ESTABLISHING BEST PRACTICE: THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MUSEUM-WIDE IPM AT THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

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Introduction

In 2012, the appointment of an IPM Coordinator allowed the Oxford University Museum of Natural History (OUMNH) to implement its first holistic and museum-wide approach to IPM. This entailed re-writing existing localized policies to incorporate all museum staff, collections space and public display areas. The new policy needed to recognize the limitations of the museum, including available resources, the varied requirements of each department and the inherent restrictions of being located in a listed Victorian building.

Primary research was gathered including: a nine month trapping and monitoring program to locate existing pest types and habitats; a staff questionnaire to gauge the existing level of IPM awareness and to see if and where staff felt it was relevant and a thorough assessment of the building to measure the quality of buildings maintenance and housekeeping. With this data assembled, the areas of priority for the policy were identified as:

1. Staff training

The best way to successfully implement change is to be able to justify it well, and through this achieve buy in from staff members. By publicizing the results of the trapping program and building assessment, staff gained a better understanding of the need for IPM and by asking for their opinions; the process was more engaging, building trust and improving communication. Staff were also trained on basic IPM procedures and pest identification through workshops and online resources.

2. Risk-zone strategy

A 'risk-zone' strategy was applied throughout the museum (fig 1).

3. Improvements to Collections Management

This included the creation of compulsory spot-checking and general improvements to collections storage. The necessary improvements comprised of short term goals such as de-cluttering and re-sealing existing cabinets. Long- term goals include improvements to environmental conditions and new storage facilities.

Figure 1– Floor plan of OUMNH first floor, with risk zones

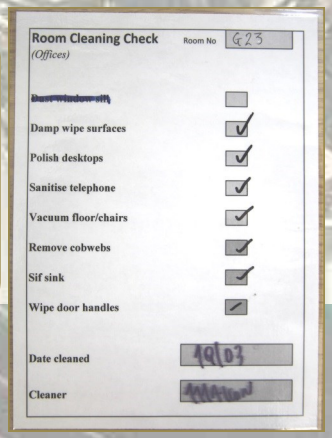

Figure 2- 'Signage system' to document housekeeping

4. Improvements to housekeeping

This includes an annual deep clean, a 'limited bin system' to reduce the amount of general waste build up in the museum, and the installation of a 'signage system' to identify when areas had been cleaned and by whom (see fig 2).

5. Quarantine

The trapping program highlighted a recently established insect pest '*Badonnelia titei',* or Booklouse (fig 3) and emphasized the need for museum-wide quarantine. A quarantine space was allocated, at a central point with good access for deliveries and freezer treatment was made available.

Figure 3– Photograph of 'Badonnelia titei' or Booklouse, a new species for the museum, found on a blunder trap

Conclusions

Overall, the new IPM policy for the museum has been a great success. The biggest challenge was to change perceptions of IPM and emphasize the importance of collaborative effort among all museum staff. The creation of an official 'IPM Coordinator' made a big difference to the receptiveness of IPM as an essential part of best practice. An increase in training, communication and transparency has allowed IPM measures to be more easily justified. However, there are still improvements to be made, foremost with improving storage and managing collections. Further policies to aid the success of the IPM are still required including a 'Food Management' policy to regulate the storage and consumption of food within the museum.

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