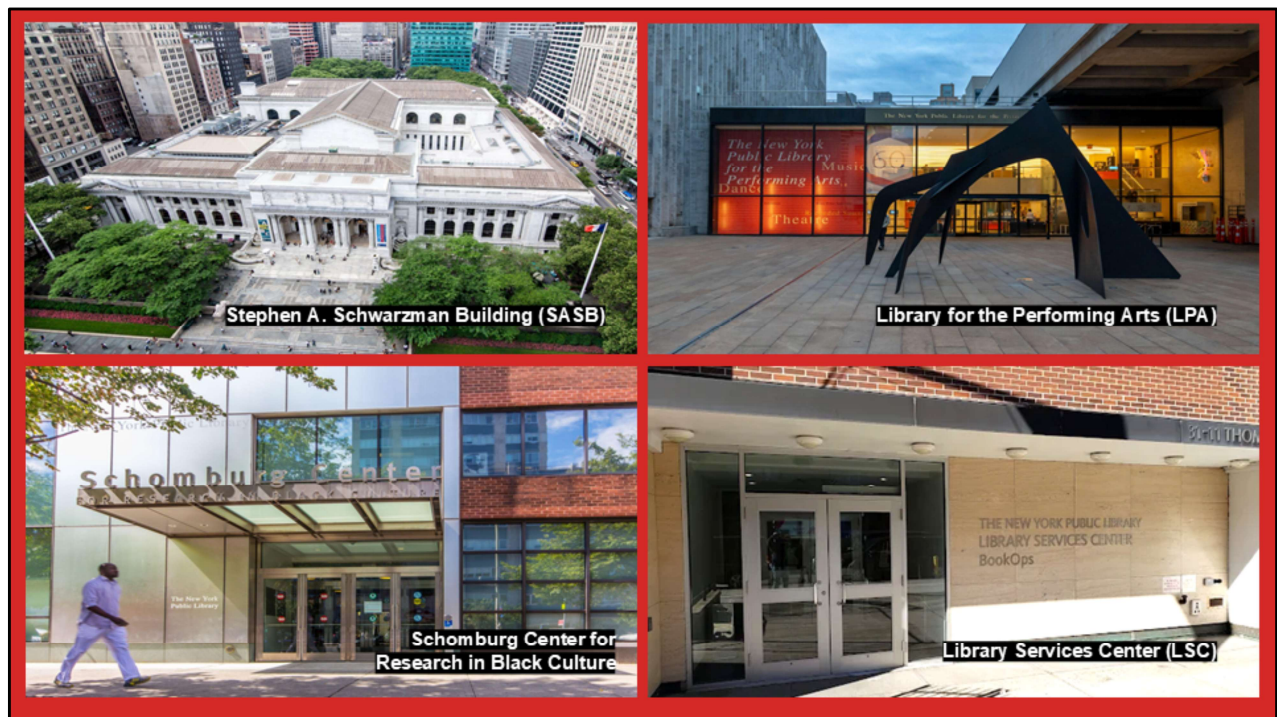The New York Public Library

Airtable as a Collaborative Tool for Integrated Pest Management in Cultural Heritage Institutions
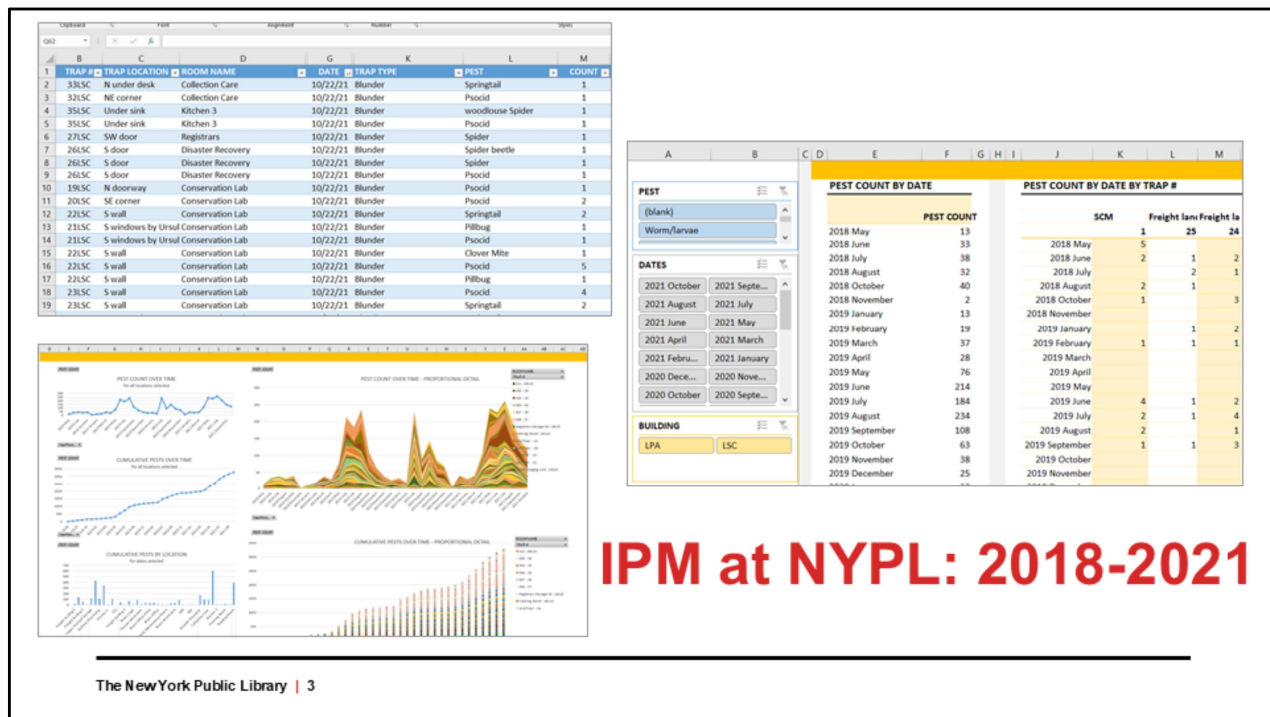
Colleen Grant, *Senior Collection Manager*
Meghan Brady, *Collection Manager*

