

NEWSLETTER
AUGUST 2007

The first speaker for the evening was Penny Williamson who was to speak on: -

‘Displaying Minerals’

Penny Williamson stressed that a number of criteria must be considered by anyone preparing to display mineral specimens. These were location of the display/s; the amount of space available and therefore the size of cases and accessibility for viewers; whether the display is to be permanent or temporary; the budget involved; the purpose or the theme of the display; the size of the specimens in that what would be done to display thumbnail-size would be different to that for cabinet sizes; the number of specimens; the display case or open shelf display construction including lighting; security; and particularly the provision of appropriate labels. The speaker then went into more detail about a number of these aspects.

Vibration from ‘traffic’ due to people walking by or examining a display may make specimens on glass or metal shelves move. In a large public display special vibration matting may be used and the glass shelves in a case can be isolated, or vibration-insulated, from the case itself. Otherwise individual specimens would need to be secured to the shelf or shelves. Security for a display in a public area may have to be provided with secure locking on display cases, internal movement sensors and external video monitoring. This leads to the problem of considering how often a supervisor may need to open a case thereby disturbing the security arrangements, - to change the display or clean the shelves or specimens since experience of large supposedly very well sealed display cases has shown that somehow dust always gets in. In speaking about these problems Penny Williamson was able to refer to her considerable experience setting up public displays including that of the **Howard Worner Collection** in the University of Wollongong.

Displays should ideally be in an area with a permanent stable temperature, not in a position which would be subjected to strong sunlight for part of the day since many mineral specimens may be sensitive to temperature changes and may even be destroyed. This also means that consideration should be applied to case/s with lighting inside which would also generate heat. Humidity should also be excluded.

The distance of the specimens from the viewer will influence the size of specimens on display and the type and size of labeling. There is the backdrop to be chosen which may considerably enhance the overall effect and appreciation of the display. Grouping the specimens in a display in regard to their sizes and colours must also be taken into consideration.

Penny Williamson stressed that however large or small a collection and/or a display, private or public it should always have a catalogue. This would be important from the point of view of security and insurance but a catalogue in any form, from card index to electronic, will also ensure that label information is readily available. This consideration led the speaker into describing various types of labeling which depending on the type of display would need to be on stiff or solid material from card to perspex or wood and would need either to lie flat or be made to stand upright or slanted. The speaker finally spent some time describing a variety of display cases and collections set up in private homes.