



President: 2015-2016

Continuity and change

Rodney Trevor Jones

Having our current and historical papers available on the SAIMM website has greatly increased how much they have been read.

It is not like to think that if one of the founding members of the SAIMM were to visit one of our present-day meetings, they might bemoan the lack of bowler hats and neckties, but would recognise what was happening, and take part enthusiastically in discussing the technical issues of the day. Just as mountain streams have to change course in response to their environment, and forests lose some trees and grow new ones, yet visibly remain the same rivers and forests, so organizations need to change yet keep their essence the same. Continuity and change are both vital, and neither should dominate at the expense of the other.

Stability is fostered in the SAIMM by its progressive leadership structure where, every year, incoming people move from one role to another of increasing responsibility. The five-year period of office (from junior vice president, to senior Vice President, to President Elect, to President, to immediate Past President) encourages the sense of participating in a team structure that allows the delivery of long-term strategies. Previous

office-bearers are encouraged to remain active Council members.

One of the Council decisions I am proud to have played a part in was to make all of our journal and conference papers freely available via open access. Having our current and historical papers available on the SAIMM website has greatly increased how much they have been read.

The way in which the Journal of the SAIMM is distributed to members illustrates how we have embraced change while simultaneously retaining continuity. A monthly contents page (with hyperlinks to each individual paper) was e-mailed to members, starting in 2009, and has been a greatly appreciated service. In 2016, the full Journal was, for the first time, e-mailed to those who preferred to receive it electronically, while retaining the printed version for those members who preferred reading a paper copy. By the end of 2018, just over a third of SAIMM's members had responded to a questionnaire about their journal preferences, and of



those about a third have chosen to receive their journals electronically, thereby incurring significant savings for the Institute in terms of printing and postage costs. This was done without sacrificing our circulation figures which are important for the prominence of our journal, as well as being significant for our advertisers. In fact, we have been able to increase our circulation by including student members in the distribution list, because of the much lower cost of electronic distribution.

Another change, whose intention was announced in 2015, has taken a little longer to deliver, yet the first set of SAIMM talks to be streamed via live video took place in 2018.

SAIMM maintains strong links with similar societies in other countries through what is known as the Global Mineral Professionals Alliance (GMPA). In November 2011, an inaugural meeting was held in London between several leading international mining and metallurgical societies - AusIMM (Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy), CIM (Canadian Institute of Mining, Metallurgy and Petroleum), IOM3 (Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining), SAIMM, and SME (Society for Mining, Metallurgy and Exploration). The meeting was intended to foster cooperation between the various organizations, to discuss opportunities for improving and sharing benefits to members, and to benchmark the institutions against each other. Further meetings between these societies were held in September 2012 in Las Vegas (SME), in February 2013 in Denver (SME), in February 2014 in Cape Town (SAIMM), in October 2014 in Vancouver (CIM), in March 2015 in Hong Kong (AusIMM), in February 2016 in Phoenix (SME), and in February 2017 in Somerset West (SAIMM). Discussions were held about the state of the mining industry in the various countries, as well as the structure and strategies of the societies represented. There was broad agreement that the societies would offer services to each other's members at member rates. Calendars of events are circulated between the organizations to coordinate major events and minimize clashes.

The flagship project of the GMPA is OneMine.org, a database of over 100 000 technical papers that is freely available to the members of GMPA societies. Support of this project - both financially and by sharing technical papers - is a necessary precondition for a society to belong to the GMPA.

In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Charles Dickens wrote that 'it was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness'. The period 2015-2016 certainly had elements of both prosperity and struggle. South Africa was at a very low point economically and politically. The country set something of a record in having three finance ministers within a period of four days. Governance was poor, and corruption was rife. In 2015, for the first time on record, South Africans began investing more abroad than foreigners were investing in South Africa. The mining industry was struggling against high electricity and labour costs. In some sectors, demand and metal

prices were low. For example, 2015 saw the worst market conditions for TiO_2 , with market prices at their lowest point in at least the preceding 28 years. However, the mining industry remains a significant contributor to the economy of South Africa, and contributes 7% to the GDP of the country.

The dominant role of the platinum group metals in the South African economy was strongly affected by developments elsewhere in the world, especially in the international automotive industry. In September 2015, allegations surfaced that Volkswagen had been involved in worldwide rigging of diesel emissions tests, affecting an estimated 11 million vehicles globally. This resulted in a strongly negative sentiment towards diesel vehicles, and a decrease in the platinum price as a consequence of the expected lower demand for platinum-based diesel autocatalysts. However, on the positive side, it has long been argued that wider usage of fuel cells would increase the demand for platinum. In 2015, Minerals Council South Africa unveiled a 100 kW platinum-using fuel cell to power its central Johannesburg headquarters, and in 2016 Impala Platinum unveiled a fuel cell forklift and hydrogen refuelling station at its refinery in Springs. Whichever way things develop, there is no doubt that the catalytic use of platinum group metals will continue to make an enormous contribution to cleaning up the world environment.

Towards the end of that year, the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference - the 21st yearly session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 21) to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the 11th session of the Meeting of the Parties (CMP) to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol - was held in Paris, with the intention of establishing a binding and universal agreement on climate, from all the nations of the world. The European Union and 195 nations were the participating parties, and the conference was attended by leaders from 147 nations. A global climate change pact was agreed at the COP 21 summit, committing all countries to reduce carbon emissions for the first time. This initiative will have a significant impact on what gets mined, and how metallurgical processes are carried out in the future - with the intention of improving our custodianship of the planet on which we all live.

It was at the end of 2015 that Klaus Schwab, founder of the World Economic Forum, first published his ideas around the 'Fourth Industrial Revolution' - the convergence of physical, digital, and biological aspects of our lives. The rapid pace of change in the technological world will undoubtedly have a great influence on how we live our lives in the future. I agree with him that 'We need to shape a future that works for all of us by putting people first and empowering them' by using these technologies wisely. We should not allow the always-connected way of life to deprive us of 'the time to pause, reflect, and engage in meaningful conversation'. *

“ The rapid pace of change in the technological world will undoubtedly have a great influence on how we live our lives in the future. We need to shape a future that works for all us by of putting people first and empowering them by using these technologies wisely. ”