

# If you can't find it, what will you use on stage???

**Learn how an inventory system can help  
you get the show on stage.**



Conference & Stage Expo  
March 20-23, 2019 | Louisville

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**#USITT19**



Only you can turn the stage from a dark, silent floor to a dazzling scene.

But if you can't find the right costume, prop, furniture, microphone or lights - how will you do it? You don't want to make or buy *everything again*.



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# An Inventory system can help :

- ▶ Create Records for each item
- ▶ Do Searches on a variety of criteria to see what you have in stock and find what you need
- ▶ Print reports (paper or PDF) to share information with others
- ▶ Rent/Loan/Checkout items to other organizations and keep track of where everything is
- ▶ Assign items to Productions to create a Production Catalog

# Where Do I Start?



- ▶ What is your goal for inventorying your collection?
- ▶ Start Planning
- ▶ Make preliminary decisions and stick to them
- ▶ Become the Expert
- ▶ Train your staff, students and volunteers
- ▶ Look critically at your storage area
- ▶ Set your schedule and get started !

# *1. What is your goal or motivation for inventorying your collection?*

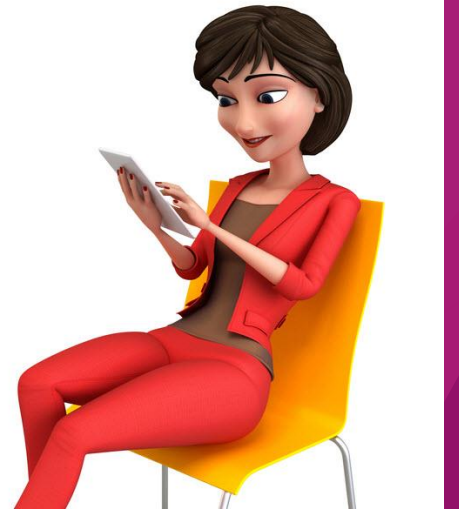
- ▶ Get organized to make better use of your costumes and props/sets?
- ▶ Generate revenue from rentals?
- ▶ Your theatre director, department chair, or principal is requiring you do it?
- ▶ Teach your students a new skills?

Recognize your goals – make your goals known so it is easier to get the funding, equipment and support you need.

## 2. *Start planning your project*

Recognize that this is a “PROJECT”. Like any project it should have:

- 1) A Planning Phase
- 2) A Budget
- 3) A Source for software, hardware, inventory tags/labels, etc
- 4) Many people to help – you can’t do this all by yourself



## As part of the planning phase you will want to ***Gather data about your theatre:***

- ▶ How many productions do you do each year?
- ▶ How many students are involved in all aspects of the productions?
- ▶ How much revenue do you bring in from ticket sales or donations?
- ▶ How are community members involved? Do you do shows for other schools or organizations?

You want to show that your theatre is very active and productive and that many students and community members benefit from theatre.

# ***Make Estimates***

- How many of each group do you have ? What do you think the value is?

Costumes

Props/Sets

Lighting Equipment

Sound Equipment

Tools






1000

2000

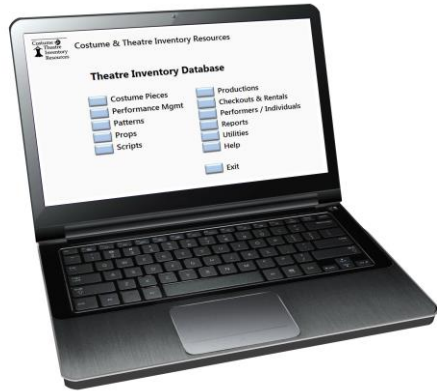


# *List the Benefits of having an inventory*

An inventory will provide:

-  1. An accurate count of your costumes, props etc.
-  2. The ability to search for costumes / props
-  3. The ability to plan and prepare for productions knowing what you have
-  4. A way to set up a rental program – to generate revenue and track where everything is
-  5. The opportunity to teach students new skills

# *Skills for students to learn*



- ▶ Computer Skills
- ▶ Costume and Props/Sets knowledge
- ▶ Inventory management
- ▶ Customer relations
- ▶ Photography

