MISSION
The NCSML preserves, presents, and transcends unique stories of Czech and Slovak history and culture through innovative experiences and active engagement to reach cross-cultural audiences locally, nationally, and internationally.

VISION
The NCSML is an innovative leader in lifelong learning, community building, and cultural connections. We encourage self-discovery for all ages so that the stories of freedom, identity, family, and community will live on for future generations.

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Please note, some photos in this annual report were taken pre-COVID-19.
On the front cover (from top to bottom): NCSML Let the Sun Shine; opening of Heritage Caretakers exhibit in February 2020; walking tour of the Czech Village. Above: NCSML staff shows their love during our February Love My NCSML campaign.
A LETTER FROM NCSML PRESIDENT AND CEO

Cherished friends of the NCSML,

Each day that passes is a day in which we make history. In 2020, we experienced history that will forever be remembered throughout the world. In some respects, we were all like historical actors on a surreal stage of uncertainty, challenges, fears, and hopes that reality as we knew it might come back. Now, a year later, we realize that some things in our world have changed forever and the reality that we yearned for will be different. For all of us at the NCSML, we changed, we pivoted, and we thought “outside the box” as we did things that were five or more years out in terms of our planning. The one thing that we always held true to was our mission and our dedication to preserve the past, celebrate the present (in new environments), and create the future. We were here for our community, our state, our nation, and our international audiences. For three months during the height of the pandemic, we closed to the public. For two weeks following the derecho we were closed because of no electricity, phone, or computer access. Yet we never stopped working and connecting to everyone via telephone, email, social media, print media, and live virtual programs.

Disasters are no stranger to the NCSML. In 2008, we rose above the floodwaters to come out bigger and stronger in 2012. In 2020, we faced two disasters: a global pandemic and a derecho. The NCSML team, our Board of Trustees, and YOU – the members and sponsors – helped us make it though so that we can present to you our 2020 annual report. It is filled with the stories and outcomes that our immigrant ancestors would be so proud of. We did build incredible memories and stories for future generations through our challenges. These memories helped to build resilience and provided scenarios for future story telling, so important to our history.

As you read the 2020 annual report, you will see that some things are different. Certainly the major one is the fact that physically we did not have the large number of visitors of years past. Nevertheless, we had visitors from throughout the U.S., especially during the summer months, and we achieved 38% of our normal annual visitation for the months that we were open. The national average for those museums that were open in 2020 was 30%. We have some major outcomes to be very proud of, too. During 2020, we established the National Czech & Slovak Cooking School. This virtual school will operate online and in person, as soon as it is safe to do so. This model cooking school has many surprises coming to us in the future! We established ongoing Czech and Slovak language classes with students taking classes from the U.S. and aboard. Our exhibits were outstanding and because of the virtual expansion, we were able to bring them to the world!

Despite all of the challenges that the disasters brought us, our dedicated staff and board accomplished so much and received national recognition in many areas that you will read about in the pages that follow. We changed as a museum and library, but all for the better. Although digital communications is here to stay, and we will expand on that, the human touch and love from each one of you will not go away. I look forward to again shaking your hands, giving you a hug, and just seeing your smile. Thank you for your ongoing support.

Nemohli bychom dělat to, co děláme bez VÁS ..... děkuji!
Nemohli by sme to, čo robíme bez VÁS ..... ďakujem!
Srdecne (Warmly with heartfelt thanks)

Cecilia Rokusek, Ed.D., M.Sc., RDN
NCSML President and CEO
April challenged us to find creative ways to continue our mission to preserve, present, and transcend unique stories of Czech and Slovak history. We introduced online Czech cooking classes, Czech and Slovak language classes, a Facebook Book Club, and social media museum games tied to our upcoming exhibit, A Century of Robots: From Čapek to Now. We also organized an International Lunch and Learn series focused on the global response to the pandemic, with guests from the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and the United States.

