Monroe dress stays stunning with tech

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Who thought immortalizing a dress could be so technical?

To preserve the $2.2 million white halter-top dress Marilyn Monroe wore in the American favorite 1955 film "The Seven Year Itch," the Debbie Reynolds Hollywood Motion Picture Museum in North Hollywood, California is turning to technology to preserve it from deterioration.

The non-profit museum, which has the largest collection of Hollywood memorabilia in the world, is storing the dress in a vault where new sensing technology is being used to survey shifts in climate and humidity.

"Excessive humidity is a severe enemy to antique textiles," said Todd Fisher, museum CEO and son of Hollywood actress Debbie Reynolds, who also said that the museum was taking extra precaution in taking care of the dress, keeping humidity below 50 percent and a temperature around 68 degrees.

Using compact, computerized sensing devices called HOBO data loggers produced by the Massachusetts-based Onset Computer Corporation, the devices measure and record humidity levels around-the-clock, even during power outages, and is accompanied by software that converts the data into time-stamped graphs.

According to Fisher, data is looked at sometimes on a daily or weekly basis, and their goal is to make sure there are no extreme variations in

temperature or humidity.

"Classic movies are an extremely important part of American history, and thousands of years from now the only remains from these movies will be the tangible items such as the costumes and props," Fishers said. "By taking advantage of new technology like HOBOs, we can better manage our collections so that they will be here for generations to come."