



Field Analytical Techniques for Geochemical Surveys

Bruno Lemière

► **To cite this version:**

Bruno Lemière. Field Analytical Techniques for Geochemical Surveys. 27th International Applied Geochemistry Symposium, Apr 2015, Tucson, AZ, United States. 2015. <hal-01185063>

HAL Id: hal-01185063

<https://hal-brgm.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01185063>

Submitted on 19 Aug 2015

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Field Analytical Techniques for Geochemical Surveys

Bruno Lemière

BRGM - D3E Environment & Water - BP 36009, 3 Av. C. Guillemin - 45060
ORLEANS Cedex 2, France, and
Environmental & Mining Consultant, 36 venelle des Vaupulents, 45000 ORLEANS,
France, +33 6 95 90 21 34

Introduction

Obtaining geochemical results in the field has been a persistent dream for exploration geologists in the last century, and a few practical geochemical tests were developed, but shipping samples to faraway labs and waiting weeks for results was the rule. This remained a dream until around 1990, when technology developments of portable instruments allowed on-site measurement of the first key metals in solids. This development progressed rapidly and by 2010, most geochemists could have access to portable field analytical methods, if they decided so. These instruments were soon used for environmental investigations too. At the same time, field instruments for water analysis were developed, with applications in the environmental, ore processing and exploration domains.

Results

The present communication is based on our own work (Negrel et al. 2007; Liakopoulos et al. 2010; Lemièrre et al. 2014), and, more importantly, on major contributions since 1995 by several field geochemists (Kalnicky & Singhvi 2001; CL:AIRE 2008; Hall et al. 2012). An important set of thematic papers on pXRF was also published in GEEA in 2014 (vol. 14) and a review paper on pXRF is currently in preparation, which will provide a comprehensive set of references.

Field analytical techniques cannot provide the level of optimisation laboratory analyses do. However, they are needed where there is no other option. They offer flexibility and/or reactivity in field operations.

Current validated applications for analysing solids (mostly by pXRF) comprise:

- mining rock face evaluation, ore processing monitoring, soil remediation and waste management (operations, etc.) requiring fast decision-making measurements and analyses,
- site evaluation grids (mainly on soils, both for environmental and mineral exploration surveys),

- fast drill-hole logging and drilling decisions,
- screening of samples to select which ones will be analysed in the lab, and
- identification of potential resources from waste.

Current validated applications for analysing water (mostly with voltammetry, polarography or ion selective electrodes), along with physicochemical sensors) comprise:

- wastewater treatment or discharge monitoring, including process monitoring and alarm networks requiring fast decision-making measurements and analyses,
- catchment mapping and reconnaissance (both for environmental and mineral exploration surveys),
- screening of samples to select which ones will be analysed in the lab, and
- catchment or pit lake reconnaissance and monitoring, groundwater logging and monitoring requiring improved measurements and analyses for site investigations.

Discussion

Impassioned debate followed development since 1995 about the quality of field analyses vs. laboratory analyses, with often non-neutral contributions from instrument suppliers and from the laboratory profession. Beyond instrument limitations, it appeared soon that sample preparation and sample representativeness were key issues to interpret field analytical results. This is still the case today, even if documented evidence of field-lab concordance is frequently published – by geochemists who pay attention to sample preparation and representativeness. The late apparition of relevant standards, to the notable exception of EPA 6200 (1998), did nothing for a smooth acceptance of field methods or their beneficial introduction in the analytical toolbox of applied geochemists.

Benefits of field analysis comprise in-situ analysis, without transport issues, implementation of dynamic and adaptive sampling plans along results collection (Robbat, 1997; Crumbling, 2001; US-DOE, 2001, Triad), increase of data density and quality (through larger data sets) and better representation of transient phenomena.

Possible pitfalls include improper interpretation of field data as a result of insufficient understanding of the sampling and measurement processes, use of heterogeneous data sets collected by different methods, and the lack of critical examination of data.

Current developments of new or adapted technologies cover mineralogy (portable XRD, micro Raman, IR spectroscopy), light inorganic elements (LIBS,

pXRF), organic substances (IR spectroscopy, GC, GC/MS) and more focused applications.

Field techniques offer their best value when they cooperate with the laboratory throughout the investigations.

References

- CL:AIRE, 2008. Field Portable X-ray Fluorescence (PXRF): A rapid and low cost alternative for measuring metals and metalloids in soils. Research Bulletin, 7, 1–4. [Retrieved from www.claire.co.uk on April 2012.]
- Crumbling, D.M. 2001. Using the Triad approach to improve the cost-effectiveness of hazardous waste site clean-ups. US-EPA report 542-R-01–016. [Retrieved in 2001 from www.clu-in.org]
- Hall, G., Buchar, A. & Bonham-Carter, G., 2012. Quality Control Assessment of Portable XRF Analysers: Development of Standard Operating Procedures, Performance on Variable Media and Recommended Uses. Canadian Mining Industry Research Organization (Camiro) Exploration Division, Project 10E01 Phase I Report. <http://www.camiro.org/exploration/r-ecently-completed-projects>
- Higuera, P., Oyarzun, R., Iraizoz, J.M., Lorenz, S., Esbrí, J.M. & Martínez-Coronado, A. 2012. Low-cost geochemical surveys for environmental studies in developing countries: Testing a field portable XRF instrument under quasi-realistic conditions. Journal of Geochemical Exploration, 113, 3–12. Downloaded from <http://geea.lyellcollection.org/> at Bureau De Recherches Geologiques Et Minières BRGM, FRANCE on July 18, 2014
- Kalnicky, D.J. & Singhvi, R. 2001. Field portable XRF analysis of environmental samples Journal of Hazardous Materials, 83, 93–122.
- Lemiere, B., Laperche, V., Haouche, L. and Auger, P., 2014. Portable XRF and wet materials: application to dredged contaminated sediments from waterways. Geochemistry: Exploration, Environment, Analysis 2014, v.14; p 257-264.
- Liakopoulos, A., Lemiere, B., Michael, C., Crouzet, C., Laperche, V., Romaidis, I., Drougas, I., Lassin, A, 2010. Environmental impacts of unmanaged solid waste at a former base metal mining and ore processing site (Kirki, Greece). Waste Management & Research, 28(11) 996–1009
- Négrel, Ph., Lemièrre, B., Machard de Grammont, H., Billaud, P., Sengupta, B., 2007. Hydrogeochemical processes, mixing and isotope tracing in hard rock aquifers and surface waters from the Subarnarekha River Basin, (East Singhbhum District, Jharkhand State, India). Hydrogeology Journal, 15, 8, pp.1535-1552.
- Robbat, Jr., A., 1997. Dynamic Workplans and Field Analytics: The Keys to Cost-effective Site Investigations, Tufts University, Case Study.



US-DOE, 2001. Adaptive Sampling and Analysis Programs (ASAPs). Report DOE/EM-0592.

US-EPA, 1998. Test Methods for Evaluating Solid Waste, Physical/Chemical Methods. Vol IA, SW-846, Method 6200, Revision 0.