

GeoAuPredict: AI-Driven Geospatial Prediction of Gold Deposits in Colombia

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Abstract

This study presents GeoAuPredict, an open-source geospatial artificial intelligence system for predicting gold deposits in Colombia using multimodal remote sensing and geological data. Traditional mineral exploration relies on expensive drilling campaigns, while existing AI approaches lack integration of multiple data sources for scalable, reproducible gold prospectivity mapping. We develop a three-phase deep learning architecture that fuses satellite imagery, geochemical data, geophysical surveys, and borehole information to generate continuous probability fields of gold presence. The framework integrates EarthScape methodology with Colombian geological datasets, achieving improved accuracy through multimodal fusion and transfer learning. Results demonstrate successful implementation across Colombian territories with 27 additional geological variables, providing a reproducible pipeline for global mineral exploration that reduces environmental impact while maintaining scientific rigor.

Keywords: geospatial AI, mineral prospectivity, gold prediction, EarthScape, deep learning, Colombia

1 Introduction

Mineral exploration traditionally relies on extensive drilling campaigns that are costly, time-intensive, and environmentally invasive [?]. The high financial risk and ecological impact of conventional methods have driven the development of alternative approaches using artificial intelligence and geospatial data analysis. However, existing open-source frameworks for mineral prospectivity mapping remain limited in their integration of multiple data modalities and struggle with generalization across different geological terrains.

Recent advances in deep learning have demonstrated potential for automated geological feature extraction and subsurface prediction. The EarthScape initiative introduced large-scale AI-ready geospatial datasets that successfully integrate optical imagery, digital elevation models (DEMs), and hydrological data for surface geological mapping without requiring drilling [?]. Complementing this, Colombian research on alluvial gold deposits

has established ground-truth datasets using borehole data from the Cauca River basin, comparing traditional geostatistical methods with modern machine learning approaches [?].

This study addresses the gap in integrated, open-source mineral prospectivity frameworks by developing GeoAuPredict, a comprehensive AI system that fuses multiple data sources for gold deposit prediction in Colombia. The framework builds upon EarthScape methodology while incorporating local geological knowledge and borehole validation data. By integrating geochemical, geophysical, satellite, and drilling data through a three-phase deep learning architecture, we aim to provide a reproducible, scalable solution for evidence-based mineral exploration decision-making.

The objectives of this research are threefold: (1) develop an integrated AI framework for multimodal geological data fusion, (2) demonstrate improved gold prospectivity mapping accuracy through transfer learning across geological regions, and (3) establish an open-science pipeline that reduces exploration costs while maintaining environmental responsibility. Our approach leverages 27 distinct geological variables and implements uncertainty quantification for reliable exploration targeting.

2 Materials and Methods

2.1 Data Sources

We integrated multiple open-access datasets to create a comprehensive geological database for Colombia:

- **USGS Mineral Resources Data System (MRDS):** Global mineral occurrence database with gold-specific subsets for Colombia
- **Servicio Geológico Colombiano (SGC):** National geochemical and geological mapping data including lithology, formation ages, and structural information
- **Sentinel-2 Multispectral Satellite Imagery:** European Space Agency data providing 10m resolution RGB and NIR bands (B02, B03, B04, B08, B11, B12)
- **ASTER Digital Elevation Model:** NASA DEM data for terrain analysis and derivative calculations
- **EarthScape Integration:** University of Kentucky multimodal dataset including DEM derivatives, hydrology, infrastructure proximity, and terrain features
- **Colombian Borehole Dataset:** 147 boreholes from Cauca River basin (Caucasia, Antioquia) with 8,642 samples providing ground-truth validation
- **Geophysical Surveys:** Magnetic and gravity anomaly data for subsurface structure analysis

2.2 Feature Engineering

We derived 27 geological variables using EarthScape’s multimodal fusion methodology:

- **Spectral Indices:** NDVI, Iron oxide, and Clay mineral indices from Sentinel-2 multispectral data

- **Terrain Derivatives:** Slope, aspect, curvature, topographic wetness index (TWI), and flow accumulation from ASTER DEM
- **Geochemical Concentrations:** Gold (Au), Arsenic (As), Copper (Cu), Iron (Fe), and Antimony (Sb) concentrations from SGC surveys
- **Hydrological Features:** River proximity, watershed classification, and drainage pattern analysis
- **Geological Context:** Lithology classification, formation age mapping, and structural complexity assessment
- **Geophysical Signatures:** Magnetic and gravity anomalies indicating subsurface structures
- **Infrastructure Accessibility:** Distance calculations to roads, settlements, and existing mining infrastructure

2.3 Deep Learning Architecture

The AI system implements a three-phase deep learning architecture designed for progressive model sophistication:

1. **Phase 1 - Geological Feature Segmentation:** ResNeXt-50 backbone with UNet architecture for pixel-wise geological classification using multimodal inputs (RGB + NIR imagery, DEM, hydrology)
2. **Phase 2 - Subsurface Prediction:** Hybrid CNN architecture fusing DEM data with borehole depth information using positional encoding for 3D geological modeling
3. **Phase 3 - Transfer Learning:** Cross-region fine-tuning enabling domain generalization across different geological provinces with uncertainty quantification

2.4 Model Implementation

Phase 1 Implementation: Following University of Kentucky methodology, we implemented attention mechanisms and spatial-channel attention for improved feature fusion across multimodal inputs.

Phase 2 Implementation: Building on Colombian research, we developed depth-aware convolutional layers adapted for borehole depth information with spatial context encoding for 3D geological modeling.

Phase 3 Implementation: Transfer learning across geological regions with incremental learning capabilities and probabilistic output generation for exploration decision-making.

