

***A Selected Compilation of Historic House Museum Resources***  
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## **Introduction**

In recent years, museum professionals, preservationists, and cultural agencies have observed a decline in attendance and revenues of historic house museums and sites. In 2002, James Vaughan, the vice president for stewardship of historic sites at the National Trust for Historic Preservation, framed this “malaise” in the following terms:

In the increasing competition for visitors, members, and financial support, many, if not most, historic sites are struggling for survival, and the quality of preservation and maintenance of many such sites has declined precipitously. In addition, the quality and appeal of the traditional historic house museum interpretation does not successfully compete with other contemporary sources of educational leisure time activities. Is it time for new models, new standards, or new approaches?<sup>1</sup>

This bibliography captures the written resources that have emerged in response to this malaise. The majority of the sources cited below appeared in the past ten years and represent the most recent scholarship and opinion on the problems and challenges faced by historic house museums and sites. The authors do not intend this to be a comprehensive bibliography. Rather, the intent of this guide is to provide the most recent advice about interpretation, including the creation of furnishing and interpretation plans and innovative techniques such as site specific performance, and to enable stewards of historic sites to study the problem from their own perspective.

In 2008, James Vaughan called for a national conversation about the sustainability of America’s historic sites. The authors of this bibliography hope that the sources listed below provide a springboard to advance this discussion. The authors encourage readers to submit newly published or overlooked resources by contacting [Ronald Potvin@Brown.edu](mailto:Ronald.Potvin@Brown.edu) or by calling 401-863-1177.

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