

“Cite It or Lose It”? The Task Force on Citation of Geoscience Data

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The Task Force on Citation of Geoscience Data is an initiative of the Geoscience Information Society formed in response to one of the recommendations of the National Research Council's Committee on the Preservation of Geoscience Data and Collections. In its 2002 report,¹ the Research Council committee identified the lack of citation of geoscience data and collections as contributing to the loss of these materials. The report indicated that lack of citation has led to these materials' being deemed to be less useful than print resources and therefore less worth preserving. The committee recommended that geoscientists start citing these materials to show their value and their being used. The task force was created to help to implement that recommendation. Its members are Linda Musser (chair), Marie Dvorzak, Connie Manson, Gene Major, Mary Eberle, and Eda Lesk.

The task force developed a Web site (www.geoinfo.org/TFGeosciData.htm), unveiled at the November 2003 Geological Society of America meeting in Seattle, that describes its purpose and provides

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Example of a citation of geoscience data:

McAndrews, J.H. 1996. *Martin Pond pollen record*. In: E.C. Grimm et al., editors, North American Pollen Database. IGBP PAGES/World Data Center for Paleoclimatology, Data Contribution Series #1996-1234. NOAA/NGDC Paleoclimatology Program, Boulder, Colorado, USA.

examples of how to cite various types of geoscience materials. The examples on the Web site do not conform to a specific style, because the task force is not advocating for a standard style but rather focusing on the essential elements of a good citation to these types of materials. The task force modeled its recommendations on examples from other disciplines, such as history, that already have traditions of citing data and collections. The Web site will be used as a focal point in the task force's efforts to alert geoscience editors, publishers, authors, and collection managers to the issue of citation of geoscience data.

At the Association of Earth Science Editors annual meeting in Seattle in November, a presentation about the task force's work was well received and generated useful responses and commentary. There were several questions about the decision not to promote a standard style, and issues regarding citation of restricted data or internal reports were raised. Judy

Holoviak, director of publications of the American Geophysical Union (AGU), pointed out that AGU has had a policy² in place for a decade for referencing publicly available data. She thought this policy could be extended to cover artifacts and to take the question to the AGU Publications Committee. One attendee summed up her view of the discussion simply by saying “Cite it or lose it”. It is the goal of the task force to persuade geoscientists to do the former so that the scientific community will not experience the latter. 

References

1. National Research Council, Committee on the Preservation of Geoscience Data and Collections. Geoscience data and collections: national resources in peril. Washington, DC: National Academy Press; 2002. www.nap.edu/catalog/10348.html.
2. American Geophysical Union. Policy on referencing data in and archiving data for AGU publications. www.agu.org/pubs/data_policy.html.