

Can you believe that it is May 2015 already? Nine times out of ten, when people of an older generation are asked this question it results in an impromptu discussion including remarks such as 'where has the time gone?' or 'time seems to go by faster as you get older'. All of which is nonsense from Einstein's perspective. However, I do have my own answer to these questions and it is simple. When I was in my 20s it would probably take me five seconds to tie my shoelaces and run up a flight of stairs. Now it takes me five minutes to put on my slippers and haul myself up to the next floor – a hard reality but true for most! So it is that we find ourselves in May and I had planned to write an update of the SAIMM activities after the first six months – well eight months have flown by and I must keep my promise to myself and the Journal.

In many respects the mining industry has not had a good 2014/2015. The overall contraction in the industry filters through to all levels of activity, and the SAIMM is not immune to this process. We have seen quite a dramatic drop-off in attendance at conferences, and several planned events have had to be cancelled by our Technical Programme Committees. As I have written previously, curtailment in discretionary spending by mining companies is quite understandable. However, it is regrettable that it is the development of our young engineers that suffers the most in this respect, in that they are not able to have the opportunities of either writing and presenting papers or attending conferences and developing their network of industry contacts.

It is important to note that, based on wise investment decisions some years ago, the SAIMM is well positioned financially to continue operations without compromising our quality of work or various initiatives in the industry. This Council-sanctioned strategy is a cornerstone of the SAIMM's ability to grow within southern Africa. However, we work in a dynamic environment, and a meeting has been scheduled whereby the operation and business model of the Technical Programme Committees will be reviewed to ensure that the SAIMM remains viable and competitive under the current circumstances.

On a much more positive note we have good progress to report on the following activities:

#### **Mining Dialogues 360°**

The Mineral Economics Division of the SAIMM had been given a mandate to look at the economic issues that impacted on the minerals industry in South Africa. A report was prepared in this context a number of years ago and MD360° was established to engage with government, mining companies, and other stakeholders. An Advisory Committee of eminent persons has been established by Mr Mike Solomon and chaired by the SAIMM President in order to engage the above groups. The Advisory Committee's objective is to assist in developing a set of agenda items that could be tabled at a national level to raise research funding in the same way as the Resource Nationalism initiative was funded.

#### **Investment Committee**

As mentioned above, the SAIMM's investments have performed well and provide long-term stability to the organization. However, Council requested that Dr G. Smith, Sam Moolla, and I investigate, through independent financial advisors, whether or not we still have the appropriate investment strategy in terms of markets, bonds, and property. This exercise is nearly complete and will be reported at the next Council meeting.

#### **Regional Development Manager**

Some of you may not be aware that the SAIMM has employed a Regional Development Manager in a part-time position. Over several years now we have been working on establishing sustainable branches in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana, and the DRC. Considerable effort has been expended on this by the Johannesburg office as well as our Officers and Members in these countries. In order to meet the increasing demands of supporting these new organizations and to ensure that the marketing of the SAIMM is managed evenly across the region, Council approved the employment of a dedicated and knowledgeable person. Malcolm Walker has filled this role since October 2014 and has actively supported the SAIMM office. He has specifically focused on reaching out to all of the appropriate universities in the region and we have had an excellent response.

#### **SAMREC and SAMVAL COMMITTEE (SSC)**

The SSC has been fulfilling an important role for the Johannesburg Stock Exchange for several years. Over this time the structure has developed and matured, and the Geological Society of South Africa and the SAIMM have met during the year to determine what (if anything) needs to be done to further support the initiative. This resulted in the establishment of an appropriate budget and an updated Terms of Reference for the SSC. The final drafts of these documents will be tabled at the SSC meeting on 28 May 2015.

One of the structures that is required by both the by-laws of the SAIMM and the ToR of the SSC is an effective process for the handling of complaints about professional conduct. This had not received the appropriate attention of the SAIMM in the past, and a duly elected and appointed Complaints Committee and Ethics Committee will be approved at the next Council meeting.

There are many other items to comment on relating to the Young Professionals Committee, our relationship with ECSA, etc., but I fear I am running out of space and ... time. I only type slowly!

**J.L. Porter**  
President, SAIMM