

# Web Access to Theatre/Costume Database

## Why you want Web Access to Inventory

- 1) Allow visitors to view Costumes / Props/Sets online for ...
  - Possible Rentals
  - Collaboration with designers
  - Students doing projects
- 2) The Costume/Props/Sets Shop is not always accessible due to ...
  - Covid-19 Restrictions
  - People with limited mobility
  - Reduced hours due to budget cuts
  - People are too far away to visit

## What the Theatre/Costume Inventory Database offers now ...

- 1) Remoted Access to PC using Google Remote Desktop or other screen sharing software.  
You can set up a PC that is available for someone to connect to and view the database.
- 2) Print reports and catalogs with photos to PDF files and publish on the web.
  - Search for a group of costumes (props) and print results to PDF file with photos
  - Many reports available on Reports menus
- 3) Export data to spreadsheet from the Utilities Menu and load it to your existing website.
  - Visitors to the webpage can download the spreadsheet to their PC/Mac. The sheet allows filtering, sorting and viewing photos (if opened in a desktop version of MS Excel).
  - You still need to review the Online Issues list →

## Things to consider for an ONLINE view of your database

Before you decide to build an Online Database to showcase your Costumes / Props/Sets on your web page – please consider these things:

- 1) **Legal Issues** - All photos have to have release forms if a) a person is pictured or b) a costume/prop/set has been designed or created by someone who deserves credit. If you do not obtain release forms you are setting your theatre up for possible lawsuits. Also, since photos on the web showing the details of a costume / prop / set piece will be of high quality, you have to realize that designs may be copied by visitors. If a designer finds that someone copied their design from your website, it can be unpleasant.
- 2) **Cost** – all websites have monthly/yearly costs. Hosting a database application with photos can be as little as \$100 per month to \$10,000 per year. There are monthly costs, per user costs, etc.
- 3) **Website design** – Websites with databases are very complex to create. If you have a few hundred costumes, speed will not be an issue. But a web database with large collection of several thousand pieces can be very, very slow to open, display photos, do searches, etc. The site has to be designed so that photos cannot be copied easily though visitors can always do a 'screen print' to make a copies. The web version must be "Read Only" so that visitors cannot modify your data.
- 4) **Time** - If you plan to show your costumes for rental – the records need to have the description as full as possible plus all size measurements recorded. Measuring each costume and recording all the details is time consuming – especially if you have more than 5,000 costume pieces. You will be doing this for any database (PC or Web) but you have to have more details for a web database as the users have to get all the information about the item from your description.
- 5) **Photos** - If you want people to be interested in a garment or prop/set – the photo needs to show it in the best possible way. That may mean putting it on a dress form to show how it fits. It also means the photo area have to be well lit and photos should be in focus and with a neutral background. It can take 15 – 20 minutes per garment to take 1 or 2 good photos. Then, the photos will need to be edited to be sized for web display.
- 6) **Business decisions** – The shop manager will need to decide what fields to show the visitors and what functions you want to allow them to have. For example – you want visitors to see the rental fee and replacement costs but not the actual cost of the garment or who has rented it before.
- 7) **Technical know-how – web manager**. As your database is updated with new costumes/props/sets or new photos, the current data will have to be uploaded to your website on a regular (maybe weekly) basis. **Someone** in the Costume/Props/Sets shop will have to be responsible for doing the update to the website, reviewing it to be sure it is correct, handling visitor questions and website issues.