

Developing an earth science collections strategy for Atlantic Canada

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Collections hold the foundations of our science. For several decades they have been removed from the security they once enjoyed and many collections are threatened with neglect and inevitable destruction. This is not a local problem but is seen throughout collecting institutions worldwide, including museums, government departments, and universities. Some of the most frequently encountered explanations for this phenomenon include lack of curatorial expertise, space, or funding to maintain collections, but as a wider systemic problem can be attributed to a fundamental misunderstanding of the role of scientific collections, and a disregard for the responsibility of scientists to maintain collections as part of the scientific process.

The Atlantic Geoscience Society has undertaken to develop and administer a survey of earth science collections throughout the Atlantic Provinces to determine the exact state of these collections. This will provide an accurate picture of the types of collections held, the state of such collections, how they are managed, and the threats they face. When completed, a regional collections strategy will be developed and circulated to appropriate decision makers. It is hoped that this work will encourage institutions and individuals within them to develop a regional strategy for the management and preservation of collections that will enable them to be used and appreciated by researchers now and in the future.