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Sommario/riassunto	Comets and asteroids are in some sense the fossils of the solar system. They have avoided most of the drastic physical processing that shaped the planets and thus represent more closely the properties of the primordial solar nebula. What processing has taken place is itself of interest in decoding the history of our solar neighborhood. Near-Earth objects are also of interest because one or more large ones have been blamed for the rare but devastating events that caused mass extinctions of species on our planet, as attested by recent excitement over the impending passage of asteroid 1997 XF11. The comets and asteroids whose orbits bring them close to Earth are clearly the most

accessible to detailed investigation, both from the ground and from spacecraft. When nature kindly delivers the occasional asteroid to the surface of Earth as a meteorite, we can scrutinize it closely in the laboratory; a great deal of information about primordial chemical composition and primitive processes has been gleaned from such objects. This report reviews the current state of research on near-Earth objects and considers future directions. Attention is paid to the important interplay between ground-based investigations and spaceborne observation or sample collection and return. This is particularly timely since one U.S. spacecraft is already on its way to rendezvous with a near-Earth object, and two others plus a Japanese mission are being readied for launch. In addition to scientific issues, the report considers technologies that would enable further advances in capability and points out the possibilities for including near-Earth objects in any future expansion of human exploration beyond low Earth orbit.
