

Guidance for Footnotes, Citations, and Listing of Sources

- Wisconsin 101 prefers not to use footnotes or endnotes, except to document specific quotations. However, as noted above, we discourage direct quotations, except for very specific purposes.

- At the end of every object history and related story, the author should provide a short list of sources used in writing the article. This list should consist of the primary and secondary sources that were actually used in writing the piece.
- Web-based resources must be used with great care. Here are some suggestions:
 - Digitized sources held by the UW, Wisconsin Historical Society and other libraries are quite reliable and can be used with confidence.
 - Although *Wikipedia* has become much more reliable over the years, it still should not be listed as a direct source. If an article in *Wikipedia* contains sources that you use in your article, cite those sources instead.
 - Blogs and other posts on web-based media should not be cited, unless those posts themselves contain citations to research articles or books.
- If you have questions about whether a particular source can be used for *Wisconsin 101*, please check with the Managing Editor.

Guidance for acknowledging exclusion and discrimination and writing about controversial topics

Wisconsin 101 is primarily an exercise in community building, which means that we seek to tell the stories of ALL members of our state community. Yet no honest presentation of our state's history can avoid those moments of division and conflict, expropriation and discrimination that also belong to the story. In some cases, individual stories or entire clusters of stories describing such moments can be built around objects such as Marge Engelman's 1972 artwork, *The Land of Freed-Up Women*, or a windlass built by the then-slave James D. Williams, who worked in the lead mines around Platteville and Mineral Point in the 1860s.

In other cases, mention of such issues can be built organically into the narrative, as appropriate to the topic. For example, the discussion of migrant workers in the harvest of Door County fruits mentions that workers came from as far away as Texas and Mexico and included members of local Native American tribes. To take another example of a story that we do not yet have, a story about the construction of County Stadium in Milwaukee in the 1950s could describe how the stadium was part of a comprehensive program of urban renewal in the city that disrupted a number of low-income and minority neighborhoods. As these examples show, reminders of discrimination can be included in stories without necessarily becoming the focal point.

In particular, we seek to be sensitive to the expropriation of Native American land in making the Wisconsin we know today. Of course, nearly everything we post could point out that the story played out on land that was once the home of one of Wisconsin's indigenous peoples. But to take this option would reduce the issue to an empty recitation. Here too we suggest that authors keep the issue of expropriation of indigenous peoples in mind and incorporate their stories into the narrative where appropriate.