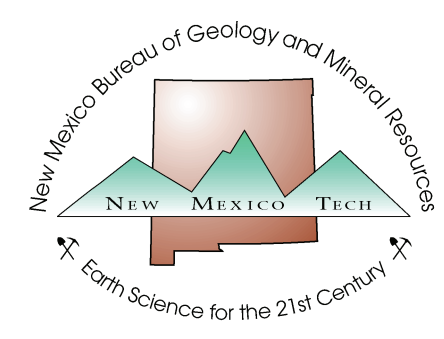


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See also earlier Proceedings (1997-2009)  
<http://ngmdb.usgs.gov/info/dmt/>



# The New Mexico Bureau of Geology & Mineral Resources geologic data model, a comparison with other existing models

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see: <http://geoinfo.nmt.edu/statemap/datamodel>



**What is a geology data model and why would I want to use one?**  
Like most other mapping agencies, the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources (NMBGMR) has produced geologic maps for many years using a Geographic Information System (GIS). A GIS is essentially a geospatial database that stores information about the shape and position of mapped features as well as associated data. In order for a particular GIS-based map to be interoperable with other maps, their geospatial databases must be organized with a consistent structure. A data model is a standardized database structure (also called a database schema) that defines what features (or entities) are recorded, what their attributes are (often with a pre-defined set of possible values), and how they relate to one another.

**Yes! not a good geology data model already been created?**  
Hasn't—a several comprehensive data models have been proposed, but none are in common use throughout the country or the world. Geologic maps are extremely complicated documents that attempt to record both geological observations and interpretations in four dimensions—through space and time. There are many reasonable approaches to encoding geological data and a lot of institutional inertia to keep doing what has been working, if imperfectly, because it is painful to migrate existing data to a new schema. Like most change, adoption of new ways of doing things only occurs when old methods are too painful to continue using and new methods have obvious benefits.

When we decided we needed a better data model, we looked at existing geologic data models and at the time we found that they were either too complex to be practical or otherwise didn't fit our needs. So, we chose to create our own model from scratch, borrowing useful ideas from other models. Since both field mapping and digitization of maps are already fairly labor-intensive, we didn't want to add needless complexity to the process of producing maps. However, we did want have the ability to create a fully attributed geologic map in a GIS.

### Model Comparison

Our model developed in tandem with both the NCGMP09 and ESRI models and shares several design features them — but also has some important differences:

### Feature Classes

We have far more granular feature classes in our model than the NCGMP09 model does and a different structure than the ESRI Geologic Mapping Template. The benefit of separate feature classes is that it is easier to create maps that display just the features of interest. For instance, if a structure map is needed, you can just display the faults, folds, and perhaps structure contour layers. To do this in the NCGMP09 model would require querying the data and perhaps exporting features to new feature classes to construct these derivative maps. Another benefit of feature classes dedicated to a particular type of feature is that attributes can be more specific for that feature type. Of course, the drawback of our approach is that having more feature classes can make geodatabases more complicated.

### Confidence, Locational Accuracy, and Exposure

Traditionally, lines (generally contacts and faults) on printed geologic maps are either solid, dashed, dotted, or queried. Solid lines were used to represent linear features that were confidently identified, well located, and exposed. Dashed lines were used for concealed features that a geologist felt reasonably confident in projecting beneath another unit. Queries along lines reflected decreased confidence about both existence and location. Dashed lines were more mysterious. Dotted lines could represent decreased confidence because a contact was mapped with microclasts or air photos, was poorly exposed, wasn't well located in areas of low relief, or was interpolated. The main problem with the standard line types used on paper geologic maps is that there are multiple inter-related attributes that can be effectively symbolized with such a simple system of line types.

We chose to attribute linear features using a combination of two attributes, 1) **Exposure** (exposed, obscured or intermittent, concealed) and 2) **Scientific Confidence** combining confidence regarding the existence and/or identification of a feature (certain, probable, uncertain). Note that for simplicity, positional accuracy is not recorded for lines and does not affect our symbology (positional accuracy can be recorded for points along the line however). Another reason for not attributing locational accuracy is that it quickly becomes very difficult to create a workable field symbology for use on paper field maps.

### Topology

We have defined a number of important topology rules that should be valid for any geologic map. Most of these rules are obvious: no gaps between polygons, contacts must intersect, polygon boundaries, contacts can't dangle, etc. These rules help identify and fix inevitable digitization errors. Other rules require that fault and fault measurements should be on their respective lines or be marked as exceptions. These exceptions will additionally have an attribute "MappedFeature" set to FALSE so that they can easily be symbolized as minor structures.

One fundamental topological relationship exists for point data that can have measurements for both planar and linear data, like faults with slickenlines, fold axial planes and fold axes, foliations with extension lineations, or bedding with paleocurrent vectors. For all these types of features, planar and linear data resides in the same record. Of course, there are many ways to store such a relationship in a database, but this method is by far the simplest to use and understand and is the most logical. Many other geologic data models store one point for a fault plane and another for the slickenline in that plane. It then becomes very difficult to extract this key data from what is really a single data point.

Our line feature classes are structured somewhat differently than other data models. Lithologic contacts are separated into two feature classes: **Lith Contacts** and **Concealed Contacts**. Additionally, faults are stored and fully attributed in **Fault Line** rather than being combined with contacts in as the NCGMP09 model. After faults are attributed, non-concealed faults (that participate in polygon topology) are copied to the **Lith Contacts** layer where they will retain their LineClass attribute of "Fault". Before building polygons, the **Map\_Boundary** polyline is also copied to the **Lith Contacts** layer and the topology is validated. Faults that do not meet criteria are deleted from the **Lith Contacts** layer and any other topology problems are fixed. When there are no topology errors — and no exceptions — polygons can be built from the **Lith Contacts** layer (and attributed using **Lith\_poly\_label** points if present).

### Lithologic Classification

We chose to proceed from very general lithologic attributes to more specific attributes:

- **LithClass** (LithType)
  - **Sedimentary** (siliciclastic, mixed, nonsiliciclastic)
  - **Volcanic** (lava flow, dome, ash, volcanoclastic)
  - **Intrusive** (plutonic, gabbro, dike, sill)
  - **Metamorphic** (metasedimentary, metavolcanic, unknown protolith)
- **Anthropogenic** (disturbed land, artificial fill, tailings, dump)

### General line types

Feature Class	Field Name	Field Alias	Length (Unit/Scale)	Field Type	Field Value	Default	Allow Null	Attributes / Examples	Description / Notes
Structural, nonconcealed	LineClass	LineClass	10	String	CSD variable	FALSE	TRUE	LineClass: 10 to 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 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