We hosted a naturalization ceremony welcoming 74 new American citizens and their families in February. “The United States of America is a melting pot, and you are representing that,” President and CEO Dr. Cecilia Rokusek said in her opening remarks. “And it is a mosaic of cultures that have made us who we are today. We are celebrating this day as we welcome you to be part of our national mosaic.” We introduced Hubert’s Night Owls, a program designed to make the NCSML more accessible for individuals with disabilities, specifically those on the autism spectrum, and rounded out the month by opening two new exhibits: Heritage Caretakers of Moravia and Czech Scientists and Their Inventions.
In July, we received $47,470 from the Roy J. Carver Charitable Trust to fund building improvements and new equipment that will make the NCSML more accessible to visitors with physical, visual, audio, and other disabilities. The funds will be used for facilities accessibility updates, program materials, and visitor experience accommodations. In addition, we collaborated with the African American Museum of Iowa and the Czech Village New Bohemia Main Street District to bring Voices and Votes: Democracy in America to Cedar Rapids. Our community was the first stop for this traveling exhibit, which is part of Museum on Main Street, a nationwide collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and State Humanities Councils.
We introduced a new spin on our Old World Christmas Market, moving our vendors market online and expanding the Museum Store to provide a socially distant shopping area for visitors. Our annual Cookie Walk pivoted to a drive through, with supporters pre-purchasing cookies and kolaches, and then picking them up in the circle drive in front of our building. Less than a week later, we hosted our first-ever livestream telethon as part of our Let the Sun Shine fundraiser. Viewers around the globe “tuned in” to Facebook Live for staff interviews, exclusive videos, and online tours.

Summer Family Free Day wasn’t the only event that was different this year. Our 17th annual BrewNost celebration changed from a one night event to a “Special Edition” package celebration that included special outreach and virtual events. We welcomed two new exhibits in September: *In Her Father’s Eyes: A Slovak Childhood in the Shadow of the Holocaust* and *Good Idea Slovakia*. We also joined our friends in the Czech Village to celebrate the unveiling of *Mucha Meets Iowa*, a mural by artist Ali Hval.

We recognized the 25th anniversary of the NCSML building dedication by three presidents – United States President Bill Clinton, Czech Republic President Václav Havel, and Slovak Republic President Michal Kováč. We were pleased to open *Formed in Fire: The Joyce Anderson Glass Collection* this month, as well as celebrate our Museum Store being named the 2020 Store of the Year by the Museum Store Association. The NCSML also was awarded Best Cultural Innovations & Marketing Specialists - Midwest USA by the North America Business Awards, hosted by New World Report.

We welcomed the traveling exhibit *Stitching History From the Holocaust* from the Jewish Museum Milwaukee. We also collaborated with the African American Museum of Iowa and CSPS to introduce a new piece of public art to Cedar Rapids: *Regenerations*, by Jordan Weber, a Des Moines-based multidisciplinary artist and activist. The NCSML, with support from ACT, Inc., hosted a public panel for Weber to talk about his work.

Yes, there are many words to describe 2020, but the one we choose to focus on is impact. Despite the challenges, we continued to be an innovative leader in lifelong learning, community building, and cultural connections. Read on to learn more about our work in 2020.
AWARDS AND HONORS

NCSML Board of Trustees and Staff received the following recognitions in 2020

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic Tomáš Petříček named Past Board President George Drost, JD a recipient of the 2020 Medal of Merit in Diplomacy. Drost was recognized for his considerable impact on the expansion of Czech-American cultural and business relations, and for spreading the good name of the Czech Republic throughout the world. NCSML members Dr. Miloslav Rechcígl, Jr. and Edward Joseph Dellin also received this honor.

Board Treasurer Ron Detweiler achieved the Certified Senior Advisor (CSA) designation and is now a Registered Investment Advisor (RIA) for Avantax Planning Partners.

Board Member Mary Kay McGrath received the Game Changer Award from 2020 Main Street Iowa Awards for her investment into multiple properties, businesses, and the local Main Street effort, as well as a Historic Preservation award for Stewardship from the Friends of Cedar Rapids Historic Preservation and the City of Cedar Rapids. McGrath was an Ovation: A Tribute to Women and Girls recipient. This honor from the Iowa Women’s Foundation recognizes women who make a difference through leadership.

President & CEO Dr. Cecilia Rokusek received the Distinguished Professional Achievement Award from the Mount Marty University in September. That same month, she was named one of the 100 Most Successful Women in Business the Global Trade Chamber of Commerce, and presented keynote address “Empowering Women throughout Our Global Society” at the virtual event. Dr. Rokusek wrote the forward for the new book Jubilation Zone by Slovak writer Jozef Banas.

Associate Director of Lifelong Learning Sarah Henderson was one of Corridor Business Journal’s Forty Under 40 honorees.

Director of Outreach & Innovation Teresa Stenstrup was published in the September 20, 2020 issue of Arts Management Quarterly. Her article, “Bringing Heritage Institutions to the Digital World,” focused on the NCSML’s online cooking classes.

