

# MuseumPests.net

**www.MuseumPests.net: Building an interdisciplinary on-line community**  
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The Integrated Pest Management Working Group (IPM-WG) is a group of collection managers, conservators, entomologists and other professionals interested in issues surrounding the implementation of integrated pest management in museums and other collection-holding institutions. The group does not teach IPM principles, but rather focuses on providing resources to make it easier for the broader museum community to develop and implement their own IPM programs. The goal is to promote and facilitate good IPM practices and collaboration between staff and institutions through the development and on-line distribution of training materials and other resources.

The IPM-WG grew out of a collaboration between staff at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) and the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) focused on expanding a database developed by AMNH to track and map trapped pest finds. Staff working on this project was aware that other museum professionals were also attempting to address similar concerns relating to implementation of IPM programs in museums and a desire to continue such collaboration fueled the first Working Group meeting hosted by the AMNH in 2002.

The 2002 meeting was one-day long and was attended by eleven individuals representing several museums including AMNH, NMAI, Texas Tech University, the Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI) and the Image Permanence Institute (IPI). Discussion focused on development of databases with potential for mapping pest activity, identification of data fields for pest-monitoring databases and the need to survey the community regarding IPM activities and needs. Major outcomes of the meeting were development of an e-mail discussion list for sharing information about IPM issues and refinement of the AMNH Pest Manager database through collaboration with group members. The results of this work were later presented at the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC) annual meeting in 2004.

A second IPM-WG meeting was held in February 2005, also hosted by AMNH with 19 people in attendance. Many from the first group were there as well as others representing the Swedish Museum of Natural History, Peabody Museums at Harvard and Yale, Milwaukee Public Museum and the private sector.

An informal survey set out to uncover the group's additional pest-related concerns and led us to focus on three topics: Standards and Best Practices, Data Collection and Identification Aids. Subgroups were organized to set short- and long-term goals and identify projects that were carried out through the subsequent year. Two important goals were achieved after this meeting:

- The beginning of a website [www.museumpests.net](http://www.museumpests.net) that would be used to share and disseminate the work of the IPM-WG.

- The **PestList** e-mail discussion group was also linked to the website and instructions for joining the list are available there. This mailing list provides a forum for discussion of IPM-related topics such as identification and treatment concerns.
- The development of a pest management database called **Z-Pest Standard**. The program is available as a free download on the museumpests.net website. It was developed by Leon Zak, a programmer who has also worked on the development of the Climate Notebook software program produced by IPI.

In February, 2006, the third meeting of IPM-WG at the AMNH, was attended by 25 individuals. Representatives from many other organizations joined us in 2006, including individuals from the Natural History Museum in London, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Smithsonian, the US Army Heritage and Education Center, and Historic New England.

- Recent accomplishments of the Group are an increased number of subscribers to the list serve (PestList).
- The MuseumPests.net web site.
- An extensive questionnaire surveying IPM practices and needs within the community.
- The expansion of the original projects of the various IPM-WG subgroups was identified as the highest priority through the questionnaire. The new subgroups and their goals are described below.
  - **Data Collection:** Their main goal is to find ways to help museums organize and archive pest-monitoring data. In order to do this, a field list of data concepts deemed most important for pest monitoring has been developed. This list will serve as a guide to individuals who may be developing or refining their pest-monitoring databases and was released on the web site in late 2006. Another initiative is a call for information from the community wherein IPM managers throughout North America were asked to submit a self-evaluation of their current pest-monitoring databases. The information obtained will be reported on the web site so visitors can see how other museums are approaching this issue and will serve as a basis for further discussions. A more distant goal for this subgroup is development of means to simplify or speed up data collection activities.
  - **Visualization:** This is a newly formed subgroup whose major goal is to work on identifying utilities (such as GIS) that allow for mapping and visualization of pest activity. Some institutions have already found this a valuable resource for identifying pest problems in their buildings.
  - **Identification Aids:** The principal activity of this group is to develop an on-line database of museum pests. The database will be structured for easy access through a variety of methods such as searching by common or scientific name, associations, food preferences, and geography as well as by identification key. The site will provide summary data about the pest, its associations and control. The group has already developed a format for

identification sheets with images and text that can be downloaded or printed for easy reference. Group members are currently working on developing these sheets for the top 20 museum pests, as identified by our recent questionnaire. Along with this project, a database of pest images is being built and will also be available on the web site. As with all areas of the site, information content and images will be reviewed by a committee and will be updated as appropriate. We envision the web site as a dynamic resource that will remain active and up-to-date.

- **Standards and Best Practices:** This group is focusing on three main areas: IPM Policies and how they fit within museum collection policies; Procedures to follow concerning activities like trapping, visual inspection, shipping and loans, and cleaning; and Tools, which encompasses things like education packages, risk and cost analyses, and scientific studies. This subgroup recognized early on that a great deal of work has already been done in all of these areas and they have made it an initial priority to gather as many of these resources as possible and present them in a simple, logical manner for inclusion on the web site. All content will be vetted by the Standards subgroup prior to being posted to the web site. A long-term goal is development a Standards and Best Practices “template” covering many of these issues. The group’s ideas on how Standards and Best Practices are developed and used have been organized into an easy-to-read grid that is now available on the web site.
- **Treatments:** Following the format described for the Best Practices subgroup, this group will focus its efforts on collecting procedures for treatments, bibliographies, and other links relating to physical, chemical and modified atmosphere treatments. Again, their results will be summarized and annotated by a group of moderators before being presented on the web site.
- **Web Resources:** Currently, the major activity of this group is collecting links to existing resources on the web such as organizations, resources, tools, classes, or and bibliographies. It is hoped that the [www.museumpests.net](http://www.museumpests.net) website will serve as a unified resource for information about IPM and that anyone with IPM needs will visit MuseumPests.net first.

The next meeting of the IPM-WG is scheduled for February 26-27, 2007 hosted by the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Information on how to join the group and attend upcoming meetings can be found on the [www.museumpests.net](http://www.museumpests.net) website and announcements will be made on the Cons DistList as well as other conservation and museum-related e-mail lists. The IPM-WG is grateful for the dedication of the many museum professionals from various disciplines who are devoting their time and expertise to help the broader museum community through their participation in the Integrated Pest Management Working Group.