

NOMCOM REVIEW OF TYPE SPECIMEN REPOSITORIES.

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The Issue: The Nomenclature Committee (NomCom) Guidelines for Meteorite Nomenclature [1] require that “type specimens of all new meteorites are preserved in collections that make material available for research” and that “type specimens must be deposited in institutions that have well-curated meteorite collections and long-standing commitments to such curation.” Despite the fact that the terms “well-curated” and “long-standing” are vague, NomCom has, to date, approved nearly 90 different repositories to house type specimens, some of which, in retrospect, appear not to have been good choices. Because type specimens are in many cases the only materials, from a specific meteorite, available for research, NomCom has decided to re-evaluate its current policies. The goal is to assure that all type specimens will be available to future researchers and that they will be curated in an appropriate manner.

The Plan: To begin the evaluation process, NomCom has developed a simple questionnaire for curators of existing repositories to complete online. The questionnaire will serve several goals: to update the contact information for repositories, including individuals with curatorial responsibility and those with institutional oversight; to invite respondents to participate in the development of a ‘best practices’ document; and to create an archive of any collections policies they may have. The information collected will be made available as a community resource. The ‘best practices’ document will eventually include a set of minimum guidelines that we expect any collection to meet if acting as a type specimen repository.

Community response: Over the next few weeks, individuals with curatorial responsibility for type specimen repositories will receive a letter by email with a link to a page where they can provide the requested contact information, as well as share any policy or procedure documents. We ask that the community assist NomCom in this endeavor, and we welcome any feedback as the process continues.

References: [1] Guidelines for Meteorite Nomenclature, 2011. <http://meteoriticalsociety.org/bulletin/nc-guidelines.htm>.