

President's Corner: Reminiscing on the Purpose of Mining Associations

'Genius is the gold in the mine, talent is the miner who works and brings it out' – Marguerite Gardiner



The concept of mining associations started in the late 1800s when the mining industry first became popularized. It was then that organizations such as the AusIMM in Australia (Australasian Institute for Mining and Metallurgy), CIM in Canada (Canadian Institute of Mining, Metallurgy and Petroleum), the IOM3 in the UK (Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining), the AIME (American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical and Petroleum Engineers) and us, the SAIMM (Southern African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy), emerged.

The AusIMM was initially established in 1893 as the Australasian Institute of Mining Engineers after the AIME in America proved to be a major success. They at first limited membership to only industry professionals related to metallurgy, engineering, and geology. The association now admits as members and represents all individuals in the mining industry. The AusIMM focuses on the environmental, social, as well as economic aspects of the industry with the intention of improving these respective outcomes.

The AIME was created in 1871 and was one of the first national engineering societies in America. The AIME has gone on to establish four more affiliated societies, namely the Society for Mining, Metallurgy and Exploration (SME), the Minerals, Metals and Materials Society (TMS), the Association for Iron and Steel Technology (AIST), and the Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE). All these associations serve to further scientific and technological developments, both locally and internationally, to advance their respective industries.

The CIM was established in 1898 as the Canadian Mining Institute. Professionals in the industry initially sought a method of influencing and communicating laws regarding worker safety, and created the CIM to achieve that. The CIM soon grew in popularity, gaining members from across Canada, and today is Canada's leading mining association.

Established in 1869, the Iron and Steel Institute held bi-annual meetings to discuss scientific questions about the manufacturing of iron and steel. As the organization grew to encompass a more general industry, it ultimately became the IOM3, which is concerned with scientific development throughout various mining operations. Its major concern is currently environmental, and the Institute is involved in dealing with climate change, greenhouse gas emissions, and general societal well-being regarding mining activities.

The SAIMM was established in 1894 as a learned society which focused on academic disciplines relevant to the mining industry. It has upheld that motive throughout its existence, and still aims to spread information about scientific and technological advances that affect mining processes.

After more than one hundred years, these associations have continued to grow in popularity. Many mining, metallurgical and engineering associations have been created with the intention to contribute to their industries. But what purpose do they serve to the members who form part of these associations?

For one, most mining, metallurgical, and engineering associations act as academic portals, thereby providing all the information that their members need. Some even serve to further student aspirations with bursaries, scholarships, and competitions.

Another reason why associations continue to garner support is the networking and employment opportunities that they present. Most associations highlight the developing of professional profiles of individuals and companies in the industry, thereby increasing awareness of their capabilities and service offerings.

Furthermore, associations maintain a specific code of ethics and quality control in the industry. This allows them to advocate professional standards in mining and ensure that individuals uphold the standards required by industry and government legislation.

Of course, there are also the rewarding aspects related to associations such as the SAIMM. These entail officially recognizing their members' various achievements in the mining, metallurgy, and engineering industries. The associations also present awards for these achievements.

Mining associations were initially formed as a connection between industry workers and the governments under which they operated, which allowed for a safe space to explore the industry and allow it to grow. This is why they are still relevant today, and why they continue to attract members. We encourage membership of these associations, if only for the extraction of one of life's rarest commodities: real contact time. In this digital age where we obtain information and conduct meetings *via* electronic resources, we tend to forget how necessary in-person conversations are, and how imperative they have become. By hosting seminars and events, associations bring individuals in the mining industry together to remind us of the value that meeting face-to-face with our peers will always hold.

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