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Collections of Geological Museums as a historic-cultural phenomenon

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Academician F.N. TSCHERNYSCHEW Central Research Geological Prospecting Museum is a subdivision of A.P. Karpinsky Russian Geological Research Institute (VSEGEI) and the main museum of the Federal Agency of Mineral Resources of the Russian Federation. The Museum was founded in 1882 and opened for visitors in 1930.

From the very beginning the main principle of the Museum policy was *"to collect materials which form the basis of geological map compilation and geological description of locality"*. Thus the Museum stock became rather unique by its composition in comparison with other geological museums. The Museum collections are mainly represented by systematic sets of minerals, rocks, ores and fossils and characterize the base structural divisions, reference geological sections and main mineral deposits of Russia and adjacent states.

Nowadays the Museum collection numbers about one million specimens of rocks, ores, minerals and fossils; more than 80 000 of them are exhibited in the exhibition halls (3.750 m²). Exhibitions of the *Economic Minerals Department* characterize more than 1.300 deposits of 70 kinds of raw materials according to the mode of their formation and mineral composition of ores and ore-bearing rocks. Exhibitions of the *Regional Geology Department* describe different regions of Russia and adjacent states (the territory of the former USSR). The specimens of rocks, fossils, economic minerals characteristic of geological construction of these regions are represented here. Each exposition of stone material is illustrated with various geological maps, schemes, crocks and explanatory texts. About 3.500 monographic paleontological collections containing more than 350.000 originals of fossils (plants, invertebrates and vertebrates) of different age are available for study at the *Paleontology Department*.

On the other hand, the museum collection consists of 13.000 author's collections gathered at different times and with the various purposes. Each collection contains unique geological information, but also, it is a monument of history and culture for time when it was created; because each collection reflect historical conditions, level of science and culture, author's scientific ideas and points of view. Such historic-cultural information isn't in priority for the Geological Museum and often it is not kept. Therefore, it is necessary to make additional work: searches in libraries and archives, studying of papers, reports and even field diaries to find such information. But such data help to include a collection into the historical context; and this collection gains new qualities and becomes an object of not only scientific studying, but also a historic-cultural phenomenon. Joint research in both geological and the historic-cultural content of a collection allows reconstructing processes of research and development of new territories; stages of searches, prospecting and exploitation of mineral deposits, etc.

The reasons given above are illustrated by specific examples from a museum collection:

1. *N 3918. Rocks and fossils of Kanin Peninsula* (K. GREVINGK, 1848); it is handled and published by A. KARPINSKY, F. TSCHERNYSCHEW, and S. NIKITIN in 1891.
2. *N 6687. Rocks, minerals, ores and fossils of the whole world* (Peter the Great Naval Sea Cadet Corps, 1802 - 1917). Specimens were gathered during sea cadet travels.
3. *N 517, 518. Minerals, rocks, ores, fossils and soils of Japan* (The Imperial Geol. Surv. of Japan, 1897). The collection was exhibited at the 7th International Geological Congress in St-Petersburg, 1897.
4. *N 956. Rocks of the Kursk province according to drilling* (S. NIKITIN, 1898). The collection was gathered during deep drilling which led to finding of iron ore deposits of Kursk magnetic anomaly (KMA), and many others collections.