



Wits Mining and the SAIMM – 120 years of parallel histories

This two-volume issue of the *Journal* celebrates 120 years of existence of the Wits School of Mining Engineering (Wits Mining). Are the two volumes two sides of the same coin? There are a myriad of quotes that refer to two sides of the same coin, albeit in a negative sense. I have previously come across the quote by Ida Pauline Rolf, an American Scientist who lived from 1896-1979, which says '*form and function are a unity, two sides of one coin. In order to enhance function, appropriate form must exist or be created*'. This quote takes a positive look at two sides of the same coin that are complementary. I can easily relate this concept to the symbiotic relationship between Wits Mining and the Southern African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (SAIMM), which can be gleaned from our parallel histories that have fostered inextricably strong links. The 'coin' can be seen as the mining industry, which we both serve in our distinct capacities, as an educational institution and a professional body. We both serve the mining industry with a common sense of unity and purpose – to contribute our best efforts to ensure that the industry can grow from strength to strength, because we can survive and thrive only if the mining industry is doing well. I will now turn my attention to the brief histories of Wits Mining and the SAIMM, sketch out some parallels, and indicate why these two institutions are so important for our mining industry, dating back to the 1800s with the advent of commercial mining in South Africa.

Wits Mining started out in 1896 as the South African School of Mines in Kimberley, with an initial enrolment of four white male students. It subsequently underwent a series of name changes and relocations, firstly transferring to Johannesburg as the Transvaal Technical Institute (TTI) in 1904. The TTI originally comprised the Departments of Mining, Metallurgy, and Geology, which were responsible for the training of graduates for the Witwatersrand gold mining industry, and was the first tertiary educational institution in what was then the Transvaal Republic. The TTI became the Transvaal University College (TUC) in 1906 and in 1910 was renamed the South African School of Mines and Technology. In 1920 the School became the University College, Johannesburg, and in 1922 the College received university status and was incorporated as the University of the Witwatersrand. Since then, Wits Mining has undergone significant growth and transformation, and earned the status of the largest mining school in the English-speaking world. In 2016 Wits Mining boasts a total enrolment of 825, including both male and female students and a cohort of international students. This total enrolment comprises 663 students at the undergraduate level and 162 postgraduates. So, what should be the form and function of Wits Mining in the next 120 years post-2016?

In 2014 the Southern African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (SAIMM) celebrated 120 years of existence. The SAIMM was founded in 1894 at a meeting held at the North-Western Hotel, 21 Pritchard Street, Johannesburg as the Chemical and Metallurgical Society of South Africa, following the discovery of gold in Johannesburg in 1886. The initial membership comprised 14 chemists and metallurgists, all white males. Coincidental with its initial number of members, the SAIMM Council currently comprises 14 elected members. In the same way as with Wits Mining, the SAIMM underwent a series of name changes, although less frequently. In 1903 it was renamed the Chemical, Metallurgical and Mining Society of South Africa, which in 1956 became the South African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy. Following the formation of branches in some of the neighbouring countries, in 2006 it became imperative for the SAIMM to rebrand itself as the Southern African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy to reflect its regional character. The Institute boasts a membership predominantly South African domiciled but international in character, with a total membership close to 5000, drawn from 51 countries. So, what should be the form and function of the SAIMM in the next 120 years post-2014?