The Colorado School of Mines (CSM) is located 13 miles west of Denver in Golden. Founded in 1874 to meet the state's growing need for professional geologists and mining engineers, the school currently enrolls 3,000 students—2,000 undergraduate, 1,000 graduate. The emphasis of the school has shifted from geology and mining to engineering; approximately 40% of the undergraduates are enrolled in the Division of Engineering. In addition to the traditional programs of mining engineering and geology, CSM also offers degrees in the physical sciences, including strong programs in metallurgy, geophysics, and petroleum engineering. The School of Mines is a research university; however, the necessary information resources for research have not translated into money for the Library. From 1991 to 1995, the Library's acquisition budget rose a total of 1%, while journal inflation for the sciences for that same time period ran close to 15% per year. Massive cuts were made in the journal collection because of these budget inadequacies.

The Library at the Colorado School of Mines was formed in 1874 with the founding of the School. Maps were set aside as a separate collection in the mid-1950's, when the Arthur Lakes Library was built. The Map Room was established in its present location when the Library's addition opened in 1978. It houses over 175,000 maps and 6,000 books and atlases. It has a staff of 1.5--1 map librarian and 1 half-time assistant. The collection is considered to be one of the best in the Rocky Mountains.

The Library has been a participant in the Government Depository Program since 1939. At least 50% of the maps now added to the collection come via the Depository Program. The budget for acquisitions for the Map Room is limited—approximately $2,000 a year. Because of this, great care is needed in making selections of maps. Many maps are acquired as gifts, usually from alumni or local mining and engineering companies. In fiscal year 1995-96, the Map Room added over 2,300 maps that were received as gifts. Many more gift maps were placed in the annual book sale. These gifts were of a surprisingly high quality; while USGS topos seem to be the most common items donated, the Map Room received a large number of geologic and topographic maps of Africa and the USSR.

The greatest strength of the Map Room is its excellent collection of mining and geology maps. Many of these items are unique; copies of company documents showing mine workings, field studies, or geology. Many have come to the Library as gifts. Particular emphasis is placed on finding and keeping mining maps of Colorado and the Rocky Mountains. The Map Room keeps multiple copies of geologic maps (such as the USGS thematic maps) and topographic maps of the state of Colorado. Duplicate or superseded maps from outside Colorado are not kept. This policy has allowed the staff to weed some of the collection, freeing up valuable drawer space.

Students are the primary users of the Map Collection, and their numbers ebb and flow with the school year. Most of the undergraduates do simple research projects requiring Colorado geologic maps. Graduate students' requests are far more complicated and range far afield.

The general public also uses the Map Room quite often. Public users fall into
two general categories: corporate and "miners." Many companies use the Library to do research in the area of natural resources management and or discovery. Corporations purchase borrowing privileges annually. "Miners" are people who look as if they just walked out of a mine or people who ask, "I just bought some property up in Clear Creek County. There is an old mine on my property. How much gold is left in it?" These questions sometimes can be answered by consulting those unique mining maps that the Map Room owns. In order to aid in reference, the Library has created homepages on the World Wide Web. The Map Room alone has contributed over 100 pages, including a description of the Map Room, a list of all the Colorado topos ever produced by USGS, and connections to other map libraries. Most useful are the pages that explain how to find a geologic map, how the Map Room is organized (including an explanation of the Library of Congress G-schedule for classification), and a listing of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). The Map Room's homepage is located at http://www.mines.edu/library/maproom/

The two greatest challenges facing the Map Room (other than the acquisition budget) are space and access. While the Library and the Map Room have room to grow, the Map Collection suffers in places from a lack of adequate drawer space. Part of this problem was alleviated by the acquisition of some used map cases this past winter. After completing some weeding, the entire collection was shifted. The staff estimated that it would take an additional 380 drawers to alleviate the overcrowding problem; unfortunately, only 80 empty drawers were available. In prioritizing the shift, Colorado and Western states received the most consideration. In addition to the lack of drawer space, the Map Room has cases that measure only 71 x 118 cm., as compared to standard drawers that measure 98 x 127 cm. These smaller cases often damage maps.

The Map Room provides open access to its collection. Unlike many map collections, the map cases are never locked. The Map Room is open all the hours the Library is open. However, staff are only available Monday through Friday 8 to 5. Except for reference items and maps housed in the Map Room Office or Archive, everything in the collection including atlases and sheet maps, may be checked out. Close to 90% of the maps are cataloged and may be accessed through the Library's on-line database, CARL (telnet to csn.carl.org). In order to facilitate better access to the collection, the cataloging backlog was eliminated in the spring of 1996. Retrospective conversion of the remaining items is underway. To further improve access, signage in the Map Room has been improved and finding aides have been placed on the World Wide Web. Finally, the collection development policy has been revised and the collection has been weeded accordingly.

The Map Room recently purchased the ArcView package for schools and libraries. The staff is currently wrestling with all of the problems other map libraries are dealing with as far as GIS: access, support, data acquisition, hardware, time investments, and so on. Only one professor on campus is formally teaching classes in GIS. These are at the graduate level, although undergraduate classes have been proposed. Within the next year, the Map Room plans to have an active GIS workstation.

The Map Room at the Arthur Lakes Library on the campus of the Colorado School of Mines is dynamic and important. It's rich collection of geology and mining
maps is seen as an asset to students, businesses and the public.--

Christopher JJ Thiry
Map Librarian
Colorado School of Mines
Arthur Lakes Library
1400 Illinois
PO Box 4029
Golden, CO 80401-0029
(303) 273-3697 fax (303) 271-3199
cthiry@mines.edu
http://www.mines.edu/library/maproom/