

Money on Display: Interpreting Financial Documents for a Public Audience

Becky Laughner

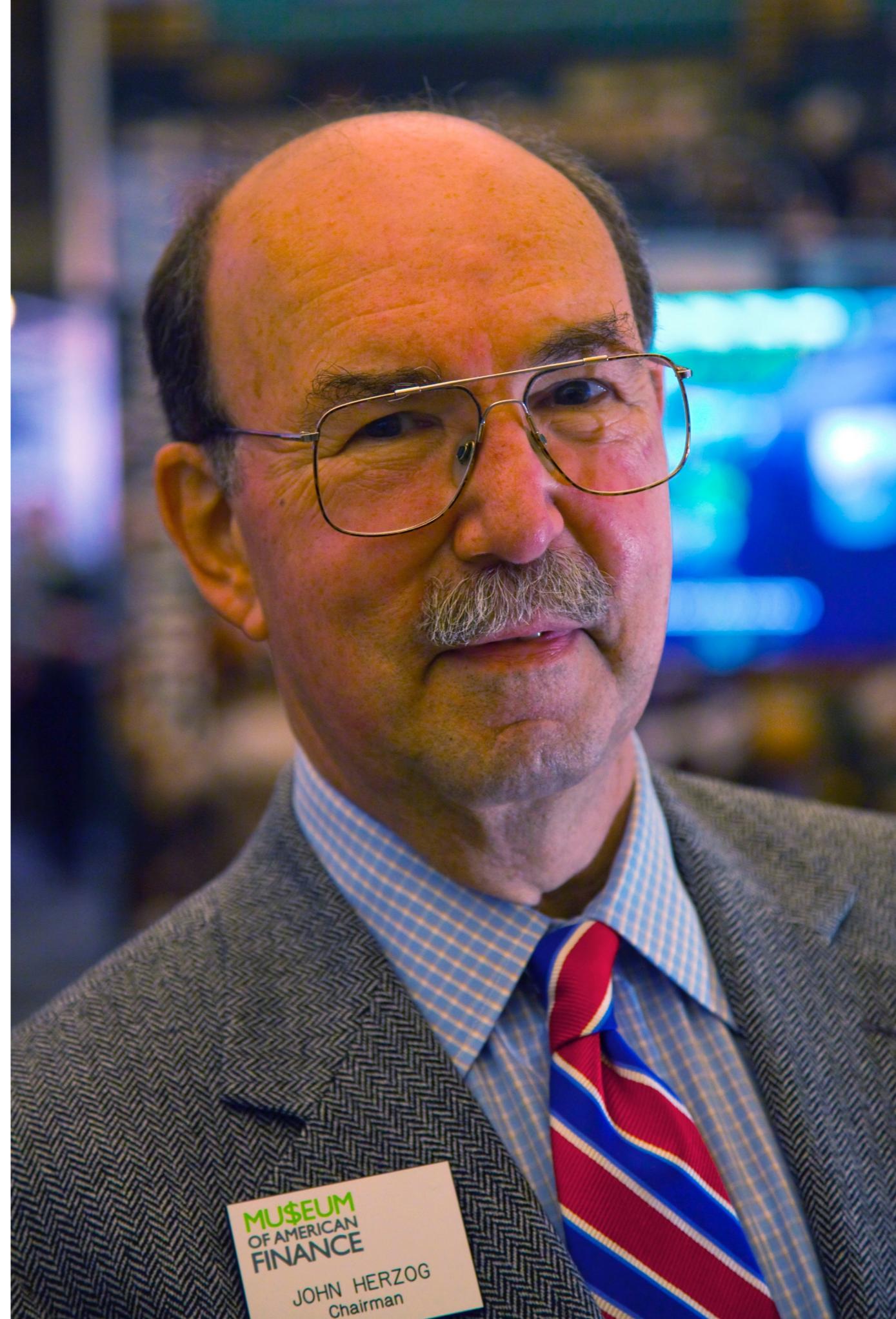
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MoAF Founding

What was missing in the confusion and panic during 1987 was historical perspective. I wanted to contribute to people's enhanced understanding of the capital markets through the history of our amazing American financial experience.

—John Herzog



MoAF Mission

The Museum of American Finance is the nation's only independent museum dedicated to preserving, exhibiting and teaching about American finance and financial history. Housed in an historic bank building on Wall Street, the Museum's magnificent grand mezzanine banking hall provides an ideal setting for permanent exhibits on the financial markets, money, banking, entrepreneurship and Alexander Hamilton.

The Museum is an independent, non-profit 501(c)(3) Smithsonian affiliate creating non-ideological presentations and programs for purposes of education and general public awareness. Financial education is at the core of the Museum's mission, seeking to promote lifelong learning and inquiry.

