Historic House Museums and Sites

Historic house museums and sites often inspire a new love for history within their visitors. To be able to see and experience what life might have been like during a certain time period is often more engaging for many people than viewing a traditional museum exhibit of historical artifacts. Operating an historic house or site, however, can be a challenging as well as fun experience. Luckily, several books and websites offer guidance on a variety of issues that these sites face today. See also the “Historic Buildings and Landscapes” and “Museum and Nonprofit Administration” toolkits for further resources.

General Guidance

- American Alliance of Museums: Historic Houses and Sites Network
- American Association for State and Local History: “How Sustainable is Your Historic House Museum?”
- Franklin Vagnone, et. al: Anarchist’s Guide to Historic House Museums
- National Park Service: Preservation Brief 32 – “Making Historic Properties Accessible”
- Sherry Butcher-Younghans: Historic House Museums: A Practical Handbook for Their Care, Preservation, and Management
- Donna Ann Harris: New Solutions for House Museums: Ensuring the Long-Term Preservation of America’s Historic Houses

Preservation and Maintenance

- Canadian Conservation Institute: “Closing a Museum for the Winter”
- Connecting to Collections Care
  - “Hibernation – Not Just for Bears: Putting your house museum “to bed” for the season” Webinar (Presenters: Benjamin Haavik and Nicole Chalfant, Historic New England)
  - “Live Question and Answer Session on Housekeeping for Historic Sites” Webinar (Presenter: Brigid Sullivan, National Park Service)
- English Heritage: Practical Conservation Guidelines for Successful Hospitality Events in Historic Houses
- Historic New England: Environmental Conditions in Historic House Museums
- National Park Service
  - Preservation Brief 3: “Improving Energy Efficiency in Historic Buildings”
  - Preservation brief 24: “Heating, Ventilating, and Cooling Historic Buildings—Problems and Recommended Approaches”
  - Preservation Briefs: Guidance on the preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of historic buildings.
  - Preservation Tech Notes: Guidance on a variety of topics involving the maintenance and preservation of historic materials.
  - “Weatherizing and Improving the Energy Efficiency of Historic Buildings”
- Northeast Museum Services Center: Video series – Housekeeping for Historic Sites
• Jane Merritt: Preventive Conservation for Historic House Museums

Interpretation and Exhibition

• David B. Allison: Effective Costumed Interpretation and Enactment at Museums and Historic Sites
• Jessica Foy Donnelly: Interpreting Historic House Museums
• National Park Service
  o Telling the Stories: Planning Effective Interpretive Programs for Properties Listed in the National Register of Historic Places
• William Alderson and Shirley Payne Low: Interpretation of Historic Sites

Finances and Funding

• State Historical Society of Iowa
  o County School Grant Program
  o Historical Resource Development Program Grants
• American Association for State and Local History: “How Sustainable is Your Historic House Museum?”
• Institute of Museum and Library Services: “Apply for a Grant”
• National Endowment for the Humanities: Grant Opportunities
• National Park Service
  o Historic Preservation Fund Grants
  o Save America’s Treasures
  o State, Tribal, and Local Plans & Grants
  o Underrepresented Community Grants
• Rebekah Beaulieu: Financial Fundamentals for Historic House Museums
• Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area: “Grant Programs”