

The CGS Library, Past and Present

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A BRIEF HISTORY

The California Geological Survey Library was formed in 1880 by legislative mandate with the mission of developing and maintaining a collection of geoscience resources, available to staff and the public alike for research and reference.

One of its first and notable locations was in San Francisco's Ferry Building, where it lived from 1899 to 1984. The library was housed there alongside staff offices, a Geochemistry Laboratory, and a Mineral Museum that boasted a collection of more than 15,000 minerals sourced from all 58 counties of California, displayed in 50 large cases. At its height in this famed location, the museum and library reached over 10,000 visitors annually.

In 1984, due to proposed renovations of the Ferry Building, the library's collection was moved, split between offices in Pleasant Hill and Sacramento, and the expansive mineral collection was relocated to the California State Mining and Mineral Museum near the town of Mariposa in the Sierra foothills, where it remains today.

After seven years in Pleasant Hill, survey offices and the library moved back, in part, to San Francisco, in order to better meet industry and research access needs, but in 1992, when survey offices relocated within San Francisco again, the library found a home with the Survey's Headquarters



Main room of the library in the Ferry Building, San Francisco, 1954.
Photo by M. R. Hill.

offices in the Renaissance Tower in downtown Sacramento, where it has lived now for 33 years.

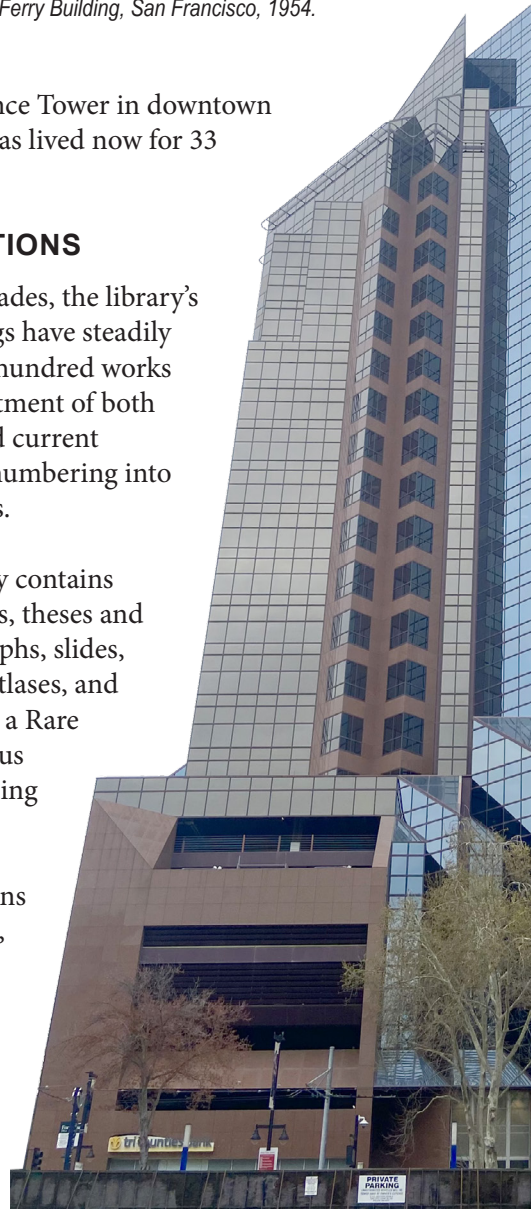
COLLECTIONS

Throughout the decades, the library's collections and holdings have steadily grown from just a few hundred works into an extensive assortment of both historical materials and current geoscience resources, numbering into well over 100,000 items.

The library currently contains books, journals, reports, theses and dissertations, photographs, slides, aerial imagery, maps, atlases, and folios, and it maintains a Rare Book Room with various books and volumes dating back several centuries. The library holds a multitude of publications produced by the USGS, and it serves as a repository for its own



Mineral Museum display cases in the Ferry Building, San Francisco, 1956.
Photo by M. R. Hill.





Partial view of the Rare Book Room shelves in the Renaissance Tower. Photo by A. Loseth.

CGS-authored publications, maps, and data.

Adding to its print collections, in more recent years, the library has turned to electronic resources by purchasing ebooks and by maintaining online subscriptions to scholarly ejournals, when available and affordable.

The Renaissance Tower in downtown Sacramento. Photo by A. Loseth.



Samples of historical photos and mine maps from the CGS Library collection. Photo by A. Loseth.

ONGOING PROJECTS

Currently, the CGS Library continues to work to digitize parts of its collection to increase research access to historical content. For several years now, library staff and students have been scanning the image collection, which largely depicts various aspects of the mining industry from the late 19th century and on. This collection is estimated to contain at least 10,000 photos, slides, and negatives, with over 6,500 of these captured as of today. Staff has also worked to scan and preserve the historic mine map collection, with just under 1,000 of these maps now digitized.

When ready, these collections will be uploaded to the library's online catalog, where all interested in the mining history of California can easily access them.

More information about the CGS Library and a link to the online catalog can be found at <https://www.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/library>.

Supporting information for this article was found in Bedrossian, T., 2019, [The California Geological Survey: A History of California's State Geological Surveys 1850-2015](#); California Geological Survey Special Publication 126, 504 p.