MUSEUM STORE

Our Museum Store was named the 2020 National Store of the Year by the Museum Store Association (MSA). We recognized this achievement with a month-long celebration of special promotions, exclusive packages, and virtual events in October, building on months of new ideas to keep sales steady during COVID-19.

The change started with free local delivery for online purchases in March. April saw the launch of local pickup for online orders and shop by appointment options. We hosted our first-ever socially distant book signing in July and had a pop-up store at the Double Header movie celebration at Veterans Memorial Stadium. Our annual Member and Volunteer Appreciation Days were extended from two days to four, with multiple promotions, including a Czech garnet trunk show featuring jewelry and crystal. We temporarily expanded our retail area in December, moving some items to our WFLA/ZCBJ Heritage Hall for socially distant shopping.

We also increased the number of products available on our online store, adding more than 200 items.
Despite the chaos of 2020, the NCSML displayed 11 new exhibits throughout the year.

**Artists as Activists** was a unique exhibit, bringing contemporary art from internationally known artists, including Ai Weiwei and David Černý, to Cedar Rapids. Digital programming with guest Curator Charlotta Kotik, great-granddaughter of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, and a filmed tour given by NCSML Curator Stefanie Kohn brought the exhibit to people across the country.

**A Century of Robots: From Čapek to Now** was an innovative presentation of the 100th anniversary of Czech writer Karel Čapek’s play *R.U.R.* and the impact robots have had on our lives since. NCSML collaborated with Metro High School on this exhibit, with students building some robotic elements for the exhibit after reading the play.

**Formed in Fire: The Joyce Anderson Glass Collection** was curated from pieces in our own NCSML collection, donated by Joyce Anderson throughout the years. She has given more than 700 pieces to the Museum. More than 200 are featured in the exhibit, which is on view until August 2021.

**Stitching History from the Holocaust**, on loan from the Jewish Museum Milwaukee, is a haunting exhibition about a Jewish couple’s quest to escape Czechoslovakia in the late 1930s and the marvelous dresses designed by Hedy Strnad. The exhibit will remain on view until March 21, 2021.
We made the decision to delay *Treasures of Slovakia: One Thousand Years of History* until 2021. Staff at the Slovak National Museum were not in their offices or with their collections for much of early 2020, and we at the NCSML want to have this exciting exhibition at a time when the maximum amount of visitors can see it.

## Donations

We are grateful to all of those who donate items to the NCSML. Your generosity allows us to share our Czech and Slovak history and culture with future generations. This year was a great year for donations, as we received artifacts and library materials from 103 donors.

Forty-seven people donated 837 artifacts. They include an embroidered Slovak jacket, a collection of Moravian kroje that was exhibited in *Heritage Caretakers of Moravia*, a collection of photographic prints taken during the Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and a feather bed.

The Skala Baritzal Library received 1,294 items from 58 people, including books, periodicals, phono records, player piano rolls, family histories, official documents, handwritten letters, stamps, and postcards.

## Traveling Exhibits

Many of our traveling exhibit contracts were canceled because of COVID-19. Only two exhibits were on display in 2020:

- *Witness to the Revolution*, along with supporting items from the collection, was on exhibit at the German American Heritage Center in Davenport, Iowa, the first two months of 2020.
- *Rising Above*, along with a kroj from the teaching collection, was on exhibit at NewBo City Market in October.

Combined, these traveling exhibits reached an estimated 3,869 people.

## Online Artifacts Collection

As more of our work went digital in 2020, the online collection saw an increase in usage. The average number of page views per month went from 773.5 in January through March 2020 to 5,800 in August through December 2020. Our Collections Manager, Tricia Bender, photographed and posted 1,379 new artifacts to the digital collection, increasing the total content by one third.
OUTREACH & INNOVATION

Programs
In order to continue to carry out the NCSML mission, Director of Outreach & Innovation Teresa Stenstrup had to rethink and redesign every plan she had for 2020. This resulted in virtual Immigrant Foodways cooking classes, YouTube videos, and online Czech and Slovak language lessons. It was a leap of faith for many of these programs, as they have only been on site before, but once the first online cooking series sold out, Stenstrup saw endless possibilities.

Because of this, her department still recorded participation numbers in the triple digits in May and June, while the country was in lockdown. These numbers continued through the rest of the year as the department partnered with the Museum Store to create special product packages that supplemented virtual author talks and online art workshops.

“My goal is for any in-person program to also be offered virtually,” Stenstrup said. “Pre-pandemic, we livestreamed some lectures, but going forward, I hope to always stream any lecture, performance (when possible), class, and workshop. How each program is streamed or digitally shared will vary by its type, but I’m confident it will only make our programs more accessible.”

