



## Variety is the Spice of Life, or Dedicated Themes



The SAIMM Editorial Board receives a wide variety of papers submitted for consideration for publication every month. Papers are sourced from as far afield as Chile and China, Russia and Brazil, with most arising from countries in Europe and Africa and a smattering from North America, South America, Asia, and Australia. Such contributions are welcomed and indeed highly appreciated as the SAIMM Journal requires papers to have passed successfully through the peer reviewing process in order to populate the 12 monthly editions per year.

As readers may recall, new rules and regulations for peer-reviewed journals were published some three years ago, which have to be adhered to in order to remain internationally accredited and indexed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).

Among other rules is one by which such journals may not publish papers that have previously been published in conference proceedings. This is to ensure that internationally recognized peer-reviewed journals publish only new, previously unpublished scientific or technical research papers, or major advances in areas of engineering endeavour, or papers offering comprehensive reviews covering topics of relevance and high value to the community at large.

Against this background, the SAIMM Journal is fortunate to receive up to 40 new papers for entry into the reviewing process every month, from five to seven of which are accepted by the peer reviewers and are published in each monthly edition.

Of specific interest is the variety of topics in the papers submitted. While most are directly allied to conventional minerals, mining, and metallurgical (M<sup>3</sup>) categories, others are now being submitted that cover important and ever-expanding new areas in the M<sup>3</sup> value chain. Such topics include digitalization, energy, environmental aspects, legal, social, and socio-economic topics including gender-based and community-related issues, and extended specialist aspects in minerals, metals, and advanced metallurgical materials.

Given the relevance of such new topics in the world of mining and metallurgy, the Editorial Board has been deliberating how to present both conventional mining and metallurgical papers as well as extended papers covering aspects in associated value chains.

The decision has been to consider two types of journal edition: one presenting a variety of disciplines within the topics mineral, mining, and metallurgy and the second containing papers dedicated to a specific theme within those sectors.

In the former case, papers will be presented that cover a mixture of topics across the mineral, mining and metallurgical value chains.

In the latter case, a number of proposed themes have been identified, each highlighting different aspects of the mining and metallurgical sectors, and calls for papers applicable to each of those identified themes will be made.

Proposed themed editions for which papers have already been called, or will soon be called, include data science, pillar design, computational modelling, PGMs, energy for the M<sup>3</sup> industry, critical metals and rare earth elements, environment, social and governance (ESG), mine closure, open pit stability, and future water developments for the mining industry. Ideas for further themes are always welcomed.

By way of example of the first type of journal edition, the current journal covers a variety of topics, including the need for project readiness to ensure successful delivery of mining projects, determining the stress state prior to excavating in an underground slate mine, rockburst energy absorption demands for the design of rock support systems in the world's largest copper mine, and the relevance, geological location, and mineral associations of scandium, a metal that is likely to see increasing demand due to its role in advanced technology. This edition also includes two papers of more socio-legal or esoteric importance, one outlining the relevance of community sentiments when applying for a mining license. This paper has significant bearing on the granting of minerals rights in South Africa. The final paper debates the issue of a journal's Impact Factor, a topic which has specific relevance for those in academia and indeed for the research value or status of the SAIMM Journal itself. This paper provides an overview of the concepts of citations and journal Impact Factors as a measure of research excellence. The author recommends the publication of high-quality papers to ensure that a journal is recognized not just for the importance of one or more high-impact papers, but rather for all its published papers, all of which should be of high quality and relevant to those in academia as well as to those in associated minerals, mining, and metallurgical industries.

Based on the journal publishing norms as summarized above, the current SAIMM Editorial Board has resolved to maintain and indeed enhance the Journal's relevance to the minerals, mining, and metallurgical communities by continuing to publish high-quality papers in two types of editions, namely those that offer (i) *variety as the spice of life* and those that are (ii) *dedicated to topics of specific relevance*.

R.M.S. Falcon