

Earth Materials Collections Management at Natural Resources Canada

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Summary

The Earth Materials Collections (EMC) of Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) are now part of the Mapping Information Branch (MIB) of the Earth Sciences Sector (ESS) of NRCan. Staff working on the collections belong to either MIB or the Geological Survey of Canada (GSC). The EMC project (2006) recognized that the collections are an information asset requiring ongoing funding and support. The goal of the project is to provide professional management of collections and the associated documentation and to protect them from degradation, theft and destruction while permitting physical and intellectual access to the collections now and for the future. At the onset, this one project included: 6 facilities (16,000 m² total) across Canada (Halifax, Quebec City, Ottawa, Calgary, Vancouver, Victoria); many collections (50+) of many different materials (rock, fossils, core [rock, ice, soft sediment] water, unconsolidated material, dredge samples); various facilities with different levels and styles of data management; a limited number of full time staff.

Three kinds of collections are recognized:

- **Project related collections** – *working collections* available to GSC scientists and *archive collections* of material from old projects available to qualified researchers (~75% of total collection holdings);
- **Core & Sample Repository** – available to public (~20% of total collection holdings);
- **National reference collections** – *National Type Collection of Invertebrate & Plant Fossils; National Meteorite Collection; National Mineral Collection* all are available for research both internal and external (~5% of total collection holdings).

The collections are in transition. A few of the issues to be faced are:

- Developing a governance framework consisting of a policy, guidelines and standard operating procedures to allow collections to manage their physical and data holdings;
- Reorganize collections personnel to work as team in support of all collections while maintaining connection to the respective research personnel working in specific collections;
- Initiate staffing actions to replace staff that have retired;
- Assume authority for collections life cycle management now and beyond the end of a particular project or program;
- Develop and deploy the tools needed to implement life cycle management;
- Training for staff to use the electronic tools including a new Sample Management System (SMS) to corporately manage and archive sample data and related information.