EDITORIAL

On International Mapping Projects

For many decades, regional mapping projects were essential to the geological sciences, as individual nations worked to assess the geology of their land masses and their mineral, soil and water resources. However, in the last 25 years or so the center of interest has shifted to thematic, problem-oriented research, for example on igneous, metamorphic and ore forming processes, geophysical and remote sensing techniques and geochemical approaches to rock genesis. With the momentum coming from industrialized nations, the focus of geological mapping, albeit by distant methods, switched to the oceans and even to extra-terrestrial bodies. The result, of course, has been the development of many exciting, glamorous and even revolutionary concepts.

Although world attention continues on these frontier areas of research, it should not be forgotten that large parts of Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Pacific islands still remain geologically unknown. In much of Africa and Asia, the pace of geological investigation slowed tremendously when the newly-independent nations severed former links with Europe. For example, geological surveys once staffed by expatriate British geologists have faced for many years now the twin problems of acquiring enough local scientists and coping with increasingly restricted budgets. In some countries the economic situation has become so bad that geological mapping has virtually ground to a halt, as G.O. Kesse relates elsewhere in this issue.

There have, however, been bright spots in the picture, especially where geological research projects involving regional mapping have brought together geologists and funds from developed and developing countries. French researchers have been extremely active in west Africa, also Latin America and the Pacific, and American, German, British, Dutch and other teams from universities and governments

have worked with local counterparts on geological problems in many developing countries. Much of this work has gone unnoticed locally, with its implications for regional geology unrealized, in part because results have been published in the journal literature, little of which is generated in or, these days, even reaches developing countries.

With its growing worldwide circulation, EPISODES is making an effort to feature international projects of this sort. Recent issues contained reviews of regional mapping and research programs in Bolivia and on the East African rift valleys – and this issue describes exciting geological projects in the Andes, the eastern Sahara, the Red Sea and Malaysia. Many of these have important implications for geological concepts and methods of investigation. While they may be no substitutes for the careful geological mapping that is eventually required, these cooperative efforts do provide an excellent means of on-the-job training of local geoscientists and another way of bridging the growing scientific gap between richer and poorer nations.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

(aside from those identified in the text)

AAPG	American Association of Petroleum Geologists	ICP	International Commission for Palynology
AGID	Association of Geoscientists for International Development	ICRDG	International Crustal Research Drilling Group
AGU	American Geophysical Union	ICSU	International Council of Scientific Unions
AIPEA	Association Internationale pour l'Etude des Argiles (International Association for the Study of Clays)	IGCP	IUGS/UNESCO International Geological Correlation Programme
ASCE	American Society of Civil Engineers	IHP	International Hydrological Programme
BRGM	Bureau de Recherches Géologiques et Minières (France)	IIASA	International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (Austria)
CCOP	ESCAP Committee for Co-ordination of Joint Prospecting for Mineral Resources in Asian Offshore Areas	ILP	ICSU/IUGS/IUGG International Lithosphere Program
CIFEG	Centre International pour la Formation et les Echanges Géologiques (France)	IMM	Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (U.K.)
COCORP	Consortium For Continental Reflection Profiling	INPRES	Instituto Nacional de la Prevencion Sismica (Argentina)
CODATA	ICSU Committee on Data for Science and Technology	INQUA	International Union for Quaternary Research
CSPG	Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists	ISRM	International Society for Rock Mechanics
EGT	European Geotraverse	ISSS	International Society of Soil Science
ESF	European Science Foundation	IUGG	International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics
EUG	European Union of Geosciences	IUGS	International Union of Geological Sciences
IAEG	International Association of Engineering Geology	NACSN	North American Commission on Stratigraphic Nomenclature
IAH	International Association of Hydrogeologists	SCOPE	ICSU Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment
IAHR	International Association for Hydraulic Research	SCOR	ICSU Scientific Committee on Oceanic Research
IAHS	International Association of Hydrological Sciences	SEATAR	Studies of East Asia Tectonics and Resources
IASPEI	International Association of Seismology and Physics of the Earth's Interior	SEPM	Society of Economic Paleontologists and Mineralogists
ICL	IUGS/IUGG Inter-Union Commission on the Lithosphere	SSRSC	Saudi-Sudanese Red Sea Joint Commission
		UNEP	UN Environment Programme
		WHO	World Health Organization