Suggestions to Authors
of the Reports of the United States Geological Survey
Seventh Edition

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PUBLICATIONS OF THE U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS are the chief products of the U.S. Geological Survey and the chief basis for the Survey's good reputation in the scientific community. When the Survey's organic act was signed into law in 1879 by President Rutherford B. Hayes, the new Survey was obliquely directed to publish the results of its investigations: "The publications of the Geological Survey shall consist of the annual report of operations, geological and economic maps illustrating the resources and classification of the lands, and reports upon general and economic geology and paleontology." From these simple guidelines the Survey's present broad base of operations has evolved. In its first years, the Survey released its results as inclusions in annual reports to the Secretary of the Interior. These results, then as now, are of two general categories: (1) topographic, geologic, geophysical, and hydrologic maps and atlases, and (2) varied series and formats of textual reports, including books. The first separately published books appeared in 1883: U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1 and the first "Mineral Resources of the United States" (for the calendar year 1882). Since then, thousands of books and maps have been published to record the results of investigations of the physical features and resources of the Nation, the Earth, the Moon, and the planets.

Catalogs and supplementary lists of publications of the Geological Survey contain directions for ordering available items. Reports and maps currently published are listed in "New Publications of the Geological Survey" (free of charge) together with brief descriptions of their contents and prices. Out-of-print Survey publications may be found in Survey libraries and in public and institutional libraries throughout the country.

Besides reports published under the imprint of the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO), the Survey releases much investigative information through other media. Thousands of Survey-generated reports have been published by cooperating Federal, State, and foreign governmental agencies and by scientific and technical societies. Survey authors should familiarize themselves with these in-house and outside media. Most publishing organizations have their own style manuals or technical standards for guidance of would-be contributors. "Suggestions to Authors" (STA) concerns mainly the preparation of the Survey's own book reports, atlases, and maps. Table 1 summarizes the Survey's currently (1988) active publication series.

Table 1. Current publications of the U.S. Geological Survey

Publication	Scope	Format
	Books and pamphlets	
Professional Papers	Comprehensive reports of significant and lasting scientific interest. Include results of resource studies and of geologic, hydrologic, or topographic investigations. Also collections of related papers addressing a single topic.	9⅛×11⅞ inches. Generally in two columns, rarely three. High-quality illustrations that may require special techniques of preparation, including plates and color photographs if appropriate. Set in type or camera ready.
Bulletins	Significant data and interpretations of lasting scientific interest but generally narrower in scope than professional papers. Results of resource studies, geologic or topographic studies, and collections of short papers on related topics.	8½×11 inches. Generally in two columns. High-quality photographs and illustrations including color if appropriate. Set in type or in camera-ready type generated on word processors.
Water-Supply Papers	Reports on all aspects of hydrology, including quality, recoverability, and use of water resources; statistical reports on streamflow, floods, groundwater levels, and water quality; and collections of short papers on related topics.	8½×11 inches. Similar to bulletins except for specialized content. Folded plates and color if appropriate.
Circulars	Technical or nontechnical information of popular interest including timely administrative or scientific information. Available to public free of charge.	8½×11 inches. Generally two columns. Editorial, type, and graphics standards permit quick publication. No plates or color artwork.
Techniques of Water-Resources Investigations.	Manuals that describe approved procedures for planning and executing field and laboratory studies, including collecting, analyzing, and processing hydrologic data.	8½×11 inches. Oversize illustrations permitted, but no color.
National Water Conditions.	Comprehensive monthly statistical summary of reservoir contents, streamflow, and ground-water conditions in United States and southern Canada.	8½×11 inches. Type copy prepared in-house. Illustrations are page size or smaller. No color plates.
Annual State Water-Data Reports.	Surface and ground-water data for each State, Puerto Rico, and Trust Territories.	8½×11 inches. Camera-ready copy from word processors, computers, or typescript. Illustrations are page size or smaller. No plates or color.
Earthquakes and Volcanoes.	Current general interest information on earthquake, seismic, and volcanic activity. Also addresses landslides, subsidence, and related geologic hazards. Published bimonthly.	5⅞×9⅞ inches. Photographs and line copy at page size or less. Multicolors.
Preliminary Determination of Epicenters—monthly listing.	Basic data on earthquake epicenters derived from Worldwide and National Seismic Networks. Not an author publication outlet.	8½×11 inches. Pamphlet without illustrations.
New Publications of the Geological Survey.	Monthly lists of all new products of the Geological Survey. Available to the public free of charge. Not an author publication outlet.	8½×11 inches. Pamphlet includes newsworthy events.
Special Book Publications.	Books outside the formal series, such as "Suggestions to Authors," USGS Yearbook, and others.	Not prescribed. Highly varied. Not a medium for publishing results of research.
General-Interest Publications.	Brief nontechnical summaries of topics often asked about, such as earthquakes, energy resources, mineral resources, water resources, volcanoes, glaciers, and rivers. Leaflets free of charge.	Booklets, brochures, leaflets, folders, and essay reprints in varied colors and formats.
	Maps and charts	
Geologic Quadrangle (GQ) Maps.	Detailed geologic maps depicting areas of special importance to the solution of geologic problems. May portray bedrock or surficial units, or both. May include brief texts, structure sections, and columnar sections.	7½- or 15-minute quadrangles printed in multicolor on topographic bases that meet National Map Accuracy standards.
Miscellaneous Investigations (I) Series.	High-quality maps and charts of varied subject matter such as bathymetry, geology, hydrogeology, landforms, land-use classification, vegetation, and others including maps of planets, the Moon, and other satellites.	Various scales. Topographic or planimetric bases; regular or irregular areas; black and white or multicolor. Single or multiple sheets; maximum sheet size 44×58 inches (image 42×56 inches). May include a text printed as an accompanying pamphlet.
Mineral Investigations Resource (MR) Maps.	Information on mineral occurrences, mineral resources, mines and prospects, commodities, and target areas of possible resources other than coal, petroleum, or natural gas.	Small scale (1:250,000 or smaller) on a sheet no larger than 44×58 inches (image 42×56 inches).
Oil and Gas Investigations (OM) Maps.	Apply particularly to areas of known or possible petroleum resources. Typically include cross sections, columnar sections, structure contours, correlation diagrams, and information on wells drilled for oil and gas.	Single or multiple sheets no larger than 44×58 inches (image 42×56 inches) in black and white or color. Text usually on map sheet but sometimes printed as an accompanying pamphlet.
Oil and Gas Investigations (OC) Charts.	Information about known or possible petroleum resources, presented as logs, correlation diagrams, graphs, and tables, but ordinarily not as maps.	Single or multiple sheets no larger than 44×58 inches (image 42×56 inches) in black and white or color. Camera-ready text, keyboarded on word processor, printed on same sheet or in an accompanying pamphlet.

