

NOTICES

Statement of the Mineral Museums Advisory Council

The Mineral Museums Advisory Council, an organization of North American mineral museum curators and others with related interests, has become increasingly disturbed in recent years by the loss to science of many irreplaceable mineralogical specimens. Of concern is the practice of segmenting specimens of very rare minerals into a size which is virtually worthless for scientific study and then the dispersal of these fragments through sale principally to the non-scientific collector community. This practice is particularly unfortunate when it involves type specimens or specimens upon which significant scientific research has been performed.

We see the most practical remedy for this situation to rest in the hands of the scientific community. To this end we urge that mineralogists who perform research on rare and scientifically significant specimens observe the following three practices:

1. Deposit type material (as required by the I.M.A. Commission on New Minerals and Mineral Names) and described rare material in an appropriate institution.
2. Indicate in their papers the disposition of this material.
3. Refuse to sell this material under any circumstances.

The U.S. National Mineral Collection

The mineral collections of the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., are very extensive and are among the largest in the world. These collections are readily available to, and used by, the scientific community for worthwhile research. The museum maintains, in addition to the study and exhibit collections, a repository for type and described mineral specimens (i.e., those from which data have been gathered, and usually published. The type collection presently contains over 500 mineral species and is continually growing. The number of described mineral specimens presently exceeds 4700 specimens. We should all be concerned about the preservation of minerals for which analytical data of any form exists. The data become far less significant if the specimens are lost, for they cannot be verified, amended, or enhanced by subsequent, perhaps more sophisticated, studies.

Far too often, minerals described in published papers are deposited in drawers or cabinets by the authors and subsequently forgotten. With the passage of time and continual shifting from place to place, these specimens are usually lost to science. Such loss, though unintentional, is an irresponsible disservice to our science. It is the rule rather than the exception and this should be changed for the betterment of mineralogy.

Just as it is important to publish our research and disseminate knowledge, so also is it important to see to it that the specimens involved are preserved. Repositories of described specimens should continue to grow in depth and quality to the advantage of all who study minerals. Authors are therefore asked, and strongly encouraged, to send all analyzed or otherwise described mineral specimens to the Department of Mineral Sciences, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560. Acknowledgment of receipt will be by letter, and the specimens will be carefully curated. Postage franks are available upon request. In turn, the museum will continue to do its best to furnish research materials to the scientist upon written request.

PETE J. DUNN
Smithsonian Institution

Descriptive Mineralogist Mentors

Cognizant that descriptive mineralogy is seldom included in contemporary university curricula, a group of professional mineralogists is offering a mentorship in which they will take interested, dedicated, and prospective descriptive mineralogists into their labs for a few days to learn more about the practices, methods, and techniques of this part of mineralogy. Persons will be chosen on the basis of recommendations and information they provide upon request. Interested persons should send a letter of inquiry to Dr. Pete J. Dunn, Department of Mineral Sciences, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560.

Dr. Russell Boggs, Eastern Washington University, Washington, U.S.A.

Dr. Pete J. Dunn, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, U.S.A.

Mr. Richard Erd, U.S. Geological Survey, California, USA.

Dr. Robert Gait, Royal Ontario Museum, Ontario, Canada.

Dr. Joel Grice, National Museum of Natural Science, Ontario, Canada.

Dr. Joseph Mandarino, Royal Ontario Museum, Ontario, Canada.

Mr. Andrew Roberts, Geological Survey of Canada, Ontario, Canada.

Dr. George Robinson, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ontario, Canada.

Dr. William Simmons, University of New Orleans, Louisiana, U.S.A.

Mr. B. Darko Sturman, Royal Ontario Museum, Ontario, Canada.