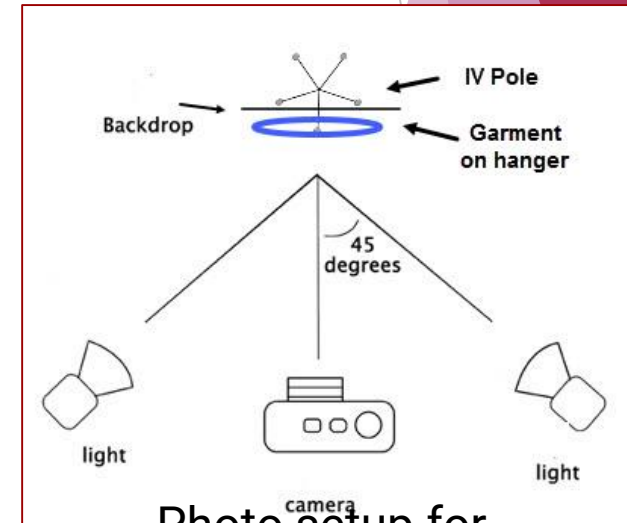
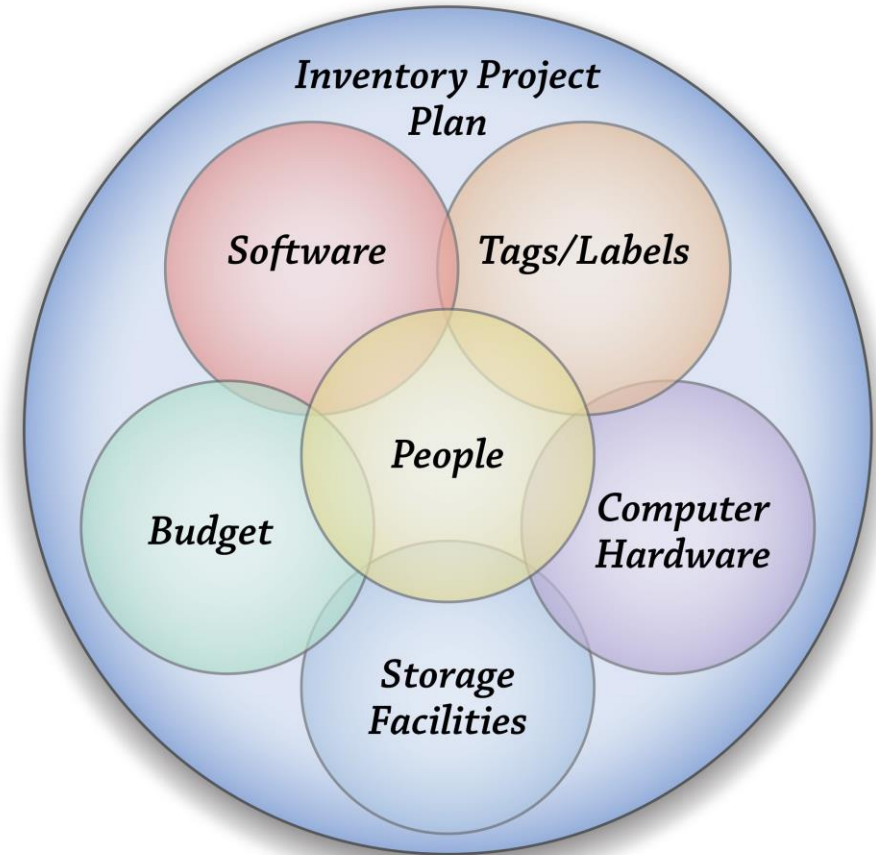


Photo setup for  
Costumes

# The Inventory Database Project Plan

- People
- Software
- Inventory Tags & Labels
- Hardware
- Storage Facilities
- Budget



# As you create your plan and proposal - think of each of these areas:

## ❖ People

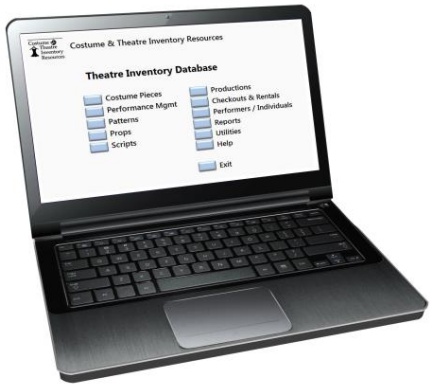
People are the most important part of the plan. Who is in charge? What staff, volunteers, or students are available? How much time can they commit to the project? When are they available? How much training will they need? Who in the organization has to approve the project? What do you need to convince them to allocate the funds and resources?

