

Online resource opens door to exploration

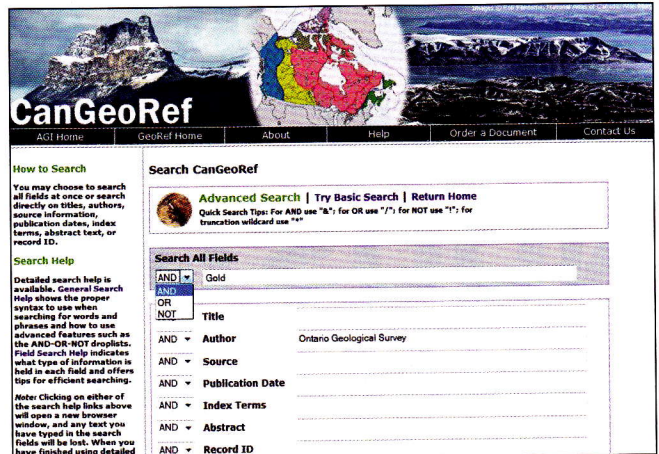
CanGeoRef will provide “one-portal access to all Canadian geoscience literature”

By Peter Braul

A searchable database of Canadian geoscience literature called CanGeoRef was launched September 15 by the Canadian Federation of Earth Sciences (CFES). The new service is expected to be a one-stop shop for academics and professionals doing research in the geosciences in Canada. Since the 1960s, The American Geological Institute (AGI) has been curating a global, searchable database of geoscience information called GeoRef; however, it has some gaps in its Canadian coverage, so CFES saw room for improvement.

In collaboration with AGI, CFES took about a year and a half to assemble their new database. Data entry, the laborious task of collecting, formatting and inputting the references, was contracted out to Victoria-based Purple Rock Inc., whose staff worked with information specialists in all provincial and territorial governments to ensure the smooth transfer of data.

While GeoRef is a good source for many users, the Canadian content of the database has not been complete since the mid-1990s. “In the early days of digitization, these processes [of curating information] often became very expensive,” explains Elisabeth Kusters, the executive manager of CFES and the self-described “central spider” in the CanGeoRef



CanGeoRef's online portal is an affordable, searchable database of Canadian geoscience literature. The Canadian Federation of Earth Sciences collaborated with the American Geological Institute to create the new service.


web. She says the provinces and territories went their separate ways for economic reasons, leaving GeoRef lacking.

The Canadian data was still available, but only for those who knew where to get it and were adept at sifting through the various sources – from university collections to government agencies. “For each province, it was very well organized, but they weren’t linked,” says Kusters.

The new database will allow users to access all of the Canadian literature published since the early 1800s and aims to be more affordable than GeoRef – a boon for the smaller companies operating here. “Many small or mid-sized organizations can’t afford subscriptions to GeoRef; it’s thousands of dollars,” says Kusters. In contrast, access to the Canadian database starts at US\$65 for individual consultants, with prices that scale up depending on the size of the company or institution that subscribes. And though the information on CanGeoRef is sure to appeal to Canadians, Kusters expects the service to attract users from the 12 states that flank Canada’s borders as well.

According to François Goulet, an exploration consultant based in Montreal, the new database will be “useful because it is a one-place search.” He says the all-inclusive aspect of services like CanGeoRef and GeoRef takes away the uncertainty that occurs when information is scattered in many locations. “If you can’t find it in GeoRef, you will have a hard time finding what you need.”




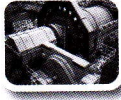
There are already over 200,000 references in CanGeoRef, but the database will continue to incorporate more provincial and territorial journal literature, meeting proceedings and abstracts, maps, books, reports and academic theses until phase one is complete in 2013. Phase two will see the assessment reports from all of the provinces and territories added to the database. **CIM**



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