

Networking in Geosciences: The Example of the Réseau Quaternaire-Québec for Mapping Surficial Deposits

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The mandate of geological surveys, both provincial and federal, is to acquire and disseminate quality geoscience data useful in various spheres of activity, such as mineral exploration, land-use planning, assessment of water resources and environmental protection. Because of increasingly limited financial and human resources, these organizations tend to focus their efforts in order to satisfy the requirements of specific clients. Faced with specific needs in achieving their respective mandates, other departments or agencies also carry out geoscience activities. They are not always concerned about or able to archive and disseminate the data which, once their needs are met, may be forgotten or lost. Moreover, without consultation or coordination, the work carried out may be duplicated. The challenges here are the sound management of public funds, the need to provide support for geoscience knowledge and the necessity of providing the public with information that is as reliable, complete and as current as possible. Scientific networking appears to be a successful way of facing these challenges.

The Réseau Quaternaire-Québec (Québec quaternary network) is a fine example of a partnership involving several governmental and academic organizations with the shared goal of acquiring knowledge about the distribution of surficial deposits. An agreement between Géologie Québec (Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune) and Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs (MDDEP) is at the heart of this network. The agreement stemmed from the MDDEP's need to update knowledge about surficial deposits in various regions of Québec in support of an extensive program to acquire knowledge about groundwater, and the capacity of Géologie Québec to maintain a reliable and accurate geoscience database. Quaternary mapping in Québec is a mandate of Géologie Québec; however it has been dormant since the early 1990s. Recent mapping of surficial deposits has mainly been conducted by teams from the Geological Survey of Canada (GSC) and the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), sometimes funded by the MDDEP. Through this new agreement, the MDDEP is transferring to Géologie Québec a significant portion of the budgets necessary to grant university contracts for mapping surficial deposits, hire geologists to work with university teams and GSC researchers, and disseminate maps and reports to the public.

In addition to the MDDEP, Géologie Québec, GSC and UQAM, the network's partners include the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi (UQAC), the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT), the Institut national de la recherche scientifique (INRS), the Ministère des Transports du Québec (MTQ) and Hydro-Québec.

This network of partners will enable pooling of data from various sources (geological, geophysical, drilling, etc.) and its use in developing new maps of surficial deposits and 3D models of the units.