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Protocols for scientists on the deposition of investigated mineral specimens

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The mineral specimens that form the basis of scientific investigations should be retained in permanent repositories for future investigators. Just as it is important, as part of the scientific methodology, for a responsible investigator to provide information on the conditions of experiments so that the results may be repeated and corroborated or challenged, it is equally as important that the very specimens used in such investigations be retained in major museums. These specimens are the only mineralogic evidence for the investigations. Although many mineralogists retain studied samples for some time, the duration of this retention period is affected by temporary degrees of interest, and many other factors, mortality among them.

Large, research-oriented museums maintain systematic, well-curated collections in which such material is preserved. It is thus available for both contemporary and future investigators. Mineralogists are encouraged, in all instances, to deposit all studied samples in these repositories.

Unfortunately, this approach has been followed only infrequently, and the vast preponderance of investigated mineral specimens has either been lost, or the necessary linkage between these specimens and the published studies of them has been lost because the studied material was not deposited. Careful institutional curation can preclude the loss of information and specimens and should be utilized by the responsible investigator as a normal adjunct to the completion of such studies, much in the way publication functions as a final repository for the data. The preservation of investigated specimen material is, therefore, a critical responsibility of professional mineralogic practice. Even unpublished data can best be preserved in museums so that it too, with the specimens, may be eventually shared with others.

The original investigator is the person best qualified to document which specimens were actually used; this is of *critical* significance in the case of type specimens (Dunn and Mandarino, 1987). The use of specimen numbers, carefully cited in the published research, remains the best method of correlating specimens and data. Deposits should be made in a direct manner, not third-hand, so that the integrity of the material is not compromised. Supporting correspondence is useful in the archival aspects of curation and is therefore encouraged. The cooperation of all mineralogists is necessary in this long-term effort to serve the science; those who have used such research collections know well their potential and value. Please help to enhance and sustain them by depositing investigated specimens in large, well-established institutional mineral collections.

The preceding statement was approved by both the Commission on Museums and the Commission on New Minerals and Mineral Names of the International Mineralogical Association.

REFERENCE CITED

Dunn, P.J., and Mandarino, J.A. (1987) Formal definitions of type mineral specimens. American Mineralogist, 72, 1261–1262.

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