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Pest Control in Museums: A Status Report (1980)

Compiled and Edited by Stephen R. Edwards, Bruce M. Bell and Mary Elizabeth King.

177mm x 254mm, VII + 34pp; app. A-G; 35 black + white figures.
Kansas, U.S.A. (Association of Systematics Collections): 1981. £12.50*
paperback.

This sewn paperback is the outcome of an inter disciplinary conference on the use of pesticides in museums sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution and supported by the Association of Systematics Collections. The book is plainly more useful to North American institutions where the legislation is appropriate and the 'trade name' terminology is understandable. Nevertheless, to the non chemist, the book provides alphabetical information on the terminology of pesticides which should reduce the risk of erroneous references to all pest control agents as "fumigants". A useful list of pesticides (with alternative names) chemical composition, recommended use, dosage and hazards is included in Appendix A which readily allows the reader to avoid the most lethal chemicals.

Appendix B which is entitled an Illustrated Guide to Common Insect Pests in Museums is somewhat disappointing as it merely lists the order, family and latin names followed by the sparsest of descriptions and occurrence records. This appendix gives little assistance to the non-entomologist in the question of pest identification. The illustrations are competent but cannot be considered as an aid to species determination. (British readers would be much better served by Common Insect Pests of Stored Food Products, 6th Ed. P. Freeman, British Museum (Natural History) Economic Series No. 15). Appendix C is a Reference Listing of Museum Pests which is a phylo genetic listing of plants and animals including the scientific and common names with an indication of the food preference and the public health problem. It is reassuring to know, if reassurance is the correct word, that most of the pests listed from America also occur on this side of the Atlantic.

Appendix E is entirely devoted to enforcement regulations of federal legislation concerning pesticides and therefore is of little relevance to British readers. Conversely Appendix E is an annotated Bibliography of the literature pertaining to Pest Control which is a comprehensive up to date reference source which should prove invaluable to any researcher in the museum pesticide field.

The listing of State and Federal Agencies with responsibilities for pesticide use and application has little of value to offer but the final appendix G read in conjunction with the main text entry on "Survey of Pest Control Procedures in Museums" reflects a position which the receiver suspects is accurate on this side of the Atlantic too.

I cannot recommend that every museum in the country should buy this book because of the understandably inappropriate information it contains when not used in the country of publication but it does provide useful bibliographic and technical information and would form a valuable addition to a museological research library.

John Gray.

* £12.50 is the cost of this book ordered through Leicester University Bookshop. Ordered direct from U.S.A. the cost would be \$15 plus exchange rate costs and postage.