As a chronicler of American financial achievement and development, the Museum seeks to play a special role as a guardian of America's collective financial memory, as well as a presenter and interpreter of current financial issues, thereby connecting the past with the present while serving as a guide for the future.



48 Wall Street, Museum entrance (left) and Bank of New York interior ca.1951 (right)

MoAF by the numbers

- 10,000 square feet of exhibition space
- collection of more than 15,000 items
- 47,000 visitors per year
- visitors by location:
approximately 1/3 international, 1/3 out-of-state, 1/3 local



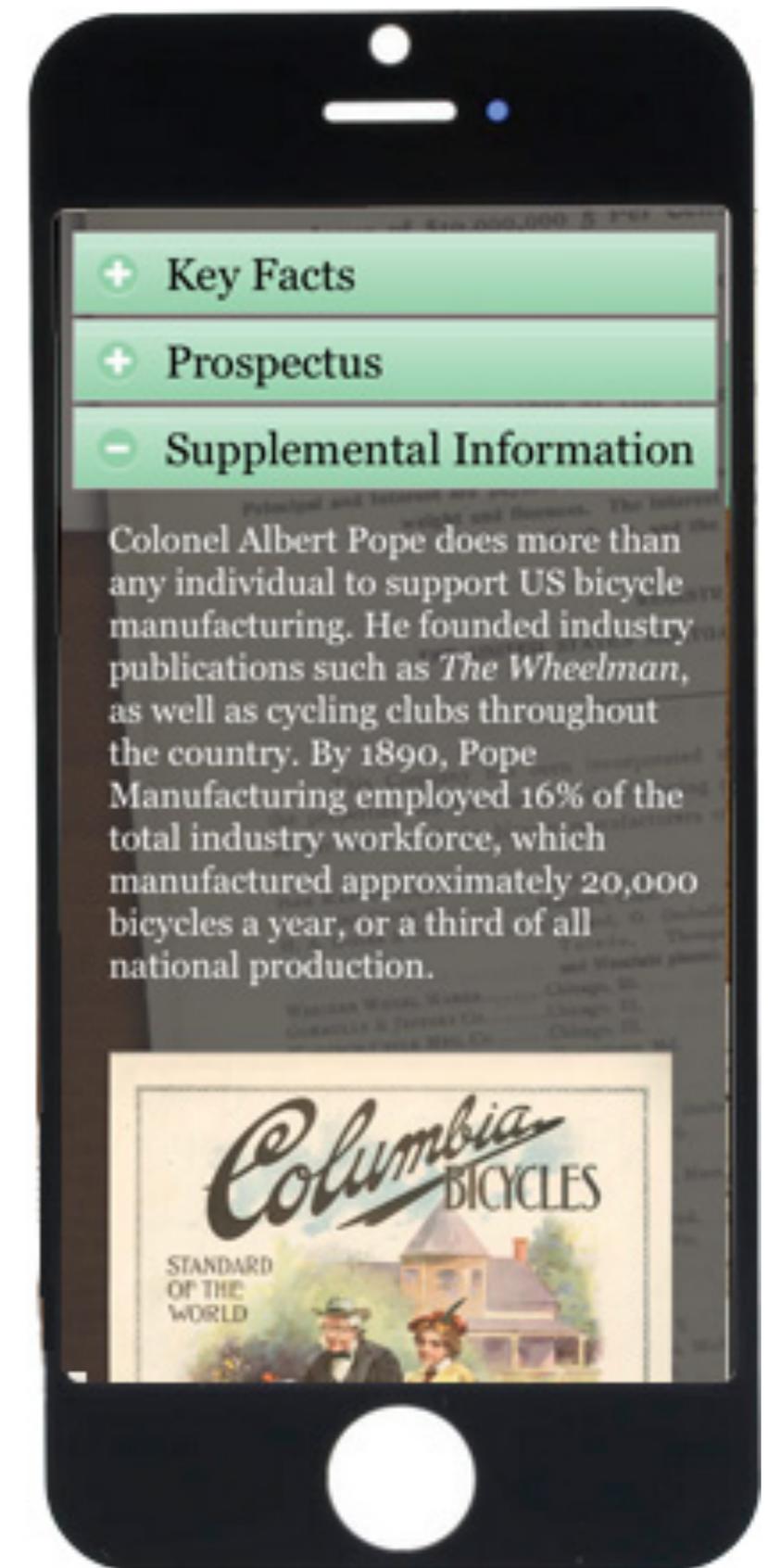
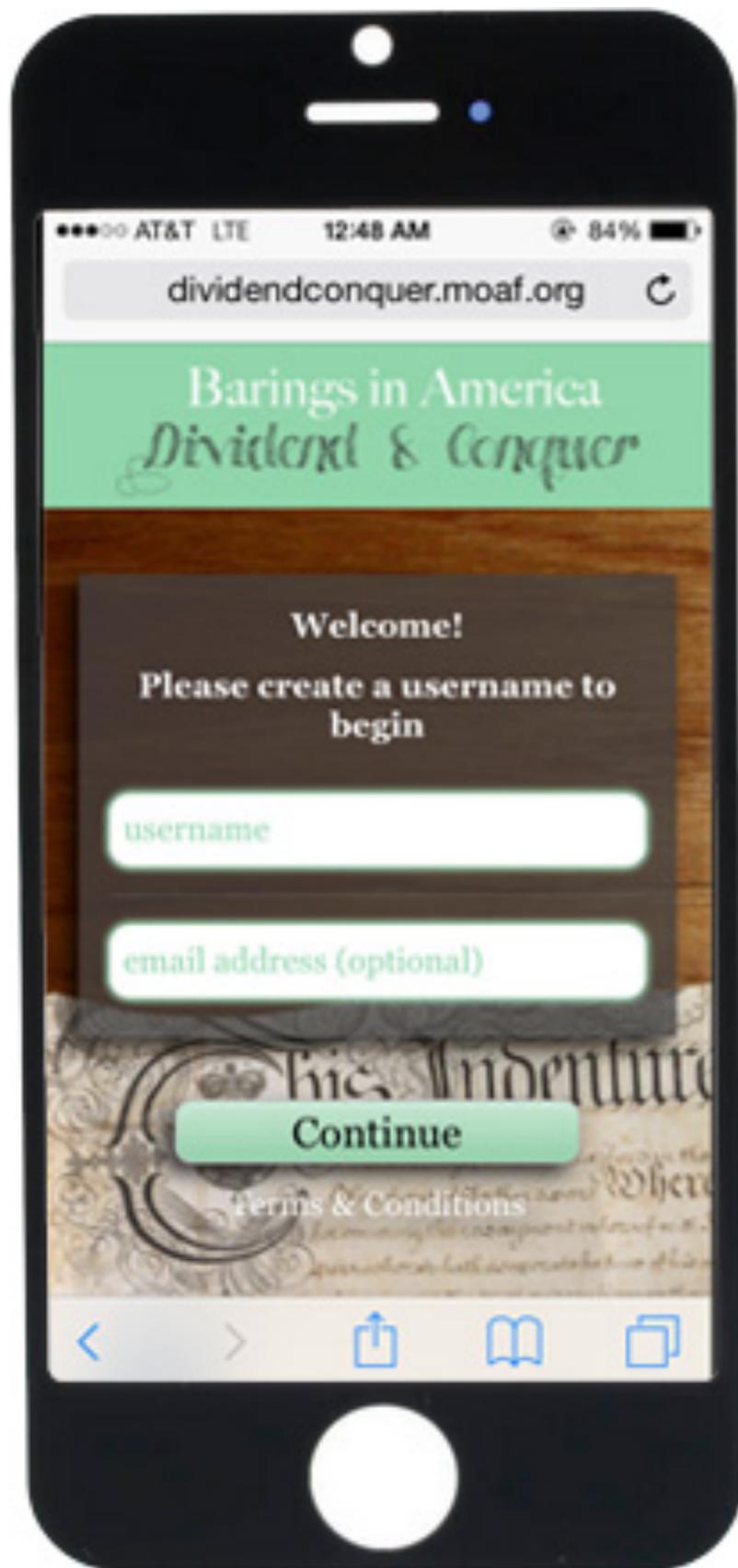
Challenges

