

The Mineralogical Society of America (MSA) Position Statement

Preservation of Natural History Collections: Minerals and Rocks

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Mineral and rock collections are foundations for the study of our planet. Their preservation is critical to retaining a record – often the only record – of deposits and outcrops that define Earth's history and processes. Colleges, universities, and museums that have sponsored the creation of geological collections also have a responsibility for maintaining them. This obligation includes sustaining the physical integrity of samples, organizing them within a professionally accepted intellectual framework, and making them accessible for scientific research and education. Given these responsibilities, the institution should have a written management/policy statement to instruct current and future staff and provide a clear guide to the disposition of the collection in all circumstances. In the event that an institution deems the collection no longer relevant to the pursuit of its mission or it cannot adequately maintain the collection, then following the policy statement will provide the mechanisms that both maximize the probability of the preservation and use of the collection as originally intended and minimize liability for any claims of mismanagement. If deaccession (sale or gift) becomes necessary, the entire process should be widely publicized from the start. Transparency and counsel by many are the best guarantee that the goals of preservation of the collections and their accessibility to scientists and the public will continue to be met.

Those who are seeking advice on the disposition of mineral or geological collections at risk can contact the Society of Mineral Museum Professionals <http://www.smmp.net/>, which has a committee on collections, dedicated to providing assistance with respect to collections at risk.