



This edition of the *Journal* covers a wide variety of subjects. There should be something of interest for just about everyone. It is also gratifying to note the geographic spread of the authors contributions came from: Canada, Iran, China, Australia, and of course

South Africa. This demonstrates the level of international acceptance of our *Journal* as a vehicle to distribute knowledge.

The internet has also helped to make more knowledge accessible to more people. It is no longer necessary for people in Iran or Uruguay to subscribe to the *Journal* to get insight into the papers we publish. It is available right there on our website. There is no need to register with a password you cannot remember the next time you need to investigate something.

The issue of free access has been raised, as the online *Journal* is potentially a source of income that we are not utilizing. However, our primary aim is not to generate funds. It is more important, especially now, to support our researchers by raising their international profiles, and this we do in our small way by removing all the obstacles we can to make their work known to the world. Hopefully, we will also attract the interest of researchers in other countries by advertising not only the problems we are facing, but also the opportunity to tackle them.

The nature of the papers also covers a wide spectrum, from fundamental research to almost common-sense mining application. The paper on productivity at Impala Platinum, indicating that more blasts can be obtained by moving activities closer to the beginning of the shift, reminds me of an old friend who managed a large coal mine some years back. His answer to the question 'How do you eat an elephant?' was not the standard one—to do it in manageable chunks, plan properly, etc. He simply said 'Start NOW.'

This brings to mind our approach to the lack of mining research being done in South Africa. There is a virtual elephant to be eaten out there. We have a massive task ahead; we have to be honest and admit that we have fallen behind. In fact, a friend in Australia told me recently that the worst thing to have happened to Australian mining is that we stopped doing research in South Africa. Most people in mining agree that we have work to do, but still the topic is debated *ad nauseam* at conferences, gatherings, etc. We all talk ourselves into a state of despair and then go back and do nothing about it.

However, there are many people right now working at addressing the problem, performing studies, and determining how to get out of the hole we find ourselves in. This is of course necessary, we need proper prioritization and plans to address the problem. We will need proper management and everything else. French author Antoine de Saint-Exupery said 'A goal without a plan is just a wish'.

Sometimes, though, one wonders if we should not at least start by just getting on with the job. De Saint-Exupery also said 'What saves a man is to take a step. Then another one. It is always the same step, but you have to take it'. If we don't start walking we are not likely to ever be at any other place than where we are today. The elephant will never be eaten.

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