- making historical financial documents interesting and engaging for visitors of all ages
- writing for an audience that varies widely in their knowledge base of finance and US history
- collaborating with stakeholders that are also image-conscious brands





The Financial Markets exhibition (above), Banking in America exhibition (below), certificates from the MoAF collection (right)



Screenshots from *Dividend and Conquer* mobile app and *Barings in America* exhibition; Mobile site available at DividendConquer.moaf.org



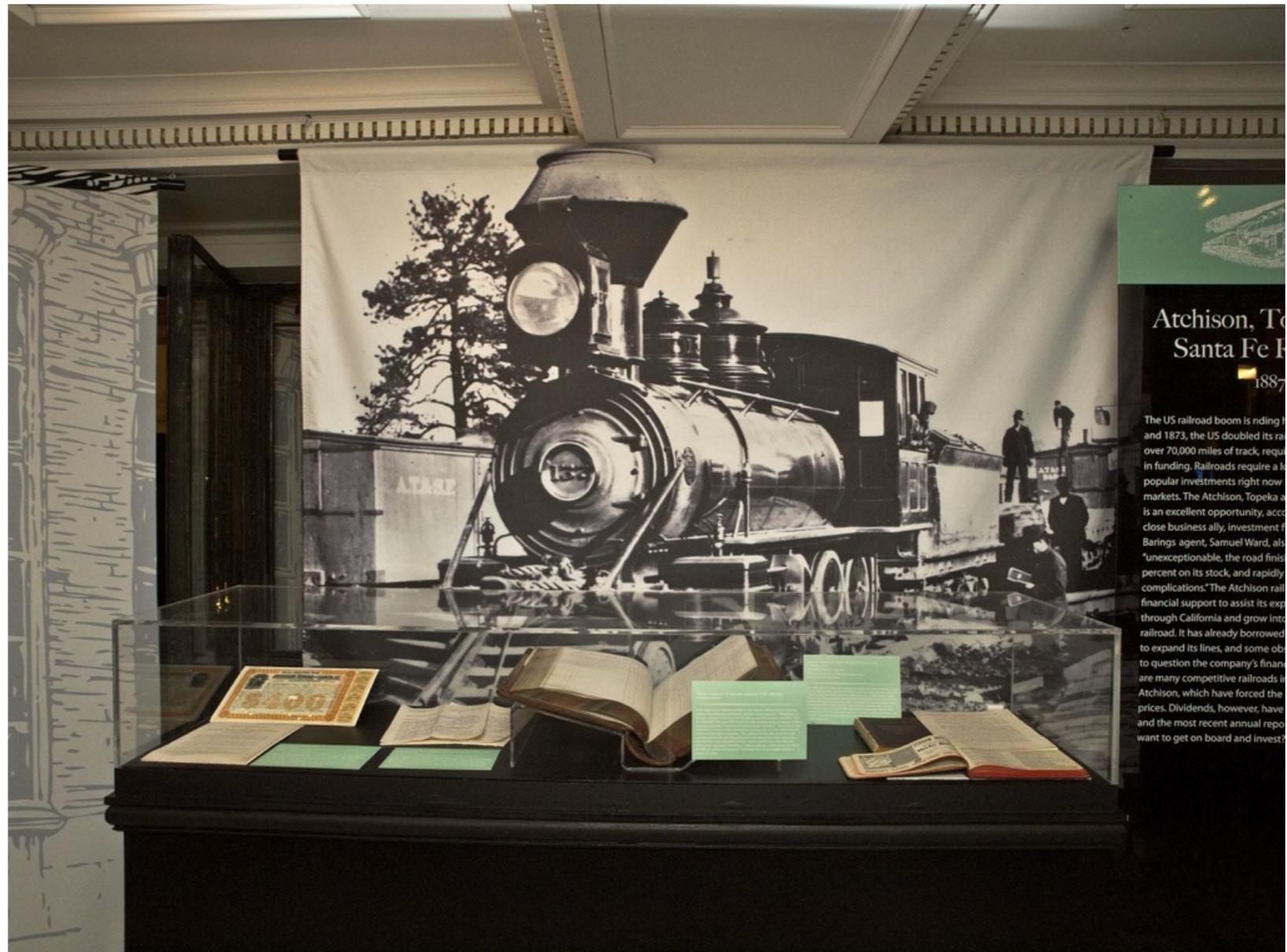
Andrew Carnegie, Daily Register of Donations, 1908–1913

Carnegie Corporation of New York Records

Columbia University Rare Book & Manuscript Library

This is one of many volumes containing the daily records of Andrew Carnegie's donations. It is open to the week of January 14, 1909. In this week alone, Carnegie donated over \$261,000 (approximately \$625,000 in today's dollars) to four libraries, three university endowments, a university science center, a university recreational lawn, 24 churches for the purchase of organs and eight additional organizations.

Andrew Carnegie: Forging Philanthropy exhibition (left) and Daily Register of Donations object label (right)



Riggs Bank account ledger with Abraham Lincoln's personal account, 1861-1862 (left), Barings ledger of US accounts, 1888-1889 (right)



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Should **#museums** be telling attractive stories about 'mundane' objects rather than enticing visitors in with attractive objects?

#AskACurator



Checks & Balances: Presidents and American Finance

www.moaf.org/exhibits/checks_balances

The number one problem in today's generation and economy is the lack of financial literacy. — *Alan Greenspan*

Only 17 states require a high school course in Personal Finance. And only 22 states require a high school course in Economics. — *Council for Economic Education, Survey of the States 2014*

In and of itself, knowledge of the past cannot improve the future, but retracing past glories and disappointments is often the best place to start. — *Robert Wright, Curator of Checks & Balances*