

President's Corner

You cannot step into the same river twice

'No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man'
Heraclitus (Greek philosopher)



No man indeed steps in the same river twice. The waves are different. The sand has shifted. Even if you step in, step out, and step right back in, you will still be entering a different body of water the second time. But there's another aspect of this that is also true. Before each entry, you've also changed. You have new lessons learned, new relationships, and new aspects of your worldview. Not only did the river change. You did too. It means that the same actions that you take may not lead to the same result when repeated.

Over the past year, I have had the privilege to work with many incredibly inspiring individuals who offer their time and energy to the SAIMM through various activities. The volunteers who tirelessly, and often with very little support, manage to arrange technical events that embody the motto of the SAIMM. Leaders in their fields who carve out time to work on committees for the greater good of the mining and metallurgical industries have humbled me on many occasions with their unwavering commitment. I've written about volunteerism before. The SAIMM wholly relies on the knowledge, experience, and time of professionals to create this river.

I've always loved the Heraclitus quote. It reminds me to be present and attentive, to live in the moment because everything around us is always in a state of flux. And even if we can easily see the ever-changing world around us, we often overlook how we are part of this continuous flux of change. One may of course think of this as an individual, the proverbial 'no man', that always undergoes inevitable change just as the river is always changing. It is also true of the SAIMM. As an Institute we also cannot step into the same river twice. I am reminded of this as my year as SAIMM President is rapidly coming to an end with July being the financial year-end and the Annual General Meeting (AGM) due in August when a new President will step into the river.

The SAIMM, through tradition and organization, follows a relatively structured annual programme. So, in apparent contrast to everything always being in a state of flux, there is also a force that unifies everything, a force that cycles through the seasons. We can stand on the banks of the river of life and observe the surface or we can become part of the future by going with and becoming part of the flow of changes. We must accept and embrace change before we can influence it, or more accurately before letting ourselves influence it.

My involvement in the SAIMM can be directly linked to a very specific individual who inspired me to commit time and supported me throughout my journey which culminated this past year in being privileged to lead this wonderful Institute. There have been many others along the way, but I can pinpoint the person who helped me step into the river. I have heard similar stories from others who are active in the SAIMM and who can trace back their involvement to a single mentor or colleague who pushed them, someone who issued a call to arms to them. It is a reminder to us all to be aware of how we came to be a volunteer. What inspired you to be involved? Who helped you along the way to be who you are in the SAIMM?

President's Corner *(Continued)*

Sometimes inspiration is passive awareness, but most often it is enlightened awareness which requires activity. Enlightenment is what engages new members and allows them to grow and develop into the next generation of SAIMM leaders. We all need to actively be the message to people. Mentorship in its simplest form is to ensure that there is someone to follow in your path. No matter who you are, or where you volunteer, identify a few people in your sphere of influence and introduce them to the SAIMM, always remembering that it is not just a once-off. Don't give up. Remember that part of the journey is to step into the river but that the experience is different for everyone.

During the past year I have been inspired by and filled with immense gratitude towards the many, many willing volunteers that organize branches, the (often solo) organizing chairpersons of technical events, and the leadership and active members of interest groups and key committees. And I also want us to take a moment before stepping into the river of the new year to express this gratitude to those who are helping to maintain the flow of the SAIMM river. Thank you!

If you are reading this and think to yourself, *I want to get involved*, I urge you to step into the river. Rivers flow for thousands of kilometres and nourish the land along the way. The land becomes richer because of the river flowing by it. We can do the same by making a positive impact on the people we come across every day through our actions and contributions. Rivers never flow in a straight line they crisscross the landscape and find the best path to reach their destination. Similarly, as professionals, we also need to be prepared to navigate through life's challenges and stay the course until we reach our goals. I believe this is where the SAIMM can play a vital role in professional and personal development.

And remember: '*If you cannot see where you are going, ask someone who has been there before.*'
(J. Loren Norris – international leadership speaker)

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