

“Have I got a pest problem?”

Mapping Insect Vulnerability of Costume Collections

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Introduction

This poster presents a simple software tool for mapping the risk of pest infestation in costume collections.

Methodology

The software has been developed to bring together and evaluate information from current literature on how the nature of a textile, insect biology museum activities and display or storage conditions can affect insect activities.

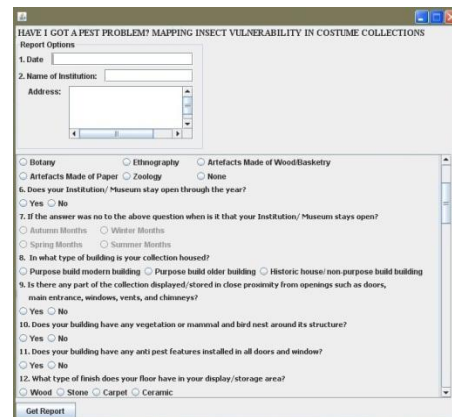
Factors Examined

The Insects: Insect biology helps provide information on insect life cycle (eating, living breeding habits) their favoured environments (temperature, relative humidity, light and pollution) along with how they can be monitored (sighting, damage caused, and life-cycle residues).

The Collection: Factors related to the composition, dying, finishing and sizing of textiles along with decoration and design of the costumes can attract or help insects flourish. Soiling and surface dirt from accumulation of dust, oils or food spills are also evaluated.

The Care of the Costume Collections

The way collections are used and how costume collections are cared for provide information on factors that may promote, sustain and allow insect infestations to remain undetected. The building fabric along with materials and designs of display and storage methods for costumes are examined. Collection care practices concerning loans, routine housekeeping, monitoring and seasonal cleaning are also considered.



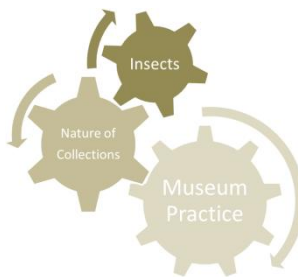
Screenshot of the software



Insect damage on costumes
(Courtesy of IWM)

Software Application

Using all of the above features the authors formulated an interactive software application to help museum staff map the areas of their collection that are vulnerable to insect infestation. The software collects information through a set of multiple choice questions and builds them into a report on how current museum practices can affect insect activity. Additionally it provides the user with a set of immediate actions that should be considered and information on how to obtain further help on developing an IPM Strategy.



Users are prompted to examine their collection and practice as a whole to identify the factors that contribute to its susceptibility to insect infestation.