



New Year, New Horizons



The beginning of a New Year brings with it the hope that new and better opportunities will arise, and this hope is no more acute than in this New Year. The difficulties encountered in all walks of life during 2020 will be long remembered. It remains to be seen how the world fares in 2021.

However, despite all the disruptions of the past year it is gratifying to note growth and continued interest in the SAIMM, its *Journal* and its published papers. Statistics show that over the year 2020, more than 300 new papers were submitted from 44 countries, with contributions from South Africa (42%), China (12%), Turkey (7%), Iran (6%), India and Indonesia (both 3%), an increasing number from north, central, and other southern African countries, the EU and USA, and from as far afield as Australia to Argentina and Chile to Russia. In terms of website statistics, data indicate that up to 17 000 visitors seek the SAIMM website per month, with the largest overview of pages on publications and *Journal* papers. As reported by the ASSAf and SciELO SA, over a period of 12 months to July 2020, the *Journal* recorded 10 349 resolutions for the 1 409 papers, giving an average of 7.4 resolutions per paper.

In the interests of increasing the standard of published scientific papers, new guidelines for authors are currently being drawn up and are due to be published shortly, with new schedules for reviewers to reduce the time for reviewing. The Editorial Board has recently expanded to include the panel of International Editorial Advisors as well as increased representation from industry and academia. As the *Journal* is now produced exclusively online, this has led to the elimination of printing costs and expanded the potential for circulation to a wider community.

With respect to content, it is worthy to note that the *Journal* continues to serve the interests of academia and industry, and in so doing it publishes fundamental research and applied industrial papers of interest to both. In addition, the Publication Committee has sought to re-define the *Journal's* focus areas, dividing the minerals, mining, and metallurgical (MMM) sectors into further defined disciplines and sub-disciplines, with experienced Editorial Board members dedicated to each sector. In so doing, the disciplines may be seen to cross the entire MMM value chain, *i.e.*, from geological exploration and mineral resources/reserves through mining and metallurgy, to digitalization, the environment, energy, and economics. Some editions provide papers on a dedicated theme, while others present a mix of general papers from a wide range of sources in this multidisciplinary industry.

This current edition of the *Journal* presents papers that illustrate the multidisciplinary nature of the publication. One paper is on mining (examining the influence of stemming practices on ground vibration on an opencast coal mine), two on extractive metallurgy (one on adapting a crusher design and a second on the effect of froth flotation operational parameters on froth stability and recovery), and a further paper is on energy efficiency (designing a framework to improve current efficiency in electrowinning).

The final contribution illustrates the interdisciplinary aspect of certain papers. For example, the overlap between the mining and geological disciplines. In this case, a pothole stress investigation is reported in the Merensky and UG2 reefs of the Bushveld Complex. The stress measurement in one pothole was found to be unique, indicating a very high stress level in the pothole rock which could have significance from a mining safety point of view. Questions regarding the nature, structure, and mechanical features of the pothole rocks and the geological process responsible for their formation were raised, which require collaboration between the mining and geological communities. It is to be hoped that further such collaboration between these disciplines will ensue. For the present, however, these issues remain unanswered. This paper was published in the interests of safety and not scientific prowess.

With the new steps being taken regarding the operation and content of the *Journal* and the clearer definitions of its fields of focus, it is to be hoped that such approaches will be of benefit to the entire MMM community and that collaboration, integration, and expansion of technical horizons across the MMM board will increasingly ensue.

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