The more efficient production and use of mineral resources is a major objective of our sustainability efforts. Resource characterization is a critical component for optimization of the mine-to-mill process, including innovative processing for sustainable growth. Such characterization is now referred to as geometallurgy, with advanced instrumentation including, for example, particle size analysis, XRF, XRD, NIR, automated SEM/EDAX analysis (QEMSCAN, MLA), and high resolution X-ray micro tomography. Geometallurgical information is important for exploration, deposit evaluation, mine planning, design and analysis of separation processes, etc.

Characterization of multiphase particles in 3D is now possible using high-resolution X-ray micro tomography (HRXMT), and such HRXMT systems have been installed at several laboratories around the world. After review of principles, the features of such HRXMT analyses are presented including size/shape, damage state, mineral phase identification, and evaluation/isolation of trace mineral particles. With new algorithms for image analysis quantitative data treatment is possible for construction of liberation-limited grade/recovery curves, for the determination of specific crack surface area, and for complex texture analysis including grain exposure. Finally, new tomographic characterization possibilities are discussed to provide the foundation for the development of advanced, innovative processing strategies in the recovery of mineral/energy resources.

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