## ❖ Software

How will you store your records? In a Database or Spreadsheet? What functions do you want in the software? Do you want to include photos? Who do you want to have access to the data? How much control do you want to have?

## Your plan, continued...

### ❖ Identifying Tags / Labels



Identifying tags for costumes and labels for props, accessories, shoes, and equipment are needed to track each item. What kind and how many of each kind do you need? What numbering system do you want to use - sequential numbers or letter and numbers combined? Do you want barcodes? Do you have the tools to apply tags to garments (small iron, sewing machine) ?

### ❖ Computer Equipment

PC or Mac or In-the-Cloud?? Do you want to share it on a network? Do you need access from multiple devices and locations? How much IT support do you have (try to be realistic) ? Can you get more IT support if you need it? If your tags have barcodes you will need a scanner for each computer. What kind of barcode scanner do you want?

## Your plan, continued...

### ❖ Storage

How are things organized now? How would you like to change it? Do you need more racks, shelves, bins, ladders ?? Are you planning a move soon? Does your storage area meet fire codes?

### ❖ Budget

All parts of the plan require money. Where can you get the money - existing budget, grant, donations, rental payments ?? How much do you need? When will the funds be available? How can you bring in more income to support the inventory system? Look at the Resource Guides at [www.costumeinventory.com](http://www.costumeinventory.com) for a sample budget.

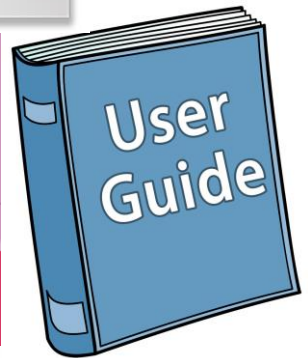
### 3. *Make decisions and stick to them !*



- ▶ Investigate which software / database to use
- ▶ Test a variety of tags and labels from different manufacturers
- ▶ Check if your current computers meet your needs – if not find new / donated computers
- ▶ Buy the software, hardware, tags & labels, barcode scanners, etc

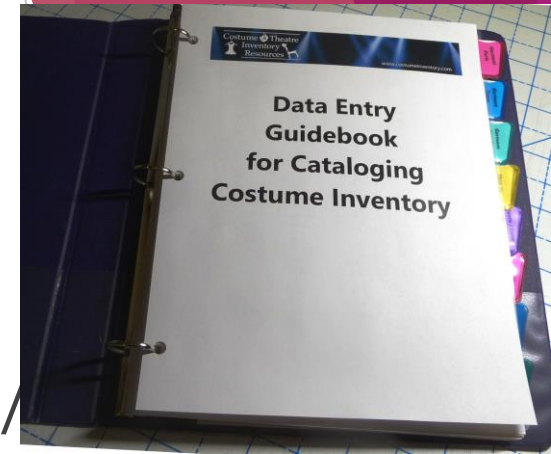
## 4. *Become the Expert* !

- ▶ Review the “Become the Expert” lessons
- ▶ Take time to learn the software that you purchase
- ▶ Take 25 or so tags / labels and apply them to your garments / props
- ▶ Make decisions of where the tags should go on each garment type
- ▶ Practice taking photos, set up a photo station
- ▶ Make a floor plan of where the costumes are / will be stored



# 5. *Train everyone !*

- ▶ Gather your training materials and have them available
- ▶ Download the Data Entry Guidebook to help teach students / volunteers about costume style, design features and fabric
- ▶ Set aside training time for each new student/volunteer
- ▶ Teach everyone how the tags should be applied and where the tags should go. The goal is consistency !
- ▶ Reward your staff / volunteers ! Tell them how much you appreciate their hard work.



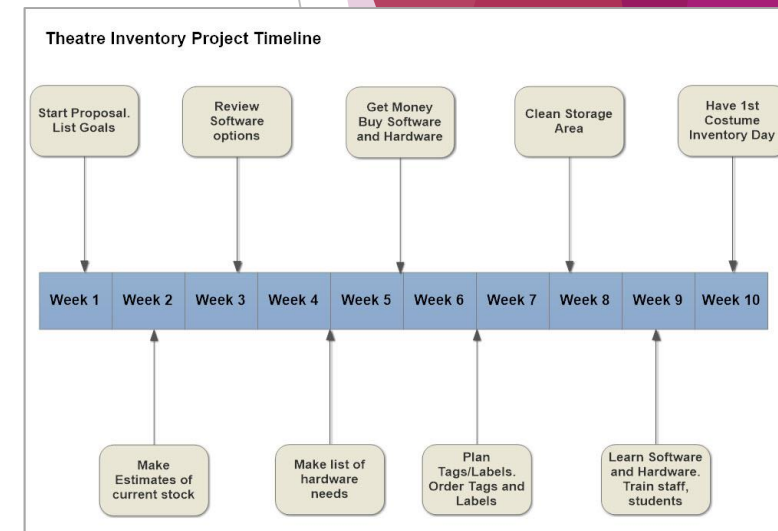
## 6. *Look critically at your storage area*

