



To Publish or not to Publish – and what to publish - that is the Question!



Knowledge is the key to life, employment, the economy, and the country. It is nowhere more important than in scientific and technical journals that aspire to deliver the 'best of the best' to the professional and intellectual members of society. Such knowledge is expected to encourage intellectual growth, to ensure innovation, to enhance understanding of key issues, and ultimately, to improve the prospects for the economy and the country.

However, knowledge comes in different 'packages'. It may be manifested at different levels of originality, across different disciplines, and aimed at different technical communities. This multiplicity is compounded by the variety of sources from whence it comes, each with different purposes. In academia, 'publish or perish' is a requirement to ensure tenure and promotion for academic staff, while for postgraduate students publishing one or more papers in accredited journals is a requirement before success can be achieved and a degree assured. For academic institutions, successful publication in high-impact journals carries with it financial rewards for both staff and the institution as well as international recognition and status in global academic rankings. In fact, researchers who publish in journals with high Impact Factors are regarded as among the most important assets at any academic institution. For these reasons, university staff are strongly encouraged to publish in journals with the highest credit ratings. Credit rating is determined by what is known in scientific circles as the Impact Factor.

A journal's Impact Factor, however, is of little relevance to the industrial mining and metallurgical community. In the latter case, papers dealing with innovative topics and practical applications are of greater relevance. Proof of this is the extremely high number of 'hits' (*i.e.* the number of SAIMM Journal papers opened on-line per month) are been reported compared to all other journals in South Africa. This reflects high interest in the SAIMM Journal content. However, the Journal's Impact Factor, namely, the referencing of SAIMM papers in other journal papers, was reported to be among the lowest relative to other accredited journals. This is of concern to the discerning academic community.

In a country such as South Africa, with highly active mining and metallurgical communities in both the academic domain and in industry, a good balance between papers supplying both *applied technology* information for those in industry and highly accredited *fundamental research* for those in academia is of the utmost importance.

The question going forward is how to achieve the balance in the *SAIMM Journal* in order to serve the interests of both sectors. This matter will be addressed when new 'Rules of Engagement' for the *SAIMM's Journal* are considered by the Publication Committee and members from ASSAf and SciELO at a meeting to be scheduled in early 2020. All concerned will be welcome to attend. The prime purpose will be to address the needs for both sectors in 2020.

Impact Factor. As described on the Sci.Journal.org website: *A Journal Impact Factor is a measure reflecting the average number of citations to articles published in science and social Journals.* In simple terms, a citation occurs when an article is cited (quoted as a formal reference) in other published articles, all in accredited journal[s].

NB: ASSAf: ASSAf is the official national Academy of Science of South Africa and represents the country in the international community of science academies. It was formed in response to the need for an academy of science congruent with the dawn of democracy in South Africa - activist in its mission of using science for the benefit of society. The mandate of the Academy encompasses all fields of scientific enquiry and it includes the full diversity of South Africa's distinguished scientists. The Parliament of South Africa passed the Academy of Science of South Africa Act (Act 67 of 2001), as amended, which came into operation in May 2002.

NB: SciELO: SciELO South Africa is an open-access (free to access and free to publish) searchable database of selected, high quality South African scholarly journals. The project is inspired by a global movement towards the implementation of online journals, pioneered by the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) project, based in Brazil.

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