Table 1. Current publications of the U.S. Geological Survey—Continued

Publication	Scope	Format
	Maps and charts—Continued	
Coal Investigations (C) Maps.	Origin, character, and resource potential of coal deposits shown by geologic maps, structure contours, cross sections, columnar sections, and measured coal sections, where appropriate.	Sheets no larger than 44×58 inches (image 42×56 inches) in black and white or color. Text on map sheet or in an accompanying pamphlet.
Geophysical Investigations (GP) Maps.	Chiefly the results of aeromagnetic and (or) gravity surveys shown by contours. Area depicted may range in size from a few square miles to an entire country.	One or more sheets no larger than 44×58 inches (image 42×56 inches), commonly printed in black and one other color with contours in red or green. Also multicolor.
Land Use and Land Cover (L) Maps.	Various categories of land use and cover, both artificial and natural, for use by geographers, land-use planners, and others.	Planimetric maps at scales of 1:250,000 or 1:100,000 on a single sheet no larger than 28×42 inches (image 26×40 inches), mostly in black and green, but occasionally multicolored.
Hydrologic Investigations Atlases (HA).	A wide range of hydrologic and hydrogeologic data of regional and national interest, such as streamflow, ground water, water quality, and extent of flooding.	Various scales. Multicolor or black and white on topographic or planimetric bases. Single or multiple sheets no larger than 44×58 inches (image 42×56 inches). Text on sheet or in an accompanying pamphlet.
Miscellaneous Field Studies (MF) Maps.	Rapidly prepared, low-budget maps in a broad range of presentations in terms of portrayal, completeness, interpretations, draftsmanship, scale, and area coverage.	Flexible layout. One or more sheets on planimetric or topographic bases not larger than 44×58 inches (image size 42×56 inches); generally in black and white. Author responsible for preparing camera-ready maps, cross sections, and other illustrations. Text should be keyboarded on word processors.
	Informal report series	
Open-File Reports (OF).	Unedited preliminary manuscripts, maps, and other material made available for public use but not considered part of the formal literature. Wide range of subject matter.	Varied scales, areas covered, shapes, and methods of presentation. Black and white paper copies and microfiche available for most reports. Some color. Computer programs and data on floppy disks.
Water-Resources Investigations Reports (WRIR).	Hydrologic information, mainly of local interest, intended for quick release. Book or map format.	Map size normally 44×58 inches. Book pages 8½×11 inches. Map sheet no larger than 44×58 inches (image 42×56 inches). Text, drafting, and layout by originating office. Color and oversize illustrations if appropriate.
Reports of the Office of Water-Data Coordination.	Products of interagency water-data coordination activities.	Various types based on need.
Index to Water Data.	Tabular information on water-data collection sites and hydrologic investigations published every 2–4 years. Data maintained in a central computer file.	Computer-generated camera-ready copy on 8½×11-inch paper, black and white; illustrated only with index maps. Standard covers.
National Handbook of Recommended Methods for Water-Data Acquisition.	Various methods of water-data acquisition, updated periodically.	Twelve chapters, typeset; 8½×11-inch paper, without color and with few illustrations. Special notebook covers.
Federal Plan for Water-Data Acquisition.	Present and future plans of 30 Federal agencies; directed to water-data collectors and users and to administrative and legislative branches of the Federal Government.	Camera-ready copy generated on word processors on 8½×11-inch paper, without color, with standard covers. Page-size computer-generated graphs.
Administrative Reports.	Prepared to meet specific internal needs or needs of other governmental agencies having proprietary interests. Unpublished and not to be quoted or cited except in followup administrative reports or unless released to the public by a cooperating agency.	No set standards; copy prepared to meet specific needs.

National Topographic Maps

Standard series maps:
- 1:24,000-scale, 7½-minute
- 1:62,500-scale, 15-minute
- 1:100,000-scale
- 1:250,000-scale
- 1:1,000,000-scale International Map of the World

Special maps:
- National Parks and Monuments
- Orthophotomaps
- Orthophotoquads
- County maps
- State maps
- National Atlas of the United States
- Maps of the United States