Education
Sarah Henderson, NCSML Associate Director of Lifelong Learning, worked with students from three area school districts to assist them in filming 12 short videos about climate change, the derecho, and the impact of COVID-19 on the community for the annual Teens Dream Video Competition: Changemaker Challenge.

Each video entered in the Teens Dream Video Competition: Changemaker Challenge relates to one of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The goals address a multitude of global challenges, including poverty, inequality, climate, prosperity, and peace and justice.

Henderson spent more than 60 hours with students on this project, meeting both in-person and virtually as students completed their research, interviewing local business owners, city employees, and community activists. In addition, the NCSML served as a temporary classroom for students with insufficient Wi-Fi connections at home.

The Smithsonian partnered with NGO the Global Co Lab Network, who created the Teens Dream competition to encourage teens to globally connect and be change-makers, engaging them in a video contest, events, and virtual meeting rooms for action. The winners of the 2020 video competition, to be announced in 2021, will receive a $500 grant to help implement their vision.
NCSML Czech & Slovak Activity Book

One project we’re especially proud of this year is the publication of our NCSML Czech & Slovak Activity Book. Comprised of our favorite activities from past programs, as well as some new, the book shares information about Czech and Slovak history, people, and culture, while also encouraging cross-cultural connections. It can be purchased through the Museum Store.

Author Sarah Henderson, NCSML Associate Director of Lifelong Learning, says she hopes families will use the activity book together. She imagines grandparents sharing stories of their heritages as their grandchildren color the pages, or parents discovering something new from the questions asked by their children.

MEMBERSHIP

We welcomed more than 100 new members in 2020

To date, more than a third of our membership includes individuals who have been with us for more than 10 years. We have members in 44 states, plus Washington D.C., Canada, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia.

IMPACT

NCSML reached nearly 20,000 people

Between virtual classes, online events, social media followers, and museum and library visits, our individual impact spanned the globe. We made sure all on-site visitors knew the precautions we were taking as a staff to keep them safe. Safety included cleaning frequently, timed tickets for exhibits when we reached a max amount of visitation, free masks for those who needed one, contact tracing, and hand sanitizer stations throughout the building.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer hours totaled 4,768

Volunteering was different in 2020. For all of our volunteer’s safety, our department handed out new guidelines, which included cleaning procedures, temperature checks, social distancing, contact tracing, and many other procedures. Even though volunteer hours were down this year, from being closed and many not returning for safety reasons, we did recruit 15 new volunteers to our team. Volunteers also played a major role in helping us prepare to reopen in the late spring. Many sewed the masks that were given to those who needed one while visiting the NCSML.

Another significant change for our volunteers this year was the Volunteer Appreciation Event. To keep it safe during COVID-19, we made a goodie bag for each person. A certificate or pin recognizing each person’s volunteer hours was included, along with a gingersnap recipe, Czech kroj greeting cards, Sokol gymnastic stickers, a thank you card from staff, beer bread, beer beverages, and other fun items. Volunteers could come in to retrieve their bag or have it brought out to their vehicle. This social distanced event was a major success and made volunteers feel safe while still being involved.
2020 DONORS

Our success is made possible by your generosity, and we are truly thankful and grateful for your continued support. To view a complete donor list, visit ncsml.org/donate.

THANK YOU!

Clockwork Donors

Our NCSML Clockwork Donors give to the NCSML on a monthly basis, allowing them to make smaller gifts over a longer period of time and making a large impact on the NCSML mission!

* Denotes Clockwork Donor

Legacy Society

Any planned gift qualifies you for membership in the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library Legacy Society, which includes an invitation to an annual, exclusive brunch honoring those invested in our future.

Bold denotes Legacy Society

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Sokol Detroit

Revenue & Endowment Draw

54.6% — Admin, Development, & Marketing
.4% — Facilities & Building Operations
6.2% — Curatorial
1.2% — Library
15.7% — Outreach & Innovation
12.4% — Events, Museum Store, & Admissions

Total Expenses

35.3% — Admin, Development, & Marketing
21.8% — Facilities & Building Operations
9.2% — Curatorial
4.6% — Library
9.7% — Outreach & Innovation
19.4% — Events, Museum Store, & Admissions
Pictured above: Moravian artist, Marie Švirgova begins what became a hand-painted motif for the *Heritage Caretakers* exhibit. (photo by Dagmar Benešová)

Support Provided By

Preserving the Past, Celebrating the Present, and Creating the Future.

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