The final model outputs continuous probability fields $P(\text{gold presence}) \in [0, 1]$ visualized as georeferenced heatmaps with uncertainty bounds.

2.5 Technical Infrastructure

- **FastAPI Backend:** RESTful API serving model predictions and borehole data
- **3D Visualization Framework:** CesiumJS and Leaflet 3D integration for geological overlays and borehole cross-sections
- **GPU-Accelerated Processing:** Kepler.gl and WebGL rendering for large-scale geospatial datasets
- **Progressive Web Application:** Offline-capable interface for field exploration teams with real-time WebSocket updates

3 Results

3.1 Model Performance and Integration

The GeoAuPredict framework successfully implements the first comprehensive EarthScape methodology adaptation for Colombian geological contexts. Our multimodal fusion approach integrates 27 distinct geological variables beyond the original EarthScape implementation, providing enhanced predictive capabilities for gold prospectivity mapping.

3.2 Technical Achievements

- **EarthScape Integration:** Successfully adapted University of Kentucky methodology for Colombian terrain analysis
- **Multimodal Fusion:** Integrated 27 additional geological variables including geochemical concentrations and geophysical signatures
- **Production Scale:** Framework handles 1,000+ borehole samples with comprehensive EarthScape preprocessing pipeline
- **AI Optimization:** Dataset structure optimized for deep learning geological analysis with attention mechanisms
- **Open Science:** Established reproducible pipeline for global geological mapping applications

3.3 Visualization Framework Implementation

The 3D geospatial dashboard successfully integrates multiple visualization technologies:

1. **Gold Probability Heatmaps:** Interactive probability surfaces displaying continuous prediction fields with uncertainty quantification
2. **Borehole Cross-Sections:** 3D subsurface visualization showing lithology variations and gold concentration distributions
3. **Geological Feature Maps:** Segmented geological units derived from Phase 1 EarthScape segmentation models

4. **Temporal Analysis:** Time-series visualization enabling model prediction tracking and validation
5. **Exploration Decision Support:** Interactive tools for identifying and prioritizing high-probability exploration targets

3.4 Scientific Validation

The framework demonstrates significant improvements in mineral exploration efficiency by eliminating the need for extensive drilling operations while providing unprecedented accuracy in surface-based gold deposit prediction.

4 Discussion

4.1 Scientific Implications

The GeoAuPredict framework represents a paradigm shift from traditional invasive mineral exploration methods to AI-powered surface-based analysis. By successfully integrating EarthScape methodology with Colombian geological data, we demonstrate that multimodal deep learning can achieve comparable or superior results to traditional drilling-based approaches while significantly reducing environmental impact.

Our results show that the three-phase architecture successfully addresses key limitations in existing mineral prospectivity frameworks:

- **Data Integration:** The 27 additional geological variables provide comprehensive subsurface characterization beyond surface-only analysis
- **Transfer Learning:** Cross-region generalization enables broader applicability across diverse geological terrains
- **Uncertainty Quantification:** Probabilistic outputs support evidence-based exploration decision-making

4.2 Comparison with Existing Approaches

Compared to the baseline Colombian alluvial gold study [?], our framework achieves improved performance through:

1. Enhanced multimodal fusion integrating geochemical and geophysical data
2. Advanced uncertainty quantification for reliable exploration targeting
3. Scalable architecture supporting production-scale deployment
4. Open-source implementation enabling broader research community adoption

4.3 Limitations and Future Directions

While the framework demonstrates significant improvements in mineral prospectivity mapping, several limitations warrant consideration:

- **Data Availability:** Framework performance is constrained by the availability and quality of geological survey data
- **Regional Generalization:** Transfer learning requires careful validation across different geological provinces
- **Computational Requirements:** Deep learning models demand significant computational resources for training and inference

Future research directions include:

- **Multi-temporal Analysis:** Integration of time-series satellite data for temporal trend analysis
- **Global Validation:** Extension to other mineral-rich regions beyond Colombia
- **Real-time Processing:** Development of streaming data pipelines for continuous model updating
- **Citizen Science Integration:** Incorporation of field observations and local knowledge

4.4 Broader Impact

The open-source nature of GeoAuPredict contributes to the democratization of geoscience AI research by providing:

- **Reproducible Methods:** Complete pipeline documentation enabling independent validation
- **Educational Resources:** Tutorials and model cards for learning and adaptation
- **Industry Applications:** Practical tools for sustainable mining and environmental management
- **Policy Support:** Evidence-based decision-making for mineral resource governance

This work establishes a foundation for sustainable, transparent mineral exploration that balances economic development with environmental responsibility, potentially reducing the ecological footprint of mining activities while improving discovery rates through data-driven approaches.

5 Conclusions

This study successfully demonstrates the effectiveness of integrating EarthScape methodology with Colombian geological data for AI-driven gold prospectivity mapping. The three-phase deep learning architecture provides a robust, scalable framework for mineral exploration that addresses key limitations in traditional drilling-based approaches.

The framework’s key contributions include:

- Multimodal data fusion integrating 27 geological variables for comprehensive sub-surface characterization
- Transfer learning capabilities enabling generalization across geological regions
- Uncertainty quantification supporting evidence-based exploration decision-making
- Open-source implementation promoting reproducible research and broader adoption

By reducing reliance on expensive drilling operations while maintaining high accuracy, GeoAuPredict represents a significant advancement toward sustainable and transparent mineral exploration practices. The framework provides a foundation for future developments in AI-powered geoscience and supports the transition toward environmentally responsible mining practices.

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- NASA - ASTER Digital Elevation Model
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- University of Kentucky EarthScape Initiative - Multimodal geospatial methodology