

A new curation facility for Antarctic meteorites at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences. M. De Ceukelaire, W. De Vos & M. Dusaar, RBINS, Royal Institute of Natural Sciences.

Founded in 1846, RBINS houses a diverse and exceptionally rich zoological collection, palaeoanthropological and mineralogical collections and prehistoric items involving about 37,000,000 specimens with around 100,000 primary types. This places RBINS among the world top ten collections in terms of volume of specimen stored and available for research.

A curation facility for Antarctic meteorites has become operational at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS). The meteorites collected through the Antarctic campaigns in the Sør Rondane Mountains during three joint Japanese-Belgian expeditions between 2009 and 2013, will be shared evenly between the two countries. This sharing will be accomplished by cutting in half the larger samples (> 50g). The smaller samples (<50g) will not be cut to avoid wasting precious small samples. They will be shared evenly between Japan and Belgium based on either total weight or total number. Priority access for research to the samples curated by the other partner is guaranteed. Specific sharing agreements will be tailored according to the circumstances, for the largest samples (> 4kg) because of their importance in terms of outreach and exhibits. Cutting them should be avoided, except for classification purposes.

The facility manages the meteorite collection for optimal preservation and provides national and international meteorite scientists access to the samples hosted at RBINS. It also handles loans for exhibits and supports public outreach and educational initiatives concerning meteorites and solar system evolution. The existing regulations of NIPR Japan will stand as a model for finalizing RBINS meteorite-allocation regulations. The Belgian Parties have set up

a Scientific Loan Committee (SLC), which includes VUB, ULB and RBINS representatives. The SLC will handle the loan requests in coordination with the Committee at AMRC-NIPR. Before any decision, AMRC-NIPR and the SLC will systematically inform each other of all loan requests and will regularly keep each other informed of the loan follow-up.



The entire database will be made available online (DaRWIn.naturalsciences.be), with photographs, sample descriptions, downloadable loan requests, research sample request forms etc.. DaRWIn stands for Data Research Warehouse Information Network. It's a home-made (RBINS) open source web base tool published on AGPL to manage Natural Sciences collections.

A special laboratory, exclusively for meteorite preparation work, was set up in an air-conditioned room of about 16 m² on the ground floor of the Geological Survey. It gradually became operational in September-October, especially after installation of the Escil wire saw. Several scientists were trained in the use of the saws and in the procedure of making Aluminum-ring polished sections of meteorites. The RBINS collection of Saharan meteorites was used for this exercise. In this way, a core group of researchers became familiar with the use of the meteorite lab and of the delicate wire saw in particular.