October 7, 2025
MuseumPests & Pest Odyssey Public Presentation Session

Good morning. My name is Colleen Grant and I'm the Senior Collection Manager at the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building at the New York Public Library. I'm joined today by Meghan Brady, Collection Manager at the Schwarzman Building. Today we're going to discuss how we are using Airtable, a cloud-based relational database platform, to more effectively manage and analyze all our IPM-related data across multiple sites and how it has become an effective tool for communication and collaboration within our own department as well as with Facilities and other partners. First, I'll give some background about our program and then Meghan will walk us through the IPM Airtable database we've built. At the end, we'll share how you can access a template version of the database which we've made available for free via the Airtable Universe.

Stephen A. Schwarzman Building (SASB)

Library for the Performing Arts (LPA)

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture
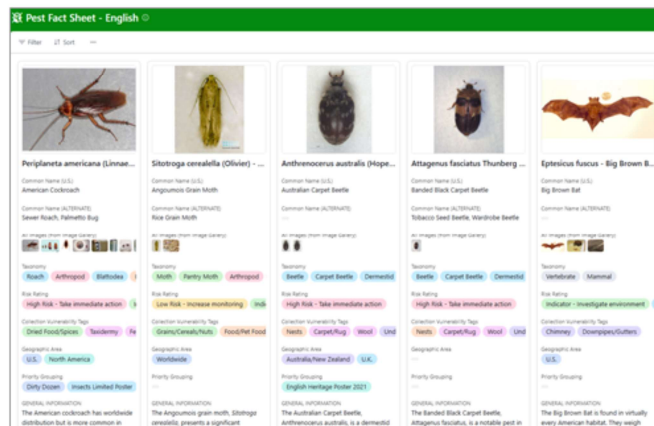
Library Services Center (LSC)

The Collection Management department at NYPL works to improve collection control, preservation, and long term care for special collection items stored across the four facilities you see on the screen, which are our 3 Research Libraries in Manhattan and the Library Services Center in Queens where collections processing, conservation, and other functions are located. We are currently a team of 17 full and part-time Collection Management and Registrar staff. As of today, our Collection Managers maintain IPM programs across approximately 200,000 square feet of space where collections are used, stored, and cared for across our four sites.

IPM at NYPL: 2018-2021

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Collection Management established NYPL's IPM monitoring program in 2018. This was back when our team consisted only of 3 staff members, so we were only able to do regular monitoring at one of our four buildings. To collect data, we used an Excel spreadsheet that one of our staff members had used when she worked at the American Museum of Natural History–a few screenshots are on the screen. This spreadsheet served us well for the first few years of our program, but by 2021, our team had grown and we had started to expand IPM into different spaces and buildings. As our program became more complex (for example, we started with 25 traps in 2018 and are up to 225 now), we quickly realized that this spreadsheet was no longer able to serve our needs. We needed something new that would allow for multiple team members to collect and analyze data at the same time and support the robust quantity of data we were collecting.

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Around the same time, I discovered that MuseumPests had started using Airtable to create dynamic versions of their pest fact sheets and image gallery. Airtable combines spreadsheet flexibility with database capabilities, supports customizable views, automations, data visualizations, and more and there is no coding required to build. And it offers scalable pricing plans, from free to Enterprise level.

So, after seeing how MuseumPests was using Airtable, I started to think that Airtable could be a solution for us.

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So, in late 2021, I built an IPM database in Airtable, which has become not only a replacement for our spreadsheet but also a dynamic system that holds all our IPM-related data and allows us to tell a rich story of IPM at NYPL. And now I'll turn it over to Meghan to show you our database.

Collaboration

- Reporting to colleagues
- Involving other NYPL staff
- Data sharing with outside experts

In addition to what Meghan already mentioned about how the Housekeeping log has helped us collaborate with Facilities, Airtable's automation feature and data analysis capabilities in Interfaces allows us to easily share monthly IPM reports with the other Collection Managers across the Research Libraries and with our Facilities Managers to help us work together to address any pest-related issues. The Sightings table allows staff from outside of Facilities and CLMGT to be our eyes around the building and report any pests they see. Sighting submissions automatically integrate with data we collect during regular monitoring. And finally, we are just now beginning conversations with the pest management vendor that NYPL contracts for IPM in non-collection spaces to see how we can share our Airtable with them to leverage their expertise.

Thank you!

Contact us!
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Library

https://bit.ly/nyplipm

Thank you! The QR code or the link on the screen will take you to the free template version of our database on the Airtable Universe. From that link you'll be able to view and also make your own copy of the base which you can then edit and tailor to your specific needs. If you end up using our base, please email us to let us know!