

The Importance of Archiving and Availability of Geophysical Data



Statement adopted by Council 29 May 1997

Reaffirmed May 2001, May 2005

Collection and analysis of Earth and space data are necessary to understand the elements of our natural environment, their interactions, and their changes with time. AGU policy calls for full and open sharing of Earth and space science data for research and education. Such sharing enhances the advance of scientific and technical knowledge for purposes of education, economic advancement, public safety, and national and international security. Since natural phenomena in general do not repeat, Earth and space data should be preserved, documented, and archived for future generations.

AGU extends this policy to data and derived products acquired with both public and private funding. AGU recognizes that there are constraints on the full and open exchange of data based on national security, commercial value, confidentiality, and historical disciplinary practice. When such data are not initially made public, they should be made available to the public as early as possible.

The responsibilities for implementing an effective data policy must be shared. The cost of collecting, processing, validating, and submitting data to an archive should be considered an integral part of research and operational programs. Governments and intergovernmental organizations have a responsibility to collate, archive, and distribute Earth and space data, and they should make it easy for users to identify and access datasets of interest. Toward greater ease of use, data archives should be complemented by adequate documentation of their holdings and by directories. Because datasets are often used for purposes other than those for which they were collected, documentation of data is as important as the data themselves. Of course, scientists and others acquiring Earth and space data also play an integral role in data preservation. They are responsible for promptly submitting data and documentation of their quality and conditions of their collection to a recognized data center. The marginal cost of data dissemination is a legitimate charge to the user.

Earth and space data are a national, and in many cases, an international resource. These data, properly documented and archived, will help future generations understand the system that comprises the Earth's interior, atmosphere, oceans, biosphere, and space environment.

Permissions: Members everywhere are encouraged to help inform the policy making process in their home locales with thoughtful presentation of scientific viewpoints. Council adoption of position statements is one way that the Union can assist in this process. Any member may use an AGU policy statement in discussions with local or national policy makers as an official statement of the Union. If you use excerpts from a statement, then you should not attribute those as a Union position. Societies anywhere may use an AGU position statement with or without attribution as a basis for developing their own statements.