- ▶ Decide how it is best to store your items – on hangers, plastic bins, hooks on the wall, shelves ... The way you have it now may not be how you want it in the future.
- ▶ Calculate how many racks, bins, shelves you need.
- ▶ Review the bins. Most costume shops have a variety of shapes and sizes. Consider getting new bins that will stack together.
- ▶ Know your local fire department regulations. Keep ample space between costumes and the walls and ceilings. Have wide walkways.
- ▶ Review your stock – are there things to get rid of?



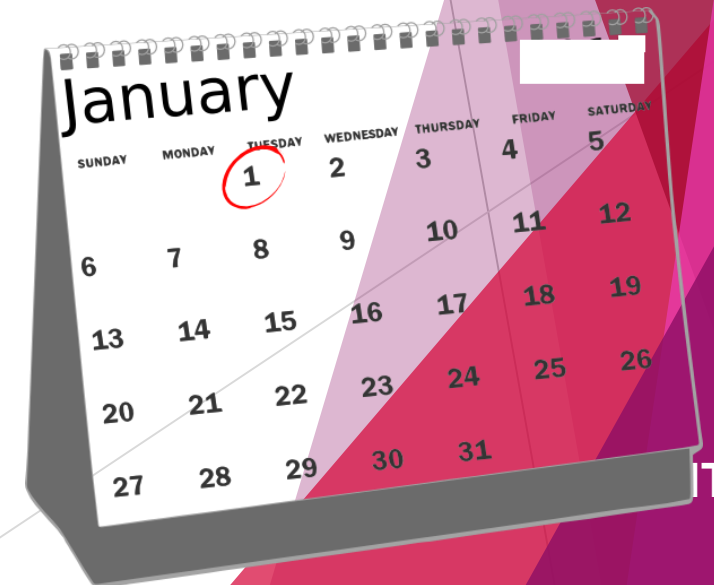
## 7. Set up a schedule and get started !

- ▶ Set up a TimeLine with the following dates when:
  - The money is available to purchase what you need
  - The hardware and software will be installed
  - The inventory tags and labels will have arrived
  - The storage area is cleaned and ready to work in
  - There are no major productions/builds happening in the costume / props shop



## Schedule, continued

- Contact your staff, students and volunteers to determine their availability
- Make and publish the schedule so everyone (management, principal, staff, volunteers and students) all know what is happening when
- Review the Resource Guide (website) on “Suggestions for a Costume / Prop Inventory Day” to help you decide how to prepare for the day you start inventorying everything.



# *Things to include in your Proposal:*

- ▶ **Do the Numbers** – how many productions, how many students are served, how many costumes, props you have
- ▶ **Outline the Benefits** - to the school/theatre, students, community
- ▶ **Show your plan** – what hardware/software you need, what tags to use, a priority list of what costumes/props will be inventoried first, explain what training is available and how everyone will be trained
- ▶ **Show your schedule** – list of people committed to help, time line when everything will be ready, a calendar of the work days
- ▶ **Show your budget** – prepare a spreadsheet (like example)
- ▶ **Summarize** why you need this project now, benefits vs costs, and your willingness and commitment to do the project

# Once you have a inventory system set up you will...

- ▶ Setup the database to have just the data you want – enter the Storage Locations, Lookup Table selections (Costume Type, Cable Connectors, etc)
- ▶ Create a database record for each item to identify each item – costume piece, prop, set piece, light fixture, cable, gobo, sound equipment, wigs
- ▶ In the record assign the item an inventory ID number, describe it using the lookup tables and description fields, include a photo, storage location, costs, rental fees
- ▶ Apply an inventory tag (garments, softgoods) or adhesive label (accessories, props, set pieces, equipment) to each item.
- ▶ Put the item in its assigned storage location

Now that you have everything and know  
where it is – its time to  
turn the stage into a production !



Atlanta Opera, 2011

#USITT19