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PRESERVATION OF GEOLOGIC DATA IN THE UNITED STATES

Every day scientists collect and interpret geoscience data such as well cores, minerals, ice cores, fossils, well logs and seismic data. Most of the material and analyses are assembled into collections and databases for private companies. The volume of these collections is large and the cost to acquire them is in the billions of dollars. Like so many other things these data have value beyond their original intent. The problem is that a significant portion of these data is in danger of being lost. Many people have been struggling with the task of preserving these data. Larry Knauer has spent a major portion of his career building the California Well Sample Repository in Bakersfield. This facility, started in 1976, is the only publicly accessible core storage library in California. Another soldier in this battle to save geologic data is Don Clarke, who has worked for the past year on the National Research Council's Committee on the Preservation of Geoscience Data and Collections. This committee was charged with defining this problem and proposing a solution. The results of their work were published in 2002. Recently, a second geologic data library was started in Long Beach for the purpose of saving material pertinent to the Los Angeles basin. Neither of the California facilities is of sufficient size to handle to amount of geologic data now in jeopardy of being lost. Funding is the major hurdle in making a geologic data repository system of adequate scope for California a reality.